

# Child Safeguarding in Projects- Best Practice Guidance

Prepared for the:

British Council English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) Programme  
in Bangladesh, India and Nepal

March 2016

By

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# Introduction to the British Council's Child Safeguarding Approach

The British Council's global approach to child safeguarding is well established and creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. The British Council believes that child protection requires everyone to take responsibility, recognises that the care and welfare of children is paramount and that all children have the right to protection from all types of harm.

The British Council recognises that they have a fundamental duty of care towards all children they engage with, including a duty to protect them from abuse. We achieve this through compliance with UK child protection laws and relevant laws in each of the countries where we operate, as well as by adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989.

A child is defined in the British Council as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday (UNCRC 1989) irrespective of the age of majority in the country where a child is, or their home country.

## **The British Council is committed to:**

- Valuing, respecting and listening to children
- Ensuring all necessary checks are made when recruiting staff
- Maintaining strong child protection systems and procedures for staff
- Training its staff and providing a common understanding of child protection issues to inform planning and practice
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children and parents/carers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff through clear processes, supervision, and support.

## **Background**

International Child Protection Advisors (ICPA) were asked by the EDGE Regional programme lead to conduct and evaluation of the programme in the context of its child safeguarding measures within the three project countries. The evaluation was designed and carried out around the needs of the primary intended users, namely the senior management team of the British Council EDGE Programme and highlights best practice standards in developing and running such programmes.

### **Terms of reference:**

The evaluation was designed to link in with the British Council's existing standards of best practice in child safeguarding:

1. Systems and procedures to prevent and respond to incidents
2. Safer recruitment to select staff that are suitable to work with children
3. Information and communication to raise staff and customer awareness
4. Education and training to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills
5. Advice and support to enable staff to make safe and informed decisions
6. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

## Overview of key findings in all countries evaluated

There is much to promote and showcase amongst the benefits of the EDGE project within all three countries visited during this evaluation. The key areas observed within Bangladesh and Nepal where programs are more established, and the potential benefits recognised in India where the EDGE program has only just begun were:

- The empowerment of adolescent girls and young women in rural communities
- The growth in confidence demonstrated by project beneficiaries
- The development of functional skills in English and ICT
- The development of leadership and organisational skills among young peer leaders
- Awareness-raising of issues integral to the project’s purpose – female participation in the lives of communities, access to information and opportunities, barriers to female participation in paid employment and so on, and
- Positive recognition of the work of the project among rural communities.

## ■ How to minimise risks in your projects

This section is intended to provide guidance to organisations working with children to enable them to mitigate potential child safeguarding risks within their projects.

Topic	Recommendations
<p><b>Child Safeguarding Policies</b></p>	<p>The organisation should have a child protection policy which is available and accessible to all staff, and a code of conduct describing appropriate behaviour of adults towards children. Designated Child Protection Focal Points should be nominated within projects and cover arrangements in place.</p> <p>Child protection risk assessments should be undertaken for any events and trips involving children, and essential information and consent obtained.</p> <p>Child protection clauses should be included in all contracts/agreements/MoUs with partners, suppliers, providers (who the project works with, through and to. This includes contractors, sub-contractors, grant recipients, suppliers, trustees, agency staff, consultants, volunteers and interns.)</p> <p>E-safety measures should be in place where relevant.</p> <p>The existence of a child protection policy or an agreement to sign up to the organisation’s policy statement forms an essential part of all agreements.</p> <p><u>For organisations who are developing their own Child Safeguarding policies, the following best practice considerations should be included:</u></p> <p>There should be a policy statement that confirms the organisation’s commitment to protecting all children from harm, its definitions of abuse; that the policy is based on international and national laws that protect children from harm, and for whom the policy is binding.</p> <p>There should be a section on prevention, which addresses safe recruitment, a code of conduct detailing appropriate and inappropriate behaviour toward children; a policy on the safe use of images and the handling of information pertaining to children.</p> <p>There should be a brief explanation about child safeguarding risk assessments for all events/activities involving children and for programmes/projects that affect children. In the section on response, the policy should explain how the organisation manages disclosures of child safeguarding concerns and the reporting processes.</p> <p>There should be a brief explanation about the designated child safeguarding persons and the role they play and, if there is a child safeguarding committee, an explanation of the purpose of the committee.</p> <p>If the organisation works with partner organisations, there should be a section on what minimum child safeguarding requirements are expected of partners.</p> <p>There should also be a brief section on how the organisation will implement its policy. This can be in the form of bullet points.</p>

