

P1 DSL Appointment and Terms of Reference

Formal documentation for appointing your Designated Safeguarding Lead

Purpose of this document

This document provides the formal templates needed to appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for your organisation. It covers three tiers of DSL structure, matched to your organisation's size and capacity. Use the tier that fits your organisation. All tiers meet the minimum safeguarding standard.

Read this document alongside P2 (DSL Responsibilities Guide) and B3 Section F (Roles and Responsibilities). Update it whenever your DSL or backup arrangement changes.

How to use this document

Step 1: Read Section 1 to identify which tier applies to your organisation.

Step 2: Complete the Terms of Reference for your tier (Sections 2, 3 or 4).

Step 3: Complete the appointment letter(s) for the person(s) named in your ToR.

Step 4: Both the organisation and the DSL sign and date the documents.

Step 5: File a copy in your safeguarding records. Give a copy to the DSL.

Step 6: Review and update whenever the DSL or backup changes, and at every annual review (O4).

1. Which Tier Applies to Your Organisation?

The Safe Spaces framework uses a tiered DSL model. All tiers are equally valid. The tier reflects your organisation's capacity, not its commitment to safeguarding. Every tier meets the minimum standard.

Tier	
TIER 1 Micro-organisations 1-3 staff and volunteers	One named DSL. One named external backup (a trustee, board member, peer DSL from another organisation, or paid external safeguarding advisor). The external backup is not involved day-to-day but is contactable within 24 hours and steps in if the DSL is unavailable or is the subject of a concern.
TIER 2 Small organisations 4-15 staff and volunteers	One named primary DSL. One named Alternate DSL, trained to the same level. The Alternate DSL is an internal staff member or volunteer, not an external contact. They step in automatically when the primary is unavailable or has a conflict of interest. All case decisions above "no further action" are made jointly by both.
TIER 3	Named primary DSL with dedicated safeguarding time. Named Alternate DSL with active day-to-day



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Medium and large organisations 16+ staff and volunteers, or organisations with ongoing ESC placements	involvement in case management. Optional: a support pool of 2-3 additional trained people who assist the DSL but do not hold primary DSL authority. External safeguarding advisor relationship for complex cases.
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Which tier if you are not sure?

If you have 1-3 people in total: Tier 1. If you have 4-15: Tier 2. If you have 16 or more, or run ongoing ESC volunteer placements: Tier 3. If you are growing: adopt the tier above where you are now. It is better to over-prepare.

2. Tier 1 — Terms of Reference and Appointment

2.1 Terms of Reference for Tier 1 DSL

[Complete one copy for each person named in this ToR. File with safeguarding records.]

Organisation name	[Insert]
DSL name	[Insert full name]
DSL role in the organisation	[Insert job title or volunteer role]
Appointed from	[Insert date]
Review date	[Insert date — at minimum annually]
External backup name	[Insert full name]
External backup role / relationship	[Insert: trustee / board member / peer DSL at [Organisation] / external safeguarding advisor]
External backup contact	[Insert phone and email]
External backup agreement signed	[Yes / No — see Section 2.3]

2.1.1 DSL responsibilities at Tier 1

The Tier 1 DSL is responsible for the following. These responsibilities cannot be delegated to a person who has not completed DSL-level training.

- Completing DSL-level safeguarding training before the first project begins, and completing a refresher of at minimum 3 hours annually.
- Being the named, visible safeguarding contact for all staff, volunteers and participants.
- Receiving all safeguarding concerns, logging them in the Incident Log (I1 Part B), and making the initial triage decision.
- Making statutory referrals when required — to police, child protection services or other statutory authorities. This decision does not require management approval.
- Maintaining the case log (I1 Part B) and the Identity Index (I1 Part C).



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- Completing the annual self-assessment (O4) and reporting findings to the board or trustee.
- Ensuring all staff and volunteers complete induction (P3) before working with participants.
- Ensuring participants receive the Participant Safeguarding Card (F4) before every project.
- Contacting the external backup immediately when: the DSL is temporarily unavailable; the concern involves the DSL; or the case is complex and requires a second opinion.
- Any internal investigation must involve the external backup and, wherever possible, an external safeguarding advisor. The DSL at Tier 1 must not conduct an internal investigation alone.

2.1.2 External backup responsibilities at Tier 1

The external backup is not a day-to-day safeguarding role. Their responsibilities are:

- Being contactable within 24 hours when called upon by the DSL.
- Stepping in as acting DSL when the primary DSL is unavailable, has a conflict of interest, or is the subject of a concern.
- Co-reviewing any case decision above "no further action" — even remotely by phone or video call.
- Supporting the DSL in complex or distressing cases, including by contacting specialist services or national safeguarding bodies on the organisation's behalf.
- Having completed at minimum a foundation-level safeguarding awareness course (minimum 3 hours) within the last 2 years.

2.2 Appointment Letter — Tier 1 DSL

Complete and sign one copy. Both the organisation and the named DSL sign.

