



SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY 2025-2026

Reviewed: April 2025
Next Review due: April 2026
Approved by the Senior Leadership Team



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1. Introduction

Bespoke Mentoring and Training Services Limited ("the Organisation") is an alternative provision dedicated to supporting learners aged 6-25 with special educational needs (SEN) and social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. The safety and well-being of our learners are paramount. This Safer Recruitment Policy outlines our commitment to recruiting and vetting staff and volunteers through robust, transparent processes, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, to ensure they are suitable to work with vulnerable learners.

This policy complies with the Department for Education's *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) 2024, the Equality Act 2010, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and other relevant UK legislation. It applies to all recruitment processes for employees, contractors, and volunteers, ensuring a consistent approach to safeguarding in our alternative provision.

2. Aims

- To recruit staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with learners with SEN/SEMH, prioritising safeguarding.
- To implement rigorous DBS and safer recruitment checks to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with vulnerable learners.
- To ensure recruitment processes are fair, transparent, and compliant with equality and safeguarding legislation.
- To maintain a culture of vigilance, embedding safeguarding in all recruitment and onboarding activities.
- To protect learners by appointing individuals who demonstrate professionalism, empathy, and suitability for working with SEN/SEMH needs.

3. Scope

This policy covers:

- Recruitment and vetting of all staff (permanent, temporary, agency), contractors, and volunteers.
- DBS checks and other pre-employment checks for roles involving contact with learners with SEN/SEMH.
- Recruitment processes for roles on Organisation premises, off-site activities (e.g., educational trips), or online interactions with learners.
- Compliance with safeguarding requirements for an alternative provision supporting vulnerable learners.

4. Principles

- **Safeguarding First:** Recruitment prioritises the safety and welfare of learners with SEN/SEMH.
- **Fairness:** Processes are transparent, non-discriminatory, and comply with the Equality Act 2010.
- **Vigilance:** All applicants are thoroughly vetted to identify risks to learners.
- **Accessibility:** Recruitment materials and processes are inclusive, supporting applicants with disabilities or diverse needs.
- **Accountability:** Clear records of recruitment decisions and checks are maintained, per data protection requirements.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Senior Leadership Team:** Oversees policy implementation, ensures compliance with KCSIE, and approves appointments.
- **Human Resources (HR) Lead:** Manages recruitment processes, coordinates DBS checks, and maintains the Single Central Record (SCR).
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Advises on safeguarding risks during recruitment and ensures safer recruitment training compliance.
- **Recruitment Panel:** Conducts interviews, assesses suitability, and verifies checks, with at least one member trained in safer recruitment.
- **All Staff Involved in Recruitment:** Adhere to this policy, report concerns, and complete safer recruitment training as required.

6. Recruitment Process

The Organisation follows a structured, safer recruitment process to appoint suitable candidates:

6.1 Job Advertisements and Role Descriptions

- Advertisements are clear, accessible, and inclusive, encouraging applications from diverse candidates, including those with disabilities, per the Equality Act 2010.

- Role descriptions and person specifications outline safeguarding responsibilities and the need for suitability to work with SEN/SEMH learners.
- All adverts state the Organisation's commitment to safeguarding and requirement for DBS checks.

6.2 Application Process

- Applicants submit a standardised application form, including employment history, qualifications, and references. CVs alone are not accepted to ensure consistency.
- Forms require disclosure of criminal convictions, cautions, or ongoing investigations, per Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975.
- Gaps in employment history must be explained, with follow-up during interviews.
- Applications are accessible (e.g., large print, digital formats) to support applicants with disabilities.

6.3 Shortlisting

- Shortlisting is conducted by at least two panel members, using objective criteria from the role description.
- Discrepancies or concerns (e.g., employment gaps, incomplete forms) are flagged for interview exploration.
- Shortlisting decisions are recorded to ensure transparency and fairness.

6.4 References

- Two professional references are sought for shortlisted candidates, including the most recent employer, before interviews where possible.
- References are requested directly from the referee's professional email or verified contact, not via open testimonials.
- Questions verify the candidate's suitability to work with SEN/SEMH learners, safeguarding record, and reasons for leaving previous roles.
- Discrepancies are investigated, and unsatisfactory references may disqualify candidates.

6.5 Interviews

- Interviews are conducted by a panel of at least two members, with one trained in safer recruitment per KCSIE 2024.
- Questions assess:
 - Suitability for working with SEN/SEMH learners (e.g., empathy, de-escalation skills).
 - Commitment to safeguarding and child protection.
 - Employment history and gaps.

- o Scenarios relevant to alternative provision (e.g., managing SEMH behaviours).
- Values-based questions explore attitudes toward inclusion, equality, and learner welfare.
- Interviews are accessible, with reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities (e.g., extra time, sensory-friendly settings).

6.6 Pre-Appointment Checks

All offers of employment or volunteering are conditional on satisfactory completion of the following checks:

1. **DBS Checks:**
 - a. An enhanced DBS check with barred list information is required for all roles involving regulated activity with learners, per KCSIE 2024.
 - b. Applicants must provide a DBS certificate or consent to the Organisation applying through the DBS Update Service or a new application.
 - c. Overseas applicants or those who have lived abroad for significant periods (6+ months in the last 5 years) undergo additional checks, such as overseas police certificates, where practicable.
 - d. Positive DBS disclosures are assessed via a risk assessment by the DSL and HR Lead, considering relevance, severity, and time elapsed. Unsuitable disclosures lead to offer withdrawal.
2. **Barred List Check:**
 - a. A separate Children's Barred List check is conducted for roles not yet in regulated activity (e.g., pending DBS clearance), per Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
3. **Identity Verification:**
 - a. Original documents (e.g., passport, driving licence) are verified to confirm identity, per Home Office guidance.
4. **Right to Work:**
 - a. Proof of eligibility to work in the UK is verified, compliant with Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006.
5. **Qualifications:**
 - a. Original certificates are checked for required qualifications (e.g., teaching credentials, SEN training).
6. **Professional Registration:**
 - a. For teachers, Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) checks confirm registration and any prohibitions or sanctions.
7. **Medical Fitness:**
 - a. Applicants complete a health declaration to confirm fitness for the role, with reasonable adjustments for disabilities per the Equality Act 2010.
8. **Prohibition Checks:**
 - a. Checks for prohibition from teaching (for teachers) or management (for leadership roles, Section 128 check), per KCSIE 2024.
9. **Employment History:**
 - a. Full employment history is verified, with gaps explained and references corroborated.
10. **Online Checks:**

- a. For roles involving significant learner contact, a proportionate online search (e.g., public social media) may be conducted to identify safeguarding concerns, with findings recorded confidentially.

6.7 Agency and Contractors

- Agency staff and contractors undergo the same pre-appointment checks as employees, confirmed in writing by the supplying agency.
- The Organisation verifies identity and DBS status on arrival and maintains oversight via the SCR.
- Contracts require compliance with our safeguarding policies.

6.8 Volunteers

- Volunteers in regulated activity undergo enhanced DBS checks with barred list information.
- Non-regulated activity volunteers undergo risk-assessed checks, with supervision arrangements documented.
- References and identity checks are mandatory for all volunteers.

7. Single Central Record (SCR)

- The Organisation maintains a Single Central Record (SCR) of all staff, contractors, and volunteers, compliant with KCSIE 2024.
- The SCR includes:
 - Name, role, and start date.
 - Identity, DBS, barred list, and right-to-work checks.
 - Qualifications, prohibition, and reference checks.
 - Overseas checks, where applicable.
- The HR Lead ensures the SCR is updated regularly, audited termly, and securely stored, per the Data Protection Policy.

8. Induction and Training

- New staff and volunteers complete a safeguarding induction within their first week, covering:
 - The Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection procedures.
 - KCSIE 2024 (Part 1 and Annex B).
 - The Staff Attendance and Behaviour Policy.
 - SEN/SEMH-specific safeguarding considerations.
- All staff complete annual safeguarding training, with at least one recruitment panel member holding accredited safer recruitment training (e.g., NSPCC or DfE-approved courses).

9. Ongoing Vigilance

- **Performance Management:** Regular appraisals assess staff suitability for working with SEN/SEMH learners, addressing any concerns promptly.

- **Whistleblowing:** Staff are encouraged to report concerns about colleagues' suitability via the Whistleblowing Policy, with protection from retaliation.
- **DBS Re-Checks:** Staff in regulated activity undergo DBS re-checks every 3 years or via the DBS Update Service, unless concerns arise earlier.
- **Safeguarding Concerns:** Any concerns about staff conduct are investigated per the Safeguarding Policy, with referrals to the DSL, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or DBS as required.

10. Equality and Diversity

- Recruitment processes comply with the Equality Act 2010, ensuring no discrimination based on protected characteristics (e.g., disability, race, gender).
- Reasonable adjustments are provided for applicants with disabilities (e.g., accessible forms, interview accommodations).
- Diversity is promoted through inclusive job adverts and outreach to underrepresented groups, per the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

11. Data Protection

- Recruitment records, including DBS outcomes and references, are stored securely, compliant with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR.
- Unsuccessful applicant data is retained for 6 months, then securely destroyed, unless consent is given for longer retention.
- DBS certificates are not retained; only check details are recorded in the SCR.

12. Monitoring and Review

- This policy is reviewed every two years or following significant changes (e.g., new KCSIE guidance, legislative updates).
- The HR Lead and DSL gather feedback from staff and auditors to inform updates.
- Termly SCR audits and recruitment process reviews ensure compliance and identify improvements.

13. Consequences of Non-Compliance

- Staff failing to follow this policy face disciplinary action, up to dismissal, per the Staff Attendance and Behaviour Policy.
- Failure to conduct required checks risks regulatory action from Ofsted or the DfE and compromises learner safety.
- Non-compliance undermines the Organisation's safeguarding commitment to SEN/SEMH learners.

14. Legal Framework

This policy complies with:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024:** Statutory safeguarding guidance for recruitment.
- **Equality Act 2010:** Non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments.
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006:** DBS and barred list requirements.
- **Data Protection Act 2018/UK GDPR:** Secure handling of personal data.
- **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975:** Disclosure of criminal records.
- **Education Act 2002:** Duty to safeguard and promote learner welfare.

15. Contact

For concerns, queries, or support:

Human Resources Lead

Email: hollie.jones@bespokementoring.org

Address: Bespoke Mentoring and Training Services, Regents Walk, Newerne Street, Lydney, Gloucester, GL15 5RF.

Safeguarding concerns should be reported to:

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Email: jacqui.reddan@bespokementoring.org

External escalation options:

- **Ofsted:** www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted, 0300 123 1231
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** For staff suitability concerns.

16. Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- Staff Attendance
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Approval

The Senior Leadership Team has approved this policy immediately.



This policy was last reviewed on 3, 2025, and it is effective