

## 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, contractors 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, including contracted staff and consultants - 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 to staff and contractors 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 and contractors 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 and contractors 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 (see [Related information](#) below) 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 and contractors are 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 or contracted work, 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. External UK contractors are expected to pay for their own costs of undertaking criminal records checks. Guidance can be found here <http://www.disclosure.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=1871>

- 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. They must also sign a declaration as part of their contractual agreement to provide services to the British Council.

### **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. All contractors should be briefed and aware of the policy to ensure they understand its implications and agree to adhere to it.

### **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. Where contractors are considered to be unsuitable for working with children on the basis of information revealed by recruitment checks or as a result of the performance management process, contracts may be terminated giving due notice.

### **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.

Please answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever been convicted of offences involving children?
2. Are you being investigated for possible criminal offences involving children – or have you ever been investigated for such offences?
3. Have you ever been dismissed from employment for reasons relating to children?
4. Do you know of any other reason why you could be considered unsuitable for working with children?
5. Do you consent to the British Council's checking the above statements against police records?

I understand that if I withhold any relevant information, I may render myself liable to disqualification from the recruitment process or – if appointed – to summary dismissal and contract termination.

Name:

Signature:

Date: