



Apple Tree Farm Services CIC

Staff Recruitment Policy



Section 1 – Policy Statement

1. Statement of Commitment

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person who accesses our services. We recognise that safeguarding begins long before a member of staff starts work and that safer recruitment is one of the most effective ways of preventing unsuitable individuals from gaining access to children and young people.

We believe that every child has the right to be cared for, educated and supported by adults who demonstrate integrity, professionalism, compassion and an unwavering commitment to safeguarding. Our recruitment practices are therefore designed not simply to appoint the most qualified individual, but to appoint individuals whose values, behaviours and professional judgement reflect our safeguarding culture and therapeutic ethos.

Safeguarding is embedded throughout every stage of the recruitment process. From workforce planning and advertising vacancies through to interviews, pre-employment checks, induction and ongoing supervision, safeguarding considerations remain central to every decision. Recruitment decisions will always place the welfare of children above operational convenience, staffing pressures or organisational need.

We recognise that effective safeguarding depends upon recruiting individuals who demonstrate:

- a genuine commitment to protecting children and promoting their welfare;
- the ability to establish safe, trusting and professional relationships;
- emotional maturity and resilience;
- sound professional judgement;
- honesty and integrity;
- appropriate attitudes towards equality, diversity and inclusion;
- the ability to maintain professional boundaries;
- reflective practice and professional curiosity; and
- willingness to challenge unsafe practice and report concerns.

Recruitment is not viewed as an isolated human resources function but as an essential safeguarding responsibility shared across the organisation. Every person involved in recruitment is expected to understand their role in protecting children and ensuring that safer recruitment principles are consistently applied.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is equally committed to creating an inclusive recruitment process which promotes equality of opportunity and complies with the Equality Act 2010. Selection decisions will always be based upon an applicant's ability to meet the essential



requirements of the role and their suitability to work with children and young people. No applicant will be treated less favourably because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Child-Centred Recruitment

At Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, the welfare of children is the paramount consideration in every recruitment decision.

Many of the children and young people who access our services have experienced trauma, adverse childhood experiences, disrupted education, emotional distress, neurodevelopmental differences or significant additional needs. They require adults who can provide emotionally safe, consistent and nurturing relationships while maintaining high standards of professional conduct.

We therefore seek to recruit individuals who demonstrate not only appropriate qualifications and experience but also the personal qualities necessary to work safely within our therapeutic environment.

Recruitment processes are designed to assess whether applicants:

- understand safeguarding responsibilities;
- place children's welfare above all other considerations;
- demonstrate empathy alongside appropriate professional boundaries;
- understand behaviour as communication;
- can work within trauma-informed and attachment-aware approaches;
- embrace neuro-affirming practice;
- are able to build trusting therapeutic relationships whilst maintaining professional objectivity;
- understand the importance of confidentiality and information sharing; and
- demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional development.

Safeguarding questions, values-based assessment and professional discussions form an integral part of every recruitment process.

Recruitment as the First Stage of Safeguarding

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safer recruitment is the first stage of safeguarding and child protection.

Our recruitment procedures are intended to deter, identify and reject individuals who may present a risk to children or who are otherwise unsuitable to work in regulated activity. Safer recruitment extends beyond obtaining an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. It encompasses a rigorous process of assessing an individual's competence, integrity, attitudes, values and professional conduct through:

- careful workforce planning;
- clear job descriptions and person specifications;
- safeguarding-focused advertising;
- comprehensive application forms;
- scrutiny of employment history;



- verification of qualifications and identity;
- robust reference checking;
- structured interviews;
- values-based assessment;
- safeguarding scenario questions;
- online searches where appropriate;
- statutory pre-employment checks;
- thorough induction;
- probationary review; and
- ongoing monitoring of suitability throughout employment.

The organisation adopts a "safer recruitment throughout employment" approach, recognising that suitability to work with children is not established solely at appointment but must be continually maintained through supervision, appraisal, training, professional conduct and safeguarding oversight.

