

# UK AI Olympiad

## Child Protection Policy

*reviewed February 2025*

### A. Policy Statement

The UK AI Olympiad (UKOAI), operating as part of the University of Cambridge, is established to promote artificial intelligence education in schools. UKOAI's core activity is the operation of national AI competitions for UK school students; it also provides AI-based enrichment activities for these students. Throughout this policy, 'children' shall be taken to mean children and young people under the age of 18.

UKOAI is committed, in all its activities, to protecting children from harm. Our personnel includes both volunteers and University staff members who have unsupervised access to, or contact with, children. They are expected to:

- Recognise and accept their responsibilities
- Develop awareness of the issues which can cause harm to children
- Use the procedure below to report concerns

UKOAI will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Adopting child protection procedures and a code of practice for all who act on behalf of the organisation
- Reporting concerns to appropriate authorities
- Providing effective management through support and training
- Operating within the University's broader safeguarding framework

### B. Code of Practice

The Code of Practice emphasises straightforward, actionable guidelines that all personnel must follow:

1. All one-to-one meetings with individual children must take place in publicly accessible areas. For online sessions, use only approved University platforms.
2. Physical contact with children must be avoided entirely.
3. Never transport children alone in vehicles.
4. Maintain professional boundaries in all communications, including digital platforms.
5. Never make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in jest.
6. Listen carefully to any disclosure of inappropriate action, following UKOAI's reporting procedures rather than investigating independently.

7. Show respect and appropriate conduct at all times, excluding any form of bullying, shouting, or discrimination.

## **C. Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The UKOAI has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead who is responsible for handling any concerns about the protection of children. For residential events such as training camps, an additional designated person may be appointed specifically for that event.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Ferenc Huszar. The DSL operates within the University of Cambridge's safeguarding framework and maintains direct communication channels with the University's central safeguarding team.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead's responsibilities include:

Understanding and managing referrals by knowing which outside child protection agencies to contact when concerns arise, ensuring appropriate information is available during referrals, and confirming all referrals in writing under confidential cover. They must liaise effectively with police, local social services, health services, and other agencies as appropriate.

Maintaining records and communication by keeping relevant people within UKOAI and the University informed about any action taken and any further action required. They ensure proper records of any referral and action are kept safely and in confidence.

Providing leadership and training by offering information and advice on child protection within UKOAI, identifying and addressing training needs, and reviewing the operation of the child protection policy regularly to ensure procedures remain current and effective.

The DSL works in partnership with the University to ensure consistent application of policies and access to institutional support when needed.

## **D. Procedure for Reporting Concerns**

Concerns requiring immediate attention must be reported directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. Staff and volunteers might develop concerns through:

- The conduct of a member of UKOAI personnel or University staff
- A child making a disclosure about abuse
- Observable evidence of physical harm
- Unusual behaviour by a child
- Changes in a child's participation or engagement patterns

When reporting concerns, personnel should:

1. Contact the DSL immediately by phone for urgent concerns about a child's immediate safety

2. Follow up with written documentation within 24 hours using the University's standard reporting format
3. Avoid any delay that could prejudice a child's welfare
4. Report concerns about staff conduct to the DSL at the earliest opportunity

Upon receiving a report, the DSL will:

1. Make an immediate assessment of risk and take emergency action if needed
2. Consult with the University's safeguarding team when appropriate
3. Refer cases to relevant authorities or document the rationale for not doing so
4. Maintain detailed, confidential records of all actions taken

The DSL may consult with the University's central safeguarding team or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on a 'no names' basis when guidance is needed about borderline cases. All consultations will be documented, including the rationale for decisions made.

## E. Definitions of Abuse

Understanding and recognising different forms of abuse is essential for all UKOAI personnel. The following definitions align with statutory guidance and the University of Cambridge's safeguarding framework.

**Physical abuse** encompasses any action that causes physical harm to a child, whether through deliberate acts or through failure to prevent harm. In the context of UKOAI activities, this includes but is not limited to inappropriate physical contact or physical intimidation during competitions or training sessions.

**Emotional abuse** constitutes persistent emotional maltreatment that causes severe and lasting adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Within academic competitions and training environments, this may manifest as excessive criticism, unreasonable pressure to perform, or systematic undermining of a child's confidence. This includes online interactions where emotional abuse may occur through digital communications.

