

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Protecting children from abuse is at the heart of our organisational values. We take our duty of care towards children extremely seriously as reflected in our zero tolerance child protection policy.

Children are a key customer group for the British Council. Annually, we engage with millions of children worldwide through a broad range of activities involving frequent and intermittent contact including overnight stays. This work is developing in line with our growth targets and with greater emphasis on income generating, partnering and bidding for contracts.

Additionally, we now work with very young children in our early years portfolio. We have extended our online offer through digital and mobile technology, and are increasingly engaging with vulnerable groups of children in fragile states. We are involved in education capacity building work that impacts on children in the state school sector, and we also deliver work through more partnerships across the public and private sector including with HSBC, Premier League, and with UK government departments such as Department of Education, DFID, the FCO and overseas governments.

This work we do with children impacts on their lives and opportunities, and makes a significant contribution to building trust, understanding and relationships for children and youth populations in the countries where we work. Keeping children safe therefore is integral to the British Council brand, reputation, success and cultural relations impact.

1.2 Purpose of the strategy

The purpose of the child protection strategy is to:

- Clarify how to take the organisation to the next stage of maturity in its child protection work in light of its level 1 child safe certification status with Keeping Children Safe(KCS);
- Develop a shared understanding of priorities; and
- Provide the basis for resourcing decisions and for a more detailed road map to implement the strategy.

1.3 Process for developing the strategy

This strategy has been developed by having conversations with external and internal key stakeholders, and taking into account findings outlined in the Keeping Children Safe Stage 1 Certification Report produced in July 2015.

Dialogue with external agencies such as CEOP and member organisations of Keeping Children Safe has taken place to benchmark and to ensure we are aligned and up to date with legal and regulatory requirements and current best practice. The Keeping Children Safe certification report has played an invaluable role in helping the Council to identify gaps and making recommendations on how to strengthen policy and child safe practice in future work.

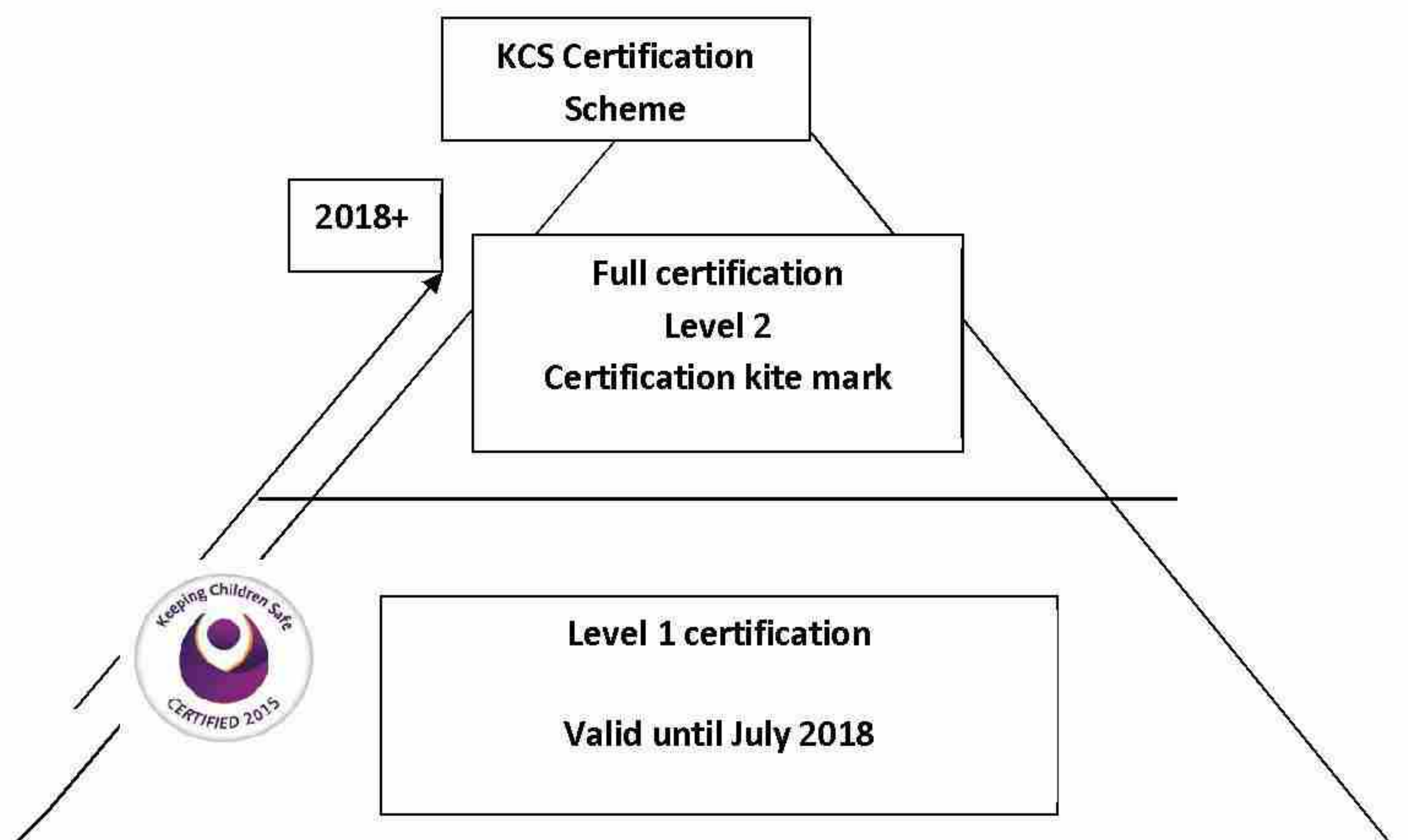
Internal dialogue has been with a cross-section of senior managers in the British Council overseas and in the UK about their priorities and child protection needs. It has also included consultation with the global child protection network. This involved the Child Protection Team facilitating a consultation session at a Review and Planning Workshop with Regional and SBU Strategic Leads and senior managers in the British Council in November 2015 which helped identify emerging priorities and support needs.

