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SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

2025-27

Mission Statement

To inspire our family of schools to provide opportunities for our pupils, staff and leaders to be the best they can be; to create a passion for lifelong learning; to enable our pupils to become kind, confident and impactful world citizens.

1. Purpose and Scope

The safe recruitment of staff to our academies is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in education. Empower Learning Academy Trust ("the Trust") is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils in its care. As an employer, the Trust expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The aim of the Safer Recruitment Policy is to help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse pupils or who are otherwise unsuited to working with them by having appropriate procedures for appointing staff.

2. Policy Principles

2.1 To ensure that the best possible members of staff are recruited based on their merits, abilities and suitability for the position.

2.2 To ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently, with no unfair treatment on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability, neurodiversity, or age.

2.3 To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including:

- Statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2025 (KCSIE 2025),
- The Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015, updated April 2021,
- Any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS),
- The Equality Act 2010,
- SEND Code of Practice.

2.4 To ensure that the Trust meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

2.5 To ensure digital safeguarding and online safety are considered in all recruitment, especially for roles with access to digital systems, in line with KCSIE 2025.

3. Rationale

3.1 The quality of education provided by our academies is entirely dependent on the quality of staff employed by the Trust. This policy outlines the structures and processes the academies will use to manage the recruitment of a member of staff.

3.2 Employees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy.

4. Recruitment Approach & Procedures

4.1 The Trust has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and will seek to recruit the best applicant for the job. The recruitment and selection process should ensure the identification of the person best suited to the job based on the applicant's abilities, qualification, experience and merit as measured against the job description and person specification.

4.2 The recruitment and selection of staff will be conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current employment legislation, and relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance (including KCSIE 2025 and Prevent Duty Guidance).

4.3 If a member of the Trust's staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant, they must declare it as soon as they are aware of the individual's application and avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

4.4 The Trust and constituent academies aim to operate this procedure consistently and thoroughly while obtaining, collating, analysing and evaluating information from and about applicants applying for job vacancies at any of the Trust's academies.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 It is the responsibility of the Trust's governing body to:

- Ensure the Trust has effective policies and procedures in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance with DfE guidance and legal requirements.
- Monitor the Trust's academies' compliance with them.

5.2 It is the responsibility of the Executive, Headteachers/Principals, HR and other Managers involved in recruitment to:

- Ensure that the Trust operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work within the Trust.
- Ensure recruiting panel members are appropriately trained in safer recruitment practice.
- Monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document, including mandatory written confirmation of checks for agency/supply staff.
- Promote the welfare of children and young people at every stage of the procedure.
- The governing body has delegated responsibility to the Executive and Principals to lead in all appointments. Governors may be involved in staff appointments but the final decision will rest with the Executive, except in cases of appointments to the Trust, Executive or Headteacher/Principal Teaching posts.

6. Regulated Activity & Frequency, Definition

6.1 Any position undertaken at or on behalf of an academy will amount to "regulated activity" if it:

- is carried out frequently, meaning once a week or more; or
- is carried out overnight, meaning between 2.00 am and 6.00 am; or
- satisfies the "period condition", meaning four times or more in a 30-day period; and
- provides the opportunity for contact with children.

Roles which are carried out on an unpaid/voluntary basis will only amount to regulated activity if, in addition to the above, they are carried out on an unsupervised basis.

6.2 The Trust is not permitted to check the Children's Barred List unless an individual will be engaging in "regulated activity". The Trust is required to carry out an enhanced DBS check for all staff, supply staff and governors who will be engaging in regulated activity. The Trust will also carry out an enhanced DBS check on a person who would be carrying out regulated activity but for the fact that they do not carry out their duties frequently enough.

6.3 Employment vetting, DBS and criminal record checks will be carried out in accordance with guidance contained in KCSIE 2025. Section 128 checks for leadership and management positions and for new Governors will additionally be undertaken. Overseas vetting and risk assessments will be completed for candidates with overseas history, as required by KCSIE 2025.

