

Policy Reviewed:	September 2024
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Safer Recruitment Policy

Introduction

Safe recruitment is central to the safeguarding of children and young people. Plan B recognises that as an organisation that employs staff to work with children and young people, we have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. This includes ensuring that we adopt safe recruitment and selection procedures which prevent unsuitable persons from gaining access to children.

The following policy and procedures are based on current legislation, guidance and best practice and aims to promote consistent practice.

Throughout this procedure, 'children' refers to any child under the age of 18 years.

'Staff' refers to any adult who is employed, commissioned or contracted to work with or on behalf of children, in either a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes directors and volunteers.

Scope

This guidance applies to all adults who have contact with children, young people and adults at risk through their work whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. It applies to permanent, temporary staff and to those recruited from overseas. It also applies to staff who do not have direct responsibility for children, but who will have contact with children within the organisation and will be seen as safe and trustworthy and/or have access to confidential and sensitive information e.g. administrative staff.

The principles of safe recruitment will also be included in the terms of any contract or service level agreements drawn up between Plan B and contractors or freelance workers that provide services for, or staff to work with, children and young people. Any service level agreement or contract will contain a safeguarding statement, which makes explicit the standards expected. The agreement will be reviewed at least annually.

Aims

Plan B recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is an integral factor in recruitment and selection and is an essential part of creating safe environments for children and young people. We are committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection activities are undertaken in a fair and transparent way and that appointments are based on the applicant judged to be most suitable.

The aims, therefore, of this policy are to:

- Attract and appoint the highest calibre of applicants.
- Ensure safe and equitable recruitment and selection is conducted at all times.
- Deter, identify and reject prospective applicants who are unsuitable for work with children or young people.



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- Ensure robust recruitment and selection procedures are in place to minimise the possibility of children and young people suffering harm from those in a position of trust.

Legal context

Plan B recognises that recruitment and selection is governed by many statutory provisions and is committed to ensuring that all legislative requirements are met in the application of this policy, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024, Department for Education).

Equal Opportunities

Plan B is committed to providing equality of opportunity at all stages of the recruitment and selection process and ensuring that applicants are treated fairly and lawfully throughout the process.

Shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation or trade union membership.

Reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process will be made to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged because of their disability.

Monitoring

Monitoring of both the recruitment process and induction arrangements will allow for future recruitment practices to be better informed. It should cover:

- Staff turnover and reasons for leaving.
- Exit interviews.
- Attendance of new staff at safeguarding training.

Maintaining a Safer Culture

Maintaining an ethos of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people will be achieved by having:

- A clear written statement of the standards of behaviour and the boundaries of appropriate behaviour expected of staff.
- Appropriate induction and safeguarding training.
- Regular briefing and discussion of relevant issues.
- Effective supervision and staff appraisal processes.
- Clear reporting system if anyone has concerns about the safety of children.

Training

All those involved in recruitment and selection of staff, including directors, should have regular comprehensive safe recruitment and selection training (e.g. NSPCC) and appropriate updates. The procedures outlined in this document should be followed and appropriate resources used to support this.

Resources

To support this process, we have template resources that we adapt for each role, to ensure a robust and consistent approach to safer recruitment. This includes an application form, a shortlisting matrix, and a reference proforma.



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Safer Recruitment Procedures

Safer practice in recruitment means giving consideration to safeguarding arrangements at every step of the process.

Planning and Advertising

- It is important to be clear about the mix of qualities, qualifications and experience a successful applicant will need to demonstrate, and whether there are any particular matters that need to be stated in the advertisement for the post, in order to prevent unwanted applications.
- The recruitment process needs to be planned, including who will be involved, responsibilities and timescales.
- The advertisement will include a statement about Plan B's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and reference to the need for the successful applicant to undertake an enhanced criminal record check where appropriate.

Job Description

Once a post becomes vacant or a new post is created the job description and person specification need to be reviewed/agreed to ensure compliance with safe recruitment guidance.

