

Guidance for Designated Support Leads (DSLs)

# UK Equality Standard

Resource Pack



The Equality Standard  
A Framework for Sport



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# Guidance for Designated Support Leads (DSLs)

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# 1. Introduction

The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport (the Standard) was launched by the UK sports councils in November 2004 to help address the inequalities that exist within the sports sector. It is a framework to guide sports organisations, including: governing bodies of sport, county sports partnerships (CSPs), sports councils and national sports organisations towards achieving equality. A more detailed introduction to the standard can be found in the “process and guidance for sports organisations” document.

This guide is primarily aimed at designated support leads (DSL). It is part of an overall suite of guidance material containing four other documents:

- Process and guidance for sports organisations;
- Equality standard assessor (EQSA) process and guidance;
- Equality Standard requirements and assessment forms;
- Glossary of terms.

## 2. The role of the designated support lead (DSL)

The role of the DSL is primarily to advise and support sports organisations working towards the Standard and to sign off their application when all evidence has been gathered.

The relevant sports council will arrange appropriate support for a sports organisation through appointing a DSL. The type and level of support will be determined by each sports council. DSLs working for more than one sports council should therefore be aware that the expectations of them in working with an organisation may differ.

Each applicant organisation is likely to have different needs or levels of readiness and DSLs need to have knowledge and experience of equality and diversity generally, and the Equality Standard requirements specifically, in order to provide the appropriate level of support.

Prior to working with an organisation, the DSL should be clear about the scope of the support they are providing, as well as being familiar with all the available guidance regarding the Standard, including: requirements, forms and process. The DSLs general knowledge should also allow them to signpost the organisation to material

relating to equality legislation, examples of good practice, information produced by equality organisations, etc.

DSLs should also ensure they understand the reporting/monitoring requirements stipulated by their funding sports council.

A DSL should foster a good working relationship with the organisation that they are supporting. Advice and support should be provided constructively and should acknowledge and be sensitive to the needs of the organisation. However, at all times, the integrity and robustness of the Standard should be maintained.

DSLs are expected to support and advise the sports organisation to develop and implement the evidence required to meet the minimum requirements for that level of the Standard. In most cases this will purely be an advisory function, but it is possible that some sports councils will, on occasions, require DSLs to work directly on producing, finding and compiling evidence with the organisation.

## The main outlined activities for a DSL are set out below:

### 2.1

#### Initial meeting and planning future work

- i) Contact the organisation and ask them to complete the “applicant organisation details” part of the assessment form.
- ii) Ensure you have a basic awareness of the organisation: their remit, size, etc.
- iii) Hold an initial meeting with the organisation to:
  - Explain/confirm the Standard application and assessment process;
  - Explain the generic benefits of achieving the Standard;
  - Explain the minimum requirements for the level;
  - Confirm your understanding of the organisation and of the work that has already been done;
  - Review the assessment report from the previous level of the Standard, in particular the highlighted “areas for development”;
  - Identify where gaps exist and the organisation’s priorities;
- Agree the amount and type of support being provided.
- iv) Agree timescales for achievement of the given level of the Standard, any interim milestones and the resources available to support the work.
- v) Develop and agree a project plan, which sets out how the organisation is to achieve the relevant level of the Standard.
- vi) Establish how/when the organisation will keep the DSL up-to-date on progress.
- vii) Advise the sports council of the agreed timescales and plans to progress the work.

## 2.2

### Ongoing support

Provide timely and appropriate advice for the organisation to progress towards the Standard. The extent of this will be governed by the specification from the sports council, but may include:

- Responding to telephone enquiries;
- Responding to email or written enquiries;
- Providing advice on draft materials;
- Providing guidance and direction;
- Producing draft evidence;
- Assisting with briefings to Board or senior management team;
- Signposting to supporting resources or examples of good practice;
- Directing the organisation to other organisations, as appropriate.

The evidence listed in the requirements tables is a guide and it is not prescriptive. Suitable alternatives can be presented if they meet the outcomes and will be judged on their merits. The DSL may be asked about the suitability of alternative evidence.

