



# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

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## Educational Guardianship Explained

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#IES2019

[www.britishcouncil.org/education-services](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education-services)

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**Oxford**  
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# Overview

- Who are AEGIS?
- Role of educational guardian
- Regulations
- Role of AEGIS
- Overview of guardianship sector
- Schools' responsibilities
- Agents
- Issues
- Case Studies

# Who are AEGIS?

Association for the Education & Guardianship of International Students

Registered charity

Promotes the welfare of international students

Set up in 1994 in response to lack of regulations

Accredits UK guardianship organisations

Membership association reliant on member fees

Developed an inspection framework

# Educational Guardians

- Act on behalf of the parents
- Independent of the school
- Attend meetings with school staff
- Arrange transportation & accommodation
- Help students adapt to their new life
- Available 24 hours a day

## Duty to take reasonable care

An educational guardian will assume **delegated Parental Responsibility** for a child in its care.

That duty amounts in practice to **take reasonable care in all circumstances.**

*NOTE: Educational guardians are NOT legal guardians*

A legal guardian is appointed by a court, an educational guardian is appointed by the parent

# Regulations

Regulations and licensing required for an educational guardian/guardianship organisation/homestay in the UK...

## Private foster care

- Arrangement where someone, other than a close relative, provides care and accommodation for a child, under the age of 16, for 28 days or more (18 years of age if the child has a disability)
- Checks of homestays are made by local authority
- Failure to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement is an offence, and could risk a fine
- Stays of less than 28 days, e.g. half-terms, exeats, require no checks legally

# Role of AEGIS: how does AEGIS help?





# AEGIS inspection process

## Led by independent inspectors

### **Stage one** - £850 + VAT

Scrutiny of documentation

Link with Local Authority if guardian for day pupils

Safer recruitment of homestays

### **Stage two** - £1500 or £1850 + VAT

Visits to homestays and to schools, interviewing staff and students

Questionnaires to all overseas parents, homestays, schools & students

# AEGIS Minimum Standards

Revised with changes to safeguarding and law; detailed and thorough

## **Example:** Homestays Checks

GO required to undertake comprehensive checks on all members of the household before placing any students with the homestay. These checks are to include as a minimum:

- All members of homestay aged 16 or over must have an enhanced DBS check, and barred list check for the main carer
- I.D. check on main carer
- Right to work in UK
- Two references sought

# Inspection outcomes

- Final report goes to Inspections Committee
- If a GO meets requirements it becomes a fully accredited member of AEGIS
- Re-inspected every 4 years
- Complaints/Concerns procedure in place
- Currently over 45 accredited GOs
- Full list of accredited GOs available on our website ([www.aegisuk.net](http://www.aegisuk.net))

# Supporting others and lobbying for change

## Local Authorities



## Safeguarding Experts



## The scale of the issue

### **No. of international students**

Number is increasing each year  
28,910 non-British school students  
with parents overseas (2019 ISC  
census)

Just over 5,902 students under  
AEGIS guardianship (2018/19)

### **Non-AEGIS students**

Remaining 23,000 looked after by  
family, friends, acquaintances,  
unaccredited guardians  
Some have no guardianship  
arrangements at all  
Some unaccredited guardians do  
not operate with the best interests of  
the child in mind

# AEGIS and schools 1/3

## **NMS for Boarding Schools, standard 20 – lodgings (long-stay)**

- If school arranges accommodation outside school, the school is responsible for all the checks
- Includes term-time lodging instead of on-site boarding e.g. for day pupils, holidays etc.
- Applies if a school appoints an agent/guardian who makes arrangements on behalf of school
- If overseas parents appoint a guardian, the school does not have to carry out checks

## AEGIS and schools 2/3

### **Tier 4 sponsor for visa nationals**

School is responsible for child in and out of school grounds

3.26 of Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for Sponsors

“Sponsors who recruit a child under the age of 18 must ensure suitable arrangements are in place for them in the UK. This must include arrangements for their: a) travel; b) reception when they arrive in the UK; and c) care while in the UK.”

# AEGIS and schools 3/3

## Providing support

- Many schools therefore insist that an international student has an AEGIS accredited guardian
- Asking parents to appoint an AEGIS guardian provides peace of mind to all parties
- Each school will set its own requirements, bearing in mind how accessible the parents are



# Agents

- Agents are the link to overseas parents and can influence the parents' decision to appoint either an accredited or unaccredited guardian
- Appointing an accredited guardian relieves the agent of work once the child is in the UK
- Encourage agents to inform parents about professional guardianship early in process

# A downside to guardianship?

Cost ... but ...

- Compared to school fees, the cost of guardianship is low
- Different packages available according to level of service required
- Companies that take guardianship seriously invest in staff training, procedures, vetting of homestays, accreditation, etc and are on call 24/7
- Guardians have a huge level of responsibility

# Cutting corners leads to ...

Fictitious guardians

Unaccredited guardians taking  
advantage financially

Friends of family  
who do not fulfil a  
guardian's role

Unaccredited guardians placing  
students in unsuitable homestays

Unaccredited guardians placing  
students in unsupervised  
accommodation during holidays

## Case study 1/5 – the family friend

- Student was self-harming due to exam stress and was unfit to attend school
- School needed student to be collected immediately but ‘guardian’ (friend of parents) unavailable
- Luckily school was familiar with AEGIS
- Accredited GO was arranged
- GO looked after the student for a week, allowing school to arrange psychiatric assessment

## Case study 2/5 – flight cancelled

- 13 year old student's flight was delayed - airline refused to take care of him
- Parents alerted guardian - homestay family arranged to go to the airport and stay with the boy
- Flight cancellations resulted in the boy staying with the family for two nights
- It was the end of term and the school was shut ... without a reliable guardian, what would have happened to the boy?

## Case study 3/5 - Airbnb

- Student under age of 16
- Airbnb accommodation during half term
- Airbnb host called the school
- Guardian was not AEGIS accredited
- AEGIS guardian appointed and homestay accommodation arranged instead

## Case study 4/5 – online inappropriate images

- Student received inappropriate images through a chat group in his home country
- Forwarded the images on to a close friend who posted them on social media
- The images were flagged and the police became involved
- Suspended from school
- Guardian arranged homestay and a meeting with headmaster and parents

## Case study 5/5 – unfit guardian

- A non-accredited educational guardian (male UK citizen) was known to police
- An international female student, aged under 16 years, studying as a day pupil in homestay accommodation
- No safer recruitment procedures were followed in the placement of the child with the homestay
- Guardian created a leaflet with the student's photo and personal details, and distributed the leaflet through doors in the local area
- No DBS or background checks were carried out on the homestay family members



## Final words

Unfortunately, the need for a professional, experienced guardian is often only brought home to schools, parents and agents when a crisis occurs

A good guardian enhances the international student's experience in the UK

At the heart of true guardianship is **THE CHILD**



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