Organisational Culture

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to maintaining a culture in which safeguarding is understood to be everyone's responsibility.

We recognise that policies and procedures alone cannot safeguard children. Children are safest when organisations promote cultures characterised by openness, accountability, reflective practice, respectful challenge and continuous learning.

Recruitment therefore seeks individuals who will actively contribute to this culture by demonstrating:

- integrity;
- honesty;
- professional curiosity;
- emotional intelligence;
- accountability;
- respect for diversity;
- commitment to learning;
- confidence to challenge poor practice;
- willingness to report safeguarding concerns;
- collaborative working; and
- commitment to our organisational values.

Our therapeutic model is underpinned by trauma-informed, attachment-aware, neuro-affirming and PACE-informed practice. Recruitment decisions therefore consider not only whether applicants possess the technical skills required for the role but also whether their values align with the culture we seek to promote.

Successful applicants are expected to contribute positively to an environment where children feel physically safe, emotionally secure, respected and empowered to thrive.

Scope

This policy applies to every stage of the recruitment, selection, appointment and ongoing suitability assessment of individuals working for or on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.



It applies to:

- Board Directors;
- employees;
- managers;
- sessional workers;
- fixed-term staff;
- casual staff;
- apprentices;
- volunteers;
- students on placement;
- work experience students;
- counsellors;
- therapists;
- Play Therapists;
- Drawing and Talking Practitioners;
- self-employed practitioners;
- contractors undertaking regulated activity;
- agency workers;
- consultants;
- external providers delivering services on behalf of the organisation; and
- any individual whose role involves contact with children and young people under the responsibility of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

The principles contained within this policy apply regardless of whether appointments are paid or unpaid and regardless of the duration of engagement.

Where contractors or partner organisations provide services on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, appropriate assurance will be obtained that safer recruitment requirements equivalent to those contained within this policy have been satisfied.

Section 2 – Legislative Framework

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to ensuring that all recruitment practices comply with current legislation, statutory guidance and recognised best practice relating to safeguarding, employment and equality.

This policy should be read alongside all associated safeguarding and employment policies and will be reviewed whenever statutory guidance changes.

The policy has been developed with reference to, but not limited to, the following legislation and guidance.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts the safer recruitment principles contained within the Department for Education's *Keeping Children Safe in Education* statutory guidance. Recruitment procedures reflect the expectation that organisations working with children must take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, maintain robust recruitment processes and create a safeguarding culture in which children's welfare is paramount.

Where KCSIE is updated, the organisation will review this policy to ensure continued compliance.



Working Together to Safeguard Children

The organisation recognises safeguarding as a shared responsibility requiring effective partnership working between education, health, social care, police and voluntary sector organisations.

Recruitment processes support this responsibility by ensuring that only suitable individuals are entrusted with responsibilities involving children and young people.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Where services fall within the scope of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, recruitment procedures will additionally comply with EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements relating to suitability, supervision and safer recruitment.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Code of Practice

The organisation complies fully with the Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice and undertakes Enhanced DBS checks, including children's barred list checks where appropriate, before individuals commence regulated activity.

DBS information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with legislation governing the use, storage and disposal of criminal records information.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Recruitment arrangements comply with the requirements relating to regulated activity, barred lists and the prevention of unsuitable individuals working with children.

The organisation recognises its legal responsibilities to make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service where statutory criteria are met.

Equality Act 2010

Recruitment decisions will be free from unlawful discrimination.

Reasonable adjustments will be made throughout recruitment and selection processes to ensure applicants with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

Appointments will always be based upon merit, suitability and ability to fulfil the requirements of the role.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

Personal information obtained during recruitment will be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently.

Information will only be collected where necessary, retained securely and disposed of in accordance with organisational retention schedules and data protection legislation.

