4LSAB Guidance on Safer Recruitment for Statutory Agencies, Providers, and the Voluntary and Community Sector

The four Local Safeguarding Adult Boards in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (4LSAB) have produced shared multi-agency guidance on Safer Recruitment to support agencies to check their recruitment process is robust and safe. Safer recruitment is about ensuring the safeguarding of adults, and promoting their welfare, is considered throughout the recruitment process. Robust recruitment and selection processes help to minimise the risk of employing unsuitable staff to work and care for adults with care and support needs/adults at risk.

This document gives guidance on recruiting staff or volunteers to work with adults at risk. For guidance on safer recruitment of staff or volunteers working with children, see the HIPS Guide to Safe Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers.

The guidance contained herein does not replace single-agency internal guidance, but rather seeks to build on and complement this by providing a 'checklist' of key areas to consider when reviewing/updating your own internal procedures and guidance. For those agencies without guidance, this document can provide a useful starting point from which to draft your own. This guidance also contains useful template documents which can be used if you do not have an internal equivalent.

We would recommend that all organisations, including voluntary and community sectors, have an accessible safer recruitment policy.

1. Job Descriptions

Job descriptions should be the place where safer recruitment begins. These suggestions will help ensure you clearly communicate your commitment to safer recruitment from the start:

- Job advertisements should clearly include your organisations commitment to safeguarding and promoting good practice.
- Where applicable, information should be included within the job description advising the role will be subject to pre-employment checks such as a DBS check, and information relating to dismissal or disciplinary relating to safeguarding concerns.
- Job descriptions should advise that all employees will be required to adhere to internal safeguarding policies

- Job descriptions should advise whether there is a professional code of conduct in place for employees, and/or whether employees will be required to adhere to internal professional boundaries guidance/policies.

2. Pre-employment Checks

- At least 2 references are taken up and checked (see further guidance below on references)
- Identity and qualifications are verified in person
- Face-to-face interviews where possible
- Previous employment history is checked
- Any anomalies or discrepancies are discussed
- For statutory agencies, at least one member of the interview panel should have undertaken safer recruitment training
- Safeguarding is at the heart of everything that the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) does. They help employer's make safer recruitment decisions. As part of the recruitment decision an employer may request a DBS check, of which there are four levels; Basic, Standard, Enhanced, and Enhanced with Barred list check.
- Anybody may apply for a Basic DBS check; however, legislation governs the eligibility for a Standard, Enhanced and Enhanced with Barred list check. More detailed guidance about each check can be found on the DBS website DBS eligibility guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and DBS checks: guidance for employers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- The enhanced check with barred list check(s) is only available for those individuals who are carrying out regulated activity and a small number of positions listed in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) regulations.
- What is classed as Regulated activity differs between the Child workforce and the Adult workforce, and it excludes any activity carried out in the course of family relationships, and personal, non-commercial relationships. The Other workforce identifies positions which do not fall within either the Child or Adult workforces but would be eligible for a Standard, Enhanced or Enhanced with Barred list check.
- The DBS also prevents unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups including children. This involves making considered decisions about whether somebody should be barred from engaging in regulated activity with children, adults, or both in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. If you are added to one or both barred lists then it is against the law to work, apply for work or volunteer in Regulated Activity with children and/or adults. If you are an employer you are also breaking the law if you allow someone to work or volunteer in Regulated Activity if you know that they are barred.

- If you are a Regulated Activity provider or a Personnel Supplier, then you have a legal duty to make a Barring referral to the DBS when certain conditions are met. Those conditions and how to make a referral are outlined in the DBS [Barring Referral Document.](#)
- Note that DBS checks are a 'moment in time' and a new one should be applied for when someone is starting a new post if possible. You can accept a certificate that was requested for a previous role, but you must ensure that the certificate is for the correct workforce and level for the new role, and that the applicants identity matches the details on the certificate. A DBS check has no official expiry date, and any information will be accurate only at the time that the check was carried out. It is up to you as an employer to decide when a new check is needed.
- The DBS Update Service is a subscription service that allows applicants to keep Standard and Enhanced DBS certificates up to date. The service allows employers to check the status of a certificate online provided that they have the applicants consent and that the original certificate is for the same workforce, type, and level of check eligible for the new role. The Update Service will show if the information on the original check can be accepted as current and valid. Further details on the Update Service can be found on the DBS [Update Service web guide.](#)