The child protection team's expertise and operational experience of what works from lessons learnt over the past two years has also been taken into consideration.

2. CURRENT POSITION AND STRATEGIC VISION

We have been on a critical journey since 2010 creating a common understanding of child protection issues and language; developing good practice and a global community of support; thereby increasing our accountability and governance in this area.

We now have a solid foundation in place reflected in the attainment of level 1 child safe certification from Keeping Children Safe in the summer of 2015. Level 1 certification is valid until July 2018. Going forward we face the challenge of mainstreaming the child safe approach and ensuring it becomes business as usual.



Our vision is to be a child safe and friendly organisation, fully compliant with the KCS international child protection standards. It is our aim to graduate to full certification level 2 child safe status with KCS by 2018, acknowledging both the complexity and scope of this ambition. We will actively work towards implementing the recommendations from the KCS level 1 report and seek full certification for either the whole organisation or adopt a risk based approach and select specific operations for level 2 certification as appropriate.

This revised strategy builds on what we have learnt, the progress we have made. It outlines our priorities leading to 2018. It also reflects the changing and challenging external environment including greater attention and scrutiny being paid to how organisations ensure that children they are in contact with are kept safe.

3. STRATEGIC APPROACH

<p>Valuing people – child centred & friendly</p> <p>Integrity – zero tolerance & accountability</p> <p>Mutuality – dialogue & working together</p> <p>Creativity – consultation & tailored to context</p> <p>Professionalism – getting it right & fit for purpose</p>	<p>Ensuring children are protected is inextricably linked to our values and cultural relations role. In valuing children and recognising their potential in this way, we are committed to placing them at the centre. Children make an active contribution to promoting international understanding, creating international opportunities and building trust for the UK worldwide. Our ultimate goal is to deliver cultural relations whilst keeping children, staff and the organisation safe. Child safe programming can help us achieve this by strengthening our credibility and reputation, attracting people to work and engage with us, and positively benchmarking us alongside other organisations.</p>
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We will continue to respond to the demands of the child protection external environment and we commit to working energetically to achieve this by remaining reflexive to change and taking a mainstreaming approach. We will seek to positively influence our partners to do the same. Our established expertise in Safeguarding and Child Protection will support our emphasis on becoming recognised as a centre of excellence for child safe business, enabling our growth and continuing transformation. As we continue to grow our English business with Young Learners, our opportunity for acquiring new and global contracts will be enhanced by the quality of our brand in the market place.

We will draw on the resource and contributions of the child protection team, the global child protection network and our workforce, partners, and contacts worldwide (including other member organisations of Keeping Children Safe), to foster change, safe programming and promote shared knowledge and interest. We will seek to ensure principals of equal opportunity and diversity are addressed through a respect for local context.

Our work is underpinned by a number of principles that emerged as fundamental to the integration and further development of child protection.

