

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 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, however it may be helpful if to have 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) 2018 identifies online safety as a safeguarding concern. Additionally, annex B recognises that responsibility for online safety falls within the remit of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Some online safety incidents will reach thresholds for child protection action; therefore, the online safety lead should have a robust understanding of local safeguarding procedures. This means a DSL (or a suitably trained deputy DSL) will need to be involved in making any initial decisions regarding appropriate responses to online safety concerns.

The online safety lead should also, where possible, be a member of the senior leadership team due to the strategic requirements and expectations of the role; for example, implementing policy, challenging practice and directing staff and resources.

Does the online safety lead require specific training?

KCSIE 2018 (annex B) states that in addition to formal DSL training, DSLs should ensure that their *'knowledge and skill are refreshed at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role so they:*

- *are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college;*
- *can recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online' (Annex B)*

DSLs may wish to consider how best to achieve this; it could for example include attending formal online safety training, accessing e-bulletins (which could include blogs), attending conferences, meeting with other designated safeguarding leads, or taking time to read and digest online safety developments and guidance.

What about other members of staff?

It is important to recognise that members of staff who previously lead on online safety (such as computing leads or IT staff) will have developed a wealth of expertise and experience over the years, which can be harnessed to support DSLs.

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

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.

- All staff should be given the opportunity to help contribute to and shape online safety policies and procedures.
- All staff should be clear that overall strategic responsibility for online safety sits with the Lead DSL.
- 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 take responsibility for implementing actions as appropriate.
 - Settings may need to consider how this practice is achieved and evidenced.

What are the key tasks of the online safety lead?

- **Policies and Procedures**
 - Act as a named point of contact on 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 child protection mechanisms.
 - Ensure the whole school community is aware of what is safe and appropriate online behaviour and understand the 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 child protection policies and procedures, if the filtering system and monitoring approaches identify any causes for concern.

- Work with the data protection officer to ensure that online practice is in line with current legislation.
- Work with the information 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 (including as part of induction) that is integrated, aligned and considered part of the overarching safeguarding approach (KCSIE 2018).
 - 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.
 - Ensure that their own knowledge and skill are refreshed at regular intervals to enable them to keep up-to-date with current research, legislation and trends.
- **Standards and Inspection**
 - Evaluate the delivery and impact of the settings 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

Should education settings have an online safety group to support the online safety lead?

This decision will be down to individual settings based on their needs and requirements and staff knowledge and expertise. A group approach however 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
- 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