Human Rights Act 1998

Recruitment processes will respect the rights and dignity of all applicants whilst balancing the organisation's overriding responsibility to safeguard children.

Decisions will be proportionate, evidence-based and consistently applied.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order

Because many positions within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC involve regulated activity with children, applicants will be required to disclose convictions and other relevant information in accordance with the Exceptions Order.



The existence of a criminal record will not automatically prevent employment. Decisions will be made following an individual risk assessment that considers:

- the nature of the offence;
- relevance to the role;
- time elapsed;
- pattern of offending;
- rehabilitation;
- safeguarding implications; and
- legal restrictions on appointment.

The welfare of children will always remain the overriding consideration.

Section 3 – Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and safer recruitment is a shared organisational duty. While specific responsibilities are allocated to designated roles, every person involved in recruitment is accountable for ensuring that safeguarding remains central to recruitment decisions.

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors holds ultimate accountability for ensuring effective safer recruitment arrangements across Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

The Board will:

- approve and annually review this policy;
- ensure recruitment arrangements comply with statutory guidance and legislation;
- promote a culture where safeguarding underpins recruitment practice;
- ensure adequate resources are available to implement safer recruitment procedures;
- monitor organisational compliance through audit and quality assurance;
- ensure appropriate safer recruitment training is available for recruiting managers;
- receive assurance that safer recruitment practices remain effective; and
- ensure recruitment decisions prioritise children's welfare above all other considerations.

Responsibilities of the Director

The Director has overall operational responsibility for implementing this policy.

The Director will:

- ensure safer recruitment procedures are consistently implemented;
- oversee recruitment planning;
- authorise appointments;
- ensure statutory checks are completed before employment commences;
- ensure induction and probation processes are effective;
- monitor ongoing suitability of staff;
- ensure recruitment records are maintained appropriately;
- support managers involved in recruitment;
- ensure recruitment reflects organisational values and safeguarding culture; and
- report significant recruitment or safeguarding concerns to the Board.

Responsibilities of Recruiting Managers

Managers responsible for recruitment will:

- undertake safer recruitment training where appropriate;



- prepare accurate job descriptions and person specifications;
- ensure safeguarding responsibilities are clearly identified within every role;
- participate in objective shortlisting;
- explore safeguarding issues during interviews;
- scrutinise references and employment history;
- ensure all pre-employment checks are completed;
- document recruitment decisions;
- identify and escalate concerns;
- maintain confidentiality throughout recruitment; and
- ensure no applicant commences regulated activity before all required checks have been satisfactorily completed.

Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL provides safeguarding oversight throughout recruitment.

The DSL will:

- advise recruiting managers regarding safeguarding risks;
- contribute to recruitment decisions where safeguarding concerns arise;
- provide guidance regarding allegations or historical safeguarding issues disclosed during recruitment;
- support decision-making relating to risk assessments;
- ensure safeguarding remains central throughout recruitment processes;
- advise on referrals to external safeguarding agencies where required;
- contribute to induction and safeguarding training; and
- monitor recruitment practice through safeguarding audits.

Responsibilities of Interview Panel Members

Every interview panel member is responsible for ensuring recruitment decisions promote children's safety.

Panel members will:

- assess applicants objectively against agreed criteria;
- explore safeguarding understanding and attitudes;
- identify inconsistencies within applications;
- question unexplained employment gaps;
- assess professional values and behaviours;
- record interview evidence accurately;
- maintain confidentiality; and
- challenge any appointment where safeguarding concerns remain unresolved.

Where possible, at least one member of every interview panel will have completed recognised safer recruitment training.

Responsibilities of All Staff

Every member of staff contributes to maintaining a safe workforce.

All staff are expected to:

- uphold the organisation's safeguarding culture;
- participate honestly in recruitment where requested;
- declare any circumstances affecting their suitability to work with children;
- report safeguarding concerns relating to colleagues or applicants;
- maintain professional standards at all times;
- comply with this policy and associated safeguarding procedures; and



- recognise that suitability to work with children is an ongoing professional responsibility, not a one-off recruitment requirement.

4. Workforce Planning

Effective safer recruitment begins before a vacancy is advertised. Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that careful workforce planning is essential to ensuring children and young people receive safe, high-quality support from appropriately skilled and suitably vetted adults.

Recruitment decisions will never be made solely in response to staffing shortages or operational pressures. The welfare of children remains the paramount consideration in determining whether, when and how appointments are made.

Prior to advertising any vacancy, the Director or designated recruiting manager will undertake a structured workforce planning process to ensure that the role is necessary, appropriately designed and financially sustainable, and that safeguarding requirements have been fully considered.

The planning process will include the following considerations.

Identifying the Need for the Role

Before recruitment begins, the organisation will clearly identify the purpose of the vacancy and how it contributes to the safe delivery of services.

Consideration will include:

- organisational need;
- current and projected service demand;
- contractual and commissioning requirements;
- succession planning;
- replacement of existing staff;
- expansion of services;
- specialist knowledge or qualifications required;
- opportunities for internal progression; and
- whether duties could reasonably be absorbed within the existing workforce without compromising safeguarding or service quality.

Recruitment will only proceed where there is a clearly identified operational need that supports the organisation's strategic objectives and safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding Risk Assessment

Every vacancy will be subject to a safeguarding risk assessment before recruitment commences.

The purpose of this assessment is to identify the level of safeguarding responsibility associated with the role and determine the safer recruitment measures required.

The assessment will consider:

- the level of contact with children and young people;
- whether the role involves one-to-one working;
- opportunities for unsupervised access to children;
- responsibility for transporting children;
- access to confidential safeguarding information;
- responsibility for personal care or intimate support;
- opportunities for influence or positions of trust;
- lone working arrangements;
- off-site activities;



- overnight activities where applicable;
- supervision arrangements;
- access to organisational IT systems containing sensitive information; and
- the vulnerability and additional needs of the children accessing the service.

The findings of the safeguarding risk assessment will inform the recruitment process, pre-employment checks, induction programme and supervision arrangements.

Staffing Levels and Safe Ratios

The organisation is committed to maintaining staffing arrangements that safeguard children while supporting effective service delivery.

Workforce planning will consider:

- minimum staffing levels;
- supervision requirements;
- staff-to-child ratios appropriate to each activity;
- the complexity of children's needs;
- gender balance where appropriate;
- staff experience;
- availability of Designated Safeguarding Leads;
- emergency response arrangements;
- contingency planning for staff absence; and
- opportunities for reflective supervision and staff wellbeing.

Recruitment decisions will support safe staffing rather than simply achieving minimum numbers.

Financial Planning and Budget Approval

Before advertising a vacancy, confirmation will be obtained that sufficient financial resources exist to support the appointment.

Consideration will include:

- salary costs;
- National Insurance and pension contributions;
- training and induction costs;
- DBS and recruitment costs;
- equipment and uniform requirements;
- ongoing professional development;
- supervision arrangements; and
- long-term financial sustainability.

Approval to recruit must be authorised by the Director or Board of Directors in accordance with organisational financial procedures.

Review of the Job Description and Person Specification

Every vacancy provides an opportunity to review the continuing suitability of the role.

Before advertising, recruiting managers will ensure that:

- duties accurately reflect operational requirements;
- safeguarding responsibilities are clearly described;
- reporting arrangements remain accurate;
- qualifications remain appropriate;
- essential and desirable criteria remain proportionate;
- professional competencies reflect current practice; and
- responsibilities align with organisational values and strategic objectives.



Existing documentation will not simply be reused without review.

Review of Safeguarding Requirements

Recruiting managers will determine the safeguarding responsibilities associated with the role before recruitment begins.

This review will identify:

- safeguarding responsibilities;
- level of decision-making;
- safeguarding training requirements;
- supervision requirements;
- responsibility for recording safeguarding concerns;
- expectations regarding professional boundaries;
- suitability requirements; and
- whether additional safeguarding competencies should be assessed during interview.

Safeguarding considerations will inform every stage of recruitment and selection.

Determining Whether the Role Constitutes Regulated Activity

Before advertising any vacancy, the organisation will determine whether the position constitutes regulated activity with children under current legislation.

This assessment will determine:

- whether an Enhanced DBS check is required;
- whether a Children's Barred List check is required;
- whether additional statutory checks are applicable;
- whether the individual may commence work before a DBS certificate is received (only in exceptional circumstances following written risk assessment and never where barred list information is required before commencing regulated activity); and
- any restrictions applicable to the appointment.

Where uncertainty exists, advice will be sought before recruitment progresses.

Recruitment Planning Meeting

For permanent appointments and specialist roles, the organisation will normally undertake a recruitment planning meeting before advertising.

This meeting may consider:

- workforce requirements;
- safeguarding risks;
- interview panel membership;
- assessment methods;
- recruitment timetable;
- advertising strategy;
- interview questions;
- values-based assessment;
- safeguarding scenarios;
- pre-employment checks; and
- induction planning.

Planning recruitment carefully helps ensure appointments are safe, fair, transparent and consistent.



5. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Job descriptions and person specifications form an essential part of the organisation's safer recruitment arrangements.

They provide clarity regarding the responsibilities of the role while ensuring applicants understand the expectations associated with working for an organisation committed to safeguarding children and young people.

Every job description and person specification will be reviewed prior to recruitment to ensure that it accurately reflects the requirements of the role and current statutory guidance.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Every job description will include an explicit safeguarding statement confirming that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is a fundamental responsibility of the role.

The statement will make clear that all employees are expected to:

- safeguard children at all times;
- comply with safeguarding policies and procedures;
- complete mandatory safeguarding training;
- report concerns immediately;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries; and
- contribute to a positive safeguarding culture.

Safeguarding responsibilities will never be confined to designated safeguarding roles.

Duty to Promote the Welfare of Children

Every role within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC contributes to promoting children's welfare.

Job descriptions will reflect the expectation that staff actively support children's:

- physical safety;
- emotional wellbeing;
- psychological safety;
- inclusion;
- dignity;
- confidence;
- resilience;
- independence; and
- participation.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate a child-centred approach that places children's welfare above all other considerations.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Job descriptions will make clear that employees are expected to establish warm, trusting and therapeutic relationships while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Employees must:

- act professionally at all times;
- avoid conflicts of interest;
- maintain appropriate relationships with children and families;
- use social media responsibly;
- follow organisational guidance regarding gifts, contact outside work and personal disclosures; and



- recognise that behaviour both inside and outside the workplace may affect their suitability to work with children.

Professional boundaries are fundamental to safeguarding and protecting both children and staff.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Every role carries an individual responsibility to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

Job descriptions will require staff to:

- recognise indicators of abuse and neglect;
- remain professionally curious;
- report concerns immediately;
- accurately record safeguarding information;
- follow safeguarding procedures;
- contribute to multi-agency working where appropriate; and
- never assume someone else has taken action.

Failure to report safeguarding concerns may constitute misconduct.

Adherence to the Staff Code of Conduct

All staff are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct.

Job descriptions will require compliance with:

- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Low-Level Concerns Policy;
- Equality Policy;
- Health and Safety procedures;
- Confidentiality requirements; and
- all organisational policies relevant to the role.

Professional conduct forms part of ongoing suitability to work with children.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to creating an inclusive workforce that values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity.

Person specifications will identify behaviours that demonstrate:

- respect for diversity;
- inclusive practice;
- anti-discriminatory working;
- cultural awareness;
- willingness to make reasonable adjustments;
- respect for protected characteristics; and
- commitment to creating environments in which every child feels safe, valued and included.

Applicants will be assessed against these expectations throughout recruitment.

Trauma-Informed Practice

As a specialist therapeutic organisation, all roles require an understanding of trauma-informed principles appropriate to the level of responsibility.

Person specifications will seek evidence that applicants can:



- recognise the impact of trauma;
- prioritise emotional safety;
- understand behaviour as communication;
- build trusting relationships;
- support emotional regulation;
- avoid punitive responses wherever possible; and
- work collaboratively with children, families and professionals.

Previous experience of trauma-informed practice will be identified where appropriate as either an essential or desirable criterion.

PACE-Informed Working

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC embeds the principles of Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE) throughout its therapeutic approach.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate behaviours consistent with PACE, including:

- warmth;
- empathy;
- reflective practice;
- professional curiosity;
- emotional containment;
- respectful communication; and
- the ability to build relationships through acceptance rather than judgement.

Interview questions and assessment activities may be designed to explore these qualities.

Neuro-Affirming Practice

The organisation recognises neurodiversity as a natural and valuable aspect of human diversity.

Person specifications will seek individuals who demonstrate:

- respect for different ways of thinking and communicating;
- understanding of sensory needs;
- willingness to adapt environments;
- strengths-based approaches;
- flexible communication styles;
- appreciation of individual differences; and
- commitment to supporting children without expecting them to mask their neurodivergent identity.

Applicants should demonstrate an understanding that behaviour frequently reflects unmet needs rather than deliberate non-compliance.

Essential and Desirable Criteria

Person specifications will distinguish clearly between essential and desirable criteria.

Essential criteria will represent the minimum knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience required to undertake the role safely.

Desirable criteria will identify additional attributes that would enhance performance but are not essential for appointment.

Criteria will be:

- objective;
- measurable;
- proportionate;
- relevant to the role;



- free from discriminatory language; and
- capable of being assessed consistently throughout recruitment.

6. Advertising Vacancies

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to ensuring that recruitment advertising supports both safer recruitment and equality of opportunity.

Vacancies will be advertised in a manner that attracts high-quality applicants while making the organisation's safeguarding expectations clear from the outset.

All recruitment advertisements will accurately describe the role, its safeguarding responsibilities and the recruitment process.

Advertisements will normally include:

- job title;
- brief description of the role;
- salary and employment terms;
- working hours;
- contract type;
- location;
- key responsibilities;
- essential qualifications where applicable;
- closing date;
- interview date where known;
- application process; and
- safeguarding statement.

Mandatory Safeguarding Statement

Every recruitment advertisement issued by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will include the following statement, or words to the same effect:

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff, volunteers and contractors to share this commitment. Successful applicants will be required to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, including children's barred list information where appropriate, together with satisfactory references, identity verification, qualification checks, right to work checks and all other safer recruitment checks relevant to the role.

Where appropriate, advertisements will also state that:

- safeguarding questions will form part of the interview process;
- online searches may be undertaken on shortlisted candidates in accordance with statutory guidance;
- appointments are subject to satisfactory completion of all pre-employment checks;
- employment is subject to a satisfactory probationary period; and
- the organisation is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates.

Advertising Strategy

Vacancies will be advertised using methods appropriate to attracting suitably qualified applicants, including:

- the Apple Tree Farm Services CIC website;
- recognised recruitment websites;
- professional networks;



- local authority networks;
- educational partnerships;
- social media;
- voluntary sector organisations; and
- other appropriate recruitment channels.

Internal recruitment opportunities may also be used where appropriate to support career progression and workforce development.

Accessible Recruitment

The organisation is committed to ensuring recruitment processes are accessible to all applicants.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required throughout recruitment and selection to remove barriers for applicants with disabilities or other protected characteristics.

Applicants will be invited to inform the organisation of any adjustments required to enable them to participate fully in the recruitment process.

