

Designated safeguarding lead professional competency framework

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in association with



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NAASA exists to collaboratively develop, share and improve safeguarding resources and documentation to support schools and trusts in meeting their statutory safeguarding obligations.



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Foreword

Schools are among the most important civic institutions in our society. Every day, families place their trust in schools, confident that when children walk through the school gates they will enter an environment where they are safe, known, valued and able to thrive.

Poverty, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, serious violence, and the complex risks of the online world remain realities in too many of our communities. Schools cannot solve these challenges alone, but they are often the first place where concerns are detected, understood, and acted upon. Leading that work stands the designated safeguarding lead.

The role of the DSL has evolved significantly since it was first established. What was once understood as a compliance responsibility has rightly become recognised as a sophisticated leadership discipline, requiring professional judgement, strategic thinking, collaboration across agencies, deep knowledge of safeguarding practice, and an unwavering commitment to the best interests of children. Yet despite the significance of the role, expectations, support and development pathways have not always been sufficiently consistent or coherent.

That is why this framework matters.

The DSL Professional Competency Framework provides a shared language for excellence in safeguarding. It recognises that safeguarding is a complex professional endeavour. It offers greater clarity about what effective safeguarding leadership looks like, supports meaningful professional development, and creates stronger foundations for consistency across schools. It is not a checklist or qualification; it is an instrument for growth. It provides a pathway through which safeguarding professionals can secure their practice, build expertise, and develop the confidence to lead safeguarding strategically across their organisations.

At the CST we advocate for safeguarding as fundamental to every aspect of a strong trust. Without effective safeguarding, schools cannot fulfil their core purpose. We are proud to support the publication of this framework and particularly pleased that it is offered openly to the wider safeguarding sector. The challenges facing children requires not only collective responsibility but professional generosity. I encourage trust leaders, governors, headteachers, and safeguarding professionals to engage deeply with this framework. Use it to support development, shape professional dialogue, strengthen accountability and create the conditions in which safeguarding leaders can flourish. Most importantly, use it to ensure that every child has access to adults who are equipped, empowered, and supported to act in their best interests.

The work of safeguarding is never complete. It evolves as children's lives evolve. But through frameworks such as this, we move closer to a shared ambition: a system in which safeguarding professionals are recognised, supported, and enabled to deliver the highest standards of care for every child.

Leora Cruddas CBE

Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts



Introduction

The *Designated safeguarding lead professional competency framework* has been created to support the development needs of those undertaking the role of the designated safeguarding lead in education.

Since the introduction of the designated teacher for child protection in 1995, the demands of the role and the awareness of safeguarding risks and needs of children have grown exponentially, particularly since the introduction of *Keeping children safe in education* statutory guidance in 2014.

The current designated safeguarding lead (DSL) responsibilities are outlined in KCSIE. With education not being listed as a specified authority in section 11 duties of the Children Act 2004, those working in a safeguarding capacity in the education context do not currently have access to the support mechanisms that are afforded to other professionals in the children's workforce; however, DSLs are on the frontline in safeguarding children practice and therefore should have access to appropriate, quality assured training, development opportunities and supervision.

We aim to raise the profile of safeguarding practice and practitioners in education and ensure the right support mechanisms are in place for DSLs.

In the absence of research, specific guidance of how to do the role, and quality assurance of training provided for DSLs, there is a significant lack of clarity over what the role is and isn't, leading to varying conceptualisations of the role, and therefore significant differences in leadership, practice and culture. We aim to reduce confusion over what the role is and what it isn't, leading to more consistency in practice.

Creating a competency framework for DSLs will both facilitate 'meaning-making' of the role and develop those that undertake the role. We hope that the framework will also influence the sector by creating a platform from which further discussion can take place regarding role development, including training opportunities, such as through formal higher qualifications and recognition for the DSL role as a career pathway, ranging from operational safeguarding through to strategic and system leadership.

We aim to acknowledge the training and development gap for DSLs and provide a platform for new opportunities to grow.

The DSL role and statutory guidance

The role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) in schools is statutory and detailed in Annex B of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2026). Statutory guidance requires the DSL to be a leader across the school:

The designated safeguarding lead should have the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post.

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 guidance requires the DSLs (and deputies) to complete training on the requirements of their role at least every two years:

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.

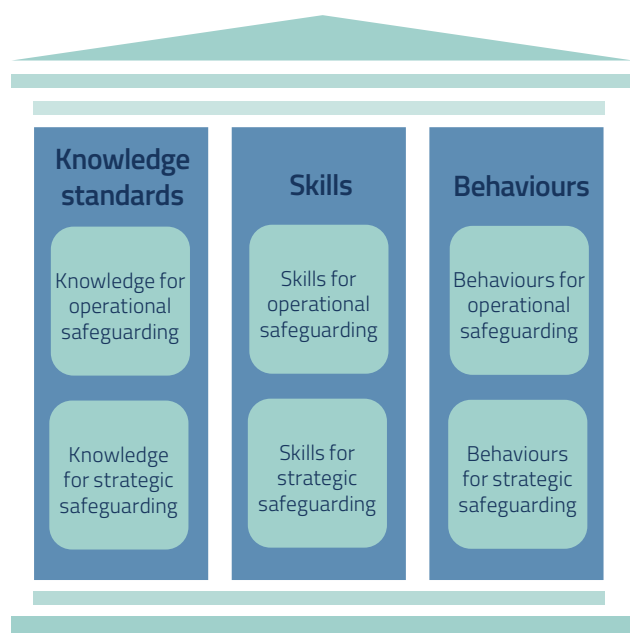
This training, however, is not regulated, resulting in a variable quality of training meaning that there is mixed competency and confidence for DSLs. Completion of a CPD accredited course outlining the DSL role every 24 months is enough to ensure basic compliance but is not enough to enable the ongoing development needs of a senior professional in the ever-changing landscape of risks and harms to children, safeguarding practice, guidance and research. To combat this, statutory guidance expects schools to provide a much wider consideration to the continued professional development of DSLs and deputies to complement the 24 month training:

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.

The framework: three pillars of DSL competency

This framework seeks to empower school and trust leaders to support DSLs in their ongoing development in a structured, meaningful way. DSLs and deputies can follow specific pathways designed to structure their individual developmental journey or they can approach it with the intention of completing the entire framework (recommended for any appointed DSL as a senior leader). The framework however is cyclical and evolving as the role evolves.

The DSL framework comprises the knowledge standards, skills competencies, and behaviour competencies required to be a DSL in a school. These are the pillars of the framework upon which the pathways, units and competencies are built.



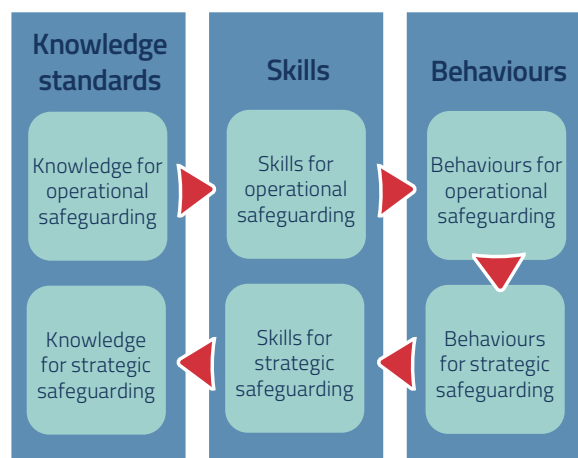
The framework pillars are broken down into six inter-related aspects to allow DSLs and line managers to approach manageable sections of the framework in a way that works for them and their settings.

The knowledge standards within this framework are intentionally described as standards because they form the essential, foundational building blocks of effective safeguarding leadership. These standards represent the core knowledge that every DSL must hold from the outset, providing the stable base from which all further development grows. Within the sector, the term standards is widely recognised as denoting the minimum expectations that underpin safe and consistent practice.

In contrast, the competencies that follow across the skills and behaviours pillars are deliberately developmental: they reflect the professional growth, applied expertise and nuanced judgment that DSLs build over time. While the standards establish the “must have” knowledge, the competencies articulate the progressive journey towards mastery that evolves through experience, reflection and ongoing learning.

These three pillars of DSL standards and competencies are then each broken down into ‘operational’ and ‘strategic’ pathways to offer a clear, sequential, manageable pathway to work towards achieving all of the competencies. For a DSL looking to work through the entire programme, it is intended that they would first complete each of the operational pillars and then each of the strategic pillars.

This approach is our recommendation for the first cycle through this framework:



The approach that you take to working through the framework is entirely your choice. For a new to role DSL it might be best to approach the framework via the operational safeguarding pathway and focus on completing these three units during the first year of doing the role, with the intention of completing the second set of units from the strategic pathway in year two.

An experienced DSL may wish to start with the strategic leadership units (and accompanying competencies) first and then complete the operational units after as a means for revisiting established practice through the lens of innovation and improvement.

The framework also offers the opportunity for development as part of succession planning and a structured CPD entitlement for pastoral colleagues or deputy DSLs who may wish to enter school leadership in the future. In this way a deputy DSL who spends the majority of their time delivering effective operational safeguarding can also be working towards the strategic pillars needed to become a DSL.



Alternatively, the competencies can be approached in any order decided upon by the DSL and school or trust leadership, according to what they agree should be prioritised for the DSL and deputy DSLs.

It is also possible, through this approach, for a team of deputy DSLs and the DSL to all work together on developing a specific pillar or unit or even a selection of identified competencies across the framework at the same time, which would also enhance the culture of professional development, peer support, and collaboration between them.

This approach is particularly useful to a newly formed team of DSL and deputies that might want to re-codify behaviours essential to their culture of safeguarding as a priority, or equally useful for an inexperienced team who would benefit from shared meaning-making by working through the knowledge units together as their priority. A team that has been working together well for some time might decide to focus on the units within the skills pillar first to establish clear delineation between the role of DSL and deputies.



We recommend that new DSLs start with the knowledge standards before moving onto the skills and behaviours pillars to ensure a strong grounding in the compliance requirements for the role.

Timeframe for completion

The DSL competency framework is designed to flex around the setting's approach to continued professional development (CPD) and the time and priority that it is given.

DSLs and headteachers may decide that all units should be met across the course of one year, or that it is more achievable to focus on meeting three of the six units across each year in a two-year cycle. This two-year cycle alternating the pillars for operational safeguarding in year one and strategic safeguarding in year two is our recommendation and so becomes the worked example below, but colleagues may approach the framework as best works for them. The framework offers a cyclical learning and development process as you and it evolves over time.

The timeframe for sign off – for competencies completion or whole units, must be agreed between the DSL and their line manager. The DSL must have deadlines to work towards that develop the skills of prioritisation and the management of long-

term projects as well as short term tasks.

Example approach

The DSL would work to complete the three operational units – one in each pillar (Knowledge, skills, and behaviours). The DSL would have an overview of all of the competencies in these units enabling them to consider pieces of work that they complete through an evidence base lens to meet the competency. One piece of work may provide evidence to meet more than one of the competencies. A significant piece of work may cover several competencies spanning all three pillars. Some small pieces of work may cover a specific standard. Where the DSL does not produce work that meets a standard or a set of competencies, they would seek support from their line manager or a senior safeguarding colleague to create opportunities to meet these competencies and strengthen their own professional portfolio of experience.

Competencies are signed off regularly through line management or through specific meetings for the purpose of reviewing evidence against competencies. This process gradually builds up a portfolio of experience and next steps of professional growth and competency for the DSL. The ongoing work offers both a sense of progress and accomplishment as well as aspiration for mastery.¹

Using a learning journal

We recommend that DSLs and deputies working through the framework keep an online learning journal in a single document. Each entry should be dated.

Learning can come from many different places such as watching a colleague handle a difficult situation and reflecting on why it was so successful, to being in a meeting about a child and reflecting on what might have been done differently for a better outcome, to reading guidance, blogs or books, to training other staff or observing training delivered by a colleague.

The journal should capture any reflections or learning taken from any reading, blogs, courses, or events. This will likely support the evidence for multiple competencies as well as enable the colleague overseeing the DSL's development to understand the journey the DSL is on and how it is progressing so that any needed support can be identified and offered.

How sign off could work

Both the DSL working through the framework and the person line managing or overseeing their development must have a strong understanding of the requirements of the framework and what would be relevant evidence that the competencies are being met. This requires a deep understanding of excellent safeguarding practice and current research and guidance ideally with multiple mental models of 'how it can look' across different schools to avoid subconsciously limiting what the evidence could be in order to align to a pre-existing model held by the person who is signing off. This would limit improvement achieved through innovation and reflection, which are essential tools for leading safeguarding in a school.

The line manager must ensure that they talk often with the DSL about barriers to meeting the competencies and offer support and guidance in creating opportunities for the DSL to work on something that would evidence that standard.

¹ Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.

