



LONDON INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE STUDENT SAFEGUARDING (CHILD PROTECTION) POLICY

Why does our International Study Centre have a safeguarding policy?

- It helps to create a safe and positive environment for students
- It clarifies what is required of LISC in relation to the protection of students
- It is a statement of intent that demonstrates LISC's commitment to safeguard students from harm.

The Safeguarding Officer (SO) for LISC is the Co-principal responsible for the welfare of students, Mr Andrew Sutherland. As the SO, he takes specific responsibility for safeguarding matters within LISC.

Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well being of all students in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the students, parents/carers, tutors and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance of concern that comes to our attention. London International Study Centre has a duty to report any suspicions of abuse and neglect to the Local Authority who have a duty to investigate such matters. The study centre will follow the child protection procedures laid out by the local authority and will seek their advice on all steps taken subsequently.

It is rare for students to lie about abuse which has occurred. If the student is young, he or she does not have the language or experience to make up stories about abuse, particularly sexual abuse. They may, however, later deny that abuse took place to protect someone they love or because they are afraid. Students may also get the details confused because of the traumatic nature of what happened. When dealing with students, question gently but do not interrogate.

LISC strives to create an atmosphere of trust in which students know they will be listened to and believed. They will then be encouraged to share their concerns and thus potentially harmful situations can be avoided.

It is the policy of London International Study Centre to ensure that all staff are familiar with child protection issues and procedures and regularly review and update this policy.

SAFEGUARDING (CHILD PROTECTION) POLICY

Definition of terms

For the purposes of this Safeguarding Policy (SP), all references to 'child' or 'children' - whether singular or plural – are used and are taken to refer to students enrolled at LISC.

'LISC personnel' means any full time member of staff or tutor having any responsibility for a child as defined in their contract during that contractual period. This may also refer to any personnel at LISC, whether paid or unpaid, whether under a contract of service or apprenticeship, under a contract for services, or otherwise

than under a contract, who has similar responsibility for a child and may be interacting with children for or on behalf of LISC. The normal duties of LISC personnel include caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children; they also involve unsupervised contact with children under arrangements made by a responsible person within LISC.

Need for and scope of policy

A safeguarding policy helps to create a safe and positive environment for children. Although no standards or processes can offer complete protection for children, the risk of abuse against children can be minimised by implementing such a policy and following the standards enshrined in it.

This safeguarding policy clarifies what LISC requires in relation to the protection of children. It sets out standards of behaviour for LISC personnel when they are around children and what to do if they notice, or are told about, inappropriate behaviour in others.

This safeguarding policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates LISC's commitment to safeguard children from harm. It will help LISC's personnel to undertake best practice in this area and deter those who would wish to abuse children from joining LISC as a member of its personnel.

This policy also provides a basis of protection for LISC's personnel and persons acting on behalf of LISC.

Aims of the policy

The welfare of children enrolled in LISC is of paramount concern to LISC. It is incumbent upon all who work in association with LISC to do everything possible to ensure that children are protected from harm at all times.

This Safeguarding Policy sets out:

1. LISC's principles for the protection of children.

LISC recognises that child protection is not only a legal obligation but

also a corporate and individual responsibility.

2. LISC's expectations in terms of behaviour and good practice for working with children.

LISC upholds that everyone involved must accept responsibility and take precautions to help create a safe place for children and their protection. This, in turn, requires that everyone be well informed and aware of child protection issues. Likewise, children, their parents and homestay families should know that there is always a responsible adult within LISC whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty. LISC works to maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to.

3. LISC's guidelines for responding appropriately if abuse of a child is alleged, disclosed, discovered or suspected.

LISC encourages openness about concerns relating to child protection matters because child abuse thrives on secrecy. The guidelines in this policy explain what should be done about those concerns.

The role of the Safeguarding Officer (SO)

The Safeguarding Officer is the Pastoral Head and responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps have been taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of every child.

The Safeguarding Officer takes specific responsibility for Child Protection matters within LISC. This person is responsible for:

- being conversant with all legislation including regulations relevant to the law of Child Protection.
- holding and being fully conversant with the Guidance and Regulations of the Children Act 1989, or any legislation subsequent to that Act.
- briefing LISC personnel on the contents of the guidance and procedures and on the procedures. This includes the briefing of new LISC personnel as part of their induction after joining LISC.
- ensuring the procedures below are followed within LISC.
- liaison over child protection procedures with the Social Services Department.
- receiving reports of alleged or suspected child abuse within LISC or reported by a child relating to incidents at the homestay or outside LISC, contacting the Social Services Department and taking other action in response, as set out below.
- ensuring that all records of concern about a child, even if there is not a need to take any immediate action, are kept confidentially and securely.

The role of LISC and its personnel

LISC and all its associated personnel should be aware of the need to report allegations or suspicions of child abuse to LISC's SO. All personnel should be alert to the fact that children often tell other children rather than the personnel of an educational institution or other adults such as, in our case, the Sutherland homestay family, about abuse.

