



# One minute guide

## Safer Recruitment

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### What is safer recruitment?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key theme of the [Children Act 2004](#). The statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, put on schools, further education establishments, local authorities and other statutory organisations under the [Education Act 2002](#) and the Children Act 2004 provide emphasis of a wider context for safer recruitment to be an integral part of any organisation's responsibilities to safeguard children and young people.

Experience over many years shows that it is important for organisations that provide services to children to incorporate into their recruitment and selection procedures, measures that help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children, or who are otherwise unsuited to work with them. Making safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children an integral part of HR management in organisations that work with children is an essential part of creating safe environments for children.

### Why is safer recruitment important?

The need for organisations that provide services to children and vulnerable adults to have robust safer recruitment processes was illustrated by the Soham case and the findings and recommendations contained in [Sir Michael Bichard's report](#) into that case (2004) that highlighted flaws and shortcomings in the recruitment process that allowed Ian Huntley to be employed as a caretaker at Soham Community School. However, the principles were not new.

Much the same issues were addressed in Sir Norman Warner's 1992 report [Choosing with Care](#), which examined recruitment and selection in residential children's homes and in a Department of Health programme launched in 1999 called Towards Safer Care which covered similar issues in the context of social care. We know from Serious Case Reviews and research on offender behaviour that some people will specifically seek out employment (either paid or voluntary) for the purposes of accessing vulnerable people and committing acts of abuse. Therefore whilst it is not possible to guarantee 'safe recruitment', by undertaking the principles of safer recruitment, organisations can make it more difficult for unsafe individuals to gain employment in positions which allow them access to children, young people or families.

The [National Safer Recruitment Consortium](#) one day Safer Recruitment Workshop delivered by the LSCP and/or Education Safeguarding Team builds on those reports and recommendations. It aims to:

- give participants an awareness and understanding of offender behaviour;
- identify the key features of staff recruitment that help deter or prevent the appointment of unsuitable people;
- consider policies and practices that minimise opportunities for abuse or ensure its prompt reporting;
- help participants begin to review their own and their organisation's policies and practice with a view to making them 'safer'.

## What are the principles of safer recruitment?

Safer recruitment is based on four principles:

**Deter** - deter applicants with inappropriate motivations from applying for positions, by making it clear that the organisation is not a 'soft target' for abuse (e.g. by referring to safeguarding policies in application processes or job advertisements);

**Reject** - identify and reject inappropriate people from the employment process (e.g. through interviews);

**Prevent** - ensure that there are no opportunities for abuse in the work context, by managing the environment, assessing risk, and establishing clear standards of behaviour (e.g. through appointment and induction processes); and

**Detect** - Identify inappropriate behaviour or abuse within the workplace at the earliest opportunity and respond appropriately (safe working culture).

When recruiting, organisations should ensure that their processes reflect these principles, and that they have a safe working culture. There are a number of good practice steps which should be undertaken throughout the employment process, all the way from identifying a vacant post to employing and inducting a new practitioner.

## What is a safe working culture?

A safe working culture is one where everyone is committed to ensuring that practice is undertaken in the best and most appropriate way to ensure children and young people in their care are safe. In addition, staff should be supported, and know how, to respond to concerns regarding the behaviour or practice of other practitioners.

Key features include:

- An open culture, with no secrets;
- A belief that abuse could happen here;
- Clear procedures to report concerns about the behaviour of practitioners;
- Support for children and adults who raise concerns, and commitment to act on them;
- A code of conduct clearly outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour;
- Policies, procedures and codes of conduct are used, and people are made accountable for their use;
- Good induction and use of probationary periods; and
- A commitment from all who work there to safeguard and protect children and to maintain an ongoing culture of vigilance.

## Where can practitioners go for training and support?

The [Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) (LSCP) recommend that at least one member of any interview panel has undertaken [safer recruitment training](#), which is available through the LSCP or [Leeds for Learning](#) (for education settings); this is considered good practice for agencies, and is a mandatory requirement for education settings.

Please speak to your line manager for further information about how your agency complies with the principles of, and guidance relating to, safer recruitment.

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