

Developing Formalised Safeguarding Networks



How to start a safeguarding network in your region

A safeguarding network is a group of safeguarding professionals from within schools, guardianship agencies and child focussed organisations, who unite to share expertise, resources and best practices. For many, these networks offer an invaluable lifeline in what can be a very lonely and tough job.

Where to Look for a Safeguarding Network

To find a safeguarding network in your region, start by asking within your own school. See if anyone on your counseling or safeguarding team has a connection with a professional at a nearby school. You can also search for professional social media groups that connect practitioners in your area.

How to start a Safeguarding Network

If you can't find an existing network, don't hesitate to start one yourself. A great first step is to identify the DSL at schools that your sports teams compete against; the DSL is often listed on the school's website. Send them an email to see if they know of a network or would be interested in connecting. Every great initiative begins with a single, courageous step!

Looking Ahead: Become a Network Champion

Successful examples like CISSA's regional safeguarding forum in Cambodia demonstrate the profound difference these networks make. By joining an established group, or pioneering a new one in your region, you ensure no school or safeguarding professional stands alone.

Together, safeguarding professionals can build a safer, stronger community for every child.

If you are interested in joining or starting a safeguarding network, contact Encompass for advice, support or training.





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Organising & Running Your Regional Safeguarding Network

Once you've gathered a small group of safeguarding professionals, your first step is to meet and define your collective purpose. Use this initial meeting to learn about each other's skills and the specific challenges you face. This will help assess whether a collaborative network is a beneficial next step. Once your core group has defined its mission and gained endorsement from your respective senior leadership teams, you can officially launch your network.

Establish Your Core Aims: Define your shared vision - whether it's improving safeguarding policy alignment, developing training and peer supervision, engaging with local authorities or simply building a community for moral support in a challenging role.

Invite Diverse Stakeholders: Bring together schools' safeguarding professionals, DSLs and counselling teams. Extend engagement beyond the school community to organisations such as NGOs like the Child Protection Unit, Police or Embassies.

Agree Working Protocols: Set ground rules for confidentiality, information sharing and meeting frequency.

Write and Sign a Statement of Intent: Collaboratively create a statement of intent or charter that formalises the network's shared commitment to safeguarding. This should outline your core values and principles. Its formal signing offers a powerful public moment to showcase each school's dedication and to reinforce a united safeguarding stance.

Create Knowledge Hubs: Use shared drives, newsletters or online platforms to store and exchange resources and updates.

Champion Continuous Improvement: Use feedback and case studies to drive network learning, responding to new safeguarding developments and regional needs.

Facilitate Regular Meetings: These can be in-person, virtual or hybrid. Rotate hosting duties to share the load.

Agendas might include:

- Safer recruitment – ensuring an agreed baseline of best practice
- Professional development – training, case studies, shared experiences
- Visits – meet local authorities or invite in external professionals
- Documentation review and compliance audits

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