LISC should keep accurate and unchanged/unchangeable records of alleged or suspected abuse, even if such abuse is only a minor incident.

The SO has responsibility for receiving complaints of abuse, investigating those complaints and reporting any complaints to the appropriate authority.

Lines of communication within LISC

There should, at all times, be routine contact between a LISC appointee and the child, the homestay and Sutherland Education, Sutherland Education and LISC, and LISC and the child's parents, as a preventative measure against child abuse.

Allegations of abuse made by a child should be reported as follows:

- A child should speak to a member of the LISC personnel or one of the adults of the homestay family about any abuse that is taking place
- If the alleged abuser is a member of the LISC personnel, the child should know that the first port of call is the Co-principal (or Safeguarding Officer), or otherwise any other member of the LISC personnel on the basis of the person considered by the child most approachable
- If the alleged abuser is the Co-principal (and SO), the child should initially report it to another member of LISC's personnel. This individual should then report the matter to a senior member of staff (other than the other Co-principal) or to the Social Services Department, whichever is appropriate.

Any person responsible for the welfare of a child has a duty under English law to report any suspicions of abuse to the relevant authority.

Parents, in a similar way, should report alleged abuse to one of LISC's personnel or the Safeguarding Officer or one of the adults of the homestay, depending on whom the alleged abuser is.

How LISC's personnel should respond to any suspicion of abuse

Any member of the LISC personnel who is told of any incident or has strong suspicion of physical or sexual child abuse must report the information to the SO. (In the absence of the SO, an immediate report should be made to the next most senior member of staff).

If a child or group of children disclose the fact that they are upset or worried, or if a child or group of children give the appearance of being upset, every effort should be made to keep the individual or group of individuals calm and not distressed. It is not appropriate to try to force conversation whilst there is an emotive atmosphere. The individual(s) concerned should be taken to a private place where, if the situation warrants it, a second responsible adult should be asked to be present. The following guidelines should be observed:

- Confidentiality should never be guaranteed. LISC personnel should guarantee that they will **only** pass on information to the **minimum** number of people who **must** be told to ensure that the proper action is taken to sort out the problem, that they will **never** tell anyone who does not have a clear 'need to know' and that they will personally take whatever steps they can to protect the informing child/children or LISC personnel from any retaliation or unnecessary stress that might be feared after a disclosure of alleged abuse has been made.
- Any questioning should be limited to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only, strictly avoiding 'leading' the child or adult who has approached them by making suggestions or asking questions that introduce their own ideas about what may have happened. (Questions such as, 'Did he do X to you?' should not be used; instead a minimum number of questions of the 'Tell me what happened?' type may be asked).
- The alleged perpetrator should not be criticised because the child's emotions may already be horribly mixed. The child should not be asked to repeat everything that s/he has already disclosed to another member of the LISC personnel.
- As soon as the child or adult has disclosed that he or she believes that something abusive has happened to him or her, or to someone else, no further questions should be asked of him or her. Further questioning could cause more damage and prejudice possible criminal proceedings.
- The informing child or adult should be asked what steps s/he would like taken to protect him/her now that the allegations have been made and should be given an assurance that LISC will try to follow these wishes.
- The matter should be referred immediately, with all relevant details, to LISC's SO. The adult to whom the disclosure has been made should make a written record as soon as possible of what s/he has been told. The record should not include the writer's own assumptions and interpretations but solely what s/he has heard and seen. Original notes should not be destroyed, even if the record may be written up more neatly and fully at a later stage. The record should comprise dates, times, places, plus any non-verbal behaviour as well

as words used, including sexual words (if any used). If injury is apparent, a diagram should be appended in order to give exact location.

- An allegation of abuse should never be discounted simply on the grounds of the child's location or because the alleged abuser is someone well known to and trusted by the individual to whom the disclosure has been made.

Action by LISC

When LISC's SO receives an allegation of physical or sexual abuse s/he will:

- a) take any steps needed to protect any child involved from risk of immediate harm. Furthermore, LISC must take any necessary steps for the longer-term protection and support of each child who has made allegations of abuse, or who is alleged to have suffered from abuse, taking his or her wishes fully into account. This may involve the child receiving continuing support and protection from a member of LISC's personnel chosen by him or her, or changing accommodation, or returning to his or her parents temporarily.
- b) not interview or investigate the allegation further but refer the matter immediately to the Duty Team Leader at the local Safeguarding office. The SO should speak personally to the Team Leader and not rely on leaving a message. If advice is sought, a staff member may first call ASKK (Advanced Services for Kingston Kids) on 020 8547 6587 to discuss the matter. If they feel this needs to be referred further, they will put the call through to Safeguarding directly.
- c) Whilst LISC has a duty first and foremost to the child, it must at all times respect the rights of parents and keep them informed of all matters relating to the child.
- d) if necessary, cease to use, pending investigation, any member of LISC's personnel who is alleged to have abused a child or children. LISC will not hesitate to cease to use any member of its personnel, without prejudgement of guilt and as a precautionary measure, where there is a concern about possible abuse.
- e) take any necessary steps to protect and support a child who is alleged to have abused another and inform his/her parents immediately.
- f) ensure that any child being interviewed by the police has available supportive LISC personnel of his or her own choice to accompany him or her if this becomes necessary.
- g) make arrangements, where feasible, for any child who has been the subject of abuse to receive any necessary continuing counselling and support, by agreement with his or her parents where appropriate.