7. Recruitment & Selection Procedure

7.1 Advertising. To ensure equality of opportunity, the Trust will advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of applicant as possible, normally this entails an external advertisement. Any advertisement will make clear the Trust's commitment to safeguarding and promoting digital safety.

7.2 Application Forms. The Trust uses its own application form and all applicants for employment will be required to complete an application form containing questions about their academic and full employment history and their suitability for the role. All applicants are required to account for any gaps or discrepancies in employment history. Applicants submitting an incomplete application form will not be shortlisted. The application form will include the applicant's declaration regarding convictions and working with children, and will make it clear that the post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. CVs will not be accepted.

7.3 It is unlawful for the Trust to employ anyone who is barred from working with children. It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children to apply for a position within the Trust. All applicants will be made aware that providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected, or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected, and referral to the police and/or the DBS.

7.4 Job Descriptions and Person Specifications. The job description is a key document in the recruitment process, and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the process. It will clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job role. The person specification is of equal importance and informs the selection decision. It details the skills, experience, abilities and expertise that are required to do the job. The person specification will include a specific reference to

suitability to work with children in an educational environment and digital safeguarding responsibilities where relevant.

7.5 References. Professional references for short-listed applicants will be obtained before any offer of employment is made, in line with KCSIE 2025. One reference must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer. If the current/most recent employment did not involve work with children, the second reference should be from the employer with whom the applicant most recently worked with children. The referee should not be a relative. References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee and their purpose is to provide objective and factual information to support appointment decisions. All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the job for which they have applied and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children. Referees will also be asked to confirm that the applicant has not been radicalised, so that they do not support terrorism or any form of extremism. No questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer of employment being made. Any discrepancies or anomalies will be followed up. Direct contact by telephone will be undertaken with each referee to verify the reference. The Trust does not accept open references, testimonials or references from relatives.

7.6 Interviews. There will be a face-to-face interview wherever possible, and a minimum of two, suitably trained, panel members will see the applicants for the vacant position. The interview process will explore the applicant’s ability to carry out the job description and meet the person specification. It will enable the panel to explore any anomalies or gaps which have been identified in order to satisfy themselves that the chosen applicant can meet the safeguarding criteria (in line with Safer Recruitment Training). Any information in regard to past disciplinary action or allegations, cautions or convictions will be discussed and considered in the circumstance of the individual case during the interview process, if it has been disclosed on the application form. At least one member of any interviewing panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training or refresher training as applicable. All applicants who are invited to an interview will be required to bring evidence of their identity, address and qualifications. Original documents will only be accepted and photocopies will be taken. Unsuccessful applicant documents will be destroyed six months after the recruitment programme, in line with KCSIE 2025 guidance.

8. Offer of Appointment

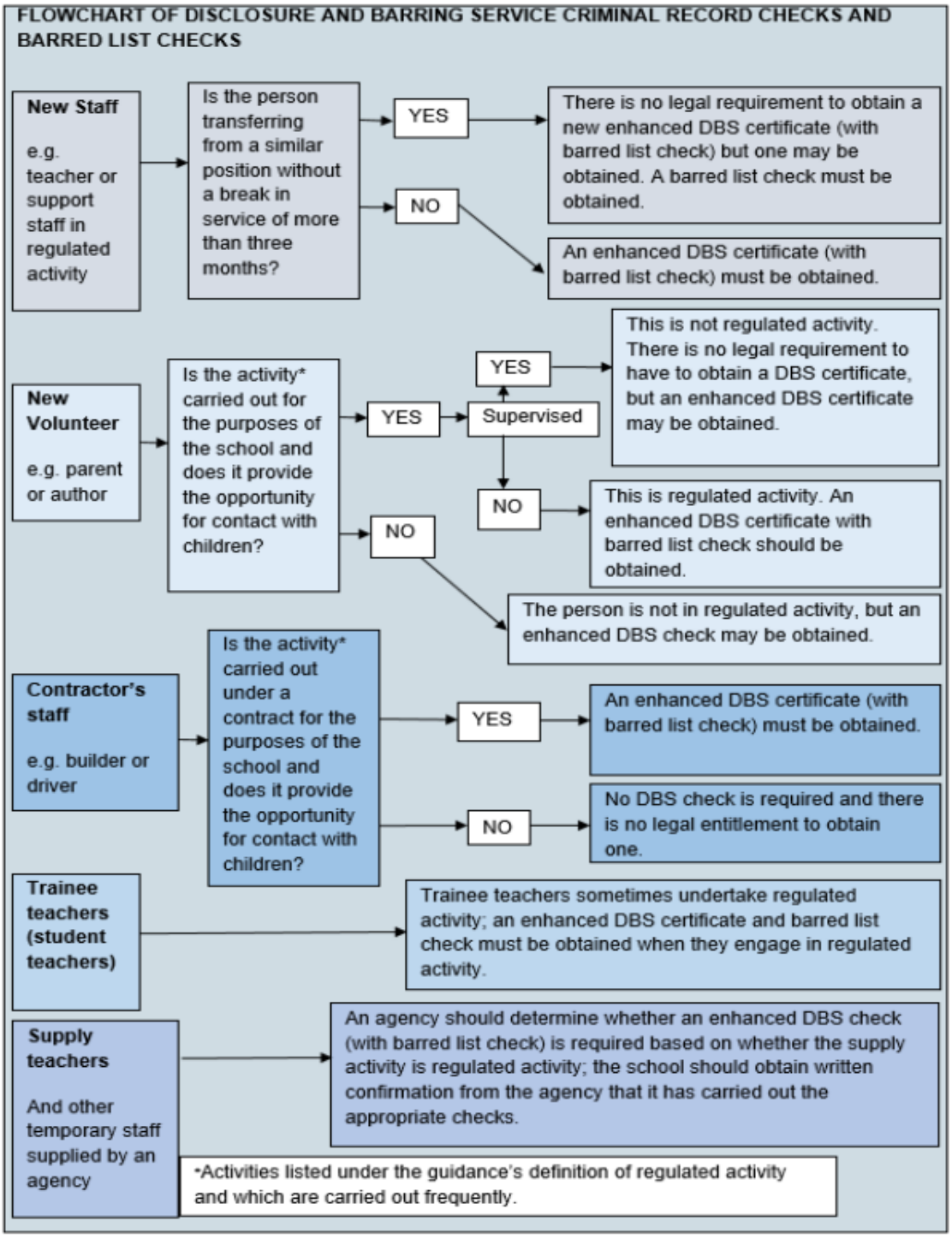
8.1 In accordance with the recommendations set out in Part three of KCSIE 2025, the Trust carries out a number of pre-employment checks, including references and Barred list, in respect of all prospective employees. If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the formal interview, any such offer will be conditional on the following:

- the agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of a contract;
- verification of the applicant's identity (if not previously been verified);
- the receipt of two references (one of which must be from the applicant's most recent employer) which the Trust considers to be satisfactory;
- for positions which involve "teaching work": the Trust being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of a sanction, restriction or prohibition issued by the Teaching Regulation Agency (formerly National College for Teaching and Leadership), or any

predecessor or successor body, or by a regulator of the teaching profession in any other European Economic Area country which prevents the applicant working at the Trust or which, in the Trust's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work within the organisation; and the Trust being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of any proceedings before a professional conduct panel or equivalent body in the UK or any other country for any reason which prevents the applicant working at the Trust or which, in the Trust's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable.

It is the Trust's policy to re-check employees' DBS Certificates every five years and in addition any employee who is promoted to a senior position. Newly appointed members of staff within the Trust are to be made aware of their obligation to inform the HR Department of any changes to their DBS status, cautions or convictions that arise between checks taking place.

8.2 All applicants are requested to complete a medical questionnaire and where appropriate a doctor's medical report may be required. This information will be reviewed against the Job Description and the Person Specification for the particular role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements of the role. The Trust is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010. No job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, obtaining medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.

8.3 DBS certificates and vetting documentation will not be retained longer than six months, in line with KCSIE 2025.

9. Employment Vetting Flowchart