This should clearly state:

- The main duties of the post.
- The extent of contact/responsibility for children and young people.
- The individual's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the children and young people they are responsible for or come into contact with.

Person Specification

This should include:

- The essential and desirable qualifications and experience.
- Other requirements needed to perform the role in relation to working with children and young people.
- The competencies and qualities that the successful applicant should be able to demonstrate.

Information Pack to Applicants

All information given to interested applicants should highlight the importance of the rigorous selection processes and the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It should be clear that proof of identity will be required, as well as a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

The pack should include a copy of:

- The application form, and any explanatory notes about completing the form.
- The job description and person specification.
- Relevant information about Plan B and the recruitment process.
- Plan B's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

Application Form

Plan B will use an application form to obtain a common set of core data. In line with good practice, we will not accept CVs (curriculum vitae) in place of an application form because this will only contain the information the applicant wishes to present and may omit relevant details.



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The applicant form/information pack will refer to Plan B's commitment to safeguarding children. Information to be obtained will be:

- Identifying details of the applicant including current and former names, current address and National Insurance number.
- A statement of any academic and/ or vocational qualifications with details of awarding body and date of award.
- A full history in chronological order since leaving secondary education, including periods of any post-secondary education/training and part-time and voluntary work as well as full time employment, with start dates, explanations for periods not in employment or education/training and reasons for leaving employment.
- Details of referees. One referee should be the applicant's current or most recent employer/line manager, not a colleague. Normally two referees should be sufficient.
- A statement of the skills and abilities, and competencies/experience that the applicant believes are relevant to his/her suitability for the post and how s/he meets the person specification.
- An explanation that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Information will be requested about any previous - including spent - convictions, cautions, reprimands, warnings or bind-overs.
- To comply with the Equality Act 2010, the date of birth will not be included on the main application form, but added on our Equal Opportunities monitoring form, which will be retained by HR and not made available to those involved in the short-listing process.

Scrutinising and Shortlisting

The same selection panel will both shortlist and interview the applicant. At least one member of the panel will have undertaken safe recruitment and selection training.

All application forms will be scrutinised to ensure:

- They are fully and properly completed.
- The information is consistent and does not contain any discrepancies.
- Gaps in employment/training or a history of repeated changes of employment are identified.
- Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- Any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment and the reasons for this should be noted, so that they can be taken up as part of the consideration of whether to short list the applicant, as well as a history of repeated changes of employment without any clear career or salary progression or a mid-career move from a permanent to temporary post. Any such concerns will be taken up with the applicant at interview and must be satisfactorily resolved before any firm offer of employment is made.
- All applicants will be assessed equally against the criteria contained in the person specification.
- The selection process for shortlisted applicants will, as a minimum, consist of a face to face selection interview with an interview panel, with other selection activities (observation; group activities; written scenarios etc.) determined by the nature and duties of the vacant post.

References

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support appointment decisions.

- One reference should be from the current or most recent employer/line manager or HR (not from a colleague within the organisation).
- Where an applicant is not currently working with children, but has done so in the past, it is important that a reference is also obtained from the employer by whom the person was most recently employed in work with children in addition to the current or most recent employer.
- References will not be accepted from relatives or friends.
- References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee.

- A copy of the job description and person specification will be included with all requests.
- References or testimonials provided by the applicant, or open references, i.e. To Whom It May Concern will not be accepted. Open references/testimonials may be forged or the result of a 'compromise agreement'.
- References will be sought on all shortlisted applicants, including internal ones. If possible these will be obtained prior to interview so that any issues of concern they raise can be explored further with the referee and taken up with the applicant at interview).
- Where a reference has not been obtained on a preferred applicant before the interview, this should be chased up. Once received it should be scrutinised and any concerns resolved satisfactorily before the person's appointment is confirmed.
- References should seek objective verifiable information and not subjective opinion. The use of reference proforma will help achieve this.

