

Principles of safeguarding and the NCTJ's policy

Introduction

The National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) believes the principles of safeguarding provide a benchmark of good practice in achieving its charitable objectives. They raise awareness and help us decide what we need to do to safeguard the people the charity supports, and to minimise avoidable risks.

The principles include having: an effective safeguarding policy, procedures and systems; a commitment to prevention and risk management; best practice codes of behaviour; clear guidance on implementation; commitment to equality and inclusion; good communication; provision of education and training; and regular monitoring and continuous improvement. These safeguarding principles have been adopted by the NCTJ. They must be read and understood by our own staff, our representatives and by our third party centres.

These principles are designed to help safeguard the people using the services offered by the NCTJ, our representatives and our related parties. They also help ensure that the NCTJ and our centres and stakeholders take positive action in response to safeguarding concerns.

This policy is based on the standards of safeguarding that the Joint Council for Qualifications have adopted and these standards reflect current government and Charity Commission guidance.

NCTJ commitment to safeguarding

This policy communicates the NCTJ's commitment to safeguarding and sets out the role that all staff and representatives have to play in protecting people from harm.

The NCTJ takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. In line with advice from the Charity Commission, we agree that safeguarding must be a priority for all charities, not just those working with groups traditionally considered 'at risk'.

Everybody has the right to be safe, no matter who they are or what their circumstances are, and the public expects charities, quite rightly, to be safe and trusted places.

The NCTJ aims to provide a safe and trusted environment which safeguards anyone who comes into contact with it including beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.

We recognise that safeguarding goes beyond preventing physical abuse, and includes protecting people from harm generally, including neglect, emotional abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, terrorism, extremism, and the consequences of the misuse of personal data.

We have fostered an organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding, so that it is safe for those affected to come forward and report incidents and concerns with the assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly.

We are committed to having adequate safeguarding policies, procedures and measures to protect people. We aim to be clear as to how incidents and allegations will be handled

should they arise, including reporting to the relevant authorities, such as the Charity Commission and the police.

Our policy is designed to give clear procedures for how to report and record any concerns and incidents to us. The NCTJ ensures that all staff and volunteers are familiar with this policy and know where to find it on our website.

As a media industry charity and awarding body/end-point assessment organisation for journalists, we also expect our education and training centres to have additional processes which suit these specific circumstances. These form part of our accreditation requirements for training journalists.

Roles and responsibilities

The NCTJ provides training, qualifications, end-point assessments and support to meet the needs of individuals, the media industry and our democratic society. In delivering these products and services, we have a role in ensuring the welfare of NCTJ staff, representatives, learners and candidates.

Some of our activities are undertaken by our employed staff; others by people who are contracted in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this policy, those who are contracted, and not permanently employed by the NCTJ, are referred to as 'representatives'.

There are normally three key areas in which safeguarding issues may be raised in relation to our work:

- the conduct of NCTJ permanent staff or representatives towards learners and candidates, whether in person or online;
- the appropriateness of our products and services;
- disclosure of information regarding personal welfare, or the welfare of one of their peers, to the permanent staff or representative of the NCTJ, whether directly or through written responses or on social media.

The NCTJ ensures that all permanent staff and representatives are aware of safeguarding issues and that there are procedures for dealing with them. We record and monitor safeguarding issues and ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Cases not relating to the conduct of a member of permanent staff or representative will involve formal reporting to the centre and/or the relevant protection authority for resolution. In these cases the NCTJ must be satisfied that the issues have been acknowledged and we will ask for confirmation of this from the organisation to which the referral was made.

Cases involving the conduct of NCTJ permanent staff will be formally investigated and dealt with in line with our disciplinary procedures.

Cases involving the conduct of our representatives will also be formally investigated and dealt with in line with the terms and conditions of their third party agreements with us.

Our centres

A centre is the place where a learner/candidate will undertake study, training and assessment with our kite mark.

To maximise the effectiveness of protection measures, it is vital that the NCTJ works in partnership with centres. This is to ensure a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.

The NCTJ must be satisfied that any partner organisation has in place adequate safeguarding arrangements, including appropriate policies and mechanisms to provide assurance on compliance.

