



Guidelines for Developing Policies and Procedures for Families and Children Serving Overseas

Approved by steering group on behalf of TCK Forum on 16th October 2008

INTRODUCTION

The Global Connections TCK Guidelines are designed to give guidance to any UK based organisation or UK church sending families overseas. The principles should be applied to all types of staff such as mission partners and volunteers working overseas. Agencies and churches should also apply them in all contexts, both long and short-term, although different procedures might be needed in each context. These guidelines have been formed specifically with cross-cultural contexts in mind, but can also be useful in UK situations, both same-culture and cross-cultural.

These guidelines are also designed to help national churches and agencies with whom the UK agency or UK church partners. It is impossible to provide generic policies that fit all circumstances and the needs of all groups. For this reason, the members of the Global Connections' TCK Forum have developed this set of guidelines, designed to help agencies and churches think through and develop their own agreed policies and procedures.

The document represents a minimum standard for Global Connections' members. In these guidelines of good practice, the word 'should' is used throughout as all the topics raised are considered to be good practice to which agencies and churches should aspire as they develop policies and procedures.

Our motivation in producing these guidelines is based on our desire that God is glorified in all that we do. We recognise the importance of families and our responsibility as Christians in safeguarding and supporting families and children to the highest standards possible.

All UK organisations should appoint a representative who is responsible throughout the organisation for ensuring that their organisation develops, completes and implements its TCK policies and that they are consistent with the required standards set out in these guidelines. Organisations that are part of an international structure should ensure the Head Office has appropriate policies and procedures in place and that the UK office is an integral part of any procedures.

Note: A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. It includes Missionary Kids (MKs).

Section 1

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF A TCK POLICY

All UK based organisations need to develop their own TCK policy with its associated appropriate procedures based on these guidelines.

A TCK Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to staff and their families of agencies and churches based in the UK but sending staff or volunteers overseas. It helps to create the best positive environment for families and children to develop and also helps to demonstrate that the agency/church is taking its responsibilities seriously.

The Global Connections guidelines are designed to help this process and are based on two clear principles:

1. The importance of family life.
2. Children should be taken into account in all HR and member care policies and procedures.

The following principles are also important to note:

1. All UK agencies and churches should have a written policy on recruitment and employment, which takes into account the needs of families and especially children, with appropriate procedures.
2. Policies and procedures should be written clearly and understood by its users at every level.
3. The TCK policy and procedures should be given to all staff and volunteers who work in or visit overseas locations. It should be an integral part of the staff handbook, orientation and training programme.
4. In situations where a staff member is seconded to a local partner, the local partner should also be encouraged to develop policies and procedures relating to TCKs.
5. Clear overall procedures should be developed and then adapted as appropriate for each overseas location and situation. They must be based on the overall TCK policy of the organisation.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

CORE VALUE 1

The welfare and education of any children is paramount from the outset of any enquiry for mission.

Application process

During the application process a whole range of issues should be discussed, including:

- Ages of the children – moving with teenagers raises particular concerns
- Suitability of the educational options available in the proposed location of service
- Special educational needs and the realistic possibilities for help and support overseas
- Children's feelings about the move
- The long-term aspirations of the parents and children and the compatibility of these with any potential move overseas

Interview and appointment

The application, interview and appointment process should reflect the fact that the agency and church believe that in the case of a **family, the whole family** is called and not just the parents or just one spouse/partner

- Overseas assignments place considerable extra strain on families. Any concerns regarding parenting and family life should be seriously considered
- School-age children should be given an opportunity to express their feelings in an informal setting, with an experienced person. Ideally, they should be seen separately from their parents for part of the time. Any special educational needs should be explored, possibly with input from their school teachers
- One spouse appointments: In situations where one spouse is applying to the organisation, implications for the partner and children should be considered in the light of the organisation's duty of care towards the family
- Particular needs relating to one parent families should be considered
- Available educational options (including funding) should be discussed in order to identify the best possible solutions for the children

PREPARATION, ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

CORE VALUE 2

Appropriate preparation for children covering cross-cultural experience is an essential part of an organisation's duty of care.

Preparing couples and children prior to a move overseas

- Children should receive age-appropriate information about the new culture and customs
- Children should be offered help in preparing for this major transition
- Parents should be encouraged to read relevant literature relating to TCKs for their own understanding and in order to help and support their children
- Training in parenting skills in a cross-cultural context should be provided
- A plan of support should be agreed where concerns have been identified
- Discussions should be held with supporting church(es), friends and extended family members regarding appropriate support for the children while overseas
- Specific consideration should be given to children not accompanying their parent(s) on the assignment
- Provision for family housing should be discussed
- A plan for children's education should be drawn up

Arrival overseas

- Meeting families on arrival should be carefully planned
- Children should be part of the induction process, including an understanding of their parent's roles
- Children should be provided with appropriate time and facilities for language acquisition

SUPPORT STRUCTURES WHILE OVERSEAS

CORE VALUE 3

Appropriate support for children and families in their host culture is an essential part of an organisation's duty of care.

