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Sarah Champion MP
House of Commons
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Dear Sarah,

During FCDO oral questions on 13 October you expressed concern that FCDO's terms and conditions may only 'strongly discourage' rather than 'prohibit' FCDO staff from having sexual relations with beneficiaries. As I said in the House, this is an incredibly serious point and therefore I wanted to write with more detail.

Safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment remains a top priority for the FCDO and we will not hesitate to take swift action if any staff member or any organisation we work with fails to uphold our strict standards.

While the full terms and conditions and HR policies for FCDO staff are being developed, the issue of sexual misconduct is extremely important, so policies were put in place ahead of the merger. FCDO's policy position is that "some specific actions are considered unacceptable and will be treated as potential gross misconduct. These include:

- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the age of consent locally
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex
- Sexual relationships between staff and beneficiaries/partners, as well as relationships based on inherently unequal power dynamics."

I hope that this clarifies the situation and provides reassurance of our commitment to stamp out sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment in the aid sector.

I am copying my reply to James Cleverly as lead FCDO Minister on safeguarding.

Nigel Adams MP
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