The NCTJ is very conscious of safeguarding issues and we will do all within our remit to ensure the safety of our candidates. However, as centres have more direct contact with candidates, they have primary responsibility for the welfare of their candidates, progressing and resolving issues and raising awareness generally.

The NCTJ and centres communicate directly with one another on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the contractual relationship which results in candidates taking assessments is between the NCTJ and a centre. There is no direct contractual relationship between the NCTJ and a candidate or group of candidates. However, we would encourage candidates to inform us of any incidents and to keep in touch about investigations and their conclusions.

Safeguarding and journalism

Journalists report about issues of public interest and have a vital role to play in democracies by providing information to the public. The right of journalists to carry out their work under safe conditions, without fear of being harassed, attacked, beaten and killed is an issue of paramount importance for freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

It also needs to be understood by those entering journalism that the nature of the job means that they are likely to face challenging situations and that journalism cannot be 'sugar-coated'. Educators, trainers and employers should ensure that journalists are prepared for this and are supported in dealing with these challenges. The NCTJ plays a role in helping to ensure standards of training and sharing of practice.

Centres running NCTJ-accredited courses must have adequate safeguarding policies in place and must meet our performance standards for journalism education and training.

Regulated activity: children and vulnerable adults

Our learners and candidates have normally reached the age of 18 when they come into contact with the NCTJ and our representatives, and we therefore do not normally work with children.

We are aware that we may come into contact with vulnerable adults but this will be very infrequent and our work is not within the definition of 'regulated activity'.

NCTJ employees, and those acting as associates or representatives of an awarding body/end-point assessment organisation, know that they should not engage in 'regulated activity' as they must not be left unaccompanied with candidates who are children and vulnerable adults.

The centre must always ensure that a responsible adult accompanies awarding body/EPAO personnel, including associates and representatives, at all times.

Procedures and systems

The NCTJ aims to have clearly defined reporting procedures and response mechanisms that ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met. This includes a designated 'safeguarding officer' who is normally our head of awarding. The NCTJ adopts measures to minimise the risk of abuse by any person it retains to engage in any activity in relation to its qualifications and end-point assessments. We ensure that obligations of confidentiality are respected and that any safeguarding matter will be dealt with sensitively and appropriately.

If anyone is worried about a safeguarding issue that has arisen in relation to the NCTJ please report your concerns in confidence to our safeguarding officer as soon as possible. We will acknowledge your issue within 24 working hours and discuss the appropriate course of action with you. If you are studying at one of our centres you should ideally take up the matter with the centre as that institution will have a safeguarding policy and procedure approved by the NCTJ. If for any reason you feel unable to do this please contact the NCTJ safeguarding officer to discuss your situation.

If anyone is unhappy with the handling of a safeguarding issue by the NCTJ, our complaints procedure can be instigated.

Codes of behaviour

The NCTJ has codes of behaviour that set out acceptable standards of behaviour and good practice for staff and representatives. These are detailed in our staff handbook and our accreditation information pack and performance standards.

Equality and inclusion

In accordance with equality legislation, in the exercise of its function of developing and awarding qualifications and end-point assessments, the NCTJ has due regard to the need to combat discrimination and ensure procedures are equitably applied. For more information, please see our equal opportunities and fair access policies published on our website.

Implementation and communication

The NCTJ gives clear guidance to permanent staff and representatives on how this safeguarding policy will be adapted and applied.

The NCTJ makes this safeguarding policy publicly available on its website. The policy is regularly reviewed, taking into account comments from appropriate stakeholders.

Education and training

The NCTJ provides appropriate initial and refresher training and development opportunities to staff and representatives. Centres are also supported in their safeguarding responsibilities through education and training forums and events facilitated by the NCTJ.

Monitoring

This safeguarding policy was introduced following a thorough review of the charity's safeguarding governance and management arrangements and performance. The NCTJ will regularly monitor the implementation of its safeguarding policy at least on an annual basis to ensure it is robust and fit for purpose. This will be overseen by the quality assurance and standards committee and reported to NCTJ trustees.