

The Role of the Online Safety Lead in Education Settings:

Guidance for Leaders and Managers

Why should educational settings identify an online safety lead?

Online safety is an integral part of education settings' safeguarding responsibilities and requires strategic oversight and ownership in order to develop policies and procedures to protect all members of the community.

The online safety lead does not need to have vast technical knowledge, as it is a safeguarding and not technical role. It may however be helpful if the online safety lead has some basic knowledge of technology, as well as having an up-to-date understanding of the benefits and risks posed by the online environment.

Who should be the online safety lead?

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) 2016 highlights online safety as a safeguarding concern; therefore the ultimate responsibility for online safety falls within the remit of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

It must be recognised that some online safety incidents will reach thresholds for child protection action, so the online safety lead must have a robust understanding of local safeguarding procedures; it would therefore not be appropriate for anyone other than the DSL to lead on online safety incidents, unless they have been trained to an equivalent standard, which enables them to act as a deputy.

If a deputy DSL takes responsibility for online safety, education settings should ensure that sufficient time and resources are in place to support them. The lead DSL should be regularly informed of any incidents or concerns and should implement action as appropriate.

There is also an expectation that the online safety lead/ DSL will be a member of the senior leadership team due, to the strategic requirements and expectations of the role; e.g. implementing policy and directing resources.

What are the key tasks of the Online Safety Lead/ Lead DSL?

• Policies and Procedures

- Act as a named point of contact on all online safety issues and liaise with other members of staff as appropriate
- Ensure policies and procedures that incorporate online safety concerns are in place. This should include (but is not limited to): Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs), mobile phones, peer on peer abuse (including responses to cyberbullying and sexting) and social media
- Ensure there are robust reporting channels and signposting to internal, local and national support
- Record online safety incidents and actions taken, in accordance with the school's normal safeguarding mechanisms
- Ensure the whole school community is aware of what is considered to be safe and appropriate online behaviour and any sanctions for misuse
- Liaise with the local authority and other local and national bodies as appropriate

- **Infrastructure and Technology**

- Work with the leadership team and technical support staff, to ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring is in place
- Take appropriate action in line with safeguarding policies and procedures, if monitoring system identifies any causes for concern
- Work with the data protection/security lead, to ensure that online practice is in line with current legislation

- **Education and Training**

- Implement regular online safety training for all members of staff that is integrated, aligned and considered part of the overarching safeguarding approach
 - This should include online safety as part of induction (including for temporary and voluntary staff) and at least annual child protection updates (KCSIE 2016)
- Work with staff to ensure that appropriate online safety education is embedded throughout the curriculum; promoting the responsible use of technology and empowering children to keep themselves and others safe online
- Actively engage with local and national events to promote positive online behaviour, e.g. Safer Internet Day and anti-bullying week
- Ensure that online safety is promoted to parents and carers and the wider community through a variety of channels and approaches
- Keep up-to-date with current research, legislation and trends.; access appropriate training or updates from other means to ensure that knowledge and skills are refreshed

- **Standards and Inspection**

- Evaluate the delivery and impact of the school's online safety policy and practice
- Review any reported online safety incidents to inform and improve future areas of teaching, training and policy development
- Feedback online safety issues to the management/leadership team and other agencies, where appropriate

What about other members of staff?

It is important to recognise that members of staff who previously lead on online safety (within ICT), will have developed a wealth of expertise and experience over the years, which should be harnessed appropriately.

- Staff with appropriate skills, interest and expertise, regarding online safety, should be encouraged to support the DSL as appropriate, for example when developing curriculum approaches or informing technical decisions
- All staff should be given the opportunity to help contribute to and shape online safety policies and procedures
- Consideration should be given to up-skilling members of staff who demonstrate the skill and capacity to deputise for the Designated Safeguarding Lead; however, they should be clear that this role would require them to support all areas of safeguarding, not just online safety
- Staff must be clear that overall strategic responsibility for online safety sits with the Lead DSL

Should education settings have an online safety group to support the Online Safety Lead/ Lead DSL?

This decision will be down to individual settings based on their needs and requirements and staff knowledge and expertise; however a group approach may help to build resilience, incorporate a wide range of experience and demonstrate that key members of the community are involved in establishing a shared ownership over online safety.

Possible online safety group members (subject to individual educational settings needs and requirements) could include:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Member of leadership team
- PSHE lead and Computing lead
- Technical staff e.g. network manager, technicians
- Safeguarding Governor /Committee member
- SENCO
- Pastoral/support staff e.g. Family Liaison Officer, Learning mentors etc.
- Parents/Carers - NB it may not be appropriate to include parents if the online safety group is likely to discuss specific incidents or named individuals.
- Pupils/children – NB if the online safety group is discussing specific incidents, children should not be present
- Other community members (e.g. local Police, Children Centre, Nursery) as appropriate

Online safety groups should meet as regularly as deemed necessary by the setting. Initially this may be on a frequent basis to help establish the group and the member's roles and responsibilities.

Online safety groups can support many of the associated tasks, on behalf of the online safety lead, such as:

- Producing and reviewing policies
- Mapping, planning and reviewing the online safety curriculum
- Producing, reviewing and monitoring the school filtering policy
- Consulting with stakeholders
- Raising awareness throughout the community
- Auditing online safety practice and policy compliance
- Creating and implementing an online safety action plan
- Reporting regularly to the governing body to help inform them of existing practice and localised concerns