Requests for references will ask:

- The referee's relationship with the applicant, e.g. did they have a working relationship and how long has the referee known the applicant.
- How they have demonstrated that they meet the person's specification.
- Whether the referee is satisfied that the person has the ability and is suitable to undertake the job.
- Whether the applicant has been the subject of any disciplinary sanctions and whether the applicant has had any allegations made against them or concerns raised, which relate either to the safety and welfare of, or the applicants' behaviour towards, children and young people. Details about the outcome of any such concern will be sought.
- Whether the referee is satisfied that the applicant is suitable to work with children and young people. If not, for details of the referee's concerns and the reason why the person might be unsuitable.
- Requests will remind the referee that they have a responsibility to ensure that the reference is accurate, and that relevant factual content of the reference may be discussed with the applicant.
- Confirmation of details of the applicant's current post, salary and sickness record.
- Specific verifiable comments about the applicant's performance history and conduct.
- Details of any disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to which relate to the safety and welfare of children or to the applicant's behaviour towards children and young people and the outcome.
- Details of any allegations or concerns about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children or behaviour towards children and young people and the outcome of these concerns.

Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations will be considered in the circumstances of the individual case. Cases in which an issue was satisfactorily resolved some time ago or an allegation determined to be unfounded or did not require formal disciplinary sanctions, and in which no further issues have been raised, are less likely to cause concern than more serious or recent concerns, or issues that were not resolved satisfactorily. A history of repeated concerns or allegations over time should give cause for concern.

Interviews

A selection decision will be made based on a fair and thorough assessment of the skills and abilities demonstrated by all the applicants against the requirements of the person specification/job description during the selection process.

The interview will assess the merits of each applicant against the job description and person specification and explore their suitability to work with children and young people.

The interview will stress that the identity of the successful applicant will be checked thoroughly and, that where a Disclosure and Barring Service check is appropriate, prior to appointment there will be a requirement to complete an application for a Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure.

All applicants should bring with them documentary evidence of their right to work in the UK and their identity. Some form of photographic ID must be seen.



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Applicants should bring documents confirming any educational and professional qualification(s). If this is not possible, written confirmation must be obtained from the awarding body. Also documentation of registration with an appropriate professional body.

A copy of the documents used to verify the successful applicant's identity and qualifications must be kept for the personnel file.

Interview Panel

A panel of at least two people is recommended, at least one member of the panel should be trained in safe recruitment practice.

The members of the panel should:

- Have the necessary authority to make decisions about the appointment.
- Meet before the interview to agree their assessment criteria in accordance with the person specification and to prepare a list of questions they will ask all applicants relating to the requirements of the post.
- Identify any issues they wish to explore with each applicant based on the information provided in their application form and in the references.
- Notes of the applicant's interview answers should be collated and stored by HR for six months after the interviews.
- Ensure that safeguarding questions are included within the interview questions and asked by Safer Recruitment trained panel members.

Scope of the Interview

In addition to assessing and evaluating the applicant's suitability for the post, the panel should explore:

- The applicant's attitude towards children and young people.
- Their ability to support Plan B's agenda for safeguarding and promoting welfare.
- Any gaps in the applicant's employment history.
- Concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the applicant and/or referee.
- Whether the applicant wishes to declare anything relating to the requirement for a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Interview Questions

Questions for applicants will be open to gather as much information as possible.

- We will probe the applicant's response to investigate the validity of the answer - clarifying any ambiguities, expanding upon any issues, or challenging any areas – probes are likely to be different for each applicant depending on their responses.
- Closed questions will be used sparingly but can be useful if we just want to clarify or confirm something the applicant is saying.
- Hypothetical questions will be used if the applicant cannot draw on their real life experience, but we understand that they are likely to elicit a hypothetical answer, which is not necessarily what the applicant would do in that actual situation.
- Past behaviour is often the best indicator of future performance. Where possible, questions will draw upon real life examples: can you tell me about a time when? What did you do? What lessons did you learn from that?