The sign off might be achieved via an experienced line manager, a headteacher, a supervisor, a trust or corporate lead for safeguarding or an external expert.

Sign off can be done per unit where all the competencies are examined together and the evidence is presented and discussed as a batch half termly, or could build up over time through bi-weekly line management meetings that consider internal areas for improvement and work that could be done to address these, thereby also meeting some of the competencies.

The time it takes to complete a unit or a pathway should be considered when the framework is being set up with the DSL. Deadlines must be agreed in advance to enable the DSL to plan their work. Meetings should be placed in the diary for this purpose.

You do not need to agree exactly which competencies will be signed off and when – so long as there is an agreement about how many competencies will have been evidenced to what extent for sign off and by which point.

We recommend regular checks on progress, on at least a termly basis, so that any misconceptions or barriers can be shared and addressed during the year to enable the DSL the greatest chance of sign off the first time around.

Where competencies are not met for whatever reason, they must be completed before the unit is signed off.



Designated safeguarding lead professional competency framework

- KO** Knowledge for operational safeguarding
- SO** Skills for operational safeguarding
- BO** Behaviours for operational safeguarding
- KS** Knowledge for strategic safeguarding
- SS** Skills for strategic safeguarding
- BS** Behaviours for strategic safeguarding

Core reading for the framework

The statutory and non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education listed below should be closely read by all DSLs, and all members of a school's senior leadership team should be at least familiar with it.

Learning from reading the guidance can be summarised or applied to a reflective journal entry that should consider how the information can be applied to your own school's context. The summary documents could be shared with wider staff and used to illustrate some competencies being met, or a journal entry can be added to reflect on a specific event or practice.

An [online summary that categorises statutory and non-statutory guidance linked to safeguarding and inclusion](#) has been generously shared by Sarah Milne from Three Spires Trust.

Further reading and resources are also suggested for each unit and competency.

Statutory guidance

- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement](#)
- [Alternative provision](#)
- [Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales](#)
- [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

Non-statutory guidance

- [Behaviour in schools](#)
- [Preventing and tackling bullying](#)
- [Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools](#)
(includes statutory guidance on record keeping and reporting)

KO Knowledge for operational safeguarding

- KO1** Understanding and applying key statutory guidance.
- KO2** Application of local thresholds to secure the right help at the right time for children that need additional support.
- KO3** Understanding of multi-agency working, information sharing and the local interpretation of national guidance.
- KO4** Management of referrals (reading between the lines and spotting indicators and susceptibilities to harm and abuse, including extra-familial harms) to identify which children need which type and level of support.
- KO5** Ensuring that safeguarding records include all statutory requirements to promote best interest decision making in the long-term as well as when the child is in your care.
- KO6** Understanding the lasting impact of trauma and adversity on individual's behaviours and attitudes, and advocate for the child.
- KO7** Ensure that the child's voice is collected and applied in a meaningful way that influences decision making relevant to that child and their family.
- KO8** Have ongoing awareness of all children that have a susceptibility to abuse or harm (for example: vulnerable list, children in care/ previously in care, children with SEND, young carers) and the nature and proactive mitigation to these potential harms.
- KO9** Support attendance and behaviour functions with insight into children's previous or lived experiences that may influence their response to internal policy and practice in these areas.
- KO10** Understand and apply signs of safety/strengths-based models in planning for a child's needs and capture this planning on the pupil safeguarding records.
- KO11** Awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps, striving to address these

Core recommended reading for this unit

- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press

K01 Understanding and applying key statutory guidance

What it means

There is a great wealth of statutory and non-statutory guidance for safeguarding in education. It is typically updated annually, and more guidance is issued in specific areas of school management each year.

A DSL must know and understand the statutory guidance that is also adjacent to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, exclusion and suspensions and inclusion, in order to ensure that the links in practice that sit between the guidance are also met.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of where decisions or actions have been questioned by the DSL based on the guidance.
- Evidence of where a set of guidance has been correctly applied to a situation (case study) in child protection, but also in areas such as reduced timetables, managed moves, adult misconduct, exclusions, non-attendance, bullying, harmful sexual behaviour, or mental health.
- Evidence of delivering training to others on how statutory guidance may be applied in practice in their environment.
- Reflective writing about a case study where the guidance did not appear clear enough and how the DSL navigated this to support decision making.

Resources

- See core reading section for links to statutory guidance.

K02 Application of local thresholds to secure the right help at the right time for children that need additional support.

What it means: (explanation function)

Each Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) must have a clear and published document that details the different thresholds for support based on the type and level of harm a child (or children) has/have endured or is at risk of enduring.

The document is designed to ensure that referrals asking for support for a child or family identifies the correct level of support needed according to the threshold. This is to support the smooth running of the referral system and allocation of resource.

DSLs must also know how to use the escalation process (which must also be published) when they disagree with the level of support that has been assessed as necessary by social care.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Successful referrals, at the right level, where the threshold has been referenced in seeking support, resulting in tangible difference to the child/family.
- Evidence of when a situation has been escalated as part of a formal professional disagreement about what a child or family needs, using the local authority's published escalation process.

Resources

- Threshold document for relevant Local Safeguarding Children Partnership(s), typically published on LSCP website.

K03 Understanding of multi-agency working, information sharing and the local interpretation of national guidance.

What it means

Using *Working together to safeguard children* to understand the national expectations of what must be offered and accessible for DSLs to work with other agencies for the best interests of children.

This understanding must then be translated into a local delivery of those expectations, and the DSL must work closely with the LA and safeguarding partners to establish the processes that they can access to achieve effective safeguarding.

The DSL should be able to explain these in a training session to all staff and to ensure that the leadership team is confident in their understanding.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Effective use of local processes and systems – case study.
- Staff training.
- Evidence of challenging a local agency or partner when they have not/are not meeting their statutory duty to children in their area (a good example to consider is the CME process)

Resources

- *Working together to safeguard children*
- Safeguarding partners' websites
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

K04 Management of referrals (reading between the lines and spotting indicators and susceptibilities to harm and abuse, including extra-familial harms) to identify which children need which type and level of support.

What it means

A skilled DSL will be able to read what a practitioner has put into the system as a referral and identify a risk statement – what are we worried about? What could potentially be missing information?

They will be an expert in the risks and harms that affect children and those that children in their care are most susceptible to, because of how well they know their cohort and the local context.

This will enable clear category-based reporting which will facilitate analysis and evaluation in governance reports.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Clear category application and reporting.
- Identification and recording of risk statements within case files.
- Governance and trustee reports alongside analysis and evaluation.
- Examples of case discussion and collaboration to identify appropriate next steps

Resources

- Annex B of *Keeping children safe in education*
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press

K05 Ensuring that safeguarding records include all statutory requirements to promote best interest decision making in the long-term as well as when the child is in your care.

What it means

A child's safeguarding record is required to travel with them when they move schools and areas. Children who are most at risk, such as those that may be taken into care, are dependent upon adults in their lives understanding what has gone before, what worked and what didn't, and the nature of the trauma that they have suffered. These records protect children from having to re-live the trauma of their story and remember all of the details all over again every time they are in a new situation. The quality of record keeping can mean that support is given more quickly (or lost for a long time while sufficient new evidence of abuse or neglect builds up).

The safeguarding file for a child can be extracted and quality assurance conducted as to decision making and practice against the local and national expectations and processes.

The process should yield learning which can then be changed into practice and used as evidence of the existence of ensuring a continued scrutiny of the quality of safeguarding records. Headteachers can also play an important part in this scrutiny as part of their duty to ensure effective safeguarding practice.

Evidence

- The quality assurance document can be retained so long as no personal information is recorded. The file itself should not be submitted as evidence.

Resources

- [Keeping children safe in education](#) and [Working together to safeguard children](#) both indicate what should be in the safeguarding records.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

K06 Understanding the lasting impact of trauma and adversity on individual's behaviours and attitudes, and advocate for the child.

What it means

Children who have suffered trauma can communicate many things through their behaviour, such as needs, fears and avoidances. They may present as timid and quiet, or angry and display behaviours of challenge. Sometimes there is no conscious thought about this behaviour – it is just the physical manifestation of emotions and feelings.

As practitioners we must seek to understand what a child has experienced and how this affects their behaviours so that we can explicitly respond to this with support and interventions rather than sanctions alone.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Case study examples of supporting children who have experienced trauma.
- Training from an organization that specialises in trauma.
- Summary of the trauma informed guidance below and steps that the DSL is taking to embed into practice.
- Review of attendance or exclusions and analysis of pupils who have experienced trauma and how the school might improve their processes and understanding to better support children.
- Examples of teaching children self-regulation techniques that the child believes are helpful.

Resources

- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, [Working definition of trauma-informed practice](#)
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

K07 Ensure that the child's voice is collected and applied in a meaningful way that influences decision making relevant to that child and their family.

What it means

The child's voice should be collected deliberately and intentionally to understand their view of what is happening and the quality/helpfulness of the support that they are receiving. We cannot effectively support children without listening to them.

Collection of pupil voice should be proactive and not solely reactive, for example before school holidays or after an absence from school. Cycles of gathering formal pupil voice on particular topics to support the strategic improvement journey for the school and the safeguarding that it offers should also be thoughtfully implemented.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of receiving training on the collection of pupil voice
- A rationalised plan for the collection of pupil voice for strategic purposes.
- Examples of how individual pupil voice is collected deliberately for children who are suffering or at risk of suffering harm, and also in the practice of all practitioners who report a disclosure from a child.
- Range of pupil voice groups – representative of school context

Resources

- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

K08 Have ongoing awareness of all children that have a susceptibility to abuse or harm (for example: vulnerable list, children in care/previously in care, children with SEND, young carers) and the nature and proactive mitigation to these potential harms.

What it means

The DSL should have a clear understanding of the nature of vulnerability, protective factors, susceptibility to risks and harms and the impact of the local context on all of these things on vulnerability.

There should be a clear, well rationalised definition of vulnerability and the decision making around the oversight and management of this for the children most at risk.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of an established oversight system for managing children who are more vulnerable than others – and a rationale that explains this.
- Training that the DSL has delivered on vulnerability and how it is responded to in school (process based training)
- Training that the DSL has delivered that details the behaviours and indicators to abuse to enable others to identify and respond to vulnerability or susceptibility.
- Examples of where no abuse has been reported but proactive work related to susceptibility has been delivered successfully.
- Prevent Risk Assessment
- Evidence of robust safety planning

Resources

- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, [Vulnerabilities: applying All Our Health](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
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- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

K09 Support attendance and behaviour functions with insight into children's previous or lived experiences, that may influence their response to internal policy and practice in these areas.

What it means

Safeguarding leadership requires being able to influence all other aspects of school life to ensure that practice supports effective safeguarding in all instances, rather than working against it in a lethal mutation created from competing accountabilities.

Key areas where this can happen include:

- Recruitment
- Resource Allocation
- Training time/allocation
- Medicines
- Sanctions
- Educational Visits
- Non-attendance
- Suspensions & Exclusions
- Managed Moves
- Off Site Direction or Alternative Provision
- CME
- Reduced Timetables
- Restrictive Physical intervention and de-escalation techniques

Example evidence to meet standard

- A case study example or reflective writing on an instance where there were competing priorities and how this was managed in the best interests of the child and family.
- A written journal piece about the identification of theoretical clashes based on a cross analysis of guidance.
- A critical review of the bullying log (or anything else from the list) against the guidance (2017) and the impact of the actions taken for both the child that was harmed and the child that harmed. Did it change behaviour? What was the balance between safeguarding and strengthening peer interactions vs sanction and separation?
- Application of an inclusion based model or the ATTEND framework for addressing the underlying issues a child or family is facing to improve attendance – strategy document and case study.
- Trauma informed practice awareness and training

Resources

- Department for Education, [RISE support for improving attendance in schools](#)
- Brighton & Hove City Council, [An introduction to the ATTEND framework](#) video
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

K010 Understand and apply signs of safety/strengths-based models in planning for a child's needs and capture this planning on the pupil safeguarding records.

What it means

Without understanding the family, the history, the context and the issues fully and empathetically and without judgement, professionals are unlikely to have a positive impact in the safeguarding of a child at risk of harm.

Strength based models of safeguarding flip the narrative to first showcase the strengths that have emerged from a situation, the skills that have been learnt and the positive things that exist. This reinforces the survivor mentality and removes the stigma of being a 'victim' that can get in the way of taking positive steps.

It is also a tool that is used to help practitioners quickly understand the situation, dangers and issues as well as strengths from the child and the family's viewpoint – without this information professionals are likely to be ineffective because they are unable to see the whole picture and because both the child (post primary) and the family members have agency.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Examples of case studies - where Signs of Safety have been used (anonymous examples) or other strength based models.
- Student voice about the impact of the work conducted.
- Attendance at relevant training or delivering training on this topic.
- Genogram mapping
- Contextual safeguarding toolkit use
- Graded care profile 2 training (neglect tool)
- Managing Early Help approach in school

Resources

- Signs of Safety, [What Is Signs of Safety?](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.

