One minute guide
Safer Recruitment

What is safer recruitment?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key theme of the [Children Act 2004](#). The statutory duties outlined in the [Education Act 2002](#) and the Children Act 2004 require schools, further education institutions, local authorities, and other statutory organisations to prioritise safeguarding as part of their responsibilities. These duties highlight the importance of embedding safer recruitment practices within the broader framework of safeguarding children and young people.

Years of experience have demonstrated the critical need for organisations providing services to children to include robust measures in their recruitment and selection processes. These measures should aim to deter, identify, or reject individuals who may pose a risk to children or are otherwise unsuitable for working with them. By integrating safeguarding and the promotion of children's welfare into HR management, organisations can help create safe and supportive environments for children.

Why is safer recruitment important?

The importance of robust safer recruitment processes for organisations working with children and vulnerable adults was starkly highlighted by the Soham case and the findings of [Sir Michael Bichard's 2004 report](#) . This report revealed significant flaws in the recruitment process that enabled Ian Huntley to be employed as a caretaker at Soham Community School. However, the principles of safer recruitment were not new.

Similar concerns were raised in Sir Norman Warner's 1992 report, [Choosing with Care](#), which examined recruitment and selection in residential children's homes. The Department of Health's 1999 programme, *Towards Safer Care*, also addressed these issues in the context of social care. Evidence from Serious Case Reviews and research on offender behaviour shows that some individuals deliberately seek employment—paid or voluntary—to gain access to vulnerable people and perpetrate abuse.

While it is impossible to guarantee entirely "safe recruitment," adhering to the principles of safer recruitment significantly reduces the likelihood of unsafe individuals obtaining positions that grant them access to children, young people, or families.

The [National Safer Recruitment Consortium](#) one-day Safer Recruitment Workshop, delivered by the Workforce Development Team and/or Education & Early Years Safeguarding Team, builds upon the findings and recommendations of these key reports . It aims to:

- Equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to implement safer recruitment practices
- Highlight the importance of robust recruitment procedures in safeguarding children.
- Provide practical guidance on embedding safeguarding principles into recruitment and HR management.
- Explore policies and practices that reduce opportunities for abuse and ensure prompt reporting of concerns.
- Support participants in reviewing their own and their organisation's policies and practices to enhance safety and safeguarding measures.

What are the principles of safer recruitment?

Safer recruitment is based on four principles:

Deter: Discourage applicants with inappropriate motivations from applying by clearly communicating that the organisation is not a "soft target" for abuse. This can be achieved by referencing safeguarding policies in job advertisements and application processes.

Reject: Identify and exclude unsuitable individuals during the recruitment process, such as through rigorous interviews and thorough assessments.

Prevent: Minimise opportunities for abuse in the workplace by creating a safe environment. This involves assessing risks, establishing clear behavioural standards, and implementing robust appointment and induction processes.

Detect: Identify and address inappropriate behaviour or abuse at the earliest opportunity by fostering a safe working culture and responding effectively to concerns.

Organisations should ensure their recruitment processes align with these principles and promote a safe working culture. This includes following best practices throughout the entire employment cycle, from identifying a vacancy to onboarding and inducting a new team member.

What is a safe working culture?

A safe working culture is one where everyone is dedicated to ensuring that all practices are carried out in the most effective and appropriate ways to protect the children and young people in their care. Additionally, staff should feel supported and confident in responding to concerns about the behaviour or practices of their colleagues.

Key features include:
- An open environment where secrecy is not tolerated.
- A shared belief that abuse could occur and vigilance is essential.
- Well-defined processes for reporting concerns about practitioner behaviour.
- Support for children and staff who raise concerns, along with a firm commitment to take appropriate action.
- A code of conduct that clearly sets out acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Policies, procedures, and codes of conduct are consistently applied, and individuals are held accountable for following them.
- Comprehensive induction programmes and effective use of probationary periods
- A collective commitment from all staff to safeguard and protect children, alongside a continuous culture of vigilance. .

Where can practitioners go for training and support?

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) recommends that at least one member of every interview panel completes safer recruitment training. The training is available through PALS or Leeds for Learning (specifically for education settings). While this is considered good practice for all organisations, it is a mandatory requirement for education settings.

For further details on how your organisation adheres to the principles and guidance of safer recruitment, please consult your line manager.

Information is also available on the National Safer Recruitment Consortium website https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org

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