Appointment Letter — Designated Safeguarding Lead

Dear [Insert name],

I am writing to formally appoint you as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for [Organisation name] with effect from [Date].

This is a formal appointment. You hold specific safeguarding responsibilities that are described in the Terms of Reference above and in the DSL Responsibilities Guide (P2). Please read both before taking up the role.

As DSL, you have the authority to:

Receive and act on safeguarding concerns on behalf of the organisation.

Make statutory referrals to police, child protection services or other statutory authorities without management approval when a person is at risk.

Instruct staff and volunteers to take immediate protective action when required.

Your external backup is: [Name], contactable at [phone/email]. You must contact them whenever: you are unavailable; the concern involves you personally; or you need a second opinion on a complex case.

Your training must be kept current: minimum 3 hours of DSL-level refresher training per year. Please record all training in P4 (Safeguarding Training Plan and Record).

This appointment is reviewed annually as part of the organisation's safeguarding review (O4).

Signed (Organisation): _____ Date: _____

Signed (DSL): _____ Date: _____



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2.3 External Backup Agreement — Tier 1

External Backup Agreement

This agreement is between [Organisation name] (the organisation) and [External backup name] (the backup contact).

[External backup name] agrees to:

- Be available as an emergency safeguarding backup contact for the organisation.
- Be contactable within 24 hours when contacted by the DSL.
- Act as the interim DSL if the primary DSL is unavailable or has a conflict of interest.
- Co-review any case decision above "no further action" when requested.
- Maintain at minimum a foundation-level safeguarding awareness course within the last 2 years.
- Maintain confidentiality in relation to any case information shared.

[Organisation name] agrees to:

- Contact the backup only when the primary DSL is unavailable or in complex cases requiring a second opinion.
- Provide the backup with a copy of this pack and access to relevant case information when needed.
- Review this arrangement annually.

Signed (Organisation): _____ Date: _____

Signed (External backup): _____ Date: _____

3. Tier 2 — Terms of Reference and Appointment

3.1 Terms of Reference for Tier 2

Organisation name	[Insert]
Primary DSL name	[Insert full name]
Primary DSL role	[Insert]
Alternate DSL name	[Insert full name]
Alternate DSL role	[Insert]
Appointed from	[Insert date]
Review date	[Insert date — at minimum annually]

3.1.1 Primary DSL responsibilities at Tier 2

All Tier 1 DSL responsibilities, plus:

- Maintaining awareness of all active safeguarding cases at all times, not just when acting as DSL.
- Jointly reviewing with the Alternate DSL all case decisions above "no further action."
- Leading on staff and volunteer induction (P3) and training planning (P4).
- Managing any partnership safeguarding agreement (O1) and monitoring partner compliance (O2).
- Reporting to the board or governing body at minimum annually using O4 (Annual Self-Assessment).



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- Conducting initial enquiries in internal investigations. The Stage 3 review (finding) is always made jointly with the Alternate DSL.

3.1.2 Alternate DSL responsibilities at Tier 2

- Trained to the same level as the primary DSL before taking up the role.
- Maintaining awareness of all active cases alongside the primary DSL.
- Stepping in automatically when the primary DSL is unavailable, on leave, or has a conflict of interest.
- Co-reviewing all case decisions above "no further action" — this is mandatory, not optional.
- Being named in all participant-facing materials alongside the primary DSL.
- Supporting the primary DSL in complex or distressing cases.

3.2 Appointment Letters — Tier 2

Complete one letter for each person. Both the organisation and the named person sign.

Appointment Letter — Primary DSL (Tier 2)

Dear [Insert name],

I am writing to formally appoint you as the Primary Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for [Organisation name] with effect from [Date].

Your responsibilities are set out in the DSL Responsibilities Guide (P2) and the Terms of Reference above. As Primary DSL you have the authority to receive and act on safeguarding concerns, make statutory referrals without management approval when a person is at risk, and instruct protective action.

The Alternate DSL is [Name]. All decisions above "no further action" are made jointly with the Alternate DSL. Complex cases may involve an external safeguarding advisor.

Training: DSL-level training must be completed before taking up the role, with a minimum 3-hour annual refresher. Record all training in P4.

Signed (Organisation): _____ Date: _____

Signed (Primary DSL): _____ Date: _____

Appointment Letter — Alternate DSL (Tier 2)

Dear [Insert name],

I am writing to formally appoint you as the Alternate Designated Safeguarding Lead for [Organisation name] with effect from [Date].

You step in as acting DSL whenever the Primary DSL is unavailable, on leave, or has a conflict of interest. You co-review all case decisions above "no further action." You must complete DSL-level training before taking up this role.

Training: complete DSL-level training before taking up the role. Minimum 3-hour annual refresher. Record in P4.