K011 Awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps, striving to address these.

What it means

There are four main areas that a DSL must oversee as the safeguarding leader for their organisation (see graphic below)

Each of these skill sets is broad and diverse and requires deliberate learning and acquisition of experience in these areas.

We must also be able to recognise where we have experience and where we don't, to identify what we don't know. This framework can help with that and so can the quadrants above.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A written "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" (SWOT) analysis with next steps.
- A training plan for the next year.
- A journal of learning.
- A plan for shadowing others.
- Reflective supervision

Resources

- CIPD, [SWOT analysis](#) factsheet
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillon.
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

SO Skills for operational safeguarding

- S01** High-quality, effective referral writing to ensure that all children receive the right help at the right time.
- S02** Professional challenge of both internal stakeholders and external agencies to ensure the best outcomes for children.
- S03** Time management and ability to prioritise tasks based on the levels of urgency and importance.
- S04** Assessing and weighing risk to ensure mitigations are in place.
- S05** Appropriate safety planning and mitigations.
- S06** Maintaining quality safeguarding records that illustrate timely, best interest decisions, without opinion, and taking into account the child's voice.
- S07** Effective facilitation or chairing of meetings, with families and professionals, providing proactive and dynamic support.
- S08** Identification of self-learning needs and opportunities.

Core reading for this unit

- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

S01 High quality, effective referral writing to ensure that all children receive the right help at the right time.

What it means

You must know and understand the thresholds for each level of support in the local area for the child that needs support, recognising that a DSL may need to engage with more than one local authority system depending on the location of the school.

You must have a deep understanding of the statutory requirements for safeguarding records.

You must have a working understanding of *Working together to safeguard children* statutory guidance.

Referrals are of high quality, with evidence of best practice learning from child safeguarding practice reviews (previously serious case reviews) being applied.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of where thresholds have been applied in a referral and the requested level of support has been accepted.
- Formal file reviews of safeguarding records evidencing that the statutory expectations for record keeping have been met.

Resources

- Formal file review tools.
- [NSPCC national case review repository](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

SO2 Professional challenge of both internal stakeholders and external agencies to ensure the best outcomes for children.

What it means

Professional curiosity: this requires the capacity and skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family or situation, rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It's about maintaining an open mind, practicing "respectful uncertainty," and critically evaluating information that is received.

Practitioners need to think beyond their usual professional roles, engage with children and their families, and understand lived experiences.

Challenging decisions and actions: As professionals, we have a responsibility to challenge decisions, practices, or actions that may not effectively ensure the safety or well-being of a child or their family.

Workplace challenges: In a broader context, this can include filling in for an absent colleague, adapting skills to fulfil a role more effectively, handling complaints, resolving disputes between colleagues, managing poor or unsafe performance, managing reductions in workforce.

Overcoming challenges: Challenges can hinder progress and lead to low productivity if not addressed promptly. Overcoming challenges involves problem-solving, resilience, and collaboration. Challenges provide opportunities for growth and learning. Embracing them with a positive mindset can lead to valuable insights and improvements in our professional lives.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of discussion and challenge within meeting minutes (internal safeguarding/pastoral meetings and governance meetings)
- Evidence of professional challenge of decisions being made.
- Evidence of formal processes for challenge to external agencies on the basis of the level of need, the level of support offered or the lack of impact of support for a child.
- Being open to receiving and providing professional challenge is the highest form of collaboration. Pastoral teams should be empowered to discuss children's barriers and needs openly to co-construct decisions and actions in the best interests of each child.
- Working with external agencies to co-construct the support package needed for each child. Challenging those agencies when they do not meet their statutory duties or provide the most relevant or impactful support for a child.

Resources

- Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (2022), [Serious case review](#)

- Community Care, (2024) '[Leaders must foster professional curiosity and challenge to improve child protection, finds review](#)'
- Erooga, M (ed) (2018), *Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

S03 Time management and ability to prioritise tasks based on the level of urgency and importance.

What it means

The DSL role balances strategic leadership that influences all areas of the school with an immediate operational response to safeguarding concerns when they are raised.

Effective systems and training are needed to both identify and respond to safeguarding issues before they become too large, in order to have a meaningful, preventative impact.

Strategic work focused on culture and improvement should not be routinely derailed by operational demands.

This skill is so important that interview tasks are usually created to establish how well candidates can read between the lines of incidents reported to the DSL and establish which should receive the first attention and which can be delegated.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Specific meetings to review the needs and vulnerability of all children and ensure that all children's needs are met – not just the most vulnerable.
- Delegation through the team to attend meetings and to respond to and report back on individual children or interventions.
- Asking curious questions to establish the nature and urgency of the harm that has been reported and then directing to the most appropriate person to deal with the situation.
- Internal case studies where issues were identified and addressed early and organisational learning processes when there were not.
- Conversion analysis and evaluation of those students on the vulnerable list against those receiving early help and those escalated for formal intervention.
- Analysis of files for children with Child In Need plans to review is action could have been taken sooner based on the information that was known.
- Utilisation of supervision and/or line management to support time management – time given to activity

Resources

- Gov.uk, [Agile delivery: Deciding on priorities](#)
- Parabol, ['9 Prioritization Frameworks + Tools to Help You Use Them'](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools.* John Catt Educational.
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed.* Hutchinson.
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting.* Macmillan.

SO4 Assessing and weighing risk to ensure mitigations are in place.

What it means

Some behaviours or circumstances put individual children or groups of children at risk of harm. In order to support children and families we must define and measure the specific risks through a formal risk assessment process. The weighing of risk allows us to identify and prioritise actions to reduce the risk(s).

There are elements in statutory guidance where a risk assessment must be put in place. You can find these in KCSIE.

Online safety risk assessments are a crucial aspect of ensuring a secure digital environment. Let's delve into the responsibilities related to these assessments:

Service providers: Online services, especially those regulated under the Online Safety Act, have a legal duty to conduct risk assessments. These assessments aim to identify, assess, and understand the risks of harm that their services may pose.

Ofcom, the regulator, plays a significant role in this process. They are responsible for preparing risk profiles for different types of services.

Services must consider how illegal harm could occur on their platforms. This involves assessing the likelihood of users encountering illegal content or the service being used for criminal offenses.

The assessment should take into account the service's user base, features, and other characteristics that could impact risks. It's essential to put safety measures in place, especially for the protection of children¹.

Risk assessment process: Services should follow a proposed four-step risk assessment process:

- **Understand the harms:** Identify the specific illegal harms that need assessment. Consider a list of risk factors, such as features like image sharing or livestreaming.
- **Assess risks:** Evaluate the likelihood of harm occurring and its potential impact.
- **Implement safety measures:** Based on the assessment, put appropriate safety measures in place.
- **Keep it updated:** Regularly review and update the assessment to stay informed about risks.

Reporting and governance: Services are encouraged to report their risk assessment outcomes and safety measures to a relevant internal governance body. Even for smaller services without formal boards or oversight teams, reporting to a senior manager responsible for online safety suffices¹.

Remember, these assessments contribute to a safer online environment, and collaboration among service providers, regulators, and users is essential in achieving this goal.

A safety plan is a plan designed to offer support around a child or a group of children to reduce risks around them. Usually it would be based on the risks that have been identified, defined and weighed in the risk assessment.

A safety plan should be agreed with the child and their family and shared with

relevant people to ensure that the terms of the plan are consistently met. A safety plan should be reviewed frequently – the time scales may become less over time. Initially the review will be frequent due to the changing nature of the situation as more information is understood. The safety plan should include the child's voice, the parents voice and the school's oversight. The school must consider and apply, and guidance related to the incident (which can be found on Gov.uk)

Example evidence to meet standard

- Prevent risk assessment for the school.
- Whole school risk assessment on a specific area such as online safety, bullying etc with the intention to identify risk to be mitigated through preventative work.
- Sexual harassment or sexual violence risk assessment and safety plan.
- Risk assessment for a specific incident that addresses who the risk is to, who else it might be at risk, then nature of the risk, the time scale of the risk and how the risk can be reduced.
- A safety plan that is designed to address risks to a child or a group of children that includes the child's voice, the parents voice and staff oversight.

Resources

- Childline, [Making a safety plan](#)
- Gov.uk, [Prevent duty: risk assessment templates](#)
- Safe & Together Institute, [Child safety and risk assessment](#) video
- 1800 Respect, [Introduction to safety planning](#) video
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.

S05 Appropriate safety planning and mitigations

What it means

For a child or children: safety planning seeks to strengthen safety factors around the child by understanding how those safety factors add safety. It is always bespoke to the child and the situation. There is not a template that can cover all of the considerations needed for individuals. It would usually consist of:

- Warning signs
- Useful strategies
- Actions to take
- Key People/family members to contact
- Professionals to contact
- Remove from risk plans

Whole school: Where the matter is a community issue, this requires collaboration between the schools, emergency response agencies, parents and the community. The law requires designated stakeholders to annually engage in a systematic planning process to develop strategies and policies to prevent and respond to potential incidents involving emergencies, natural and other disasters, hate crimes, violence, active assailants/intruders, bullying and cyberbullying, discrimination and harassment, child abuse and neglect, discipline, suspension and expulsion, and other safety aspects.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Application of the signs of safety model
- Response to an incident of child on child abuse, for example bullying, sexual violence, or sexual harassment.
- Response to a child that was suffering child criminal exploitation or affiliated travel to get to school.
- Business continuity planning, evacuation, invacuation and lockdown

Resources

- Signs of Safety, [What Is signs of safety?](#) video
- Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse, [Safety planning in education](#)
- Birmingham City Council, [Students who pose a risk: School Safety Plan](#)
- Devon County Council, [My safety plan: exemplar and guidance](#)
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.

506 Maintaining quality safeguarding records that illustrate timely, best interest decisions, without opinion, and taking into account the child's voice.

What it means

Safeguarding records offer an overview of the child's history, information sharing, trauma, abuse, neglect, incidents and interventions. When the full story of a child and their family is understood by practitioners, they are able to identify strengths to build upon and reoccurring issues to address. They can consider what has been put in place in the past and how effective (or not) it has been. They are alert to possibilities of disguised compliance, through patterns of behaviour and cycles of conformity and inability to prioritise the child and their needs.

Safeguarding files travel with a child that is taken into care or moves between schools and LAs. Without those files the child's story and their history will not be understood by the new professionals that notice something is wrong and seek to support them. The social care system essentially begins again.

The records must therefore be high quality to enable ongoing best interest decision making between practitioners over time and between agencies in any moment in time in the child's life.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Formal file review against statutory guidance and best practice.
- Regular headteacher review of best interest decision making, by internally reviewing a file.
- Participation in an external safeguarding audit.
- Feedback about the quality of safeguarding records from a multi-agency partner.
- Processes and systems for transfer of pupil files.
- Active pupil voice (thoughts and wishes) on a regular basis.

Resources

- NSPCC Learning, [Child protection records retention and storage guidance](#)
- Department for Education, [Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#)
- TES, [The importance of managing safeguarding concerns](#)
- Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships, [Child's Voice & Lived Experience](#) toolkits
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press

- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

S07 Effective facilitation or chairing of meetings, with families and professionals, providing proactive and dynamic support.

What it means

The chair of meetings sets the tone and behaviour expectations in the meeting. The group of people gathered must believe in the professionalism of the chair and that they have each person's best interests at heart. They are responsible for creating enough safety in the room for everyone to feel able to be honest and bring their whole selves to the table.

The chair invites and values diverse opinions and challenge of assumption to get to the best outcome, and is aware of the impact of dominance dynamic on their colleagues' willingness to offer suggestions.

The chair sets the common objective that the group is gathered to achieve and challenges when other people go off topic, switches track or is disrespectful to anyone else in the meeting.

The chair ensures clear actions are created with shared accountability linked to intent and impact but driven by a named person by a set time.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Meeting minutes
- Meetings achieve what they set out to achieve – evidence of impact in minutes/feedback
- Meeting time is valued by colleagues and meaningful and impactful.
- Information is shared to enable each person to fulfil their role.
- Feedback from families or external agencies
- Clarity of outcomes of the meeting and assigned actions that are agreed by all

Resources

- Community Care, [Recognising and responding to shame in child protection: key practice points](#)
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

508 Identification of self-learning needs and opportunities.

What it means

Safeguarding practice and the guidance underpinning it is ever-evolving. Multiple research papers, guidance, safeguarding practice reviews with practice recommendations are published every year.

A DSL that is not constantly learning is already falling behind.