Topic	Recommendations
	<p>Finally, the policy should state that the child safeguarding policy will be reviewed at a minimum of every three years.</p>
<p><b>Communication of the Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Guidelines.</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendations for the communication of the policy:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure access for all staff</li> <li>• Create appropriate language translated versions</li> <li>• Circulate to all staff and other stakeholders with a reminder of the need to be familiar and act in line with the policy</li> <li>• Ensure access for all staff to the full set of child safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance available, and promote these with staff and relevant others</li> <li>• Arrange induction training on the Child Safeguarding Policy and other safeguarding documents for all staff</li> <li>• Develop summary versions and promotional materials to support further communication of safeguarding messages and measures, including child-friendly materials</li> <li>• Work with partners, to consider how children and communities can best be briefed on the Child Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Involve children and parents in the development of policies through consultation and facilitated workgroups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Code of Conduct (CoC)</b></p>	<p>Any partner's CoC should set clear codes of behaviour that describes how it is committed to promoting the well-being of children, preventing abuse and creating a safe, positive environment for children wherein their rights are upheld and they are treated with dignity and respect.</p> <p>This document or a version of it must be made available to all staff and visitors.</p> <p>For visitors consider a shorter version that states the following by example:</p> <p><i>"Welcome to our project, whilst you are here please do not take photographs of our children without proper organisational consent.</i></p> <p><i>Do not take contact details of any children or ask for personal information from them.</i></p> <p><i>Where practical use assigned lavatories for adults. If you have any concerns regarding a child's welfare please report to (Name / contact number)"</i></p> <p>Explanation of these documents should form part of all induction training.</p> <p>Consider both offline and online behaviour in any code of conduct.</p> <p>Create appropriate language versions of the document</p> <p>Involve children in the development of policies and CoC through consultation and facilitated workgroups.</p>
<p><b>Risk Assessments</b></p>	<p>Contractual arrangements with partners should ensure all child safeguarding requirements are included regarding the Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, Implementation, Training, Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation.</p> <p>A risk assessment should be conducted prior to contractual arrangements being agreed. The risk assessment should look at the partner's suitability in the context of its child safeguarding measures. This risk assessment should inform next steps of the agreement.</p> <p>Child protection risk assessments should be undertaken for any events and trips involving children, and essential information and consent obtained.</p>
<p><b>Safe Recruitment</b></p>	<p>Any recruitment interview should be seen as an opportunity to assess the candidates' suitability in relation to child protection.</p> <p>The designated focal point for child safeguarding should remind the interview panel of some basics in relation to child abuse, e.g. that abusers look completely 'normal,' are often very skilled at deception, salesmanship and manipulation, 'grooming' (of organisations as well as individual children).</p> <p>Therefore, bearing in mind the principles of an equal opportunities interview (i.e. everyone should be asked the same questions without discrimination), the interview panel should pay attention to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in employment history</li> </ul>

