

## **The Role of the DSL**

### **Main areas of responsibility**

Every school must have a DSL who will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and liaise closely with other services such as children's social care.

The DSL's main areas of responsibility are set out on pages 89 to 92 and 18 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education, GOV.UK –](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

[DfE](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

### **Managing referrals**

The DSL should refer cases of suspected abuse to the local authority (LA) children's social care team as required, and to:

- The Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern
- The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), in cases where a person is dismissed or leaves due to risk or harm to a child
- The police, in cases where a crime may have been committed

The DSL should also support staff who make referrals.

### **Work with others**

The DSL is expected to liaise with:

- The headteacher – to inform them of issues, especially enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations
- The 'case manager' and the designated officers at the LA – for all child protection concerns involving a staff member
- Staff – on matters of safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies, and act as a source of support, advice and expertise for staff

The DSL and any deputies should liaise with the LA and work with other agencies in line with statutory multi-agency safeguarding guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children, GOV.UK –](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)

[DfE](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)

### **Raising awareness**

The DSL should ensure that the school's policies are known and used appropriately. This will involve:

- Working with the governing board to ensure the child protection policy is reviewed annually, and that safeguarding procedures are updated and reviewed regularly
- Ensuring that the child protection policy is publicly available and parents are aware that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made, and the role of the school or college in this
- Working with local safeguarding partners to make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest local policies on safeguarding

### **Child protection file**

The DSL has a responsibility to make sure that where a pupil leaves the school or college, their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible. This should be securely transferred separately from the main file and confirmation of receipt should be obtained.

### **Eligibility to be the DSL**

The DSL should:

- Be an appropriate senior member of staff
- Have the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post
- Be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings – and/or to support other staff to do so – and to contribute to the assessment of children
- Have this role explicitly set out in their job description

The DfE confirmed that the DSL doesn't have to have qualified teacher status or be a full-time employee. However, there must be child protection arrangements and processes in place for when the DSL is not present.

[Contact DfE, GOV.UK – DfE](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education#org-contacts) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education#org-contacts>

### **Deputy DSLs**

It's for schools to decide whether they have a deputy DSL. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the DSL.

While the activities of the DSL can be delegated to deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding remains with the DSL and should not be delegated.

The DfE said there's no requirement for the deputy DSL, if a school has one, to be a member of the senior leadership team (SLT), but the school should be confident that the deputy has the appropriate authority to stand in for the DSL when necessary.

It's for schools to decide on their own arrangements for any deputy DSLs. The number and details of these roles will vary depending on the size and phase of the school.

## **Training**

The DSL and any deputies should:

- Undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role, including Prevent awareness training
- Update this training at least every 2 years
- Refresh their knowledge and skills at regular intervals (at least annually) so that they understand any developments relevant to their roles. This can be done via e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read about safeguarding developments

Refreshing their knowledge should enable DSLs and any deputies to:

- Understand the assessment process for providing early help and intervention
- Have a working knowledge of how LAs conduct child protection case conferences and review conferences, and attend and contribute to these effectively
- Ensure staff, particularly new and part-time, have access to and understand the school's child protection policy and procedures
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, such as young carers and pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- Understand relevant data protection legislation, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals
- Understand and support the school with the requirements of the Prevent duty, including supporting staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation
- Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant training courses
- Encourage a culture of listening to pupils and taking account of their wishes

## **Availability and time for the role**

The DfE doesn't specify an amount of time that should be given to DSLs for the role but the time allocated should reflect the level of need.

Even one case could take up a significant amount of time with liaison with outside agencies, or there could be a number of incidents close together. This makes it difficult to plan how much time should be given. The key is to have good back-up systems in place so that the DSL can deal with incidents as needed.

ASCL said being the DSL would count as a leadership and management responsibility, and that the DSL would therefore be entitled to a 'reasonable' amount of time for these duties, if employed under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).

The DSL, or a deputy, should always be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. While this would normally mean being available in person, it may be appropriate in some "exceptional" circumstances for availability to be via phone or a similar medium.

### **Availability for out-of-hours or out-of-term activities**

It is for individual schools to arrange appropriate cover arrangements for any out-of-hours or out-of-term activities, according to page 61 of the guidance.

If the external provider is using the school on a lettings basis, it would be for the external provider to ensure there were adequate safeguarding arrangements in place.

If the activities are being run by an external provider on behalf of the school, the school would be expected to ensure there is adequate cover in place. It may be that someone from the external provider acts as safeguarding lead, rather than a member of school staff.