

Child Protection Policy

Miscellaneous

Contents

Child Protection Policy	3
Practical Guidelines for Staff Working With Children and Young People	7
Child Protection - Complaints and Whistle-Blowing	8
Child Protection - Revised Recruitment Procedures	9
Standards of Behaviour for Staff Working With Children and Young People.....	11

Child Protection Policy

Overview

This section summarises the British Council's policy on child protection, designed to improve safeguards for children and young people involved in the British Council's activities. The British Council follows the widespread practice of defining a child as any young person under the age of 18 years.

The section covers:

- background
- aims
- scope
- underlying principles
- employment standards.

This section will be revised as detailed child protection measures are introduced in different UK departments and country operations. Where necessary, there will also be revised and additional guidance to cover specific aspects of child protection.

Audience

This section applies to all British Council staff, including temporary staff, and outside consultants, whose responsibilities involve access to children and young people.

Responsibilities

- All British Council staff are responsible for adhering to the policies described in this section.
- Director Human Resources (HR) owns the child protection policy. Responsibility for overseeing its implementation is shared with other departments involved in the corporate systems for managing risk, in particular, the Business Risk Management Framework.
- Directors of country operations and UK departments must ensure that all services accessed by children and young people are delivered in line with the principles and standards referred to in this section. This includes assessing, at regular intervals, the effectiveness of child protection measures, and consulting with the staff, customers and external contacts directly affected.
- Line managers must ensure that the principles and standards referred to in this document are followed in all aspects of British Council employment (see Employment standards below).
- Line managers are also responsible for ensuring the procedures for complaints and whistle-blowing are clearly understood and easily accessible, by both external customers and staff members.

Policy

Background

Much of the British Council's work directly involves children and young people, including 40,000 young learners of English in British Council centres worldwide, and 35,000 young participants (in the UK) in school partnerships, joint curriculum projects and free-time activities managed by the British Council. Approximately one in four British Council staff members has some responsibility for teaching, training, supervising or briefing children and young people, and this proportion is set to grow.

There is specific legislation in the UK which gives the British Council a duty of care towards the children and young people involved in its programmes, projects and one-off events, and is responsible for protecting a child or young person's health and well-being. The basis for such legislation, in the UK and other countries, is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Given the variations in cultural and social conditions, and legislative provision, in the countries where the British Council operates, reference to internationally agreed standards is essential, and the British Council takes the UN document as its starting-point in child protection. See Article 19, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Aims

The British Council's approach focuses on making child protection an integral part of existing practices for managing risk. The British Council's child protection policy aims to:

- protect all children and young people involved in its activities from physical and emotional harm, including all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse (including sexual abuse), neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation
- reduce, manage and, where possible, avoid risks relating to children and young people
- increase the benefits to children and young people arising from their engagement with the British Council
- protect British Council staff members and the British Council as a whole
- enable the British Council to fulfil its duty of care in the three, equally important, components of the policy:
 - safeguards in the recruitment and selection of new and existing staff - taking action to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and young people
 - high standards of facilities and premises management - taking all reasonable measures to control known and foreseeable risks when children and young people use British Council premises and other facilities
 - practical guidelines for staff who work directly with children and young people - encouraging staff who have responsibility for working with children and young people to follow good practice guidelines in all areas of their work, including professional conduct and risk management.

Scope

- The British Council child protection policy applies mainly to staff whose responsibilities include working with children and young people, for example, English language teachers and teachers' assistants, examiners and staff managing programmes in the arts and education (including online services). It also applies to other staff, for example, in finance and IT, who do not usually have contact with children and young people, but whose roles support the delivery of British Council services to these age groups.
- The policy applies to all children and young people involved with British Council activities, including those on short-term attachment to a British Council office (in any country) for work experience. The policy also covers people who are vulnerable for other reasons, for example, because of an impairment or disability, irrespective of their age.
- The policy affects the way British Council staff are appointed, supervised and managed. It includes measures to ensure that an individual's personal and professional experience is suited to the role, and gives guidance on the practical aspects of working with children and young people (such as managing events), and on appropriate conduct.