Participation of Children and Young People

Children and young people can make a valuable contribution to the recruitment process and their participation should be considered for key strategic and managerial posts as well as posts where staff will have a high level of responsibility, working with children on a one to one basis.

The following considerations should be taken into account in planning children's involvement:



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- Clarification of the role children will take in the process, how their views will be taken into account in selection and what weighting these will be given.
- Preparation and/or training.
- Process for debriefing/feedback.

Conditional Offer of Appointment

Any offer of employment made prior to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks is made on a conditional basis. Conditional offers of employment will only be confirmed once all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed.

An offer of appointment to the successful applicant should be conditional upon:

- Receipt of at least two satisfactory written references, where possible confirmed by telephone.
- Verification of the applicant's identity.
- A satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service Disclosure at the appropriate level (unless the Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service applies).
- Evidence of permission to work for those who are not nationals of a European Economic Area (EEA) country.
- Verification of the applicant's medical fitness.
- Verification of qualifications.
- Verification of professional status/registration where relevant to the role.
- Verification of successful completion of statutory induction / probationary period where appropriate.

All checks should be:

- Confirmed in writing.
- Documented and retained on the personnel file (subject to restrictions on the retention of information imposed by Disclosure and Barring Service regulations).
- Followed up where they are unsatisfactory or where there are discrepancies in the information provided.

Pre-Employment checks

Where:

- The applicant is found to be on the Barred Lists, or the Disclosure and Barring Service Disclosure shows s/he has been disqualified from working with children by a Court.
- The applicant has provided false information in, or in support of, his/her application.
- There are serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children.

These facts will be reported to the police and/or Disclosure and Barring Service (if they are not already aware).

In exceptional circumstances, we may determine to allow an individual to commence employment in regulated activity prior to the receipt of a DBS check. In these circumstances, all other checks, including a separate barred list check where appropriate, must have been completed and he or she will not be left to work unsupervised. A risk assessment will also be carried out to determine whether other safeguarding measures may need to be put in place.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

The level of disclosure requested, Enhanced DBS including barred list reflects the nature of the duties of the post and degree of contact with children or young people or with sensitive, confidential information.

In considering asking a person to apply for an enhanced DBS check, an employer is legally responsible for making sure



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the job role is eligible. This should be done before countersigning each DBS application form.

Statutory Guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education sets out detailed provisions on checks and levels of supervision for staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors in educational establishments.

A record should be kept of the date when the disclosure was obtained, by whom, level of disclosure and unique reference number. Disclosure and Barring Service checks should be:

- Treated as confidential.
- Kept secure.

- Destroyed as soon as no longer required (not normally longer than 6 months after decision to appoint; however, note that it may be necessary to retain them for longer for inspection regimes).

Criminal Record

Employers must make a judgement about suitability, taking into account only those offences which may be relevant to the post in question. In deciding the relevance the following will be considered:

- The nature of the appointment.
- The nature of the offence.
- The age at which the offence took place.
- The frequency of the offence.

Anyone who is barred from work with children is committing an offence if they apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work constituting Regulated Activity. It is also an offence for an employer knowingly to offer work in a regulated position, or to procure work in a regulated position for an individual who is disqualified from working with children or fail to remove such an individual from such work.

Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), operates an optional Update Service which is designed to reduce the number of DBS checks requested.

Instead of a new criminal records/ barred lists check being necessary whenever an individual applies for a new paid or voluntary role working with children and young people, individuals can opt to subscribe to the online Update Service. This will allow them to keep their criminal record certificate up to date.

Plan B encourages all staff to subscribe to the update service and will pay for this service. This enables us to carry out free, instant, online status checks of a registered individual's status. A new DBS check will only be necessary if the status check indicates a change in the individual's status (because new information has been added).

Social Media checks

As part of the safer recruitment process, candidates must be informed that inline with GDPR that Plan B recruitment personnel will undertake a social media content search across all platforms. This will take place to further check the suitability of candidates for working with young people and vulnerable adults and to ensure the reputation of Plan B is upheld.

Checks on Overseas Staff

Individuals who have lived or worked outside of the UK will be subject to the same pre-employment checks as all other staff. In addition, further appropriate checks, such as an overseas police check, will be made as necessary, in order to sufficiently establish the individual's suitability to be appointed.

Where an applicant has worked or been resident overseas in the previous 5 years, Plan B will obtain a check of the applicant's criminal record from the relevant authority in that country and seek additional information about an



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applicant's conduct. Not all countries provide this service. The application process for criminal records checks or 'Certificates of Good Character' for someone from overseas varies from country to country. Further information will be obtained from government advice, to ensure we are undertaking the right checks.

Freelance workers and contractors

Safe recruitment practices will be observed when sourcing freelance workers and contractors. Identity checks and DBS checks will be undertaken.

Staff Records

In relation to each member of staff appointed a record will be kept to show:

- Written references have been obtained and confirmed by telephone.
- Gaps in employment history have been checked.
- A satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate has been obtained, with a unique reference number and date.
- Any reasons/decision to appoint despite criminal convictions (i.e. a Risk Assessment).
- Evidence of proof of identity (this will have been provided for the Disclosure and Barring Service check).
- Evidence of qualifications.
- Details of registration with the appropriate professional body.
- Confirmation of right to work in the UK.
- Record of interview questions and answers.
- Records will be signed and dated by appointing manager/chair of the interview panel.

Retention of recruitment records

For unsuccessful applicants, all paperwork gathered as part of a recruitment exercise will be kept confidentially and securely in accordance with the UK GDPR for a period of 12 months after the interview date to ensure that if there are any claims raised, Plan B is able to rely on its records to justify its judgement and decision. After this period, these records will be confidentially disposed of.

For staff appointed to work at Plan B, information gathered during the recruitment process will be used to form part of the employee's personnel file and will be recorded on our secure Drive.

Post Appointment Induction

There should be an induction programme for all staff and volunteers. The purpose of the induction is to:

- Provide training and information about Plan B's safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. This training will be at a level appropriate to the member of staff's role and responsibilities with regard to children.
- Support individuals in a way that is appropriate for their role.
- Confirm the conduct expected of staff.
- Provide opportunities for a new member of staff to discuss any issues or concerns about their role or responsibilities.
- Enable the line manager or mentor to recognise any concerns or issues about the person's ability or suitability at the outset and address them immediately.
- Ensure that the person receives written statements of:
 - Policies and procedures in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
 - The identity and responsibilities of staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities.



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- Safe practice and the standards of conduct and behaviour expected.
- Other relevant personnel procedures e.g. whistleblowing, disciplinary procedures.

Supervision and Staff Review and Development

Annual staff reviews are important elements in ensuring safe practice. The aim is to:

- Ensure staff are up to date with current safe practices.
- Identify areas for development.
- Openly address any concerns about behaviour and attitudes.
- Put in place an action plan and arrangements for review.

Disclosure and Barring Service Re-checking

Further DBS checks on staff should always be considered when:

- There has been a break from employment of 3 months or more.
- There are grounds for concern about the person's suitability to work with children (note that the employee can decline).

Whistleblowing

A mechanism has been established for confidential reporting or whistleblowing of any behaviour towards children or young people which is abusive, inappropriate or unprofessional. This includes:

- Conduct which is a breach of the law.
- Conduct which compromises health and safety.

Conduct which falls below established standards of practice with children and young people. This mechanism for confidential reporting, or whistleblowing should:

- Discourage anonymous reporting.
- Provide for the reporter identity to be revealed only with consent.
- Provide support for the reporter, e.g. in giving evidence

Further guidance on whistleblowing can be found in our Whistleblowing policy.