

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in Schools

Supervision Policy & Guidance

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1. Introduction

Supervision can mean different things to different people but essentially, it is an activity that brings together a skilled supervisor and, in this context, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to reflect upon their practice. It aims to help DSLs to process, put into context and learn from their experiences in their role. It is not an inspection or critique of their work, but a mechanism to support safe practice.

This model policy provides a template for use in schools and colleges in Birmingham for the provision of Safeguarding Supervision for the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The document is a good practice guide for what should be included in a policy and can be amended by an individual school or college as appropriate.

2. Designated Safeguarding Lead role

The DSL role is crucial in schools because they are the designated person responsible for ensuring child protection and safeguarding policies are implemented and followed, acting as a central point of contact for staff, leading the management of safeguarding concerns and referrals to local agencies, and liaising with children's social care to maintain a safe environment for all pupils.

It is important to recognise that difficult cases can sometimes trigger a variety of emotions, including fear, anxiety and inadequacy.

DSLs should be provided with consistent support and guidance specifically around their safeguarding role. As the member of school staff with specific responsibility and leadership in safeguarding children, there can be a risk of DSLs feeling isolated, particularly when first in the role.

This role is a fundamental requirement in schools, as stipulated by the [Children Act 2004](#) and outlined in statutory guidance like [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

3. Purpose of Safeguarding Supervision for DSLs

The purpose of Safeguarding supervision is to:

- Discuss and seek guidance on specific cases.
- Reflect on practice.
- Offer support for emotional well-being, resilience and developing coping strategies.
- Have an opportunity to off-load, talk about how they are feeling when dealing with distressed students and the impact on their own life. It should feel restorative and help build resilience.
- Celebrate success.
- Review workloads and time management.

- Discuss and seek guidance on specific cases – review action plans, avoid drift.
- Provide a fresh eye, talk through intolerances, frustrations e.g. With other agencies/systems.
- Provide an opportunity where a member of staff can be challenged supportively and constructively with advice offered on areas for improvement.
- Allow for issues relating to the workplace and to working practices to be identified and discussed including safer working practice and professional boundaries.
- Enable an opportunity for reflection, creative thinking and solution focussed thinking.
- Consider how their role fits with the rest of the school/other services and the community.
- Identify achievements and good practice.
- Consider appropriate CPD/training needs in relation to the safeguarding role.
- Consider emergency or additional supervision for any of the DDSL's working on complex cases.

4. Principles

Safeguarding supervision is not related to and does not replace appraisal or line management but should complement it. It is not counselling and a supervisor at times may need to refer a supervisee to other services such as counselling.

It is not essential that the supervisor sits hierarchically above the supervisee, thus reciprocal arrangements with another school / college, use of independent supervisor can be used.

The school SLT/Governors should see supervision as an important aspect of the professionals' work and ensure adequate time is provided.

Where the Safeguarding supervisor does not sit hierarchically above the supervisee, the line manager still provides accountability for the work and should oversee direction of the plan and work for individual children.

The supervisor should have attended supervision training and be receiving supervision themselves.

5. Supervision Models and Tools

While there is value in group safeguarding supervision with other DSLs, this policy is concerned primarily with one to one safeguarding supervision for DSLs that takes place in private at a pre-arranged time with an agreed agenda and preparation on behalf of both parties, as set out in the Supervision Contract (in Appendix A).

There are many different tools that can be used during supervision, including:

- [Socratic questioning](#) (using questions that encourage the use of critical reflection on the supervisees thought processes and decision-making).

- [Wonnacott's Discrepancy Matrix](#) (looking at what is known, not yet known or unknown about a case from the point of view of the professionals and the family).
- [Supervisee anxiety scale](#) to for use in helping to deal with stress, anxiety, and workload pressure.
- [Reflective supervision tools](#) that aid reflection and help consider the range of skills, knowledge and experience used in a particular case.

Discussion

To reflect on individual cases/scenarios, the supervisor may find it useful to use:

- Tell me
- Explain to me
- Describe to me

And consider 4 aspects:

- SENSE – the story, what happened?
- FEEL – reflection, what was it like?
- THINK – analysis, what does this mean, what has been the impact on the child or young person? What could have been done differently?
- DO – what next, action plans?

(Morrison T 2005) The Supervision Cycle

Supervision should enable the DSL to consider the best way to support the child or young person's current needs, reflecting on and adapting responses to achieve the best outcome for the child or young person.

6. Safeguarding Supervision Contract

It is good practice to agree a Safeguarding Supervision Contract before supervision activities commence. The most important part of this is the discussions that take place before supervision has actually begun, which is the time for the supervisor and supervisee to consider expectations of each other, particularly the boundaries between safeguarding supervision and management supervision, and establish the basis for a strong and supportive relationship going forward.

The contract should outline the expectation, including:

- frequency and length of safeguarding supervision,
- location of the supervision meeting (which should be in a private and uninterrupted space during the working day),
- the supervisor is responsible for taking notes, and will make available to the DSL (supervisee) for review and agreement on accuracy before being filed securely,

While supervision is considered as confidential, this can be overridden, for example in the case of child protection issues relating to the supervisee or where not sharing

information with senior school management could put a child or adult at risk, or contribute to bringing the school into disrepute, or a potential disciplinary matter or whistleblowing.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Supervision Contract			
Supervisee:	Mike Wingrove- Lead DSL		
Supervisor:	Sean Barlow- Safeguarding Governor		
Start Date:	September 2026		
Review Date:	September 2027		
Supervision Agreement:	Safeguarding supervision will be undertaken termly or sooner if requested and will be for a minimum of 1 hour. • Every effort will be made for supervision to take place in an uninterrupted environment. • Each party in the agreement has the responsibility to notify the other in the event of cancellation or postponement. • If at any time the Supervisor or the Supervisee is unhappy about an issue which cannot be resolved, the Chair of Governors will be consulted with the agreement of both parties. • Supervisors will respect the confidentiality of the Supervisee in all areas except Child Protection concerns about which need to be referred on, or whether information is identified that could bring the organisation into disrepute which may need to be reported via line management. • Notes and agreed actions will be recorded, signed, shared, and kept securely electronically.		
Supervisee:		Date:	
Supervisor:		Date:	

Link to template provided below:

[Appendix A - DSL supervision contract | Birmingham City Council](#)

Designated Safeguarding Lead Supervision AGENDA (Examples given below as a guide)	
Date:	
Time:	
1.	Welcome / Clarify roles and confidentiality /Agreed expectations
2.	Agenda setting both parties to input
3.	Review notes of previous meeting
4.	Information sharing
5.	Specific case discussion including problem solving, consideration of the ‘voice of the child’ What could have been done differently? Professional practice issues e.g. new policies, quality of performance, safer working practice, professional boundaries, role within school. Celebrate success and good practice.
6.	Impact of work on individuals professionally or personally and any additional support which may be necessary.
7.	Job resource and support needs including learning and development, CPD support and access to resources e.g. reflect on recent or forthcoming training development opportunities.
8.	Any Other Business (AOB)
9.	Date of Next Supervision

Link template provided below:

[Appendix B - DSL supervision agenda | Birmingham City Council](#)

Item	Notes	Agreed Action	By Whom	By Date

Name	Role	Signature	Date Agreed
		Supervisee	
		Supervisor	

Link template provided below:

[Appendix C - DSL supervision notes and action plan | Birmingham City Council](#)

[Birmingham Children's Trust Policies, Procedures and Practice Guidance Manual](#)

[Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#) Birmingham City Council

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) Statutory guidance for schools and colleges, Department for Education, 2026

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) HM Government, 2026

[Reflective Supervision Toolkit](#)