- The British Council recognises that awareness-raising and practical skills training in child protection is now a requirement for staff in many external organisations working in areas relevant to the British Council, including arts and information management, as well as in the education and training sector.
- The policy emphasises protection, that is, limiting or eliminating the situations in which abuse or other forms of maltreatment of children and young people can occur, rather than identifying instances of harm, which most British Council staff are not qualified to do. However, the British Council also recognises that there may be occasions when staff, customers or external contacts have concerns about actual or potential harm to children and young people. The British Council complaints and whistle-blowing procedures ensure such concerns can be raised and acted on without delay.

Principles

- The British Council treats children and young people with dignity and respect in all areas of its work. It takes all reasonable measures to control known and foreseeable risks to children and young people involved in its activities.
- The British Council's child protection policy reflects good practice among international organisations working in educational and cultural relations. This includes encouraging children and young people, wherever appropriate, to contribute to decisions affecting them.
- Every member of British Council staff is expected to understand their responsibilities in child protection, including the responsibility to conduct themselves appropriately when working with children and young people.
- Staff with management responsibility for activities involving direct contact with children and young people must ensure that child protection measures are communicated effectively.
- The British Council ensures that staff are appropriately prepared and trained for their roles, and are supported in carrying out their responsibilities concerning children and young people.
- The British Council's child protection policy is consistent with the British Council's values, in particular with the commitment to understand and respect an individual's different background and views.
- The British Council's child protection policy will be reviewed every three years.

Employment standards

Recruitment

Refer also to Child Protection - Revised Recruitment Procedures, for details of how child protection measures have been included in recruitment and selection procedures.

- Line managers are responsible for identifying posts which may be a source of risk. This includes carrying out a detailed review of job descriptions, in consultation with HR staff, for posts which have direct contact with children and young people, and for posts with responsibilities in delivering online services, maintaining customer records, or making other forms of indirect contact.
- A summary of the British Council's child protection policy is given to all applicants (external and internal) for posts which give access to children and young people.
- External appointments to posts which give access to children and young people can only be made on the basis of thorough checks. In the UK, and in other countries

where appropriate systems exist, these include criminal records checks.

- Staff transferring for the first time into posts which give access to children and young people are informed that procedures apply similar to those for external appointments. Criminal records checks are repeated after three years.
- Employment agencies providing the British Council with temporary staff, and companies providing support services (such as cleaning and security), must confirm that their own recruitment practices are consistent with the British Council's child protection policy. For consultants and other temporary staff working in posts designated as having direct contact with children and young people, the British Council must receive confirmation that the individuals concerned have undergone due checks.

Induction

As part of their corporate induction, all new members of staff are made aware of the British Council's child protection policy. For staff whose responsibilities include working with children and young people, the induction must include a more detailed briefing on child protection. The line manager must ensure that the member of staff takes part in timely and appropriate induction training.

Supervision and management

- To reduce, manage and, where possible, avoid risks to children and young people, line managers must review working practices, assess risks arising from the use of premises and other facilities, and ensure that staff, especially those without prior experience, who work directly with children and young people are appropriately supervised and supported.
- External consultants, temporary staff and volunteers are treated the same way. Because even the most rigorous recruitment and selection procedures may not identify an individual likely to put children and young people at risk, it is essential that line managers take due care in supervision and be alert to signs of inappropriate behaviour.

Training and development

Depending on their role, staff may need a more in-depth knowledge of the British Council's child protection policy and of issues related to working with children and young people. Specific technical skills may be needed, for example, in carrying out risk assessment. Line managers are responsible for ensuring training and development needs are discussed and acted on as part of the performance management cycle.

Redeployment and termination of contract

When a member of staff is considered to be unsuitable for working with children and young people, on the basis of information revealed by recruitment checks, or as a result of the performance management process, all reasonable efforts must be made to find an alternative post. Where it is not possible to reach agreement on an alternative position, the individual's contract of employment with the British Council is reviewed. This may result in termination of contract.

Other issues

- The British Council follows good employer practice in using and storing the information revealed by recruitment checks, and ensures this is consistent with its Data Protection Policy.
- The British Council's child protection policy is consistent with the organisation's equal opportunities policy. The British Council does not discriminate unjustifiably, in recruitment or other employment procedures, against people with criminal convictions.