These principles ensure the strategy:

- Is child-centred, realistic, proportionate and pragmatic;
- Enables the organisation to graduate from level 1 child safe certification with Keeping Children Safe, consistent with the Maturity Model being pursued;
- Supports a considered leadership and accountability process;
- Enables safe business through child safe practice;
- Makes an active contribution to the attainment of our growth targets by aiding the expansion of activities involving children; and
- Addresses external drivers relating to compliance and managing risk.

4. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The primary driver for the 2016-18 strategy is to build on and add to the positive work of recent years by mainstreaming and actively managing child protection into new and existing business processes and systems.

By extending the scope of our work from a direct contact base to one that includes impact on children, we aim to protect those children with whom we come into contact primarily through third party and partnership working. This requires us to broaden and deepen our engagement particularly in advocacy, positive influencing and systems monitoring.

The key priority areas for the next phase of our work are aligned both to our values and risk management and include:

- 1) **Case management** – A combination of increased staff awareness, intense media coverage of high profile child abuse cases alongside heightened public scrutiny and external probity, has led to a marked increase in allegations and reports of abuse and concern. As part of the case review and performance improvement system, we will carry out systematic analysis and sharing of case work experience including lessons learnt. This will ensure that practice and services are constantly improved.
- 2) **Historic and enquiry work** – We will ensure a robust and transparent response to all enquiries and investigations from external statutory bodies, and apply recommendations from those enquiries where necessary to comply with our duties and responsibility for the protection of children.
- 3) **Safer Recruitment** – We will support HR and recruiting managers to mainstream pre-employment screening and safe recruitment practice to ensure that suitable staff, including suppliers and consultants, is working with children in the UK and overseas.
- 4) **Third Party Working** – As we are increasingly working with and through partners, suppliers and contractors it has become clear that there is a growing need to provide a clear framework on how to work through third parties. Such a framework should enable us to reach common and transparent agreements, mutual learning and the development of good practice on keeping children safe
- 5) **E-Safety** – As part of our growth and continuing transformation we are increasingly embedding digital and mobile technology in the work we do. Whilst this creates opportunity it also poses risk for children, therefore staff and partners require further guidance and procedures on e-safety process and practice including how to raise awareness with children and parents/carers.
- 6) **Increased Risk in Vulnerable Groups**– To address abuse prevention and risk mitigation in new and emerging business for groups with specific vulnerabilities (Early Years, Refugees, Children with Disabilities etc.), we will set up and formulate communication systems and practise procedures to ensure full understanding of the complexity and appropriate intervention.
- 7) **Awareness Raising and Training** - We will continue to raise awareness on keeping children safe. We will also utilise the branding opportunities associated with being Keeping Children Safe certified in order to promote our approach externally and to gain recognition for quality of brand in the market place.

We will also continue to equip staff with child protection knowledge, skills and confidence by promoting compliance with the mandatory basic awareness e-learning course, production of tailored training packages upon request and

delivering periodic refresher training of our global child protection network. Additionally training resources will be developed to raise awareness with partners and suppliers.

- 8) **Children's Participation** – Encouraging and promoting the active involvement of children in our work reflects their centrality in our child protection agenda. It also demonstrates our responsibility to upholding their rights as well as our belief in their agency and capacity. We will extend and develop our programme of inclusiveness and support through creatively enabling their participation in work developments going forward.
- 9) **Advocacy & Positive Influencing** – In targeting work that impacts on children and making it safe, we will contribute to the growing body of international knowledge and understanding around organisational safe practice. We will simultaneously strengthen our relations locally from schools and small enterprises through to government ministries. We will work to ensure that complex and sensitive operations that bring us into contact with children are accountable to child protection considerations.
- 10) **External Relations** – Working beyond the boundary of our organisation we will continue to develop mutuality through strong working relationships with peers both internationally and in the UK. We will comply with new and emerging reporting requirements, and contribute to the development of strong working practices by sharing our expertise and experience.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Everyone shares responsibility for keeping children safe irrespective of individual roles.

We require strong leadership and accountability from those with influence, authority and resources: the Board of Trustees, Chair and Chief Executive of the British Council, the Executive Board and Management Board and senior managers. Their support for the Strategy and commitment to it through their behaviours, attitudes and effective use of resources will make a critical difference. We need the full support of staff globally and to continue to share responsibility.

The Child Protection Team, in partnership with the global child protection network, will support the business to embed child safe practice into planning and operational practice and ensure that improvement can be sustained on a day to day basis effectively by fulfilling three core roles:

