

Safeguarding Team

February 2020

BRITISH COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY

Background

The Board of Trustees took a decision in 2018 to make a significant change in the delivery and management of the Safeguarding agenda which resulted in the amalgamation of the Child Protection team and the Adult Safeguarding agenda, housing the two services under one structure hence the creation of the Global Safeguarding Team.

Introduction

We create international opportunities for people in the UK and other countries and build trust between them through a wide range of cultural relations approaches and activities.

Our Safeguarding Strategy helps to ensure that all we do, wherever this takes place, promotes the safety, security and well-being of children and adults who are involved with us deemed to be at risk and avoids negligence on our part.

Every child we work with matters and their needs are paramount. Children can be extremely vulnerable for socio-economic, geo-political and other reasons, including the increasing use of technology as a vehicle for abuse and exploitation. Adults can also be at risk for these and other reasons that may be temporary and circumstantial or may be permanent. These factors and challenges, greater awareness and encouragement to speak up and speak out, as well as practice improvements and demands for accountability inform our Safeguarding Strategy.

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The strategy builds on our child protection work spanning over a decade. It is reinforced by our Code of Conduct, organisational values, broader policies and the fully inclusive organisational culture we aspire to. It is **(implicitly)** aligned with our international cultural relations strategy leading to 2025.

Vision

British Council seeks to create a safe environment no child or adult at risk, consistent with human rights principles and irrespective of any aspect of their identity, including but not limited to age, disability status, economic background, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, or sexual orientation, will experience harm or exploitation during the course of their contact with us.

Our safeguarding commitments and practices will become deeply embedded and contribute to any children and adults at risk that we work with feeling safe and able to maximise the opportunities our cultural relations work provides access to.

Our staff will have the capability, confidence and competence to realise our vision and our leadership will nurture and drive it. Everyone who works for and with the British Council, in whatever capacity, will understand, embrace and support this vision.

We will draw upon best practice models and what we share about our safeguarding approach with other international organisations, and our cooperation and collaboration with them will help prevent harm and support potential and actual victims and survivors of abuse worldwide.

We will contribute to the development and revision of international safeguarding standards and protocols and promote them through our networks and partnerships.

Our reputation and the positive difference we aim to make to people's lives will be enhanced by the collective safeguarding actions we take.

Approach

We will adopt a mainstreaming ethos to safeguard children, adults at risk, victims and survivors underpinned by respect, care and concern. All business areas and regions will therefore work to shared approaches and standards, but with local adaptation where relevant and necessary. They will carry responsibility for implementation and hold localised accountability.

Our focus will be on protection and prevention from harm and abuse, be this physical, sexual, arising from exploitation or modern-day slavery, or for reasons of fixed or acquired identity, institutional abuse, or unjustified discrimination, or any other reason that is unacceptable and inhumane and inconsistent with our organisational values.

The Safeguarding Centre of Excellence will set our safeguarding standards and approaches and support implementation, quality assurance, compliance and management of risk. They will champion prevention, lead organisation wide reporting and review and the meeting of external standards and benchmarks.

Strategic Priorities

The safeguarding strategy is based on three overarching priorities which we believe are realistic, understandable, achievable and measurable:

- A workforce that understands violence and abuse against children: young people, and vulnerable adults in all its forms and equipped to respond in a timely, sensitive and appropriate manner
- British Council develops strong international alliances and networks to share information and strategic developments that supports and seek to implement the safeguarding standards
- The voice and experience of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is central to the work we do through advocacy, positive influencing and third-party relationships. British Council will further enhance its current systems, process and arrangements to ensure we promote, hear and learn from these vulnerable individuals and communities which in turn will inform our responses and policies.

Objectives

The objectives set out below support the delivery of our safeguarding vision and strategy:

Policies, standards and procedures

We will develop an overall Safeguarding Policy whilst retaining our distinct Child Protection and Adults at Risk policies. All British Council policies will clearly and overtly align with these and our Safeguarding Strategy in due course.

Safeguarding standards and procedures will continue to be informed by and respond to legal and other external requirements and best practice benchmarks, business needs and feedback. These will include, for example, pre employment checks, and cover programming, project development and delivery, teaching and exams activities and raising concerns. Any revisions or new standards and procedures will be based on consultation and what we learn and will respond to gaps. At the heart of all our standards and procedures will be our commitment to providing a safe environment for the children and adults at risk we work with.

Dissemination and implementation will involve awareness and capability interventions, line management actions and oversight and accountabilities.

Third party suppliers and relevant others will be made aware of our standards and procedures and be required to comply with them, including through legally binding contracts and agreements.

Governance and accountability

Our priority to keep children and adults at risk safe will continue to be supported by a revised governance and accountability framework. This will comprise:

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- A role of the Risk Committee chaired by Board member will help to ensure Board level oversight and necessary knowledge and involvement. The group will meet quarterly and receive strategy progress reports and updates, including of safeguarding risks.
 - The Safeguarding Steering Committee will have oversight, steer, endorsement and review priorities from the British Council's Global Safeguarding team, regional and business unit and corporate services representatives, through monthly meetings.

Accountability is supported by the above and includes:

- Internal transparency and openness about our actions and decisions to the children and their families and the adults at risk we have a responsibility to protect and keep safe. This includes a timely response to concerns, questions and queries aligned to our Complaints Policy and Customer Service standards; a defined point of contact; access to documents and records consistent with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation, underpinned by confidentiality principles.
- Specific safeguarding roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all regions and business areas to help implement relevant policies, standards and procedures, supported by regular professional supervision through the Centre of Excellence.
- Accountability for safeguarding through the line of business and close to delivery set out in regional and business plans.
- Quarterly risk reporting information to the Risk Committee with a focus on review, prioritisation, mitigation, accountability and recording.
- Safeguarding audits to provide feedback and assurance, and/or highlight issues and problems.
- As required, accountability and reporting and to the UK's Charity Commission.
- Awareness raising and building capability.

This will be achieved through

An annual plan of awareness and capability interventions that continues to build a preventative and protective global organisation wide safeguarding culture.

Extending and deepening awareness and capability through a mixed learning and development, engagement and delivery model. The emphasis will be on face to face but will include online and will highlight and support implementation of all relevant policies, standards and procedures.

Monitoring take-up of development activities and acting on findings, including targeting groups, business areas and third-party suppliers and responding to specific issues, needs and requirements.

Responsibilities

Working within and upholding the safeguarding policies and principles outlined is the responsibility of everyone working for or with the British Council, irrespective of country base, role or contract type.

The progress we have made towards keeping children, and more recently, adults safe, can only continue, strengthen and deepen if this responsibility is fully embraced and is aligned to what we have set out in this strategy.

Review

The strategy will be reviewed every three years led by the Safeguarding Centre of Excellence team in consultation with key stakeholders.

A revised strategy will undergo an Equality Screening and Impact Assessment (ESIA). Any arising action points will inform a final draft for Senior Leadership Team review and sign off.

Elaine Ryan

Global Head of Safeguarding

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Review date: March 2023