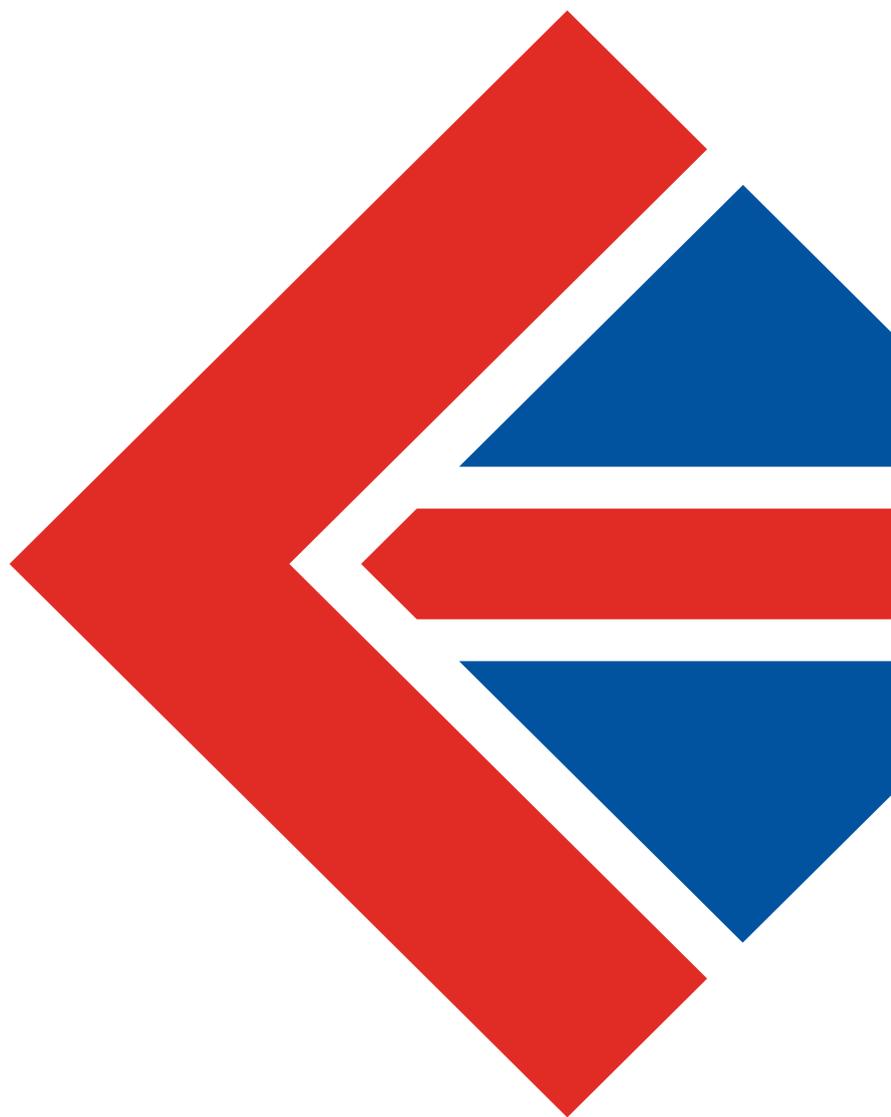


CARE OF STUDENTS AGED UNDER 18

For Agents and Educational Consultants



Care of under-18s: what agents need to know

New requirements for the care of students aged under 18 are being introduced in English UK member centres.

The changes mean that our language schools must be very explicit about their child protection policy and check that everyone working with under-18s is suitable. There are also new requirements on transfers and leisure time, particularly for younger students. The changes are being driven by the Accreditation UK inspection framework, which has been updated to meet (and sometimes exceed) the law in this country, and best practice in looking after under-18s. The new regulations are being introduced during the next year to give centres time to adapt.

Most of the requirements apply to all students under 18, whether or not they count as adults in their home country or what type of course they are on. Sometimes slightly different arrangements can be made for 16 and 17 year olds when the booking is made.

Safeguarding Policies

The regulations say that all centres which enrol under-18s must have a "safeguarding policy" which explains what they do to ensure the safety and well-being of this group of students. This policy must outline:

- How the organisation will work to ensure it only hires people who are safe to work with children
- How staff will behave around under-18s
- How staff will be trained to ensure child safety
- What to do if children make a complaint, which may include physical or sexual abuse
- How records will be kept

All adults in contact with under-18s must know about this policy, and have had some training or guidance on implementing it, and students, parents or legal guardians must also have an accurate description of the level of care and support given to these students. It is also important that parents or guardians are told about those time when students are unsupervised, especially when they are 16 or 17.

Hiring staff

- Centres must be particularly careful when hiring staff who will be responsible for under-18s or spend long periods of time with them. This means that they must check all references, the person's work history, qualifications and proof of identity. They will also be checked for suitability with one of the official UK services, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which looks at criminal and other records in England and Wales.
- Centres should have formal agreements in place with agents which agree that suitability checks have been done on all adults accompanying under-18s, such as group leaders. Group leaders should also be asked to sign forms declaring that they are aware of the centre's safeguarding policy and practices. It is not necessary for centres to get a DBS check on group leaders who have never lived in the UK, although agents will need to verify that group leaders have a clean police record (eg 'police certificate of good conduct' or equivalent).

Care outside lessons

- Centres must also make sure students are supervised and safe outside lessons, which usually means a leisure programme. It is not compulsory to provide a leisure programme for 16 and 17 year old students on adult courses, if it is made clear when the programme is booked that this is not included.
- There must be enough adult supervision for all scheduled activities, and clear rules for what students may do at times when they are not being supervised. If the provider is not taking responsibility for student supervision outside scheduled activity, this must be made clear at the time of booking.

- When students are travelling to and from airports or ports as part of their journey to and from the course, under 16s must be fully accompanied and 16/17 year olds on adult courses should be on arranged transfers. If they are not, there should be written confirmation, some guidance and support, and parents/guardians should be told that there may be problems at the border if UK officials are not happy about the situation.

Accommodation

- The provider is usually responsible for accommodation and meals unless a different arrangement has been made and confirmed in writing.
- Hosts must know about the rules for students outside activity times, and especially the time they are due home at night, and work with the centre to make sure these are followed. Rules should be appropriate to the age of the student.
- A responsible adult, who has been checked (see Hiring Staff) will be in the accommodation overnight and usually when under-16s are present. Students aged under 16 will not be housed with students over 18.
- The centre must have a 24-hour contact number for the parents/ guardians, agent or group leader of students, and in turn they must have a phone number to contact the centre at all times.



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