Mistakes are easy to make with so many statutory responses to risks and harms – our approach to these mistakes is either shame and hiding evidence or to embrace that mistakes lead to learning for the individual and in some cases for wider practice.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Learning journal entries reflect ongoing, intentional learning and reflections from unplanned learning.
- Explicitly identified and booked training, reflection, coaching or mentoring sessions and records of these.
- Post audit identification of next steps and priority areas.
- Collaborative working with other professionals with the intention of learning.
- Organizational learning practices and reports – designed to share learning for improved practice.
- Pre-audit self-identification of areas for development.
- Ongoing training plan for the DSL.
- Case study formal reflection on 'even better if' or 'what else could we have done'.
- Practice reflection or supervision discussions and feedback

Resources

- Department of Health and Social Care, [Revisiting safeguarding practice](#)
- McKeown, M & Yeung, E, '[Deepening our understanding of reflective practice in a safeguarding child protection and welfare context](#)' *Practice*: Vol 35 , No 2
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.
- Clear, J (2018), *Atomic habits*. Random House Business.
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.

BO Behaviours for operational safeguarding

- BO1** Model an explicit child centric approach in all that is done (consider inclusion, behaviour and attendance)
- BO2** Intentional awareness raising of safeguarding risks and children's needs.
- BO3** Cross function influence and collaboration: working with and influencing colleagues to ensure that safeguarding culture and decision making occurs through the school.
- BO4** Building and maintaining positive relationships that navigate and withstand difficult conversations and challenging situations.
- BO5** Explore and innovate – be curious and explore areas of ambiguity and complexity to find creative solutions.
- BO6** Acting with integrity by providing the whole truth, the back story and the why in decision making.
- BO7** Leading with compassion and care, seeing beyond the past or present situation to the person and people beyond.
- BO8** Being reliable, consistent, courageous and kind.
- BO9** Cross function and agency collaboration, influencing other leaders/ areas/agency decision making.
- BO10** Active listening to better understand other's perspectives.
- BO11** Promote wellbeing and self-care for myself and others.

Core reading for this unit

- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

B01 Model an explicit child centric approach in all that is done.

What it means

A child centric approach means keeping the child's safety and wellbeing as the primary focus in all discussions and decisions that relate to that child.

A child centric approach also recognises and promotes the rights of the child as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

School staff hold a unique role in their relationships with children, due to being the only professionals who see and work with for 30+ hours per week, and so can positively use this position to understand and advocate for the needs of children based on their comparatively extensive knowledge and experience of working with them.

Explicit modelling of this approach means remaining unrelentingly focused on keeping the child at the centre of all safeguarding processes, promoting this to leaders, fellow DSL team members, staff, parents and stakeholders through creation and implementation of policy and procedure, and evidencing this in decision making.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Thorough and robust approach to pupil voice – for all pupils, for groups of pupils, and for pupils known to be vulnerable or at risk
- Examples of where children's feedback has led to explicit action and/or tangible change
- Evidence of advocacy for children to others – parents/carers, colleagues and professionals
- Evidence of challenge to others – parents/carers, colleagues and professionals – where discussions and/or decisions are not child centric, including escalation where necessary

Resources

- Buckler, R (2023), *Developing child-centred practice for safeguarding and child protection: Strategies for every early years setting*. Routledge.
- Firmin, C (2020), *Contextual safeguarding and child protection*. Routledge.
- Eriksson, M et al (2022), '[Safeguarding children subjected to violence in the family: child-centered risk assessments](#)', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19 (21).
- Race, T & Frost, N (2022), '[Hearing the voice of the child in safeguarding processes: Exploring different voices and competing narratives](#)', *Child Abuse Review*, 31 (6)
- Department for Education (2011), [The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final report - A child-centred system](#)
- Erooga, M (ed) (2012), *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley.

- Erooga, M (ed) (2018), *Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
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- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

B02 Intentional awareness raising of safeguarding risks and children's needs.

What it means

Raising awareness of safeguarding risks and children's needs can often be reactive – we become aware of a particular risk, and communicate about that risk with relevant colleagues and partners.

This must always be accompanied by the intentional raising of awareness, which is planned and deliberate. When we act in this way, our choices are informed by what we know as well as by what we don't know, so that we aren't restricting our focus to just reacting to what is in front of us.

By deliberately planning for the intentional raising of awareness of risks and needs, DSLs can be assured that all stakeholders are regularly and systematically given the knowledge, skills and abilities with which to fulfil their responsibilities.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Planned and deliberate implementation of raising safeguarding awareness with all stakeholders – staff, DSLs, SLT, governance, and parents and carers – to include meeting minutes, training trackers and resources, parent communications, reports, feedback comments, and evaluations.
- Continuous training, development and upskilling, based on school, local and national needs and risks, sourcing it for self and delivering it to/for others
- Effective delivery, reinforcement and evaluation of training delivered to staff and other stakeholders
- Clear strategy for communicating known risks and needs for specific children and groups of children to relevant staff and other professionals
- Demonstrable commitment to inclusive practice, and awareness of barriers faced in meeting needs and managing risk for children based on disadvantage or protected characteristic

Resources

- NSPCC, [Keeping children safe](#)
- SAFE CIC, [List of safeguarding children partnerships](#)
- Safeguarding Network, [Staff Training - as easy as level 1,2,3...?](#)
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.

B03 Cross function influence and collaboration: working with and influencing colleagues to ensure that safeguarding culture and decision making occurs through the school.

What it means

An effective safeguarding culture cannot rely solely on one person; however, the DSL has named responsibility in KCSIE to drive and embed effective safeguarding culture in their school. This is achieved through the work done both with colleagues in school and professionals outside of school, as well as with parents, governance, and other stakeholders. It includes having a clear strategic oversight, delegating effectively and empowering others to be effective in their role.

An effective DSL willingly works with others, and deliberately influences practice and decision making, all to promote and secure their school's safeguarding culture.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Continued training, modelling and reinforcing expected practice at all levels
- Working as part of a team to solve problems and create / develop policy, procedure and practice
- Effective and impactful use of time with stakeholders – SLT, DSLs, staff, parents, governance, as seen in meeting plans, minutes and reports
- Deliberate and planned checks of all aspects of daily life in school to ensure culture is being robustly upheld
- Challenge and/or escalation in the best interests of children, both internally and externally

Resources

- Baker, M & Glanville, M (2021), *Lessons will be learned: Transforming safeguarding in education*. Practical Inspiration Publishing.
- Baginsky, M et al (2022), *Protecting and safeguarding children in schools: A multi-agency approach*. Policy Press.
- Sturt, P & Rowe, J (2023), *Using supervision in schools*. Pavilion Publishing.
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

B04 Building and maintaining positive relationships that navigate and withstand difficult conversations and challenging situations.

What it means

The DSL role is inherently predicated on the risk of needing to have difficult conversations – with children, parents, staff or other professionals – and face a range of challenging situations.

Prioritising the proactive establishment and maintenance of positive and productive relationships with all stakeholders supports DSLs to establish an 'emotional bank account'.

This supports them to have a 'reserve of trust' with those around them, so that a response to a challenging situation, including any difficult conversations, are built upon on a pre-existing foundation that can help prevent the relationship going into deficit.

Example evidence to meet standard

- High profile presence in school with children, parents and staff, and in external settings with other professionals
- Proactive and impactful approach to establishing and maintaining relationships, especially with those considered under-served or hidden.
- Transparency, candour and tact in communications, both verbal and written
- Challenge and escalation, both informally and formally, in and out of school

Resources

- Gill, S (2018) *Successful difficult conversations in school: Improve your team's performance, behaviour and attitude with kindness and success*. John Catt Educational.
- Covey, S (2020) *The seven habits of highly effective people*. Simon & Schuster.
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

B05 Be curious and innovative – explore areas of ambiguity and complexity to find creative solutions.

What it means

Safeguarding practice reviews (formerly serious case reviews) consistently cite a lack of professional curiosity from professionals as a contributing factor to significant harm suffered by children due to abuse and/or neglect.

Professional curiosity in the context of safeguarding can be defined as a proactive consideration and exploration of all factors influencing the safety of a child or children, not relying on assumption, acceptance of information at face value, or from a single source.

Curiosity and innovation for a DSL means not accepting the 'status quo', and not shying away from ambiguity or complexity. By being curious and innovative, you are always striving to challenge self and others to seek evidence that confirms effective practice.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Embedded systems and structures that allow for and promote multiple voices and feedback streams when making decisions
- Effective use of supervision to seek support, challenge and find solutions
- Regular check and monitoring schedules to ensure practice is embedded effectively – such as through quality assurance and audit processes.
- Proactively seeking feedback from stakeholders to inform next steps, and involving stakeholders in co-production of solutions
- Case study reviews used in training to support solution-focused creative thinking

Resources

- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, [Professional curiosity](#) resource pack
- TES, [What is professional curiosity?](#)
- NSPCC, [Learning from case review briefings](#)
- NSPCC, [National case review collection](#)
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting*. Macmillan.

B06 Acting with integrity by providing the whole truth, the back story and the why in decision making

What it means

Integrity is inherently associated with strong moral principles. In the context of the work of DSL, acting with integrity is aligned to the concept that a full understanding of the 'whole' story of a safeguarding issue or incident is morally necessary in order to provide the best and most effective support to safeguard children.

A DSL's approach must therefore prioritise seeking, knowing, understanding, assessing and reflecting on all of the factors that contribute to or influence the safeguarding of a child or children.

Record keeping must also make clear and transparent the reasons and rationale for decision making, with factual reference to known risk and protective factors. Capturing what we think we don't know is as important as what we think we do know.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Proactive practice that aims to secure a full understanding of a situation, its contributing factors and its risks
- Clear record keeping that explicitly records rationale (the 'why') for decisions and actions taken / not taken
- Use of appropriate assessment and evaluation tools (such as signs of safety, LA threshold documents) to ensure all aspects of risk are being considered
- Regular re-visiting / monitoring of risk to ensure up to date assessment and judgement
- Appropriate levels of detail in referrals, considering current risk and relevant historic factors
- Transparency and clarity in communication with staff, children, parents and other stakeholders, based on fact

Resources

- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

B07 Leading with compassion and care, seeing beyond the past or present situation to the person and people beyond.

What it means

DSLs must hold a very difficult line of being unrelenting on their focus on children's safeguarding, without this being to the personal detriment of the people (parents, children or professionals) who are causing the potential harm. Effective safeguarding could be seen as the need to be 'tough on the issue and not the person'.

This practice requires us to describe situations without laying blame, commit to difficult conversations with integrity and transparency, focus on facts and not making things personal, all whilst understanding that challenging someone on their provision of safety for a child can often be seen as one of the most personal questions an individual can face.

Effective DSLs are aware of the risks of disguised compliance, maintain professional curiosity and remain compassionately focused on what is in the child's best interests, acknowledging that treating all others with care is likely to more quickly and effectively secure the best outcomes for the child.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Proactive approach to seeking, establishing and maintaining positive relationships – high profile and visible in the school community
- Examples of difficult conversations, held with openness and transparency – such as informing parents of referral without consent, discussing consent for a referral, improvement feedback for staff, use of LA escalation
- Internal and external communications about stakeholders are professional and compassionate
- Commitment to working with those who challenge (children, parents, staff and other professionals), using flexibility and adaptability to meet need
- Recognition of power imbalance, especially with children and parents, and actively working to empower them to engage with others and help themselves

Resources

- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillon.
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.

B08 Being reliable, consistent, courageous and kind.

What it means

A DSL's reliability and consistency are crucial in establishing safe, trusted and productive relationships with all stakeholders, especially children and their family members. It means that you are predictable and that boundaries are known and understood, which creates a greater feeling of psychological safety.

Within this relationship, tricky issues and difficult conversations can be approached, and steps mutually agreed to get better.

Acting with courage yet kindness means that a DSL is proactive and assertive but also mindful of use of language, acting in the best interests of children and promoting compassion and care for everyone involved in everything that they do.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Evidence of agreed actions being seen through to completion
- Diligent application of policy with consistency, supported by record keeping of decisions made and actions taken
- Use of appropriate assessment / evaluation tools, i.e. LA threshold documents, to ensure consistency of approach
- Facing challenges and taking appropriate action in difficult situations
- Appropriate identification of where support may be needed, and facilitating access to it

Resources

- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

B09 Cross function and agency collaboration, influencing other leaders/areas/agency decision making.

What it means

Collaboration is at the heart of effective safeguarding, hence why the statutory guidance governing all services that work with children is called *Working together to safeguard children*.

As a DSL, your role is critical in influencing and shaping ethos, process and decision making related to our practice with children, both with your own colleagues and with professionals in other agencies.

