

Early years Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL) should have the appropriate status and authority within the setting to carry out the duties of the post.

The role of the DSL 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.

The DSL takes the lead in ensuring that appropriate arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are in place and adhered to at all times. In larger settings it is advisable to appoint a deputy DSL, who are trained to the same standard, however the lead responsibility should not be delegated.

Keeping children safe in education (2024) advises schools :

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 remains with the designated safeguarding lead, this lead responsibility should not be delegated.

In committee run settings it is advised that a trustee takes the role of the deputy DSL or at least be trained to the level of DSL.

Childminders will always take the role of the DSL in their setting.

The role of the DSL: Recognise, Record, Report and Refer

Recognise

The Early years foundation stage statutory guidance requires the lead practitioner (DSL) to attend a child protection training course as recommended by the local authority that enables them to identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of possible abuse and neglect.

Local authority requires DSLs to attend Worcestershire children first DSL training every 2 years, however, recommend this is completed annually as good practice.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed regularly and at least annually (this might be via network meetings, e-bulletins, meeting other designated safeguarding leads, attending specialised training or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments). This allows them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role and understand the contextualised safeguarding threats (threats outside of the home) within the localities they work.

We would recommend: GET SAFE, FGM, PREVENT, ACES training.

The DSL should have a solid understanding of the Safeguarding and Welfare requirements of the EYFS.

[Statutory framework for the early years' foundation stage](#)

The EYFS states the DSL must have regard to the government's statutory guidance '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)' 2018 and to the '[Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales 2023](#)'. The EYFS also recommends childcare providers refer to [Keeping children safe in education \(2024\)](#)

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during opening hours) for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. It is up to the setting to determine what 'available' means.

The DSL should ensure there are clear policies and procedures outlining the settings response to child protection. This should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the [West Midlands Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).

The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting. (EYFS 2024).

Templates are available on the Worcestershire children first website.

[Early years safeguarding | Worcestershire County Council](#)

In conjunction with policies and procedures parents should be made aware of what to do if they are worried about a child's safety or have concerns about the safeguarding practices of a setting.

The DSL should be alert to the vulnerabilities of children, young people and families in their care. They should signpost to support through Early help. This includes settings creating a Supporting families offer which captures both national and local support for families who may need a little help.

[Early help in the Early Years](#)

The DSL should have an awareness that children with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse.

The DSL duties to safeguard extend outside of the setting. Good practice is to educate parents on certain topics that may affect their children such as developing good on-line safety habits. Children and young people can be taught directly in the setting where appropriate which can then be supported by families sharing similar messages in the home.

[Childnet — Online safety for young people](#)

It is good safeguarding practice for the setting to sign up for Operation encompass notifications. The DSL would take the role of the key adult and complete the necessary training as required. Operation encompass is a notification service where police contact the local authority who then contact settings with funded children to inform them a domestic abuse incident has happened in the child's home. This allows you to support the child who is now recognised as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right. For more information please contact our operation encompass co-ordinator via email at:

opencompasseys@worcestershire.gov.uk

It is good practice to share the free training associated with this project, with adults working with children and young people due to the prevalence of domestic abuse.

The DSL should have an awareness of MARAC which is a multi-agency risk assessment conference for the most significant domestic abuse cases in Worcestershire. The role of the setting is to provide information to feed into these meetings via the early years team. This information reflects the child's voice and is an opportunity for them to be heard and their lived experience shared with the many professionals working with the family.

[MARAC FAQs General FINAL.pdf \(safelives.org.uk\)](#)

The DSL is responsible for building a strong safeguarding culture across the setting. This involves supporting, advising and sharing expertise with the teams they work with. This also includes listening and reflecting on safeguarding practices and empowering adults to challenge and be professionally curious. Children are also involved through the teaching of the settings values. Building a strong safeguarding culture involves addressing low level concerns about adults working with children. [Low level concerns in the Early years](#)

The DSL is responsible for training and upskilling adults working with children regularly and effectively and ensuring everyone knows their responsibilities around safeguarding. This includes informing adults of what to do if they feel their concerns raised have not been dealt with effectively which may result in whistleblowing.

Good practice is to create a safeguarding training pathway for the team which starts at induction and carries on through the academic year.

The DSL should attend regular DSL network meetings ran by the Worcestershire county council to keep informed of local processes and the everchanging safeguarding landscape.

In addition the [NSPCC Caspar newsletter](#) is a good resource to keep yourself informed of developments and research within safeguarding.

The DSL should be aware of how health and safety issues can potentially harm children. They should work with the leadership of the setting to ensure the environment is safe. This also includes how the setting approach safer sleeping, allergies, administering of medication, supervision of children, and the risk assessments around this.

The DSL should regularly audit safeguarding procedures to ensure they are effective. This includes completion of the annual Safeguarding audit provided by Worcestershire children first which will help to identify areas for development to ensure safeguarding practices remain strong.

[Early years safeguarding | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Record

The DSL should ensure children and young people's safeguarding records are completed in a timely manner and to a good standard. These should be regularly audited to ensure standards are kept throughout the safeguarding file and to ensure the information could be understood by other professionals should they be required for legal purposes.

The DSL should support the adults working with children to write factual, accurate records which reflect the child's voice where appropriate.