Signed (Organisation): _____ Date: _____

Signed (Alternate DSL): _____ Date: _____



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4. Tier 3 — Terms of Reference and Appointment

4.1 Terms of Reference for Tier 3

Organisation name	[Insert]
Primary DSL name and time allocation	[Insert name] — [Insert % of time or hours per week dedicated to safeguarding]
Alternate DSL name	[Insert full name]
Support pool members (optional)	[Insert names — trained to staff/volunteer level, assist but do not hold primary DSL authority]
External safeguarding advisor	[Insert name, organisation, contact details]
Appointed from	[Insert date]
Review date	[Insert date]

4.1.1 Additional responsibilities at Tier 3

All Tier 2 responsibilities, plus:

- Dedicated, protected time for safeguarding work — not squeezed around other roles.
- Oversight of the support pool: briefing pool members, maintaining their awareness of cases where appropriate, and ensuring they do not exceed their authority.
- Active relationship with an external safeguarding advisor for complex cases, statutory referrals and internal investigations.
- Proactive partnership compliance monitoring (O2) throughout each project, not only at start and end.
- Regular (not only annual) safeguarding reporting to the board.

4.1.2 Support pool members — scope and limits

Support pool members (Tier 3 only) assist the DSL but do not hold DSL authority. They may:

- Receive initial concerns from staff and volunteers and pass them to the DSL as soon as possible — within the same session or the same day.
- Conduct welfare check-ins with the person at risk as directed by the DSL, as part of a monitoring plan.
- Provide emotional support to staff and volunteers who have raised a concern.
- Support pool members may NOT:
 - Make triage decisions.
 - Make statutory referrals.
 - Make internal investigation findings.
 - Act as primary DSL or Alternate DSL.

5. Training Requirements for All Tiers



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The following training requirements apply regardless of tier. "Completing training" means attending a course or module from a recognised provider that specifically covers safeguarding in youth work, child protection, or the relevant specialist area.

Role	
DSL (all tiers)	DSL-level safeguarding training (minimum 6 hours, in-person or accredited online) before taking up the role. Annual refresher of minimum 3 hours. Examples of suitable providers: NSPCC Learning (nspcc.org.uk/learning), UK Safer Recruitment Consortium, local safeguarding partnerships and boards, national child protection agencies in EU member states. Your National Agency may also hold a list of approved training providers.
Alternate DSL (Tier 2 and 3)	Same as primary DSL.
External backup (Tier 1)	Foundation-level safeguarding awareness (minimum 3 hours) within the last 2 years. The full DSL-level course is strongly recommended.
Support pool members (Tier 3)	Foundation safeguarding awareness training (minimum 3 hours). Annual refresher.
All staff and volunteers	Safeguarding induction (P3) before first contact with participants. Annual refresher of at minimum 1 hour.
Board members and trustees	Foundation safeguarding awareness for trustees (minimum 2 hours). P5 (Board and Trustees Safeguarding Briefing) is a starting point but is not a substitute for formal training.

6. DSL Conflict of Interest and Step-Back Protocol

If the DSL has a personal or professional relationship with either the person at risk or the alleged perpetrator in a safeguarding case, they must step back from that case immediately. The Alternate DSL (or external backup at Tier 1) takes over.

- Document the step-back in the case log (I1 Part B): who stepped back, why, and who took over.
- The DSL who has stepped back has no further involvement in that case.
- If both the DSL and Alternate DSL have a conflict of interest, the board chair or most senior trustee takes over and arranges for an external safeguarding advisor to manage the case.

7. External Support: Where to Find It

Every tier of the model may need external support at some point. Here is where to find it.

What you need	
External safeguarding advisor	NSPCC (nspcc.org.uk). NCVO (ncvo.org.uk). Your national safeguarding body. Your National Agency (Erasmus+/ESC programme body) — ask whether they maintain a list of



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	approved advisors. A peer organisation with a trained DSL who has agreed to a mutual support arrangement (see template in Section 2.3).
Statutory authorities	Police: emergency 112 (EU), 999 (UK). Child protection services: find the relevant agency in your country using the Country Legal Supplement (supplementary document). Social services: contact through your local authority or equivalent.
Training providers	NSPCC Learning: learning.nspcc.org.uk . UK Safer Recruitment Consortium: saferrecruitment.co.uk . Your national programme body (National Agency) may hold a list of country-specific providers. Local safeguarding partnerships and child protection boards in EU member states.
Peer DSL network	Organisations at Tier 1 can formalise a mutual DSL backup arrangement with a peer organisation. Use the External Backup Agreement template in Section 2.3, adapted for peer organisations. Both DSLs agree to be each other's backup contact.
Anonymous reporting tool	Verified platforms: Whispli (whispli.com), EQS Integrity Line (eqs.com), FaceUp (faceup.com), SpeakUp (speakup.com). These are purpose-built to guarantee genuine anonymity. Standard web forms and email do not.

References

B3 Safe Spaces Safeguarding Policy Framework v2.0, Section F (Roles and Responsibilities).

P2 DSL Responsibilities Guide (Safe Spaces).

O4 Annual Self-Assessment and Review (Safe Spaces).

NSPCC Role Description for Child Protection Lead: learning.nspcc.org.uk

NCVO Safeguarding Guidance: ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/



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