

# Short Guide for Designated Safeguarding Leads

## The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is to oversee the operational leadership of Child Protection at the school.

The DSL takes on the central role in the school's response to Child Protection risks and incidents. As Child Protection is both a critical and complex element of a school, the responsibilities of the DSL in leading Child Protection can be multi-faceted and nuanced.

This guide provides an overview of key functions, best practices, and supports needed for DSLs to successfully lead Child Protection operations. It is intended for school leadership, Child Protection committees, and new and existing Designated Safeguarding Leads.

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### Guiding Principles

**To best meet the leadership responsibilities for Child Protection operations, the DSL should:**

- Maintain the school's focus on the scope of duty of care to protect children
- Promote Child Protection efforts within the school community
- Be the primary point of contact for Child Protection matters
- Ensure Child Protection practices are relevant, up-to-date, and tracked
- Sustain a relationship-focused approach to communication and support
- Safeguard confidentiality, accuracy, and security of Child Protection information



## Overview of the Role

The DSL is a critical member of the school's management. The role of DSL is to ensure that Child Protection operations are well managed, lead, and tracked. However, the DSL should not be seen as the strategic lead for Child Protection.

Strategic leadership for Child Protection at a school involves school strategy, policy making, and culture. The Strategic Head of Child Protection is a separate role from the DSL and, whenever possible, should not be undertaken by the same person.

Strategic Head of Child Protection	Designated Safeguarding Lead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Child Protection strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage Child Protection operations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the culture of Child Protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain systems, records, and practices</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the Child Protection Committee / Taskforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary point of contact for Child Protection matters</li> </ul>
Typically – Head of School or a member of Senior Leadership	Typically – Senior staff member with decision making authority and time flexibility

The relationship between the Strategic Head and the DSL is critical. The Strategic Head provides leadership and guidance while the DSL keeps the Strategic Head informed of Child Protection inside and outside of the school.

## Role Title

There are several titles schools use for the role:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Designated Child Protection Officer
- Designated Safeguarding Person
- Senior Child Safeguarding Officer

The role title chosen should reflect the full scope of the role and school's culture while being easily understood by members of the school community.

"Child Protection Officer" or "Child Safety Officer" may be inadequate titles for the DSL role as they do not indicate senior Child Protection operational leadership. These titles are appropriate for other key Child Protection roles that do not lead operations.

## Needed Traits of the Staff Member in the Role

The DSL role can be either a full-time position or an additional post for an existing staff member based on the size and resources of the school.

Typically, the DSL role is taken on by a senior member of staff or a school leader because the post must have authority for decision making and flexibility in time.

## Reporting Lines

The DSL typically reports directly to the Strategic Head for Child Protection or a member of the Senior Leadership of the school. Supervision by senior member of the schools is critical to ensure the DSL is sufficiently supported and resourced.

The DSL may supervise Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads or staff members who have taken on posts within the Child Protection operations of the school.

It is best practice to separate the DSL from being supervised by the Child Protection Committee / Taskforce.

## Key Responsibilities

The DSL is responsible for the school's Child Protection operations, systems, and practices.

These key responsibilities include:

- **Incident Management and Referrals** – First and foremost, the DSL must manage and/ or oversee management of any Child Protection reports, Child Protection incidents, and manage any referrals.
- **Relationship Management** – The DSL will need to maintain relationships with members of the school community, other schools and DSLs, legal experts, and resources in the local community or government.
- **Oversight of the Child Protection Action Plan** – The DSL should manage and oversee the school's action plan for protection children.
- **Point of Contact for Child Protection** – The DSL should be the primary point of contact for Child Protection internally and externally.
- **Training Management** – The DSL should oversee and set standards for the Child Protection training of all adults and students in the school community.
- **Data Management** – The DSL should ensure the security and confidentiality of all Child Protection data.
- **Manage the ITFCP Essential Questions** – The DSL should coordinate responses to the [Essential Questions for Schools from the International Task Force for Child Protection](#).

## Resources

To successfully lead Child Protection operations at the school, it is important that the DSL have the following resources:

- **Sufficient time and flexibility** to manage needed matters. This may require release from other duties to attend to a Child Protection incident.
- **Sufficient budget** to conduct trainings, assessments, and manage systems.
- **Periodic training** in Child Protection. The DSL should be trained at Level 3 and remain current on Child Protection topics.
- **Leadership support** in actions, communications, and decision making.
- **Sufficient systems** to manage communications, data, and incidents.
- **Professional supervision or mentorship** external to the school.

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## Child Protection Network

It is critical that the DSL maintain a professional network external to the school for support, resources, and contacts.

Amongst other resource this network may include:

- Other DSLs and school counsellors
- Legal experts and law enforcement
- Child protection experts and consultants
- Health experts
- Victim support resources
- Local government contacts and services
- Embassies / Consulates

This network of contacts and resources should be documented and kept up-to-date.

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## Construction and Evaluation of the Role

The construction for the role should parallel the process used in the authoring of the school's Child Protection policy. It should include input from school stakeholders and be led by the Strategic Head of Child Protection in partnership with the Child Protection Committee / Taskforce.

Though DSLs have similar roles and responsibilities across schools, it is important not to copy and paste job descriptions from other schools. Instead use outside resources to help guide the construction of the DSL job description that best meets the needs and context of the school.

When evaluating the DSL, consider the following:

- An evaluation of the role of the DSL within the scope of the school, separate from the staff member holding the post.
- The job performance of the individual staff member as the DSL
- The job performance of the individual staff member given the available resources, constraints, and requirements of any other position they hold.

Child Protection is the commitment and actions taken to protect children from abuse. It involves all aspects of the school community and everyone has a role to play.

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**ChildSafeguarding.com:**

[csawa.re/LearnMore](https://csawa.re/LearnMore)

# DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD JOB DESCRIPTION – TEMPLATE

<b>JOB TITLE</b>	We recommend you choose a job title that reflects the Child Protection culture of the school. Please see above for examples.
<b>REPORTS TO</b>	We recommend you have the DSL report to the Strategic Head for Child Protection or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
<b>JOB OVERVIEW</b>	We recommend you write a 3-4 sentence overview of the role of the DSL in relation to the Child Protection practices of the school. It is good practice to include a reference to the school's commitment to Child Protection.
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES</b>	<p>Suggested Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident Management and Referrals</li> <li>• Relationship Management</li> <li>• Oversight of the Child Protection Action Plan</li> <li>• Point of Contact for Child Protection</li> <li>• Training Management</li> <li>• Data Management</li> <li>• Child Protection Professional Network</li> </ul>
<b>TIME ALLOCATION</b>	If you choose to make the DSL role an additional post for a staff member, we recommend you define the expected number of hours per week you expect the role to require. It is good practice to mention that additional hours may be required.
<b>EVALUATION CRITERIA</b>	We recommend you describe the evaluation criteria for the position and for the individual staff member's performance.
<b>STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT</b>	We recommend that the school include a statement of commitment to supporting the DSL with resources, time flexibility, and leadership.