Effective DSLs are proactive in their approach to seeking opportunities to collaborate, investing time to learn about the work of others, and to use their position and influence to advocate in the best interests of children.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Proactive relationship building with colleagues across all connected agencies
- Close oversight of caseload to ensure attendance by a DSL/DDSL at all multi agency meetings concerning pupils
- Engagement with learning, CPD and professional events offered by LA and other stakeholder to share feedback and shape practice
- Open and transparent communication with others, including when challenging decisions or escalating concerns

Resources

- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.
- Raymond, J (2018), *Good authority: How to become the leader your team is waiting for*. Ideapress.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

B010 Active listening to better understand other's perspectives.

What it means

Active listening in this context could be taken to mean the steps taken by a DSL to ensure that all voices are sought, heard, valued and considered.

To achieve this, a DSL must first stop to consider whose perspectives are needed in order to produce the most informed feedback about a child or children.

In order to avoid poor-quality decision making arising from 'group think' (inability or unwillingness to challenge, accepting conformity), or the negative impact of perceived hierarchy on an individual's ability to have their voice heard, a DSL should consider the strategies they use to seek and encourage everyone's views that will actively avoid these pitfalls.

Record keeping is essential to demonstrate how different perspectives have been sought and contributed, and how they have informed outcomes.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Planned / deliberate actions to flatten hierarchy and ensure all voices are heard
- Demonstrable actions to empower others i.e. Deputy DSLs, to lead, manage and direct
- Use of discussion structures and tools that prompts diversity of thinking and actively supports contributions from all
- Record keeping reflects different ideas and options that have been considered and how/why the outcome that has been reached was decided upon

Resources

- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

B011 Promote wellbeing and self-care for myself and others

What it means

The role of DSL is a demanding and often draining job to undertake. It is emotionally challenging, and requires you to manage and respond to information that can be distressing.

It is important for a DSL to recognise the impact that this work can and will have on them, and on others around them. Promoting healthy and sustainable work practices through one's own behaviour becomes critical to ensure that the foundations on which your safeguarding practice is based are secure.

Recognising how challenge and stress impact us and each individual around us is a key aspect of leading effective safeguarding, as it allows early identification of any support needs and minimises impact on the overall quality of practice.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Being a good role model in your self-care behaviours and 'practicing what you preach'
- Established system of regular check ins, and acting upon any information indicating concern
- Embracing opportunities to seek and receive support and care from others, i.e. supervision
- Signposting wellbeing services to those around you

Resources

- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

KS Knowledge for strategic safeguarding

- KS1** Understanding and successful application of the statutory escalation processes to ensure a child receives the right level of support.
- KS2** Maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding and wellbeing of children not attending the school site including attending off site provision or alternative provision or severe absence.
- KS3** Understanding and application of the local authority designated officer's (LADO) functions.
- KS4** Effective reporting on the quality of safeguarding practice to: i) Headteacher, and; ii) relevant governance structures.
- KS5** Ensuring the appropriateness and quality of safeguarding records through regular, robust review.
- KS6** Understanding national guidance and research, and translating it into implementable practice.
- KS7** Collection of, and active response to, pupil voice.
- KS8** Demonstrating determination and courageous leadership by removing barriers and blockers to enable others to do their jobs well.
- KS9** Understand and apply all statutory training for all relevant staff by cross-referencing relevant guidance, making a training plan and log to ensure annual compliance.
- KS10** Understand best use of coaching, mentoring and supervision techniques and impact on safeguarding practice.
- KS11** Communication and articulation of safeguarding strategy; managing and implementing change.
- KS12** Ensuring appropriate resource is available to meet needs in respect of the safeguarding function - which may include system procurement, implementation and review of contracted services.
- KS13** Knowledge and understanding of the law in relation to safeguarding children, utilising professional legal expertise and advice appropriately, recognising where scope for professional judgement exists.
- KS14** Working collaboratively to ensure the safeguarding curriculum is fit for purpose and suitably meets individual children's needs.
- KS15** Promoting the outcomes of all vulnerable children working with internal and external partners.
- KS16** Understanding of Safer Recruitment and effective oversight of the Single Central Record.

Core reading for this unit

- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.

KS1 Understanding and successful application of the statutory escalation processes to ensure a child receives the right level of support.

What it means

Professional challenge is identified as paramount importance in safeguarding practice reviews and child death reviews where there has been ongoing harm to a child. Challenge is a form of respectful collaboration with other agencies and internal partners who are all working toward the same goal of protecting the child.

The escalation process is a statutory requirement for every local authority and provides a formal mechanism for professionals to access where there is professional disagreement about the outcomes or best interests of a child.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of where the escalation process has been effectively used.
- A formal write-up or written training course of how escalation works in your LA.
- A reflective write up based on safeguarding practice reviews that examines the role of professional challenge, sharing what occurs when it is absent.
- Example of reflection of processes used in cases internally – lessons learned reviews

Resources

- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

KS2 Maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding and wellbeing of children not attending the school site including attending off site provision or alternative provision or severely absent.

What it means

Some children find that they cannot access mainstream education – this can be for a variety of different reasons.

Alternative provision can offer models of education that some mainstream schools can't. They should not be used as a punishment for poor behaviour, but rather as a means of ensuring that the child receives a suitable and full education entitlement.

Safeguarding and attendance functions should work closely to ensure children's whereabouts are known, and safe and well checks take place when required.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A summary write-up of the alternative provision guidance
- A system written to oversee children attending an AP setting, including the safeguarding that you would expect to be present in the process.
- An oversight system in use – explained in training for other staff members.
- A risk assessment that you designed to capture all the requirements of a school that intends to ask a child to attend an AP setting.
- Contribution to an individual learning plan for a child attending an AP setting.
- The documentation for the work that has gone into a support a child before making the decision about an AP.
- A write up of a visit to an AP setting.
- A write up of the learning taken by attending a sharing panel.
- A summary explanation or training about the behaviour management strategies guidance and the different types of mechanism that can and can not be applied in different scenarios.

Resources

- Department for Education, [Alternative provision](#) statutory guidance
- Department for Education, [Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement](#) statutory guidance
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.

KS3 Understanding and application of the local authority designated officer's (LADO) functions.

What it means

The LADO holds a statutory role in the local authority and acts as a source of information and advice. They oversee staff allegation management, ensuring schools take appropriate actions and undertake effective investigations and share information through agencies if required.

The DSL should know who their LADO is and how to contact them. They should know what they do and how this fits into their schools' overall management of adult conduct and culture of safeguarding.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Attendance at a course about the role of the LADO
- Explanation of the role that the LADO plays and how the DSL supports the headteacher in accessing these statutory mechanisms.
- Explanation of the process (or shadowing for the purpose of learning) an incident of adult misconduct.
- Delivering training on the difference between a low-level concern and a LADO referral.
- Explaining the difference between the LADO and allegations of abuse, whistleblowing, complaints and grievances processes and the purpose of each.

Resources

- National LADO Network, [The role of the LADO](#)
- Erooga, M (ed) (2012), *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley.
- Erooga, M (ed) (2018), *Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

KS4 Effective reporting on the quality of safeguarding practice to:
i) Headteacher, and;
ii) relevant governance structures.

What it means

Effective governance is the healthy accountability that drives behaviours and practice in the organisation to deliver both the culture and strategy. Reporting to the headteacher on strategic safeguarding and then to the relevant governing body is a fundamental part of the DSL's role. These can be done through different mechanisms, but the rationale for these decisions should be known and understood by all and in line with the guidance below. In order to do this, the DSL must have capacity and capability to deliver robust internal review and quality assurance.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Written reports that are submitted to either of the above – discuss how and why you chose what to include in the report and what to leave out.
- Quality assurance cycle and examples.
- Learning and reflection processes, change management (improvement) planning and delivery, evaluation of impact.
- Minutes of meetings that evidence questions/challenge and the responses given.

Resources

- Department for Education, [Maintained schools: governance guide](#)
- Department for Education, [Academy trusts: governance guide](#)
- CST, [Safeguarding at scale](#)
- CST, [Governing a school trust](#)
- CST, [Next-gen governance](#)
- CST, [Governance at scale](#)
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.

KS5 Ensuring the appropriateness and quality of safeguarding records through regular, robust review.

What it means

The DSL is responsible for the CP record (as outlined in KCSIE). Regularly reviewing the quality of the safeguarding and decision making around an individual and their family is crucial to avoid professional hubris.

The DSL must be clear about the expectations of what should be in a pupil safeguarding file, the thresholds for harm and intervention, escalation, statutory guidance and the individual case.

The DSL must have knowledge and awareness of information sharing guidance and GDPR, ensuring clarity over who can access what and when.

The DSL must accept that safeguarding is 'anxious work' that can lead to professional dangerousness. Review, if done without psychological safety, can lead to toxic accountability and hiding mistakes rather than learning from them.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Clearly planned and well rationalised quality assurance activity.
- Clear parameters for success.
- Examples of thematic, practice based learning and improvement activity.
- Effective use of reporting systems for appropriate purposes

Resources

- Safeguarding Network, [Professional dangerousness](#)
- ICO, [Schools, universities and colleges](#) guidance
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.

KS6 Understanding national guidance and research, and translating it into implementable practice.

What it means

Guidance is a set of principles that are usually underpinned by requirements that we must do or should do. It is left to professionals that work in schools to interpret the guidance and turn it into a process that can be implemented within a school to ensure consistent practice that meets the requirements set out into the guidance.

This means that the DSL must be proficient in change management processes as well as synthesising new guidance into existing processes that were determined by previous iterations of guidance. It requires the skill of turning something hypothetical into something practical for a specific school or environment.

The same is true of research: it will tell you what we can learn from existing practice and, in some cases, what would help to improve it, but it is up to the professional to implement it.

Implementation of process and strategy is a leadership skill more than a safeguarding one; however, the pace of change within safeguarding means that a DSL cannot be successful without understanding how implementation is successful, and how it can fail.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of an issue that has been identified and the problem formally deconstructed, alongside a change management process step by step on how to address the issue.
- Change management process explained.
- A plan that has been successful in implementing improvement.
- A strategy document.

Resources

- EEF, [A school's guide to implementation](#)
- CST, [The DNA of trust-led school improvement: a conceptual model](#)
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting*. Macmillan.

KS7 Collection of, and active response to, pupil voice.

What it means

Pupil voice is integral to our ability to continually update and improve practice in a meaningful way, but sadly it can become a tick box exercise where we collect, but do not always use or respond to it. Sometimes it is overwhelmingly positive and sometimes it is not. If done correctly, pupil voice will always tell us something useful about how we can improve and will not be just an affirmation of existing practice.

Once we have collected pupil voice, we must formally analyse what that collectively it is telling us and how we feel about what we are told. This strategic knowledge standard is about how we respond to pupil voice and how we use the information for learning and improvement.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Feedback to pupils on what has happened as a consequence of what they shared with us.
- Children report that they know what mechanisms there are for offering unsolicited feedback and that they trust leaders to listen and respond.
- Newsletters sharing action that had taken place after the collection of pupil voice.
- Change and improvement plans that include the actions identified from pupil voice.
- Targeted pupil voice that addresses potential areas of weakness in practice or groups of children that we may not be serving as well as others.
- Improvement activity that can be linked back to pupil voice collection activity.

Resources

- EEF, [Teacher feedback to improve pupil learning](#)
- CST, [Leading through listening](#)
- Edurio, [Pupil happiness at school guide](#)
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

KS8 Demonstrating determination and courageous leadership by removing barriers and blockers to enable others to do their jobs well.

What it means

Sometimes leading safeguarding is hard. It takes professional bravery and sometimes feeling like we are shouldering the risks so that others may thrive. Sometimes it means letting others try new and difficult things whilst holding the knowledge that we already know how to do it and that if we did it ourselves there is no risk of it going wrong.

Sometimes it can feel like lion wrestling when you challenge a colleague in another agency and even worse if you must challenge an internal superior.

Sometimes the barriers are poor communications, misunderstanding, lack of training or process – all of these must be considered when looking at enabling others to deliver effective safeguarding. This is the role of the DSL because we are responsible for ensuring consistent safeguarding practice and to do this, we must enable others to make meaning of the work (and the mistakes) as we did.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Statement about professional bravery – something that we did that was hard for us but we did it for a greater strategic good.
- A witness statement from another leader or a colleague detailing professional bravery that you exhibited.

Resources

- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

KS9 Understand and apply all statutory training for all relevant staff by cross-referencing relevant guidance, making a training plan and log to ensure annual compliance.

What it means

As the DSL you are the person who absorbs the guidance and translates it into practice. Often this will require some training to support a better understanding of a risk or harm or to ensure the effective implementation of a process.

In addition, there are statutory requirements listed across the relevant sets of guidance that relate to training, who must have it and how frequently. To ensure that your requirements are met and that you enable staff to safeguard children effectively you must plan a cycle of training. There is too much to get it all done each year.

You should consider:

- What is in induction?
- What is the appropriate timeframe for renewal?
- How many sessions you can have for training each year?
- Which sessions should be face to face and which might be online?
- What is sacrificed if the training is not live?
- What requires an external expert?
- What staff members should attend what sessions?
- What other CPD cycles can include safeguarding elements?
- Who maintains the record of training?