Topic	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent changes of employment or address</li> <li>• Reasons for leaving employment (especially if this appears sudden)</li> <li>• It's also good practice to get clarification on any duties or accomplishments that come across as 'vague' in a CV in relation to work with children.</li> </ul> <p>During the interview ask specific questions that allow a person's attitude to child protection to be tested.</p> <p>Ensure there are clear person specifications, job descriptions, advertisements and applications in place for all posts.</p> <p>More than one person should be involved in short-listing and interviewing candidates, using a transparent scoring system.</p> <p>Applicants should provide 3 referees, 3 pieces of identification and original copies of qualifications before appointment.</p> <p>Criminal record clearance or equivalent police checks should be obtained for all staff working with children and their managers.</p> <p>IF THIS IS NOT feasible (due to local context), a documented log to demonstrate that feasibility was researched and rationale/reasons given for why it can't be obtained and with appropriate authorisation should be in place. Note: Self declarations should be used as default.</p> <p>Child protection related questions should be asked at interviews.</p> <p>A probationary period should be in place for all staff.</p> <p>Arrangements should be in place to handle a positive disclosure by any applicant.</p>
<b>Training</b>	<p>All staff should complete mandatory face to face child protection induction training course or a briefing, this could also be reinforced through e-learning resources.</p> <p>The induction training should include an understanding of all Child Safeguarding policies, categories of abuse, signs and symptoms of abuse, how to report issues of concern and for adults how to manage a disclosure from a child.</p> <p>Periodic child protection briefings for all staff should be delivered (face to face).</p> <p>Trained child protection focal points should be established within the project.</p> <p>Management should ensure this training is implemented.</p> <p>Child protection focal points should have on-going access to relevant training and opportunities to update knowledge and skills.</p>
<b>Reporting</b>	<p>Partnership agreements between organisations should clearly mention the mandatory nature of reporting and the methods to report any issues of abuse, or suspected child abuse.</p> <p>During planning and negotiation stages with any partner a specific risk assessment should be conducted to ensure proper reporting processes are in place.</p> <p>Reporting procedures should be developed at a local level in each country to identify what, how and when concerns are reported.</p> <p>The local / country Procedures should include agreed management guidance on when and how to report concerns to national authorities as well as the local child safeguarding infrastructure and locally available child safeguarding resources.</p> <p>A template reporting document should be designed to capture all relevant information and a simple flow chart giving guidance on when, how and who to report to should be developed and made available to all staff.</p> <p>Best practice would dictate that those managing disclosures from children should be over 18, where there is potential that children might receive a disclosure from another child this should be treated as a matter of concern within any project and steps should be put in place to manage any identified risks through formal risk assessment processes.</p> <p>Reporting procedures should be publicised and visibly communicated to all staff, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Appropriate language versions should be developed to ensure guidelines are understood.</p> <p>The reporting process should be reviewed annually to ensure it is working</p> <p>The reporting process should be included in all induction training/briefings.</p> <p>All project staff, participants, parents and any visitors should know how to report any issues of concern.</p>

Topic	Recommendations
<p><b>Potential online activity within a project</b></p>	<p>Where the project has any potential online activity for children consideration should be given to raising awareness of the risks children might face online, for example;</p> <p><b>Top 10 Tips for Online Safety for Children</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be kind to each other online – be kind online and treat others as you would like to be treated. If someone says or does something to upset you do not reply, as reacting can make things worse. Instead block the person on your contacts list, tell an adult you trust and report them to the website. If you are being bullied online you can collect evidence of this to show to an adult by taking screen shots and saving pictures and emails</li> <li>2. Keep your personal information private – think carefully before sharing information like where you live, your email address or where you go to school on your profile or when chatting online. You might be sharing your personal details with more people than you think</li> <li>3. Use strong passwords – protect yourself from hackers by using passwords that are not easy for others to guess. Use a combination of upper and lower case letters and numbers and do not share your passwords with others, even your friends</li> <li>4. Not everyone is who they say they are – you may feel like you know an online friend really well but it can be easy to lie online. Even if someone shows you a picture or video of themselves, it could be a picture of someone else or be faked. Think carefully about who you chat to and who you add as a friend online, just because someone is a friend of a friend does not mean that you know who they are</li> <li>5. Check your privacy settings – change your privacy settings so that only your friends can post on your profile and see the information that you share. Remember to check your privacy settings regularly as sites often update these leading you to share more personal info publicly than you may want to</li> <li>6. Trust your instincts – if something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. You don't have to do anything you don't want to. If you ever feel uncomfortable about what someone is talking to you about or asking you to do on a social networking site, chat room, IM or on webcam block them, tell an adult you trust and report it to the website</li> <li>7. Think before you post – stop and think before filling out forms online, updating your status or posting pictures and videos of yourself or your friends. Think about who can see what you post online, once shared you can easily lose control</li> <li>8. Take a trusted adult with you when meeting online friends – if you have made a friend online and you decide to meet up in real life, keep safe by taking a trusted adult with you</li> <li>9. Check your old accounts and profiles – if you have an account on a site that you no longer use, go back and check your privacy settings and who your personal details and pictures are being shared with. Close your account if you don't think you will use it again</li> <li>10. If you are worried tell an adult you trust - if you ever see anything online that upsets you or something happens that makes you feel uncomfortable talk to an adult you trust about it.</li> </ol>