As good practice chronologies should be kept for all children in order to record anything the keyperson would need to know to meet the child's physical and emotional needs i.e. came in tired as didn't sleep well, missed breakfast, forgot lunchbox etc. Sometimes chronologies can help us identify patterns or frequency of events and this can then help you to support the child and family. The DSL should regularly scrutinise and review chronologies to identify such patterns. If a safeguarding concern is then highlighted from reviewing chronologies a safeguarding record should be started and safeguarding procedures followed.

The DSL should liaise with the setting manager to chase any unexplained non-attendance on the day of absence. This should be recorded and addressed with parents/carers where possible.

The DSL should also review accident at home forms and ensure the setting are completing these as part of their daily practice.

All records should follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy adopted by the setting.

The DSL should have a good understanding at all times of the children and young people who have a safeguarding file and review these regularly to ensure actions have been completed.

The DSL should ensure Safer recruitment principles are followed at all times. If possible, the DSL should sit on the interview panel and be trained in safer recruitment.

Although settings are not required to provide a single central record which captures recruitment and vetting check information, it is good practice. DSL should have access to such a record to audit the safer recruitment processes which includes the completion of DBS checks.

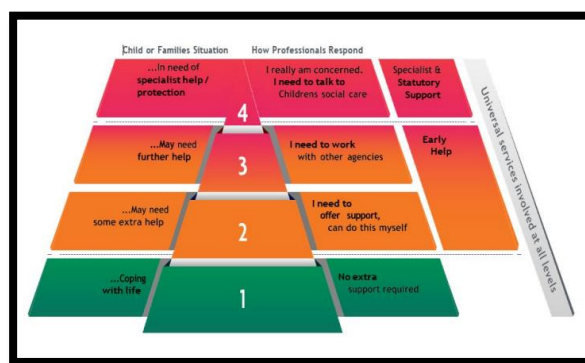
The DSL should establish who requires a DBS, where this is unclear i.e. a gardener who regularly attends the setting, they should seek advice. [Regulated activity with children in England.](#)

Where adults are due to start work and their DBS application is yet to come through a risk assessment must be completed. However it is good practice to wait for the DBS to be in place.

Safeguarding should be on the agenda of every team meeting and supervision, allowing adults to clarify information and professionally discuss any concerns. The DSL should work closely with the leadership team, so adults are supported in their safeguarding role and any gaps in knowledge are identified and addressed.

Report

The DSL requires a good understanding of the [Multi-agency levels of need document](#) to be able to establish the level of support a family requires. They should have a clear idea of what support looks like at these different levels.



The DSL should have a good understanding of Worcestershire children first early help process and how to request services from early help support through the referral process. The DSL should be familiar with the safeguarding and early help information on the Worcestershire children first website.

[Early Help family support | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The DSL should be familiar with the signs of safety model which helps to identify what is working well for a family, what are we worried about and what needs to happen next.

[What Is Signs of Safety? - Signs of Safety](#)

The DSL should have the time and space to hold meetings as required with parents/carers and other professionals.

The DSL should lead conversations with parents to address any concerns and agree a plan for support.

The DSL is required to complete early help assessments with families as required. This can be completed in conjunction with the settings manager where necessary.

[Early help assessment and guidance | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The DSL should be available to take part in strategy meetings and child protection conferences with the local safeguarding partnership as required. They should be the settings main point of contact where multi agency working is happening.

The DSL should keep the registered provider and manager of the setting informed of the current safeguarding cases and the work involved. They should work closely with keypersons to ensure children's needs are met.

Significant events must be reported to Ofsted as soon as reasonably possible and within 14 days. The DSL may be involved in this and future discussions around the event dependent on what this was.

Refer

The DSL should have a good understanding of how to refer into family front door at level 4 and how to write a good referral. There is a range of training to support with this:

[CourseSearchCitizen \(worcestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

The DSL should be aware of and promote the Harmony at home program to support the reducing parental conflict government initiative.

[Harmony at Home | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The DSL should be trained in managing allegations and have a good understanding of the role of the LADO, knowing when to refer in.

LADO Concern

Information about LADO should be shared with the adults in the setting so they understand how they can refer in themselves should they have concerns about the suitability of a person working with children.

The DSL should understand the circumstances of when to make a barring referral to the DBS and complete this in a timely manner.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-barring-referrals-to-the-dbs>

The DSL should understand their legal duties where there is an allegation or suspicion of FGM [2019-07-03-FGM-Updated-Pathway.pdf \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/2019-07-03-FGM-Updated-Pathway.pdf)

The DSL should understand their duties under the prevent duty. They should ensure the adults working with children understand and can articulate how they prevent children being susceptible to radicalisation.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-referral-to-prevent>

The DSL should ensure the transfer of safeguarding records to feeder settings is completed in a timely and effective manner. A transfer record sheet should document this and be signed by both parties. This transfer sheet should be kept until the child's 26th birthday. Where there is no feeder setting known the original child's safeguarding file should be archived until the child's 26th birthday.

When children start at the setting the DSL should contact the previous setting to ask if there are any safeguarding files for the child.

The DSL should seek support when they need it in order to carry out their role effectively. The early years team are here to support:

Telephone: 01905 844048
eycc@worcestershire.gov.uk

The DSL should ensure they are kept up to date with new legislation and disseminate this through updating policies and procedures and sharing with the setting.

This DSL job description is by no means exhaustive however hopefully gives you a good understanding of the main roles and responsibilities expected of a DSL.

Please add additional responsibilities as required.