Financial support

- The detailed budget should address the additional costs of supporting a family (such as. education and associated travel)

General support

- Prayer support specifically for children should be encouraged
- Communication between children and supporting churches should be fostered (e.g. through Sunday School and Youth Group)
- Contact between children and the wider family at home should be promoted

Accountability

- Reviews of the children's progress and well-being should be held regularly with a person who has an understanding of TCK issues
- A regular review of the children's education should be conducted
- There should be an official procedure to deal with any concerns
- Balance of working hours and leisure/family time should be discussed

Dealing with problems and crises

- Agencies and churches should work together to ensure support for children when difficulties arise
- Children and parents should know about counselling services and how to access them
- Agencies and churches should follow clear procedures for debriefing children in crisis situations
- If issues cannot be resolved in the current location, relocation or other options should be considered

HOME ASSIGNMENT AND RETURN

CORE VALUE 4

Appropriate preparation and support during re-entry to the passport culture is part of the organisation's duty of care.

Welcome pack

- An appropriate welcome pack should be available to the family which includes information relating to the welfare of children such as child benefit, child tax credit, educational access and NHS access

Debriefing

- Children should be involved in an exit interview which takes place before leaving the host culture
- Children should be prepared for Home Leave by parents and organisations and, where appropriate, their schools
- Debriefing on re-entry should be offered for children with people who have appropriate training or understanding of TCK issues
- Parents and children should be informed of opportunities to take part in camps or clubs, especially with other TCKs

Representation to churches

- Children should not be coerced into sharing about their experiences publicly
- Careful consideration should be given to the children's needs to avoid exhaustion
- Churches should be encouraged to provide appropriate opportunities for children to share their experiences

Permanent return

- Families should be given information regarding support available for children, including debriefing and re-entry camps
- Resources should be made available to assist families in settling back into the UK
- Individuals in the church and agency should be specifically responsible to ensure ongoing support for TCKs well into adulthood, if needed

Children or young people returning without their parents (for 6th form, school or university)

- Planning should begin at least two years before the child's return, including gathering information about cost, eligibility for 'home student' status, and funding options
- At least one parent should be provided with the opportunity to assist their child settling
- A 'responsible adult' should be appointed in the home country to look after the welfare of the child and act in loco parentis
- Sufficient funding should be budgeted for visits to their family during longer holiday periods

USEFUL ADDRESSES AND RESOURCES

1. AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES

INTERHEALTH

111 Waterloo Road, London SE1 7HR

Tel: 020 7902 9000

Email: info@interhealth.org.uk Website: www.interhealth.org.uk

HEALTHLINK360 (formerly Care for Mission)

Elphinstone Wing, Carberry, Musselburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH21 8PW

Tel: 0131 653 6767

Email: admin@healthlink360.org Website: www.healthlink360.org

Marion Knell provides briefings in the UK for families going overseas

E-mail mariondk@uk2.net

Training days for families (including special activities for the children) are also held (see www.redcliffe.org and look under 'events').

2. WEBSITES

www.eurotck.net

www.tcklife.net

www.xenosmk.org

www.globalconnections.co.uk/tckforum

www.globalconnections.co.uk/shop

3. BOOKS

***Families on the Move* - Marion Knell** published by Monarch books. A useful book that is easy to read for parents and older children. Can be purchased via Global Connections, either by mail or via the website.

***Burn up or Splash Down* - Marion Knell** published by Authentic. Guidance through reentry. Can be purchased via Global Connections, either by mail or via the website.

***Third Culture Kids* - Dave Pollock & Ruth Van Reken.** The 'standard' book on third culture children that many others refer to. Easily available in bookshops or from Amazon.

***Fitted Pieces* - edited by Janet Blomberg & David Brooks.** A compilation of articles covering many third cultural and family issues taken from past magazines. Mail order from www.shareeducation.org/rsrc/pieces.htm

***Raising Resilient MKs* - edited by Joyce Bower.** The same format as Fitted Pieces, but with different articles. Mail order from WEC Canada via mk_tck@yahoo.co.uk

4. CD-BASED RESOURCES

Manual for Parents and Organisations Preparing Children to Go Overseas (WEC International)

Off we Go - Polly Chan & Hwai Bing Pwee (OMF Hong Kong). A colourful workbook for children aged 3-7.

Going "Home" - Carole Steedman (WEC Thailand). A short guide for parents plus activity book for primary children

MK Manual - Jean Barnicoat (WEC International). Covers the main issues facing crosscultural families

All of these resources are available on one CD at the cost price of the CD plus postage from WEC International. Contact stevegill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk

5. COURSES AND EVENTS

TCK camps: Each summer various agencies and people from within the Global Connections network run camps for children on home leave and going through re-entry. Re-Konnect for younger children and Xenos for teenagers. Details available from www.globalconnections.co.uk/tckforum and www.xenosmk.org

MKPFO: Training for all workers with MKs. This is held annually at WEC International, Bulstrode, Gerrards Cross, Bucks. Details on www.eurotck.net

Day conferences and seminars: Organised by the TCK Forum of Global Connections. Visit www.globalconnections.co.uk/tckforum

6. MAGAZINES

Among Worlds from Interaction Geared for young adult TCKs, including MKs with articles about TCK identity and re-entry. Order from amongWorlds@interactionintl.org at \$25/year

Educare is published quarterly and aims to cover any theme relevant to mission families. Free subscription on provision of an e-mail address to stevegill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk