

NSPCC Safeguarding in Education Service

Briefing: The role of the Designated Senior Person (DSP) for child protection in schools and colleges

April 2013

Introduction:

The role of the DSP is to take lead responsibility for managing child protection issues and cases. This involves providing advice and support to other staff, making referrals to and liaising with the local authority and working with other agencies. Information relating to individual child protection cases is confidential, although some information can be shared with relevant school staff where necessary. This should be done on a „need to know“ basis.

The DSP must be a senior member of the school’s leadership team but does not have to be a teacher. The school must also make arrangements for covering the role of the DSP when that person is unavailable. In many cases, there will be a deputy DSP in place and in larger schools can consist of a team of staff working together. The DSP must keep the headteacher informed of all child protection issues in the school.

The DSP does not have to be an expert in the area of child protection but takes responsibility for the school’s child protection practice, policy, procedures and professional development. The headteacher should ensure that the DSP is given sufficient time and resources to carry out the role, which should be explicitly defined in the potholder’s job description. This includes time to attend and provide reports and advice to case conferences and other interagency meetings as required

If relevant to the school, the DSP should be involved in ensuring there are appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place for pupils undertaking work experience, work-based learning and educational visits. Further guidance can be found in “Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education”.

The Governing Body

Governing bodies are responsible for ensuring the school’s policies and procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements. The DSP should liaise with the nominated governor for safeguarding so that the nominated governor can report to the governing body about safeguarding issues. Reports to the governing body should not be about specific child protection cases, but should review the safeguarding policies and procedures. It is good practice for the nominated governor and the DSP to present the report together. All governors have a responsibility to ensure the school’s safeguarding measures meet statutory requirements and all should know what to do if they have

concerns about a child. Further guidance can be found by visiting the Department for Education (DfE) website at <http://www.education.gov.uk/>

Allegations against staff

It is not the role of the DSP to investigate allegations against staff. If an allegation is made about a member of staff to the DSP, the DSP must refer this to the headteacher. If the allegation is about the headteacher, it should be referred directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The DSP should know who the LADO is and how to contact them. Further information on the role of the LADO can be found in “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2013) (Reference below).

Further guidance on dealing with allegations against staff is available from the Department for Education.

Relevant legislation and guidance

Section 11 of the Children Act and section 175 of the Education Act 2002, section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and part 3 of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2010 place duties on organisations to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This legislation is supported by the guidance “Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)” and “Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2006). It is essential that the DSP has access to these documents.

DfE (2013) ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’

DfES (2006) ‘Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education’

Ofsted

From September 2012, safeguarding is referenced within the Behaviour and Safety judgement. It includes: “Managing safeguarding arrangements to ensure that there is safe recruitment and all pupils are safe, including for example, the effective identification of children in need or at risk of significant harm, including:

- Maintaining the single central record and appropriate arrangements for child protection
- The rigour with which absence is followed up
- How well safe practices and a culture of safety are promoted through the curriculum.

The curriculum is not the responsibility of the DSP but the DSP should be involved in ensuring that messages about personal safety and managing risk are taught appropriately and accurately throughout the school.

There is also a reference to safeguarding in the Leadership and Management judgement. Leadership and Management will be judged to be inadequate if “the school’s arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet statutory requirements and give serious cause for concern.”

The full evaluation schedule can be found at by visiting the Ofsted website.

Responsibilities

“Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2006)” describes the responsibilities of the Designated Senior Person under three main headings:

- Referrals
- Training
- Raising Awareness

Referrals

- The DSP should know how to recognise the signs of abuse and know when it is appropriate to make a referral to the relevant investigating agencies. A key person for contact is the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the DSP should
- Have an understanding of the LADO role in order to work effectively with them. See “Working Together to Safeguard Children” for more information.
- When making a referral and liaising with other agencies the DSP should act as a point of contact and a source of support, advice and expertise within the school.
- At all stages of the referral process, the DSP must keep the head teacher informed of on-going investigations, on-going child protection issues and the welfare of pupils who are subject to a child protection plan.

Training

The DSP should have attended:

- Basic child protection training in order to recognise how to identify signs of abuse and know when it is appropriate to make a referral.
- Training on inter-agency working. The DSP must have a working knowledge of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the conduct of a child protection conference and must be able to contribute to these and other inter-agency meetings effectively when required. A key role for the DSP is to ensure that the concerns and views of the school are represented and taken into account.

- Specific training on the role of the DSP. This should be refreshed every two years.