**Sexual abuse**, as defined under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, includes any sexual contact with a person under 18 where the adult is in a position of trust, regardless of apparent consent. This encompasses both physical contact and non-contact activities, including inappropriate communications through digital platforms. In an educational context, this includes any sexualised language or behaviour, whether in person or through electronic communications.

**Neglect** represents the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs. In UKOAI's context, this might include failing to provide appropriate supervision during events, ignoring medical needs during residential activities, or failing to ensure adequate support during intensive training sessions.

## F. Recruitment and Selection Procedures

UKOAI follows the University of Cambridge's comprehensive recruitment procedures while maintaining additional safeguards specific to our activities.

For new volunteers and committee members, we require:

Criminal record checks appropriate to the role, processed through the University's HR department. For those working directly with children, we require enhanced DBS checks with barred list information. Current school teachers may use the DBS Update Service with appropriate verification of their status.

Before beginning their role, all personnel must:

- Complete the University's safeguarding training appropriate to their level of involvement with children. This includes specific modules on digital safety and online supervision for those involved in virtual training sessions.
- Review and acknowledge in writing their understanding of this Child Protection Policy and related procedures. They must also sign the University's code of conduct regarding work with young people.
- Commit to ongoing training and professional development in safeguarding practices. This includes annual refresher courses and updates on policy changes.

## G. Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse

It is essential that all UKOAI personnel understand how to respond appropriately if a child makes a disclosure of abuse. Any response must prioritise the child's safety and well-being, ensuring that the child feels heard, respected, and supported.

If a child discloses abuse, personnel should:

1. **Stay Calm and Listen Carefully:** Allow the child to speak freely without interruption. Refrain from expressing shock or disbelief, as this may discourage the child from continuing to share their experience.
2. **Avoid Leading Questions:** Do not attempt to investigate or probe for details beyond what the child voluntarily discloses. Use open-ended questions such as, "Can you tell me more about that?"
3. **Reassure the Child:** Offer reassurance that they have done the right thing by speaking up and that they will be taken seriously. Avoid making promises about outcomes that cannot be guaranteed.
4. **Explain Next Steps:** Let the child know that their disclosure may need to be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and other appropriate authorities to ensure their safety.
5. **Record the Disclosure Accurately:** As soon as possible, document what the child has shared, using their exact words whenever possible. Note the date, time, and context of the disclosure, and ensure that the report is signed and dated.
6. **Report to the DSL Immediately:** The DSL must be informed without delay so that appropriate action can be taken in line with safeguarding procedures.

It is crucial that personnel **do not**:

- Promise confidentiality, as all disclosures must be reported to ensure the child's safety.
- Investigate the matter themselves or question the child extensively.
- Express opinions or judgments about the alleged abuser.

Failure to follow these procedures may put the child at further risk and compromise UKOAI's safeguarding framework.

## H. Use of Photographic Equipment

UKOAI recognises the importance of protecting the identity and privacy of children participating in its events. Therefore, strict guidelines govern the use of photographic and video equipment during UKOAI activities.

- **Parental Consent:** Photographs or video recordings of children may only be taken with explicit, written parental consent. Consent forms must clearly outline the intended use of the images.
- **Approved Use:** Images and videos may only be used for educational, promotional, or archival purposes as specified in the consent agreement. Unauthorised use, including sharing on personal social media, is strictly prohibited.
- **Storage and Retention:** All images must be stored securely, with access restricted to authorised personnel only. Images will be retained for a limited period and deleted once they are no longer necessary.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any concerns regarding inappropriate photography, unauthorised image use, or misuse of media must be reported to the DSL immediately.

## I. Policy Review

The UKOAI Child Protection Policy is subject to an **annual review** to ensure continued compliance with best practices, legal requirements, and the safeguarding policies of the University of Cambridge. This review process will be conducted by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in consultation with the University's central safeguarding team.

Key elements of the review process include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of current safeguarding procedures.
- Updating the policy in response to legislative changes or identified risks.
- Providing refresher training for personnel on any new safeguarding protocols.
- Communicating policy updates to all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders.

All personnel will be required to re-confirm their understanding of and commitment to the policy following any revisions. The latest version of the policy will be made available on the UKOAI website and distributed to all relevant parties.