Example evidence to meet standard

- A training cycle/plan
- An overview of what each role requires in terms of training – and what is statutory and what is to enable them to do their role as required.
- Staff knowledge checks / feedback from and impact of training
- Improvement to pupil outcomes

Resources

- NSPCC, [Writing safeguarding policies and procedures](#)
- NSPCC Sport, [Writing a sport safeguarding plan](#)
- Safeguarding Network, [Staff training - as easy as level 1, 2, 3...?](#)
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.

KS10 Understand best use of coaching, mentoring and supervision techniques and impact on safeguarding practice.

What it means

Coaching, mentoring and supervision can often be conflated and misunderstood. However, they each serve a different purpose and support professional development and practice in different ways.

Supervision means something different in the police than it does to a social worker and again to a DSL. Understanding the nature of supervision and its value is important to continued professional development and has become a topic of debate in the sector.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A written explanation of the difference between these mechanisms
- A recommendation to the headteacher about which would be best to implement to improve safeguarding practice and why, including a cost benefit analysis linked to risk.

Resources

- NCVO, [Responsibilities of a DSL: Supervision and support](#)
- Sturt, P & Rowe, J (2023), *Using supervision in schools*. Pavilion Publishing.
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press

KS11 Communication and articulation of safeguarding strategy; managing and implementing change.

What it means

A safeguarding strategy is not a list of tasks on an action plan. It is an overarching goal with relevant pillars to deliver that goal that drives all tasks. If the strategy is well explained and understood, the delivery of it will become shared across the staff body and the likelihood of behaviours and actions that do not support the strategy will be reduced.

There must therefore be a communications plan to ensure that the messages within the strategy are understood and regularly repeated. Success and innovation that support the strategy are spotlighted and celebrated. This requires careful advanced planning.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A presentation on safeguarding strategy to leadership and the whole school.
- A written communications plan to coach to the strategy.

Resources

- Chartered Institute of Professional Relations, [Confused when it comes to strategic planning? We're here to help](#)
- Association for Project Management, [Communication planning](#)
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting*. Macmillan.

KS12 Ensuring appropriate resource is available to meet needs in respect of the safeguarding function - which may include system procurement, implementation and review of contracted services.

What it means

Resources might be financial, or they might be in physical capacity. As the leaders for safeguarding, you will probably know where you have enough resources, and where you don't. It is a difficult task to establish that more resources are needed because safeguarding is not always understood by those that hold the purse strings. As such you must be able to quantify the need for resources through data and evaluation and then present a quantifiable plan linked to impact.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Write a business case for resource as required.
- Share case study where you identified a need for resource and were able to procure it.
- Explain the financial scheme of delegation for the organisation and how you would go about securing resource (if you find that you don't need any just now)

Resources

- Association of Project Management, [What is a business case?](#)
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.

KS13 Knowledge and understanding of the law in relation to safeguarding children, utilising professional legal expertise and advice appropriately, recognising where scope for professional judgement exists.

What it means

Some safeguarding situations are challenging and complex and we must recognise that in these cases it is important to seek advice. This might be in cases that relate to employment law when dealing with adult misconduct, or child protection law when dealing with children that may need to be removed from their family for their own safety.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A case where advice was sought, why it was sought and the outcome for the incident and the child.
- A reflection on what was learnt by seeking advice.

Resources

- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

KS14 Working collaboratively to ensure the safeguarding curriculum is fit for purpose and suitably meets individual children's needs.

What it means

One of the most impactful things that schools can do to safeguard children is to support their knowledge and skills in keeping themselves safe and managing risk. The safeguarding curriculum is determined both by statutory guidance and by the professionals in the school that identify risks to those in the area. The curriculum must therefore be a collaboration between relevant teachers and leaders to ensure a clear plan for all areas to be addressed.

In the best cases, this model also works with heads of department who consider the ways in which their subject curriculum supports the safeguarding curriculum – for example bereavement and loss may be covered in a novel or poetry and studying the holocaust in history might support the work around British values.

Example evidence to meet standard

- A curriculum or scheme of work that shows how each criterion will be met and when.
- A resource bank that supports the delivery of the curriculum.
- Any evidence that the DSL has been part of the curation of the curriculum.

Resources

- Department for Education, [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#) statutory guidance
- Department for Education, [National curriculum](#)
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

KS15 Promoting the outcomes of all vulnerable children working with internal and external partners.

What it means

The DSL is responsible for supporting all outcomes for vulnerable children, which means that, alongside responding to safeguarding concerns, we must also support teachers who enable academic outcomes. To do this we must share some information and use our expertise to help advise teachers how trauma might present in a classroom, or strategies that might be best for certain children. We must be clear about those that cannot always have the correct books, equipment or uniform and what we are doing to support them. The DSL should work collaboratively with others, seeking advice and support to best meet the needs of individual children.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Training or update sessions for staff to support vulnerable students with academic, social and wellbeing outcomes.
- An individual learning plan that includes input from the DSL
- Evidence of internal team around the child meetings to look at the holistic outcomes for vulnerable children
- Reports that identify vulnerable children as an analysis group (in the same way that boys and girls are compared, or pupil premium)
- DSL job specification that specifically identifies this requirement in their role.
- Reviewing impact of interventions

Resources

- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

KS16 Understanding of Safer Recruitment and effective oversight of the Single Central Record.

What it means

The guidance for safer recruitment in schools is very clearly laid out in KCSIE. Within this guidance are the rules of what must be contained in the single central register (SCR). This is a wide-ranging statutory requirement that is usually delivered by HR or office colleagues with a safeguarding purpose. We must therefore understand and help others to understand the guidance to ensure that we are all able to meet our safeguarding responsibilities.

This is arguably the biggest area of compliance in terms of what must be done within KCSIE and yet DSLs may not see it as part of 'their job'.

You have a clear purpose in viewing the SCR, in order to ensure that statutory duties are being met and to ensure that only safe adults have contact with your pupils. DSLs must see their responsibility for safeguarding pupils from abuse outside of school as equal to the assurance they need that the processes for vetting employees and volunteers are strong enough to prevent abuse from occurring within our school.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Writing a form of quality assurance for safer recruitment or an SCR based on the guidance.
- Shadowing some QA of the SCR or safer recruitment
- Attending a safer recruitment course or one on the SCR requirements (they are different).
- Delivering training to relevant colleagues on either area.

Resources

- Buckinghamshire Council, [Single Central Record guide](#)
- Erooga, M (ed) (2012), *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley.
- Erooga, M (ed) (2018), *Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

SS Skills for strategic safeguarding

- SS1** Intentional development of the team's cognitive capacity to ensure best interests decisions are made for every child in every situation.
- SS2** Analysis of data and trends to inform proactive strategic safeguarding plans.
- SS3** Promote excellence in practice through offering tangible feedback, holding colleagues to account through direct challenge and genuine care to develop and motivate them in their individual ability to safeguard children.
- SS4** Creation and formal implementation of necessary processes to address identified areas of weakness in safeguarding practice.
- SS5** Develop and oversee systematic approaches to self-review, focused on continual reflection and improvement.
- SS6** Write and implement a bespoke strategy to improve safeguarding.
- SS7** Develop, lead and maintain a culture of safeguarding.
- SS8** Establish networks of internal and external influence to build knowledge, skills, expertise and seek advice.
- SS9** Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas in practice amongst colleagues.
- SS10** Strategic management of risk (risk register), with awareness of and contribution to crisis and risk management strategies, inclusive of organisational reputation management.
- SS11** Stakeholder management.

Core reading for this unit

- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.

SS1 Intentional development of the team's cognitive capacity to ensure best interests decisions are made for every child in every situation.

What it means

To make best interest decisions for each child we must understand the context for that child. This means that we must have shared relevant information about that child to the person making the decision. We must also have a mental model of the steps needed to protect children in any given situation and the ability to identify risks and harms by reading between the lines in what children disclose or report to us.

This can only be achieved through the ongoing, intentional and planned dual development strands of practice skills and risks and harms. The nature of risks and harms and indicators to them could be delivered through sharing information – but the skills needed to respond to a child in distress would more likely require training where colleagues can engage in scenarios to test their understanding by applying their learning to a situation.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Planned CPD for the various teams within schools: all staff, pastoral and safeguarding staff, behaviour and attendance teams, dinner supervisors team, site team, and leadership team.
- Staff value briefings and training and can speak knowledgeably about what they have learnt and why it is relevant in their school.
- Staff voice collection.
- Scenario based training
- The mechanisms for knowledge input and skills are considered and planned for maximum impact on the recipient to enhance their efficacy.
- Staff are quizzed to test understanding and close knowledge gaps.
- Practice that could be improved is shared with the intention of sharing the learning

Resources

- Hart, M, '[Building capacity](#)'
- ICO, [Children's code: best interests framework](#)
- Council for Disabled Children, [Decision making toolkit](#)
- CPD UK, [How to plan CPD activities effectively](#)
- Royal Statistical Society, [How to make CPD effective](#) webinar
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.

SS2 Analysis of data and trends to inform proactive strategic safeguarding plans.

What it means

Safeguarding can only be strategic once patterns and trends have been sought and recognised so that improvement can be targeted and success evaluated.

These trends might be sought from the safeguarding system (such as CPOMS or My Concern) in deliberate reports that looks for specific trends in common areas of concern such as bullying or harmful sexual behaviour. These mechanisms are useful to identify the frequency of some incidents such as assault, self-harm, suicidal ideation so that the nature of those harms within that school or year group can be targeted through external intervention and education.

Or, DSLs could be looking for trends across pastoral incidents per child to identify patterns that might mean that they are being bullied by multiple other children.

Trends can also be found in governor reports, safeguarding audit reports, attendance and exclusion data, data on the amount of social care referrals, including how many of those are accepted.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Strategic plans that detail areas for improvement based on quality assurance and data, mechanisms and approach, timescales for delivery and criterion for success.
- Data reports with analysis of trends and what they tell us, leading to the identification and delivery of actions to address the trends. Different levels of reporting – from local governors to trustees
- Research analysis of external materials to support safeguarding improvement within their school.
- Headteacher report to local governance, with analysis of incidents, trends and next steps.
- Identification of top five risks and harms with whole staff safeguarding training sessions or briefings to raise awareness of these.

Resources

- Gov.uk, [Children in need statistics](#)
- Ofsted, [Children's social care statistics](#)
- Department of Health and Social Care, [Adult social care statistics](#)
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.

SS3 Promote excellence in practice through offering tangible feedback. Hold colleagues to account through direct challenge and genuine care to develop and motivate them in their individual ability to safeguard children.

What it means

The DSL's function is to lead safeguarding strategically across the school. To do this the DSL must develop the professional judgement and consistency of practice of all staff. To achieve this, feedback on where improvements in practice can be made must be shared. To offer effective feedback that will have a long term impact, colleagues must be supported to understand why the feedback is important to them and their success, as well as the success of the children and the organisation.

The coupling of personal care and direct challenge results in radical candour between colleagues that are all focused on the aims of the organisation – in this case, to keep children safe. When the DSL does not offer feedback for improvement due to concerns over someone's reaction this leads to ongoing inconsistency in the levels of safeguarding effectiveness.

The DSL must understand and navigate the barriers to receiving feedback and support a psychologically safe work environment.

Example evidence to meet standard

- 360 feedback or statement from a colleague on a specific piece of feedback that benefited them on their professional journey, explaining the impact that the feedback had on their efficacy for the organisation's aims.
- An example of where practice has improved long term or across a number of people due to the quality of feedback delivered.
- Thoughtful and agreed line management processes and agendas.
- A paper written by the DSL about when and where radical candour is used and why it is important to a culture of safeguarding and ongoing development of staff. Reflection on which quadrant of radical candour the DSL spends most time in and how this might affect the practice of others.
- Group reflection tasks supporting identification of challenges and solution focused activity

Resources

- Better Up, '[How to give constructive feedback: 21 examples for work](#)'
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.
- Raymond, J (2018), *Good authority: How to become the leader your team is waiting for*. Ideapress.

SS4 Creation and formal implementation of necessary processes to address identified areas of weakness in safeguarding practice

What it means

Areas of weakness in practice should be analysed to establish how improvement can be made. This might be across a staff body or a team after a quiz based on the training of KCSIE, or collection of staff voice.

It may be necessary to identify specific recurring weakness within the team of DSLs that requires specific support.