3. References

References are an important part of safer recruitment, and agencies must ensure that they have a robust process for ensuring the right information is requested from the right source and is followed up accordingly. Referees will usually only provide what they have been asked, so it's important to ask the right questions. For those agencies without an internal reference template, this section includes an example template from DBS which can be adapted for your own agency.

- **A Better Hiring Toolkit** has been launched for care sector employers to make informed, safer recruitment decisions. The [Better Hiring Toolkit](#) provides simplified guidance to support employers with both obtaining and providing effective references and conduct information.
- Reference forms should always include a specific question around whether there have been any safeguarding concerns around the employee. If the answer is yes, then this should be followed up with a phone call for more information.
- A reference should always be requested from the most recent employer
- Reference requests should always go through an HR department. If they are directly from a tutor, supervisor etc. they should not be accepted, as they may not have access to HR records, and so may not be aware of any safeguarding concerns.

- It may be necessary to follow up with a phone call, to clarify or discuss information that may be unclear, incomplete or is of concern
- Employers should ensure they are asking questions relating to a specific timeframe
- In the exceptional circumstance that staff may be required to start without all pre-employment checks in place e.g. only 2 out of 3 references have been returned, a risk assessment must be undertaken before allowing them to start, and all other pre-employment checks must be complete

4. Induction and Training

- Review the 4LSAB Learning and Development Strategy to ensure safeguarding training is comprehensive enough for your workforce. This multi-agency learning and development guidance is designed to support the development of best practice in adult safeguarding work and to ensure that people working with adults at risk across all sectors.
- Assess whether the role you are advertising has a higher risk e.g. similar ages of staff and individual, transient staff etc. and tailor training and induction accordingly
- If safeguarding training is not mandatory for all, consider making it mandatory
- Consider regular refresher courses
- Information on 'professional boundaries' and expectations of behaviour should be included within safeguarding training
- If you are recruiting international staff, ensure they receive appropriate support and induction. You will need to ensure you have understood the culture, context and system within which they work in their home country before they arrive, and consider any preparation activity you may need to undertake in advance to ensure a respectful working environment. For the health and social care sectors, additional guidance can be found in the Code of practice for the international recruitment of health and social care personnel in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

5. Policies/Frameworks

- Many professionals such as nurses and social workers are required to adhere to a code of conduct as part of their professional registration. Consider whether an employee code of conduct is needed for any employees in your organisation who do not have a professional registration, or for your organisation as a whole if you do not employ registered professionals.
- We recommend that information on professional boundaries should be included within your internal adult safeguarding policy

- Consider a policy on 'Relationships at work' or 'Safe Relationships Policy', ensuring that people's right to privacy is balanced with the need to protect the interest of the organisations, service users and other employees.
- North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board have produced a one minute guide on social media use for professionals, which references informal relationships with people they have had contact with in the course of their work, and provides signposting to further national guidance - https://safeguardingadults.co.uk/working-with-adults/one-minute-guides-omg/social-media-guidance-for-professionals/

6. Process for when there are concerns a staff member may be unfit to work with adults with care and support needs

In order to develop a consistent approach and to promote best practice across Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth, the four Local Safeguarding Adults Boards have established a joint framework and process for how allegations against people in positions of trust should be responded to.

The 4LSAB Allegations Management Framework is an overarching framework setting standards around the management of allegations against people in a position of trust, supported by clear reporting requirements and arrangements across the whole system. This includes clear information-sharing arrangements and explicit timescales for action. **This is an overarching Framework and so each individual organisation will be expected to develop its own business process detailing how it will implement this framework internally.**