

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges

September 2026

Annex B: Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure an appropriate senior member of staff, from the school or college leadership team, is appointed to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should have the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post. The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and they should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the role effectively. Their additional responsibilities include providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and / or supporting other staff to do so, and contributing to the assessment of children.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

It is a matter for individual schools and colleges as to whether they choose to have one or more Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the role should be explicit in their job description. Whilst the activities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, this lead responsibility should not be delegated.

Availability

During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to define what "available"

means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or Microsoft Teams or other such media is acceptable. It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out-of-hour / out of term activities. To ensure continuity of safeguarding responsibilities, schools should implement robust cover arrangements for periods when the DSL is unavailable due to illness, leave, or other circumstances. Schools and colleges have the flexibility and discretion in how these arrangements operate, provided safeguarding responsibilities remain appropriately covered. It would be good practice that, whenever the DSL is unavailable, there is a clear, reliable, and known arrangement in place so that concerns can be raised. This could, for example, include a confidential shared mailbox or equivalent system to ensure that safeguarding concerns are received, monitored, and acted upon without delay.

Manage Referrals

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is expected to refer cases:

- of suspected abuse and neglect to the local authority children's social care as required and support staff who make referrals to local authority children's social care
- to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required and support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme
- where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required
- where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. [NPCC - When to call the Police](#) should help understand when to consider calling the police and what to expect when working with the police.

Working with Others

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is expected to:

- act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff
- act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners
- liaise with the headteacher or principal to inform him or her of issues - especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult. Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - [PACE Code C 2019](#)
- as required, liaise with the "case manager" (as per Part four) and the Local Authority Designated Officer(s) (LADO) for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member
- liaise with staff (especially teachers, pastoral support staff, school nurses, IT technicians, senior mental health leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), or the named person with oversight for SEND in a college and senior mental health leads) on

matters of safety and safeguarding and welfare (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children's needs are considered holistically

- liaise with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the mental health support team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health
- promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances
- work with the headteacher and relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement and achievement at school or college.¹⁵⁹ This includes:

- o ensuring that the school or college knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort

- o supporting teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.

Information Sharing and Managing the Child Protection File

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child. Safeguarding records should be clear, factual, and distinguish between observed concerns, professional opinion, and historic information.

Records should include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

They should ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or content within is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice set out in Parts One and Two of this guidance.

¹⁵⁹ We recognise that in some settings there may be a different strategic lead for promoting the educational outcomes of children who have or have had a social worker, particularly in larger schools or colleges. Where this is the case, it is important that the DSL works closely with the lead to provide strategic oversight for the outcomes of these children and young people.

Appropriate arrangements should be in place to ensure that safeguarding information is transferred, reviewed and actioned promptly at all transition points, including in-year moves.

Where children leave the school or college (including in year transfers) the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term.

This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Where child protection files are transferred, the exporting school or college should include a clear, structured summary identifying current safeguarding concerns, relevant context, and any ongoing support needs.

Particular care should be taken to distinguish between current safeguarding concerns and historic information, ensuring that past issues are presented with appropriate context. For example, where a file contains extensive historical information, a concise summary of current risk and relevant context is likely to support more effective safeguarding than the transfer of unstructured records alone.

Receiving schools and colleges should ensure that safeguarding information is reviewed by an appropriately trained member of staff so that key risks and needs are clearly understood. Safeguarding information should be used to support, not disadvantage, the child.

Where the receiving school or college considers that safeguarding information is unclear or incomplete, it should seek clarification where necessary to support effective safeguarding.

They should also ensure key staff such as Designated Safeguarding Leads and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) or the named person with oversight for SEND in colleges, are aware as required. It will then be for the DSL to consider what other information should be shared with other relevant staff and when this should be shared.

Lack of information about their circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. In addition to the child protection file, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving particularly where the information would support an assessment of risk to others in the school as well as the individual pupil to help them put in place the right support to safeguard this child and to help the child thrive in the school or college. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting children who have had a social worker and been victims of abuse, incidents that may indicate concerns about serious violence or harmful behaviours and/or details of those who are currently receiving support through the 'Channel' programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives. It would be good practice for a conversation to take place at the appropriate and relevant

points between the Designated Safeguarding Leads at both settings, where there are issues or concerns to ensure information is being actively considered and acted upon.

Raising Awareness

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should:

- ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school or college's Child Protection Policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff
- ensure the school or college's Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with governing bodies or proprietors regarding this
- ensure the Child Protection Policy is available publicly and parents know that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school or college in this
- link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements,
- help promote educational outcomes by sharing information about welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children who have or have had a social worker are experiencing with teachers and school and college leadership staff.

Training, Knowledge and Skills

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any Deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any Deputies) should also undertake Prevent Awareness training. Training should provide Designated Safeguarding Leads (and any Deputies) with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly local authority children's social care, so they:

- understand the assessment process for providing family help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements ¹⁶⁰
- have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so

¹⁶⁰ Full details in Chapter one of Working Together to Safeguard Children

- understand the importance of the role the Designated Safeguarding Lead has in providing information and support to local authority children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes
- are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers ¹⁶¹
- understand and support the school or college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation
- are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college
- can recognise the additional risks that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support children with SEND to stay safe online
- obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses
- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other Designated Safeguarding Leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

Providing Support to Staff

Training should support the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and Deputies) in developing expertise, so they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This includes specifically to:

- ensure that staff are supported during the referrals processes

¹⁶¹ Section 17(10) Children Act 1989: those unlikely to achieve a reasonable standard of health and development without local authority services, those whose health and development is likely to be significantly impaired without the provision of such services, or disabled children.

- support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.

Understanding the Views of Children

It is important that all children feel heard and understood. Therefore, Designated Safeguarding Leads (and Deputies) should be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:

- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them
- understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Holding and Sharing Information

The critical importance of recording, holding, using and sharing information effectively is set out in Parts one, two and five of this document, and therefore the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) should be equipped to:

- understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with other schools and colleges on transfer including in-year and between primary and secondary education, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners
- understand relevant data protection laws
- be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as LA children's social care or the Prevent program etc.