Allegations against a member of staff

Any allegation against a member of staff will be treated seriously and investigated immediately. The Manager and Proprietor will work with the ASKK team to take appropriate action as quickly as possible. An initial investigation will take place to determine the exact nature of the allegation. Advice will be sought from ASKK and from the Senior Management Team. If appropriate, in accordance with the LISC procedures for staff conduct, the member of staff will be suspended pending the final outcome of the investigation. All investigations will take place in accordance with LISC procedures, and with the safety of children as paramount. Following the preliminary investigation, if there is evidence to substantiate allegations, disciplinary action will be taken. If the allegations made are found to be unsubstantiated, all relevant parties will be informed and it shall be made clear that the member of staff is exonerated.

Any allegations against a member of staff will be reported to ASKK and Safeguarding and they will be kept informed of the outcome of any investigations.

We take child protection issues very seriously. It should therefore be noted that action will be taken against any persons making allegations that are found to be malicious, mischievous, vexatious or spurious.

Allegations of abuse against a member of LISC's personnel or anyone in their household

Following investigation, LISC will consider taking, and if necessary and appropriate, will take the necessary measures to safeguard the child against any member of its personnel, where it believes children are at risk of abuse from that member of the LISC personnel or of their household, even in cases where there may be no criminal prosecution. Cessation from a role within LISC's personnel (without prejudice) may be necessary to protect all concerned, including the member of LISC's personnel or his/her household member.

LISC will make its own assessment of whether a child's welfare is at risk, whatever the outcome of a police or Safeguarding investigation may be. The level of evidence needed for criminal prosecution is likely to be higher than that which may trigger valid and appropriate precautionary proceedings taken by LISC.

Appropriate precautionary proceedings and grounds for concern over its children's welfare may therefore be based on 'balance of probability', rather than on evidence 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

In any instance of an allegation of child abuse LISC will, after reasonable investigation and if satisfied on a balance of probabilities that there is substance to the allegation, immediately terminate any contract or other arrangement with that member of the LISC personnel or other person. LISC has a duty to terminate any possible contact between the child and that person and report the alleged abuse to the Criminal Record Bureau.

Where LISC has 'low level' concerns that do not amount to allegations or suspicions of specific abuse, but which may indicate the possibility of abuse occurring, the Co-principal or designated member of staff will discuss these with ASKK.

Recruitment and screening

It is an undertaking of LISC to make all its personnel aware of this safeguarding policy and to request them to sign a Safeguarding Declaration. LISC will seek to take up not fewer than two references as to the character and suitability of any person under their control and their suitability to have contact with a child.

All applicant LISC personnel must declare any history, criminal or civil, of child abuse. Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks must be sought to confirm this. Permission to interact with children is dependent upon a judgement of these declarations and the results of an enhanced CRB check.

If any member of LISC 's personnel is considered to be a risk to children, s/he needs to understand that s/he will not be allowed to work with children again in LISC or any allied organisation/agency.

All LISC personnel, when using outsourced services (e.g. taxi firms) whose personnel may have contact with a child, must obtain a written assurance from the service provider that all such personnel have been subjected to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB checks) and other relevant checks have also been done according to any other legal requirements or LISC guidelines.

Complaints and abuse

The SO needs to ensure that key people who deal with complaints and concerns are fully aware of this policy document and that there is the possibility of certain complaints understating an allegation of abuse and therefore any such complaints should be routed via the appropriate channels.

Staff concern that action is not being taken

Although extremely unlikely, it is possible that staff may feel that the Safeguarding Officer is not taking appropriate action, which as a consequence is exposing students to potential harm. If a member of staff believes this to be the case, despite having made the Safeguarding Officer aware of their concerns for a student, then they should regard themselves as having responsibility to raise the issues directly with the Proprietor, immediately advising the Manager that they have done so.

False alarms

It is important to realise that adherence to the Children Act will inevitably lead to some investigations being triggered which do not substantiate the allegations made, as well as those that do and to entirely false allegations. It is a basic assumption that it is better to accept some false alarms than to fail to initiate the specialist investigation of instances of real abuse. The Safeguarding Authorities will work with the Co-principal of LISC, LISC personnel, parents, tutors and children involved in any false alarm investigation to assist in recovery from the incident, as well as working with LISC to assist in 'living through' and recovering from a substantial investigation.

Whistleblowing

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where adults fail to do so. All adults involved in LISC 's provision of care should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of other adults. Please see Whistleblowing policy below.