
Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Version 4 April 2022



Introduction

In keeping with its vision, mission, and values, the British Council is committed to maintaining the highest degree of conduct amongst all its staff and associated personnel. To help increase understanding, this Code of Conduct details the British Council's expectations of employees in key areas.

Scope and purpose

This Safeguarding Code of Conduct applies to anyone working with or for the British Council.

This includes staff, trustees, contractors, agency staff, consultants, volunteers, and interns.

The purpose of this Safeguarding Code of Conduct is to set out the behaviour expected of all staff, ensuring that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, thereby providing assurance to all about the British Council's commitment to promoting a safe environment for children and adults. This Code of Conduct sits alongside the Safeguarding Policy and other procedural documents that make up the Safeguarding Framework.

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct is always applicable. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct is applicable in the UK and globally wherever local conditions allow. Where practices and legislation are more developed and extensive than in the UK, we aim to meet these. British Council staff irrespective of their work location are expected to abide by local laws and are required to ensure their behaviour conforms with the Code of Conduct.

Organisational Values

The values of the British Council underpin everything we say and do, how we work with people, behave towards them, and communicate with them. Here is a brief description of what each value means to us.

“Open and Committed”

Our belief in what we do translates into a deep and long-term commitment to people we work with and the places where we work. We tackle challenges and take responsibility with openness and honesty to bring about positive change.

“Expert and Inclusive”

Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. Through inclusive conversations we learn from each other and bring together all our experience, knowledge, and expertise to deliver the best service we can.

“Optimistic and Bold”

We are positive and creative, and we focus on what works. Therefore, we are not afraid to make bold choices to shape a better future for everyone.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct Standards

As a British Council employee, you must uphold the integrity and reputation of the British Council by ensuring that your professional and personal conduct is consistent with the British Council's values and standards. In doing so, you must:

Always:

- Treat all people equally and fairly with respect and dignity.
- When working in an international context or travelling internationally on behalf of the British Council, be observant of local laws and respectful of local customs.
- Ensure that your conduct, both at work and outside of work, does not bring the British Council into disrepute or undermine your ability to undertake the role for which you are employed.
- Listen to and respect children and adults, empower them and, where appropriate, allow them to participate in planning and delivering activities as much as possible.
- As far as possible, be visible and accessible when working with children and adults.
- Dress appropriately at work and in any situations in which you are representing the British Council.
- Be aware of situations which may present risks for children and adults and take appropriate action to control and mitigate any risk of abuse or harm.
- Exercise due care always.
- Hold yourself accountable for your behaviour and appropriately challenge or report behaviour in others which contributes to poor practice.
- Report any concerns you may have about the protection or wellbeing of a child/children or adults at risk to your Safeguarding Focal Point, or to the Global Safeguarding Team using the [Report it Form](#).
- Handle information relating to incidents confidentially and share information with only those who need to be informed in accordance with this guidance. This is necessary to protect the privacy of those involved.
- Teachers are encouraged to consult the Safeguarding intranet page which has additional resources to ensure teaching is as safe as possible.
- Ensure that email communications are always sent and responded to via British Council business email accounts.
- Adhere to all legal and health and safety requirements in effect at your work location.
- Comply with any organisational health and safety and security guidelines and procedures.
- Behave in a manner such as to avoid any unnecessary risk to the safety, health and welfare of yourself and others at work, at beneficiary organisations and in the community.

Never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children or adults.
- Behave in a way meant to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade anyone.
- Show differential treatment or favour to children or adults to the exclusion of others.
- Never use language or make suggestions open to being misconstrued as inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
- Spend time alone with a beneficiary / customer child or adult at risk away from others.
- Engage in abusive or exploitative activity or behaviour.
- Engage in sexual activity with a child (persons under the age of 18). Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Pay for sexual services of any kind at any time with anyone under the age of 18 years old,

even if the age of sexual consent in a country is below 18.

- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual favours or other forms of degrading exploitative behaviour.
- Engage in any exploitative activities for personal or commercial gain with children or adults, including child labour or human trafficking activities.
- Expose children or adults to pornographic/indecent materials of any form.
- Permit or encourage children or adults to take part in activities that are illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Take or condone the taking of illegal drugs.
- Work while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Sleep in the same room as a child or vulnerable adult who is a British Council beneficiary or service user.
- Invite or allow a child you have met through work into your home.
- Enter a child's home without invitation and without the agreement of your line manager as to the purpose, or without another member of staff present.
- Enter the home of an adult beneficiary without agreement of line management as to the purpose of your visit.
- Encourage children or adults to communicate privately with you using personal email accounts, social networking sites, mobile phones, or other means of communication.
- Use British Council IT equipment, software or e-mail and social media platforms to engage in activity that is illegal under local or international law or that encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offence. This includes any material that intimidates or harasses any group based on protected characteristics or encourages extremism.
- Use the British Council's IT equipment to view, download, create, share, or save in any format, inappropriate or abusive material including but not limited to indecent images of children and or adults.
- Take photos of children or adults participating in British Council activities without obtaining prior consent. Written parental consent or consent from a child's legal guardian is always required prior to taking and using photographs, and audio or video materials.
- Allow allegations or disclosures of abuse to go unreported.
- Divulge confidential information relating to colleagues, work-related matters or any sensitive information unless legally required to do so.
- Agree to keep secret information relating to abuse or exploitation of a child or adult.

The overall principle is that staff should avoid any actions or behaviours that may be perceived as inappropriate or abusive.

Signature of staff member:

Position held:

Date:

In accepting employment with the British Council, I undertake to discharge my duties in accordance with the requirements of this Code of Conduct which I have read and understood.

The British Council is the United Kingdom's ("UK") international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It was founded in 1934 and was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940. A Supplemental Charter of Incorporation was granted in 1993. It is registered as a charity in England and Wales and in Scotland. The British Council receives an annual grant-in-aid from and is sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), from which the British Council has operational independence. As well as its legal status as a charity incorporated by Royal Charter, the British Council is classified by the Office of National Statistics as a public non-financial corporation and as an executive non-departmental public body.

Reference Documents:

[British Council Code of Conduct](#)

To be reviewed April 2023

Safeguarding Team