## 2.3

### Assessment

When the organisation feels it has all the essential evidence in place for the minimum requirements for that level of the standard, they should complete an assessment form. Again, depending on the support requirements of the sports council, the DSL may be asked to assist with the completion of this form. As a minimum, the DSL should ensure that the assessment form contains sufficient detail to enable the EQSA to perform an independent evaluation and to support the EQSAs recommendations.

To achieve the relevant level of the Standard successfully, all essential evidence, as outlined in the “requirements and forms” document for that level must be covered. All essential evidence must also meet the assessment criteria, again found in the “requirements and forms” document. Once the DSL is satisfied this is the case, they should complete their part of the assessment form. This will indicate to the sports council that the DSL believes the organisation is now in a position to submit for an independent evaluation.

The organisation will then inform their home country sports council that they are ready to submit and the sports council will allocate an EQSA. The organisation should send their assessment form to the EQSA along with the required pieces of evidence.

## 2.4

### **Completing the assessment form**

As well as approving the assessment form to show all essential evidence is present and of satisfactory quality, the DSL will need to specify, in their view: the overall strengths of the application, areas for development and examples of good practice.

Identified areas of development will not prevent the applicant from achieving the level of the Standard; they are simply advisory points that, if accepted, will help the organisation become more equitable.

Examples of good practice are things that, in the DSLs view, are worth sharing with other organisations to help them progress through the Standard or to operate more effectively in terms of equality. The sports councils will collate and publicise these.

By approving the assessment form, the DSL is merely stating that they believe the organisation is in a position to be independently evaluated. They are not providing a recommendation that this level of the Standard has been achieved.

## 2.5

### **Confidentiality**

All data and information about the organisation that the DSL has access to is owned by the organisation and should be treated confidentially for the sole purpose of achieving a level of the Standard.

Organisations will have their own data protection policies which DSLs are required to adhere to when handling sensitive data.

### 3. Independent evaluation process

**Independent evaluations of submissions will be carried out by EQSAs on a quarterly basis.**

As part of these evaluations, the EQSA will contact the organisations (with the possible exception of Foundation level, where this is not obligatory). The EQSA may also contact the DSL and, for Intermediate and Advanced levels, may require the DSL to accompany them to visit the organisation, but if not, will almost certainly contact them by telephone.

For each submission the EQSA will reach one of the following two decisions:

- The criteria are met – the relevant level of the Standard is achieved;
- The criteria are not met – the organisation continues to work towards the relevant level of the Standard. In this case specific guidance will be provided in the feedback from the EQSA.

If it is judged that the organisation continues to work towards the level of the Standard, the DSL may be asked by the sports council to assist by, providing support to follow the EQSA's guidance. The extent of this further support will need to be agreed with the sports council.

## 4. Employment and contractual information

### 4.1

#### Appointment and remuneration

All contractual arrangements, including: qualification requirements for a DSL, appointments to organisations, level of support required, rates of pay, invoicing, reporting, reviewing of performance, etc will be the responsibility of each sports council.

### 4.2

#### Training and communication

All DSLs are expected to maintain the required level of knowledge and skills to fulfil this role.

All sports councils have committed to:

- Provide a sufficient induction process and ongoing training for DSLs;
- Periodic checking of assessment forms to ensure levels of quality and consistency are maintained;
- Disseminate examples of good practice so that others can benefit;
- Keep up-to-date the process and guidance documentation;

- Provide appropriate levels of ongoing support;
- Maintain a record of recommended improvements to the assessment process;
- Communicate regularly with DSLs regarding all Standard related matters.

### 4.3

#### DSL pool

Each sports council will identify and maintain a pool of qualified DSLs and ensure that they are delivering quality services according to their contract.

Each sports council will carry out recruitment (specifying experience, knowledge and skills minimum requirements) and set up contracts according to their in house processes and standards.

### 4.4

#### Complaints

Any complaints, either from or about, a DSL will be dealt with by the relevant sports council in line with their complaints policy.

## 5. Further information

Readers of this guidance should also read the other four documents in this guidance suite, in order that they understand the full application and assessment process.

The latest information regarding the Standard can always be found on the Equality in Sport website [www.equalityinsport.org](http://www.equalityinsport.org)