# EDGE Project overview

English and digital skills are strongly connected to the labour market but the opportunities to develop and strengthen these skills in Bangladesh, India and Nepal are limited, especially for adolescent girls, and girls and women have less access to education and ICTs, and less access to learning English than boys and men. This is resulting in a gender digital divide which could lead to a serious skill imbalance and unequal life chances for girls and women in the future, resulting in increased gender inequality. 28 million adolescents are aged 10 – 19 years in Bangladesh alone which make up about one fifth of the total population – a challenge for Bangladesh in terms of employability and skills development.

The long-term goal of the EDGE project is:

*“Adolescent girls from marginalised communities can make more informed and independent life choices, as is their right, in order to contribute fully to the family, the economy and society.”*

The project creates and provides easy access to education by offering English and digital education for adolescents in their communities through non-formal after school clubs. The project uses a peer leader network, and these peer leaders are trained by the British Council. The peer leaders facilitate weekly sessions using mini net books, laptops or phablets pre-loaded with British Council digital interactive English resources mapped to the various national curriculums, as well as communicative spoken English activities.

The project teaches ICT literacy and 21st Century skills through English, girls get experiencing using mouse and keypad as well as touch screen and apps.

In the 2015 / 16 financial year, a significant investment was made by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) which has enabled the British Council to develop new materials for the project which will lead to the intervention time being increased from 6 months to two years. We have also been working with a team from the University of Leeds, our delivery partners and local research partners to develop a Theory of Change, project logic models (by country), and a monitoring and evaluation (M and E) framework. We have also completed a small scale piece of research on the impact of the EDGE project on peer leaders from 2012 – now.

To date the EDGE project comprises 182 clubs, led by 621 peer leaders with 6581 participants throughout Bangladesh alone. In India there are plans for 5 clubs, with 100 participants. In Nepal there are 80 clubs run from 40 different venues, which are led by 160 peer leaders, with 1920 participants.

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<sup>1</sup>www.un.org, 2015

# Terms and Definitions

- **Associates:** these include all individuals and organisations who have been brought into contact with children or are party to child sensitive data while working for or with the organisation. For example board members, volunteers, incentive workers, sponsors, visitors, consultants and contractors. Also the Staff and/or representatives of partner organisations and local governments
- **Child:** any person under the age of 18 years
- **Child Protection:** programming design and delivery which is focused on upholding the protection rights of children in the communities and countries in which the organisation works
- **Child safeguarding:** the responsibilities, preventative measures and activities that the organisation undertakes to protect children ensuring that no child comes to harm as a result of their association with the organisation, their contact with the Staff and Associates and/or their participation in the organisations projects and programmes. In addition, it incorporates the organisations responsibility to ensure that where there are concerns over a child's welfare or where a child has been harmed, actions are taken to address this and concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities in line with the national and local procedures
- **Code of Conduct:** the principles, values, standards, or rules of behaviour that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organisation in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations
- **Complaint:** a formal statement that something is wrong or unsatisfactory
- **Issue:** the complaint/incident/allegation being reported
- **Partners/partnership:** a formal arrangement for working jointly to achieve a specific goal, where each partner's roles and responsibilities are set out in a written agreement
- **Risk management:** the identification, assessment and prioritisation of risks followed by coordinated, economical and efficient use of resources to minimise, monitor and control the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events, or to make the most of opportunities. The risks with the greatest loss and greatest probability of happening are handled first. The strategies to manage risk typically include transferring the risk to another party, avoiding the risk, reducing the negative effect or probability of the risk, or even accepting some or all of the potential or actual consequences of a particular risk
- **Staff:** all paid or unpaid Staff of any part of the organisation
- **Stakeholders:** those (a person, group, organisation etc.) who affect or can be affected by the organisations actions.

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<sup>1</sup>The UNCRC also defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years of age