It is the role of the DSP, working with the headteacher, to ensure all staff:

- Have induction training covering child protection, an understanding of safeguarding issues including the causes of abuse and neglect
- Are able to identify the signs and indicators of abuse
- Know how to respond effectively when they have concerns and know that they have a responsibility to report any concerns immediately
- Know how to respond to a disclosure appropriately

It is good practice to invite all Governors to this training (not just the nominated Governor for child protection) so that they all have a basic awareness of child protection. This can be delivered by the DSP or by another provider arranged by the DSP. The DSP should know how to contact relevant local and national organizations that can deliver child protection training. Records should be kept of the dates of the training, details of the provider and a record of staff attendance at the training. NSPCC offers training for those taking on the role of the DSP and in basic child awareness. Further details can be found by visiting NSPCC Inform at www.nspcc.org.uk/inform

A training resource for schools and colleges, “Safety in Learning” is also available from NSPCC. It contains materials that can be delivered as basic child protection awareness training and refresher training for staff.

Schools will also need to consider how new staff who join the school within the 3 year cycle will be given appropriate training. Some local authorities provide resources for training which can be downloaded for use in school in such circumstances. Other suitable resources are available from Educare.

The materials were developed in partnership with NSPCC and meet the statutory requirements outlined above. Programmes for the education sector include:

- “Child protection awareness in education”
- “Creating a culture of safety”
- “Safer recruitment and selection”

It is good practice for the DSP to provide an annual briefing and termly updates to staff to update on any new child protection issues, changes in local procedures and to remind staff of the school's policy and procedures. Many schools find it helpful to discuss safeguarding regularly at staff meetings so that awareness remains high.

Raising Awareness

The DSP's role is to:

- Ensure the school's child protection policy is updated and renewed annually and work with the governing body regarding this.
- Ensure every member of staff has access to and understands the school's child protection policy especially new or part time staff who may work with different educational establishments. Regular briefings and updates at staff meetings, departmental meetings or Governors' meetings help to ensure that all staff are kept up to date and regularly reminded of their responsibilities.
- Ensure parents can see copies of the child protection policy which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the school in this process. Many schools include information about this at induction meetings for new parents, in their prospectus and on their website.

Record keeping

It is the DSP's responsibility to:

- Be aware of vulnerable pupils in the school. All staff need to know how to raise concerns about pupils who are vulnerable or at risk of abuse and neglect. This should be covered in child protection training and briefings.
- Keep detailed accurate secure written records of children where there are safeguarding concerns. These records are confidential and should be kept separately from pupil records. They should include a chronology of concerns, referrals, meetings, phone calls and emails.
- Maintain child protection records
- Ensure that when a child leaves the school, any child protection files are copied for the new school, college or FE setting as soon as possible but transferred securely and separately from the main pupil file.

Interagency working

The DSP should:

- Ensure that locally agreed procedures are followed in the school.

- Liaise with Children's Social Care over suspected cases of abuse.
- Liaise with and co-ordinate within school the activities of any other agencies that become involved. This may involve completing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and taking on the role of the lead professional. The DSP should be familiar with the CAF and the local procedures in place for submitting the form. Further advice should be available from the LSCB.
- Attend, or arrange for an appropriate member of staff to attend, Child Protection Conferences and Core Groups relating to a child at the school.
- Submit a school child protection report to Child Protection Conferences.
- The DSP could be the lead professional in a case and should be familiar with this role and its associated responsibilities. The role of lead professional is usually decided on a case by case basis.

School Policies

As well as the school policy for child protection, there are other policies which have relevance to safeguarding and the DSP may be involved in monitoring the effectiveness of these other policies to ensure the school safeguards its pupils. Other relevant policies include:

- Attendance
- Anti-bullying
- E safety
- Behaviour
- Intimate care
- Physical intervention
- Staff code of conduct
- Recruitment and selection
- Confidentiality

Supplementary Guidance

Supplementary guidance is available on a number of issues that may be relevant to the school and the community that it serves.

HM Government (2011) 'Safeguarding children from female genital mutilation'

DCSF (2007) 'Safeguarding children from abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession'

DCSF and Home Office (2007) 'Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked'

HM Government (2008) 'Safeguarding children in whom illness is fabricated or induced'

DCSF (2009) 'Safeguarding disabled children – practice guidance'

HM Government (2009) 'The Right to Choose; multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage'

HM Government (2009) 'Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation'

HM Government (2010) 'Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity'