

International Development Research Funders Statement on Safeguarding

On the day of the international summit, *'Putting People First: Tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, in the aid sector'*, we, the Department for International Development (DFID), the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the global charitable foundation, Wellcome, commit to supporting the development of the highest standards in organisational culture, systems and practice required to prevent and tackle all incidents of harm and abuse. We are working collectively, with our partners in the research and development community to strengthen our safeguarding practices and compliance processes.

As major UK funders of international development research, we condemn all forms of harm and abuse, including bullying, and sexual and other forms of harassment. We take a zero-tolerance approach to harm and abuse to any individual employed through or associated with our programmes in all contexts; whether in humanitarian or fragile and conflict-affected settings, in other field contexts, or within the international or UK research and development community which we fund.

We recognise that the nature of scientific endeavour in which research teams may be working with individuals or communities facing systemic vulnerabilities, and where junior staff may be dependent upon senior staff for mentorship and support, or where research staff may be engaged on short-term contracts, presents situations in which abuses of power may occur.

We pledge to work on raising standards of behaviour across our sector, recognising the strength of existing good practices and working in partnership with the development research community. We will place utmost importance on the protection from harm and abuse of all individuals; including research participants and their communities, and those that volunteer, work (researchers and others) or study in the research sector.

We expect research institutions (universities and other research entities) to promote a culture in which harm and abuse is less likely to happen, and to act swiftly to respond to cases that do emerge, in line with international standards. Tackling bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of abuse requires a multi-pronged approach, focusing on governance, human resources, whistle-blowing and risk management policies. Institutions must have systems and policies which support everyone, integrating clear codes of conduct into processes of recruitment, professional development and promotion, and ensuring that timely, transparent, robust and fair processes are in place and accessible by all. It is not acceptable for any allegation to be ignored and we expect institutions to respond quickly and effectively when allegations are made.

Where necessary and appropriate, we will introduce, following consultation, specific clauses into our contracts and terms and conditions, including requirements that organisations report, at an aggregate level, on incidents occurring and actions taken. We will reserve the right to terminate individual research funding contracts and grants if a breach of safeguarding practice is proven and to review the eligibility of organisations to receive major awards.

We will adopt an evidence-based approach, implementing change where the risk and need is greatest. There is an established wealth of knowledge and experience in research ethics and

research integrity. High-quality frameworks and standards are already in place; UK research institutions have policies on workplace harassment and bullying, and well-established ethical review procedures to guide the conduct of research involving human participants. We need to identify, understand and learn from effective practices, to ensure we and our partners are sufficiently equipped, to protect all individuals from harm and abuse wherever possible, and to respond appropriately to any allegations.

We aim to strengthen organisational capacity and capability across the development research sector, to raise and uphold standards of safeguarding, building on existing frameworks and striving for excellence. As members of the Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board, independently chaired by Professor Baron Peter Piot KCMG, we have requested that the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR), facilitate a dialogue between research funders, academic and research institutes, private sector and civil society to:

- Review existing evidence on safeguarding within international development research.
- Identify and share key aspects of effective practice in prevention and response.
- Develop practical and relevant principles and guidance to support international development funders, universities, research institutes and other organisations that conduct development research.

We will support UKCDR in these activities, preserving a culture of openness, trust and transparency. Collectively through this work and our own organisational changes, we commit to driving up safeguarding standards across the international and domestic research sector, to ensure people are safe and protected where ever they are located.

Co-signed by the following major UK funders of international development research



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



Department
for International
Development



Department
of Health &
Social Care

UK Research
and Innovation