Practical Guidelines for Staff Working With Children and Young People

Overview

This section gives guidance to British Council staff on the main practical aspects of organising a project, event or other activity involving children and young people, and reflects relevant guidance produced by external bodies (see External bodies below). The information in this section complements the detailed guidelines that already exist in Customer Service Standards for Teaching Centres and Examination Services, the Recommended Guidelines on the Safety of Children in British Council Libraries, and others.

Audience

These guidelines are for all British Council staff who work with children and young people.

Responsibilities

All British Council staff are responsible for adhering to the guidelines in this section.

Guidance

External bodies

External bodies which have produced guidelines on child safety and child protection of relevance to the British Council's work include:

- Department for Education and Skills
- Arts Council of England
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

General principles

Child protection depends on the effective management of risk. In any activity designed for younger audiences, you must assess the risks and take action to manage them. Only when this process has been completed can the activity go ahead. Risk assessment can also lead to a decision not to proceed with an activity.

Planning

You must plan and organise all activities involving children and young people within a clear management framework. This framework must set out the purpose and scope of the activities, the precise objectives and the responsibilities of all parties. Responsibilities must include carrying out risk assessment, particularly for off-site events, and ensuring that appropriate recruitment procedures have been followed for all staff, consultants, facilitators and volunteers.

Consultation

Participants

Children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions which directly affect them. You must consult the participants, wherever possible, as part of the planning for a project, event or other activity. The consultation must include discussing and agreeing ground rules for each activity, and clarification of procedures for raising concerns about participants' safety and welfare.

Parents

You must give parents or other legal guardians information about the purpose and scope of the activity. It is usually helpful to include a summary of the British Council's child protection policy (translated, where appropriate). Ask the parent or guardian to complete a consent form (in advance) for each participant under the age of 18.

Health and safety

Complete a risk assessment for all aspects of the activity which may be a source of hazards. The assessment must also cover the skills of the lead manager, and of other adults involved, to implement emergency procedures and to give first aid.

Supervision

For workshops or similar events, at least two responsible adults must be present, and easily identifiable, at all times. Mixed groups must be supervised by both female and male adults. The ratio should normally be below 1:15, or, for children up to the age of 10, below 1:8.

Publicity

Written consent from parents or guardians is required before images of children and young people can be made available to a public audience, for example, through a website. Participants must normally be identified by first names only in press releases, reports on completed events, or other publicly available documents.

Contact details

The lead manager for the activity must compile a list of names of all children and young people participating, together with emergency contact numbers for parents, guardians or other responsible adults (such as teachers or group leaders). Emergency contact details must be accessible to the staff members, consultants, facilitators and volunteers involved in the activity.

Child Protection - Complaints and Whistle-Blowing

Overview

This section summarises the existing British Council procedures for dealing with concerns relating to child protection.

Audience

This section is for all British Council staff.

Guidance

- Staff can make use of the information, advice and counselling service offered through the Employee Assistance Programme. Contact the Employee Assistance Programme on telephone 0800 282 193 (in the UK), or +44 1865 397 497 (outside the UK).
- The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) runs a 24-hour child protection help-line in the UK. Contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.
- Concerns raised by outside customers or staff are followed up using the British Council's grievance or disciplinary procedures, as appropriate.

Note: All allegations are investigated in the strictest confidence, for both the child or young person and the member of staff involved.

- Disciplinary procedures will be used if a member of staff knowingly makes a false accusation.

Procedures

If you have a concern, you **must** raise it.

Staff

1. Staff who are concerned that the behaviour of a colleague, external consultant, facilitator or volunteer presents a risk of harm to children or young people must raise their concern with one of:
 - their line manager
 - the line manager of the staff member in question
 - the member of staff with management responsibility for the programme, project or event, if the concern relates to external partners or their representatives
 - the local HR manager, or HR representative in the UK.
2. Staff should also use these procedures to raise any concerns they may have about actual or potential harm to children or young people occurring outside the British Council, including in the child's or young person's home.
3. If you are a manager notified of concerns in this way, you must assess the risks of allowing the child or young person, and any member of staff involved, to remain in the situation, and take action accordingly.

Note: You must assess the risk and take action **immediately**.

Customers

Customers, including parents or other responsible adults (in the case of young learners), other Teaching Centre students and examinations candidates, who have concerns relating to child protection, must raise their concerns with one of:

- the Teaching Centre Manager
- the Examinations Manager
- the HR Manager, or HR representative in the UK
- the Country Director, or head of department in the UK.

Note: This ensures the guidance given to both staff and customers follows a consistent format.

1. If you are a manager notified of concerns in this way, you must assess the risks of allowing the child or young person, and any member of staff involved, to remain in the situation, and take action accordingly.

Note: You must assess the risk and take action **immediately**.

2. Use the British Council complaints procedures to follow up the concern.

Child Protection - Revised Recruitment Procedures

Overview

This section summarises the changes made to existing British Council recruitment procedures to accommodate child protection measures.

Audience

This section is for all British Council staff.

Guidance

The table here indicates the main changes to British Council recruitment procedures:

Task	Description	Child protection measure
Confirming vacancy	Report vacancy to Country Director/HR coordinator/ HR UK team	Check whether post has responsibility for contact with children and/or young people. If it does, take further action as described in entries below.
Reviewing job description	Review job description/person specification using British Council's agreed behavioural and technical competencies (as listed in the Recruitment Toolkit, under Resources)	Line manager must consider risks to children and/or young people using following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is contact one-to-one? ▪ Is contact unsupervised? ▪ Is contact regular? Where there is clear and unavoidable need for contact with children and/or young people, appointment can only be made on basis of thorough checks.
Advertising vacancy	Vacancy advertised internally and/or externally, as appropriate	In UK, and other countries as appropriate, advert must include reference to child protection policy. Details of child protection policy must be included with information pack sent to applicants. Application form must ask for confirmation of willingness to meet standards set out in policy, including self-declaration and pre-appointment checks.
Selection	Applicants short-listed, using short-listing matrix	Applicants short-listed only if confirmation received of willingness to meet standards set out in policy.
Confirming appointment	Post offered to preferred applicant, subject to completion of standard pre-appointment checks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proof of identity ▪ qualifications ▪ references ▪ medical clearance. 	Post offered subject to additional pre-appointment checks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ references, covering experience of working with children and/or young people ▪ criminal records clearance (in countries where appropriate systems exist).

- Criminal records checks, where appropriate, are only carried out with the written consent of the individual concerned. Results are seen by designated HR staff, and not by the recruiting manager.
- Where all other pre-appointment checks have been completed, a post may be offered before the outcome of a criminal records check is known. In such cases, employment

can be terminated if the check subsequently shows that the individual in question presents a risk to children and young people.

- Local legislative provision is always taken into account in implementing child protection. In some contexts, it is not considered appropriate to request criminal records details for prospective or existing employees. In such cases, greater emphasis is given to the standard recruitment safeguards referred to above.

Standards of Behaviour for Staff Working With Children and Young People

Overview

This section sets out general standards of behaviour for British Council staff who work with children and young people.

Audience

These guidelines are for all British Council staff who work with children and young people.

Responsibilities

All British Council staff are responsible for adhering to the guidelines in this section.

Guidance

The standards of behaviour set out in this section are especially relevant to staff who work directly with children and young people (including English language teachers and assistants, examiners, staff responsible for programmes in the arts and education, and staff managing online services designed for younger audiences). They apply equally to line managers of such posts.

Note: You must always act on any concerns you have about the behaviour of British Council staff or other adults involved in an activity designed for children and young people.

General principles

- The British Council treats children and young people with dignity and respect in all areas of its work.
- It takes all reasonable measures to control known and foreseeable risks to children and young people involved in its activities.
- If you work with children or young people, you are in a position of trust. It is important that you acknowledge the influence you have on children's and young people's development.
- You must take care to ensure your behaviour is appropriate at all times. This is important both in safeguarding children and young people, and in protecting staff from wrongful accusation.

Particular areas

You are expected to pay particular attention to:

- the age, experience and cultural background of a child or young person, and whether this makes him or her more vulnerable
- a child's or young person's physical or mental disability, and whether this makes him or her more vulnerable
- avoiding unnecessary or inappropriate situations in which no other adult is present
Note: With the exception of planned situations, such as language classes, where

other members of British Council staff know where you are and for how long

- understanding local norms around physical contact between children and adults
- avoiding sexually suggestive behaviour, or any physical contact likely to cause a child or young person fear or embarrassment
- encouraging mutual respect, listening and co-operation among participants in a British Council activity
- challenging any behaviour, by children or young people themselves, or by other adults, that is aggressive or sexually suggestive