Not knowing something about safeguarding or making a mistake in practice, while posing a safeguarding risk to a child does not equate to an allegation against a member of staff. Mistakes and lack of knowledge should be addressed through development and learning; wilful neglect of duty of care may require additional competency or disciplinary processes.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Post-training quizzes analysed and gaps in understanding followed up and addressed.
- Support plans where a member of staff struggles with a specific skills, behaviour or area of expertise.
- Analysis of complaints to establish areas for improvement and sharing this via training with staff.
- Organisational learning activity that looks at a process or a pupil file for what we could have done better.
- Recommendations for improved practice without blame are created.
- Analysis of reporting/recording

Resources

- NCVO, [Evaluation: Learn how to develop effective impact and evaluation processes in your organisation](#)
- Arbor, [How to write an effective school development plan](#)
- Erooga, M (ed) (2012), *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley.
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting*. Macmillan.

SS5 Develop and oversee systematic approaches to self-review, focused on continual reflection and improvement.

What it means

The ability to self-review is often assumed but requires significant professional bravery and skill. You must be willing to deliberately expose things that you could be doing better – not just those around you. Starting with what you are trying to find out and then work on how you would find this information.

You must be aware of the impact of your prior knowledge and the bias that it creates in self-review. Optimism bias in this context is assuming that processes are working the way that we intended when we implemented them, rather than really seeing what is in place now, how consistent it is and how effective stakeholders of that process believe it is.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Analysis of S175 audit to tell us about how we can improve practice.
- Design a process that enables self-review – such as a format for reviewing a safeguarding pupil file that is then shared and taught to others in the team, or a policy in practice review of a specific item such as how decisions for the order of home visits is done.
- Design pupil voice questions focused on the areas that you want to develop or that you can never be totally sure are working for students – the lunch queue, the bus home, the level of supervision in the quad in social times etc.
- Designing a pupil voice cycle that targets specific groups of children to check that their needs are met and that they feel part of the community and belong.
- Design and deliver an internal audit process for specific areas of safeguarding such as the single central record, safer recruitment, record keeping, allegations against adults etc.
- Reports to the SLT, headteacher and local governance about areas for improvement and the impact of subsequent action.

Resources

- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillon.
- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

SS6 Write and implement a bespoke strategy to improve safeguarding.

What it means

A strategy is a plan with the aim to improve safeguarding – it is not the task based action plan. The strategy is a well-considered approach and behaviours that drive the improvement forward consistently.

The strategy is underpinned by 'tactics'. The tactics might include things such as self-review or staff training or individual research assignments and shared feedback or new systems and processes which will then likely generate 'tasks'. The tasks are usually written into a plan that can be then ticked off to show how much work has been done to superiors/line managers. These actions remain a list of completed tasks unless they are linked to strategy through reviewing the impact of those tasks against the strategic improvement need previously identified. The tasks may not have had the desired impact, or not fully achieved the aim.

The strategy should be co-constructed with all relevant stakeholders (those who will be part of the delivery of the strategy to meet the aims). Without their buy in you are unlikely to be able to implement the strategy and affect the change required.

Once the strategy is agreed, it should direct decision making and prioritisation of actions and resource to deliver the aims within that strategy.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Strategic overview document that includes – main pillars for improvement, tactics (not tasks), reporting and review processes, risk management, with clarity about what you are trying to achieve and how you will be doing that.
- Colleagues will be able to articulate the strategy without you having to remind them.
- Buy-in processes after stakeholder identification and management.

Resources

- Harvard Business Review, [Six principles to build your company's strategic agility](#)
- Garill, S, [CST blog: The challenge of strategy in education](#)
- Humphrey, M, [CST blog: If we call it strategic, Then it must be important!](#)
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.

SS7 Develop, lead and maintain a culture of safeguarding.

What it means

A culture of safeguarding is not yet defined in guidance – so first you must decide what it is. What is it when compared to compliance?

Culture is about everyone having the same understanding of why rigour in safeguarding practice is important to every child and the role that they personally plan in this – directly and indirectly. It is a framework for decision making and behaviours towards children. It creates consistency in practice regardless of the individual situations presented by different children's needs.

The Ofsted school inspection toolkit lists five areas for evidence of leadership of safeguarding and an "open and positive safeguarding culture". DSLs should be mindful that this is focused on inspection needs, and so may give less emphasis to less tangible behaviours, indicators, and risk management, that remain important.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Definition of what a culture of safeguarding is – worked through with your staff body and linked to both value proposition to children's future and every-day practice.
- Inclusion of operational functions such as: Safer Recruitment processes, how pupil voice and participation shapes practice, site security, training of staff, reporting and recording of concerns.
- Review or audit of the consistency of practice focused on safeguarding culture indicators and products.
- Staff can answer knowledgeably about the top safeguarding risks and harms that children face, about processes they follow and support that can be acquired if/when needed.
- Training is scenario-based to support the codification of behaviours and processes.
- Peers support each other with expectations of conduct and report misconduct.
- Analysis of the nature of misconduct that is being reported and addressed through whole staff training.
- The safeguarding curriculum is bespoke to the needs of the school context

Resources

- Ofsted, [School inspection toolkit](#)
- Safeguarding Network, [Self-esteem: the foundation of every effective safeguarding culture](#)
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.

- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillon.
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.
- Clear, J (2018), *Atomic habits*. Random House Business.

SS8 Establish networks of internal and external influence to build knowledge, skills, expertise and seek advice.

What it means

Safeguarding risks and harms develop and evolve quickly. Consequently, practice must also develop at a rapid pace. There are multiple sets of lengthy guidance, frequently updated, and even more sets of research that underpin developing practice.

It is really easy to miss a set of guidance or not see some research if you stand alone. It is also easy to doubt your interpretation of what you are reading or simply be in a position that you don't know, what you don't know.

A professional network, where you are safe to share what you don't know (and what you do) is foundational to your success as a DSL. Not only does it offer support, but someone else will be working on things that you haven't yet thought of. Through professional generosity the whole network gains an outward facing developmental model for improvement and the safety to address the next things together.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Join a professional network such as the NSPCC, CST, or Safer Recruitment consortium; attend meetings and conferences and seek people in similar roles or in similar areas that you can link with professionally.
- Attending the LA DSL meetings, summaries learning and actions for the next SLT.
- Create expertise within your team for people to be a 'go to' for a particular area of safeguarding.
- Consider social networks such as LinkedIn to find and consider information to build your understanding of the wider context in education.
- Ensure that you receive supervision and that your team does too.

Resources

- [CST Safeguarding Professional Community](#)
- Safeguarding Network, [Supervision package](#)
- NCVO, [Responsibilities of a DSL: Supervision and support](#) | NCVO
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.

SS9 Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas in practice amongst colleagues

What it means

Our behaviours and decision making are largely formed by our sub-conscious values. In some instances, this can influence the way that children and families experience our safeguarding practice. This may manifest in different ways that are not intended to harm, though sometimes they are. Different protected characteristics can be considered more and less important than others when it comes to discrimination depending on individual values and experiences.

Our individual privileges may limit our capacity to see things from another person's position as clear as we might hope. In this way we may not fully understand the situations, family dynamics and harms that a child is facing and this can lead to assumptions and actions that are not in the child or the family's best interests.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Reflective documents about what we didn't know or what was assumed in decision making, i.e. as part of a file review.
- Learning from serious cases reviews that focus on professional dangerousness, adultification, the hidden men in child protection cases etc.
- Training that is designed to open up discussion about values at the start of training to reveal hidden/unknown bias (see Brook Traffic Light Tool training as an example)

Resources

- Safeguarding Network, [Professional dangerousness](#)
- NSPCC, [Unseen men: learning from case reviews](#)
- HM Inspectorate of Probation, [Adultification bias within child protection and safeguarding](#)
- Brook, [Sexual behaviours traffic lights training](#)
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.
- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

SS10 Strategic management of risk (risk register), with awareness of and contribution to crisis and risk management strategies, inclusive of organisational reputation management.

What it means

The risk of working in a role linked to safeguarding children cannot be eliminated but it can be reduced. In order to do this, we must identify risks, and implement a system for overseeing the risks and the impact of the mitigations around them. There is a scale of tolerable and intolerable risk that is discussed in the HM Treasury Orange Book that is worthy of consideration in this area.

The risk register must include the highest risks and must be co-constructed – safeguarding is only one aspect of the risk register. Everyone is responsible for safeguarding and must therefore form part of the mitigation in reducing the risks.

Risks must be identified and categorised against the strategic aims of the school or organisation – the risk is created by potential barriers to the aims being achieved.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of risk management is the statutory requirement under the Prevent duty to have a prevent risk assessment for each school. Explanation of the risk register.
- How the process of risk identification and management occurs.
- Evidence of fire evacuation drills and policy.
- Evidence of lock down process for evacuation and invacuation drills.
- Prevent duty risk assessment
- Formal writing of a safeguarding risk – *the risk is that... leading to... resulting in.*

Resources

- HM Treasury, [Orange Book: Management of risk](#)
- Matrix Academy Trust, [SMART Response critical incident training](#)
- Home Office, [Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools.* John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms.* Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them.* Virago.

- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillon.

SS11 Stakeholder management

What it means

As a DSL, it is essential to develop good communication skills, work flexibly, be adaptable and develop confidence in order to manage and work effectively with people in different roles and contexts.

On a day-to-day basis, a DSL may encounter challenging meetings with other professionals, families and colleagues where they may not be in charge but still must ensure the child's needs are continuously advocated for and prioritised.

This skill is multi-faceted, managing the expectations of others, navigating competing agendas and priorities, having confidence in your professional judgement whilst not always having the full information and having a sound understanding of guidance and legislation.

The DSL is always leading and managing in every meeting that is about safeguarding, whether they are chairing or not. As a sometimes lone voice against competing priorities, organisational pressures or differing professional opinions, the DSL must remain focused on the child's best interests.

Effective stakeholder management requires the ability to identify who has influence over safeguarding outcomes, understand their priorities and motivations, build positive professional relationships and communicate persuasively. It involves working collaboratively whilst being willing to challenge appropriately when decisions, actions or outcomes do not meet the needs of children.

Strong stakeholder management also supports the implementation of safeguarding strategy, policy and change.

Through trust, credibility and consistent communication, the DSL gains the support of staff, leaders, governors, families and external agencies, creating the conditions for effective safeguarding culture and improved outcomes for children.

Evidence

- Evidence of effective partnership working with parents, carers, external agencies and school staff to improve outcomes for children.
- Meeting minutes demonstrating collaboration, influence, professional challenge and successful resolution of safeguarding concerns.
- Feedback from colleagues, governors, parents or external professionals regarding the quality of communication and professional relationships.
- Evidence of leading safeguarding initiatives, change programmes or strategic priorities through engagement and buy-in from stakeholders
- Examples of managing conflict, professional disagreement or competing priorities whilst maintaining positive working relationships.
- Delivery of safeguarding updates, reports or presentations to governors, senior leaders, staff or external partners.
- Evidence of successful escalation where stakeholder influence has secured additional support, resources or intervention for a child.

- Mapping of key safeguarding stakeholders and clear systems for communication, consultation and engagement.
- Parent, family, and child voice

Resources

- Global Safeguarding, [The Dunning-Kruger effect and safeguarding](#)
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.
- Patterson, K et al (2011), *Crucial conversations tools for talking when stakes are high*. McGraw Hill
- Lencioni, P (2022), *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable*. Jossey-Bass.

BS Behaviours for strategic safeguarding

- BS1** Influencing and investing in the wider work of the school/trust to ensure safeguarding is continually considered and prioritised – even when the topic does not directly link to your individual responsibilities.
- BS2** Continual learning through prioritisation of development of self (reflection log) and others.
- BS3** Demonstrate authentic leadership: bravery through vulnerability.
- BS4** Reflective in practice, being prepared to learn from mistakes or failures, taking personal accountability linked to values.
- BS5** Providing clearly codified competencies so that colleagues have a shared mental model of excellence.
- BS6** Modelling and expecting high standards of professionalism in practice that are applied rigorously not ruthlessly.
- BS7** Championing equity and fairness for all children with understanding that not all children receive the same opportunities; being a change agent to tackle injustice.
- BS8** Being open, outward facing and inviting others' perspectives; treating feedback as a gift.
- BS9** Value difference and champion diversity.

Core reading for this unit

- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.

BS1 Influencing and investing in the wider work of the school/trust to ensure safeguarding is continually considered and prioritised - even when the topic does not directly link to your individual responsibilities.

What it means

Effective safeguarding practitioners must recognise the role they play in ensuring safe practice and decision making is taking place beyond the remit of their own role.

Using your knowledge, skill and experience to positively influence and shape your organisation's practice and culture ensures that safeguarding is being robustly embedded at all levels and in all areas of our work for children.

DSLs should value and invest in the organisational aims and priorities of their school or trust, thereby promoting the importance of safeguarding in everything that is done.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Proactive interest, involvement and contribution to wider school or trust priorities
- Collaborative working with colleagues across all functions, both in school and trust
- Commitment to learning and upskilling in other service areas in order to understand how they all link together

Resources

- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.
- Kotter, J & Rathgeber, H (2017), *Our iceberg is melting*. Macmillan.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.
- Raymond, J (2018), *Good authority: How to become the leader your team is waiting for*. Ideapress.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

BS2 Continual learning through prioritisation of development of self (reflection log) and others.

What it means

Safeguarding is a discipline that requires continual learning – from what has worked and positively benefited children, and from what has not worked and from which improvements must be made. This learning takes place within their own schools and through local and national case and practice reviews.

Effective DSLs should proactively commit to recognising and prioritising their own strengths and areas for development, seeking opportunities to further progress their skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of different scenarios. This ethos should then be shared, promoted and embedded among staff and colleagues.

This starts with honest, open and regular self-reflection, considering the effectiveness of one's practice and contributions, and acknowledging any aspects where development or refinement is beneficial.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Use of own line management / supervision to reflect, prioritise, and plan development
- Promoting use of line management / supervision with staff and colleagues to reflect, prioritise and plan development
- Regular maintenance of logs / documents to record own reflections and those of others
- Periodic review of reflection logs etc to identify arising themes or unaddressed actions

Resources

- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.
- Pink, D (2018), *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Canongate Books.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

BS3 Demonstrate authentic leadership: bravery through vulnerability.

What it means

To lead with authenticity can mean to present strength yet vulnerability, courage yet uncertainty, and respect yet challenge.

Authentic leaders remain true to themselves and to their values, sincerely reflecting their own character and experiences in building relationships, setting expectations and communicating effectively with others.

Recognising the power in sharing vulnerability within appropriate professional boundaries can be key to creating connectedness and trust between colleagues. Authenticity and vulnerability can inspire teams to work better together as well as to learn from each other.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Seeking and harnessing opportunities to identify and reflect on mistakes made and lessons learned
- Regular and timetabled discussions during line management / supervision for "what went well" and "even better if"
- Promotion and role modelling of authentic leadership during wider school, local authority, and trust forums

Resources

- Harvard Business School, [Authentic leadership: what it is and why it's important](#)
- George, B (2004), *Authentic leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Forbes, [Authenticity: the key to great leadership and how to embrace it](#)
- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.
- Brown, B (2018), *Dare to lead*. Vermillion.

BS4 Reflective in practice, being prepared to learn from mistakes or failures. Take personal accountability linked to values.

What it means

Safeguarding can be viewed as extremely high stakes, and this has generated a toxic view that 'safeguarding is too important to make mistakes'.

This unintentionally sets us all up for failure in the long term because we will be unable to embrace healthy accountability and fall prey to the trap of perfectionism – never owning or learning from mistakes because to make them is unthinkable. The reality is that safeguarding is so complex that mistakes are made every day, by all parties, and we will only be able to continue to improve practice if we are able to share these mistakes and the learning from them.

Reflective practice is significantly easier to talk about than to practice; however, if you understand and value what it offers you can set up processes that normalise learning that is gained from mistakes.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of formal organisational learning that sets out to learn from mistakes in practice, or complaint, rather than to seek a disciplinary outcome.
- Some training delivered by the DSL on how to improve shared practice that uses their own examples of mistakes and learning to make it safe for others to do so.
- Lesson learned (and analysis) reporting to the trustees/Governors
- Meeting records to show reflection

Resources

- Edmondson, A (2018), *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley.

BS5 Providing clearly codified standards so that colleagues have a shared mental model of excellence.

What it means

Codification is the process of creating clarity of expectations through a set of shared standards. With so many elements to safeguarding, each with numerous processes and systems, codification is one pillar to generate consistent practice. The lethal mutation here is that they can be used as an accountability framework which generates fear and inhibits innovation. This should be avoided.

The competencies should be co-constructed wherever possible to offer a deeper understanding as to the rationale for each standard and what it is meant to achieve. The co-construction (or consultation) will support the implementation process because colleagues will better understand the goal that they are designed to achieve.

Codification can be about practice, process or behaviours and may be as specific or as open as the situation requires. The codification of a process for safer recruitment would look very different to a leadership behaviours framework for example.

In short – it is the way that we do things here.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of codification that is designed to support consistency in something safeguarding related.
- Evidence of consistent practice arising from codification

Resources

- Department for Education, [Teachers' standards](#)
- Committee on Standards in Public Life, [The seven principles of public life](#)
- CST, [Model code of conduct for trustees and trust boards](#)
- Campbell, A (2015), *Winners: And how they succeed*. Hutchinson.
- Collins, J (2001), *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. Random House Business.
- Raymond, J (2018), *Good authority: How to become the leader your team is waiting for*. Ideapress.
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

BS6 Modelling and expecting high standards of professionalism in practice that are applied rigorously not ruthlessly.

What it means

Whilst we must make space for practitioners to make mistakes (BS4) and learn from them – we must also ensure that we have high standards and expectations of practice. Without knowing what we are aiming for, we are unlikely to achieve it.

This is the art of positive or healthy accountability. Feedback should be given with care for the person in mind about genuinely supporting them to reach their goals. The feedback must be honest and clear about where practice falls short of competencies – but should also consider all of the constraints within an ‘unconditional positive regard approach’.

This is not to make excuses or reduce standards – it is a non-blame approach to everyone working towards the same goal via the same standards and acknowledging that we can’t be perfect all the time.

Example evidence to meet standard

- An example of where you have received feedback openly and have sought to take the learning from it to improve a standard.
- An example of where you have shared feedback and removed the issues of guilt or blame in order to focus on learning. A witness statement to support this would be useful.
- Policies – code of conduct for staff

Resources

- Harvard Business Review, [Do you understand what accountability really means?](#)
- Erooga, M (ed) (2012), *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley.
- Erooga, M (ed) (2018), *Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Scott, K (2018), *Radical candor: How to get what you want by saying what you mean*. Pan.

BS7 Championing equity and fairness for all children with understanding that not all children receive the same opportunities; being a change agent to tackle injustice.

What it means

We serve communities, children and families who have lived experiences that are different from our own. We seek to make best interest decisions for children in our care, but we cannot always do this when we don't understand the social, cultural or religious context that a child is growing up within. We cannot know the prejudices and discriminations that a child or their parents have suffered unless we ask them about their lives, and we take time to learn their context.

We must be aware of our gaps in knowledge and that all of us have an inbuilt bias to make assumptions based on our own experiences and this can lead to some well-meaning actions having a harmful rather than helpful impact.

We will never be finished learning about groups and cultures that are not our own – but we must continue to actively learn as much as we can about both groups and individuals.

We must ensure that our processes and policies are equality impact assessed so as not to inadvertently discriminate against a particular group or groups.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Attendance at any anti-prejudice or awareness training.
- An equality impact assessment
- Training that the DSL delivers to staff on a particular minority group in the school and what othering can look like.
- Attendance at anti-bullying training
- Rights respecting schools – awareness of United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC)
- Attendance/participation towards protected characteristic awards
- Accessibility plans
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy

Resources

- Inclusive Employers, [Equality impact assessments: A definitive guide](#)
- Forrester, A (2022), *The complete guide to pastoral leadership: A compendium of essential knowledge, research and experience for all pastoral leaders in schools*. John Catt Educational.
- Firmin, C, Lefevre M, Huegler, N & Peace, D (2022), *Safeguarding young people beyond the family home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Policy Press
- Curtis, P (2022), *Behind closed doors: Why we break up families – and how to mend them*. Virago.

- Faye, S (2021), *The transgender issue: An argument for justice*. Penguin.
- Demie, F (2023), *Understanding the cause and consequences of school exclusions: Teachers, parents and schools' perspectives*. Routledge.
- Lemov, D, Lewis, H, Williams D & Frazier, D (2023), *Reconnect: Building school culture for meaning, purpose and belonging*. Jossey-Bass.

BS8 Being open, outward facing and inviting others' perspectives; treating feedback as a gift.

What it means

We can learn much from our peers and colleagues within our school and wider organisations (where applicable). We often seek external training opportunities from the LA or our trust colleagues.

This standard goes further than this and asks that DSLs consider becoming active in an external peer network and share ideas as well as invite feedback. This is based on the idea that everything that we do is an innovation of an idea that someone else gave us and that we must continue to share and listen to continually improve our knowledge and practice. Being intentionally outward facing requires both professional bravery and generosity.

It is easy to ask someone to give you feedback on something that you have done when you know that it is strong; it is less straightforward when you are not sure about the work you have done. There is consideration in the way that you ask for feedback, if you genuinely want it. Asking 'can you give me some feedback' will usually yield affirmation because the person doing so does not know what type of feedback you are looking for – evaluative, developmental or affirmation – with affirmation being far less likely to offend you.

Instead, you might ask 'you know what I'm trying to achieve, what haven't I thought of?' Or 'how do you think I can make this better'?

Example evidence to meet standard

- Seeking peer review and gaining feedback on a specific piece of work or idea – decision making rationale about what feedback is taken and what is left on the table and why.
- Joining a network and contributing.
- Intentionally and thoughtfully inviting feedback with a view to caring deeply about what can be learnt from it.
- Thoughtful written examples of how you have collected genuine feedback for improvement based on the language used.

Resources

- O'Brien, T (2022), *School self-review: A sensible approach*. John Catt Educational.
- Stone, D & Heen, S (2014), *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin.

BS9 Value difference and champion diversity.

What it means

We can meet this standard in multiple ways – it can be inviting quiet person into a discussion or actively seeking a more cognitively diverse consultation group on a project that you are working on.

It can also be about working with someone who almost always disagrees with you, or you find 'difficult', so long as you are working to the same goal because that challenge makes you better.

It is important to raise awareness in your practice of societal prejudice such as misogyny, misandry, or racism, and highlight when these things have become so mainstream that they exist in organisations.

Look at controversial topics such as supporting trans children, read deeply about the topic and speak to children and families before making practice or policy based decisions.

It can link to standard BS7 and championing the diversity within those that we serve and appreciating the value that each person brings to a situation.

Example evidence to meet standard

- Facilitating pupils to share their culture in meaningful ways that raise awareness and shared understanding and promotes belonging.
- Share an idea that someone else made better.
- A report that you have written on a specific topic
- Training from the DSL that champions diversity
- Professional development activity
- Safeguarding curriculum
- Staff training

Resources

- CST (2024), [Building diversity into our workforce strategies](#)
- Spinks, A, CST blog: [Fair and transparent recruitment: practical steps school trusts are taking](#)
- Gov.uk, [Gender pay gap service](#)
- Crome, S (2023), *The power of teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams*. John Catt.
- Lencioni, P (2012), *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business you want by saying what you mean*. Jossey-Bass.

About the authors

Nicola Law has worked in safeguarding for over 20 years and has specialised in education safeguarding leadership since 2009. She has held safeguarding leadership roles across four school trusts, helping to develop safeguarding practice and systems alongside the growth of the sector. Her experience spans primary, secondary, and special education settings, and she currently serves within a special school trust.

Sarah Bloomer has led safeguarding across school trusts since 2016 and holds an MA in Safeguarding and an MSc in Education Leadership. Sarah chairs a community of practice with over 80 school trust directors of safeguarding providing peer support, challenge and development. Sarah regularly speaks at conferences on topics such as strategy and culture, peer on peer abuse, and harmful sexual behaviours.

Helen Beattie is Head of Safeguarding at REAch2 Academy Trust, the largest primary-only trust in the country. It works across 60 primary schools all over England, often in deprived and challenging areas. Prior to joining REAch2, she worked as a senior manager for NSPCC, based in the ChildLine helpline and managing high level risk from young people seeking help. For ten years Helen was a teacher, assistant headteacher, and DSL.

Strengthen safeguarding across your trust with CST

As safeguarding expectations evolve and challenges become increasingly complex, leaders, safeguarding professionals and trustees need opportunities to learn, connect and develop effective practice. At CST, we bring together sector expertise, professional networks, and trust-focused development opportunities to help strengthen safeguarding across the system.

Safeguarding Professional Community

CST's [Safeguarding Professional Community](#) connects safeguarding leaders and practitioners from trusts across the country. Through expert input, peer discussion, and shared learning, the community provides a supportive space to explore emerging issues, strengthen practice and build valuable professional networks.

The community is an integral part of your trust's CST membership, and open to all staff and governance volunteers in CST member trusts.

CST Safeguarding Conference

The annual [CST Safeguarding Conference](#) brings together trust leaders, safeguarding professionals and sector experts to explore current priorities and emerging challenges. Designed specifically for the trust sector, the conference offers practical insights, strategic thinking and opportunities to learn from peers.

Training for your trust

The challenges faced by trusts keep changing, and CST offers a range of training backed by our expertise and unique understanding of school trusts. This includes our [Your role as a safeguarding trustee course](#), aimed at helping those fulfilling this important link role to understand their responsibilities, strengthen oversight, and develop the confidence to provide effective challenge and assurance.





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