Positive Recruitment Culture

Recruitment advertising should accurately reflect Apple Tree Farm Services CIC's values and culture.

Advertisements should communicate that successful applicants will join an organisation that is:

- child-centred;
- trauma-informed;
- attachment-aware;
- PACE-informed;
- neuro-affirming;
- committed to continuous learning;
- committed to safeguarding excellence; and
- dedicated to improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

This approach helps attract applicants whose values align with those of the organisation, strengthening safeguarding and supporting the development of a safe, compassionate and professional workforce.

7. Application Process

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to operating a fair, transparent and robust application process that supports safer recruitment and enables the organisation to assess an applicant's suitability to work with children and young people.

The application stage is a critical component of safer recruitment. Information provided by applicants enables the organisation to identify discrepancies, verify qualifications and employment history, explore safeguarding matters and determine whether applicants should progress to the next stage of recruitment.

All applications will be treated confidentially and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Apple Tree Farm Application Form

To ensure consistency and enable robust safer recruitment checks, all applicants must complete the official Apple Tree Farm Services CIC Application Form.



Curriculum Vitae (CVs) may be submitted as supporting information but will **not** be accepted as a substitute for the completed application form. The application form has been specifically designed to support safer recruitment and obtain the information necessary to assess an applicant's suitability to work with children. Incomplete application forms will normally not be considered.

Full Employment History

Applicants must provide a complete chronological history from the point of leaving compulsory education.

Employment history must include:

- full-time employment;
- part-time employment;
- self-employment;
- voluntary work;
- agency work;
- periods of education or training;
- periods of unemployment;
- career breaks;
- parental leave;
- travel where exceeding three months; and
- any other periods where the applicant was not in paid employment.

Applicants must provide accurate start and finish dates for every period.

Explanation of Gaps

All gaps in employment, education or training must be fully explained.

Recruiting managers will review explanations carefully and may request additional information where clarification is required.

Unexplained or inconsistent employment histories will be explored during shortlisting and interview.

The organisation recognises that employment gaps occur for many legitimate reasons and applicants will be given the opportunity to explain these fully.

Declaration of Criminal Convictions and Relevant Information

Where legislation permits or requires, applicants will be asked to disclose criminal convictions and other relevant safeguarding information appropriate to the role.

This may include:

- convictions;
- cautions;
- reprimands;
- final warnings (where legally disclosable);
- ongoing police investigations;
- pending criminal proceedings;
- professional disciplinary findings;
- barring decisions;
- safeguarding investigations; and
- any information that may affect suitability to work with children.

Applicants are expected to answer all questions honestly.

Failure to disclose relevant information may result in:

- withdrawal from the recruitment process;



- withdrawal of a conditional offer;
- disciplinary action;
- dismissal where employment has commenced; and
- referral to relevant regulatory or safeguarding bodies where appropriate.

The organisation recognises that a criminal record does not automatically prevent employment. Every disclosure will be considered individually, taking account of the nature of the offence, its relevance to the role, the time elapsed and evidence of rehabilitation.

Self-Disclosure Form

Applicants shortlisted for interview may be required to complete a confidential self-disclosure form.

This enables safeguarding information to be considered separately from the shortlisting process and ensures decisions remain objective and free from bias.

Information disclosed will be considered only by appropriately authorised personnel and only where relevant to safeguarding or legal requirements.

Right to Work in the United Kingdom

Successful applicants will be required to provide original documentation demonstrating their legal right to work in the United Kingdom before employment commences.

The organisation will verify documentation in accordance with current Home Office requirements.

No individual will commence employment until the required right to work checks have been satisfactorily completed.

Verification of Qualifications

Applicants must provide evidence of all qualifications stated as essential for the role. Original certificates, professional awards or equivalent documentation will normally be verified before appointment.

Where qualifications were obtained overseas, additional verification may be sought where appropriate.

False claims relating to qualifications will be treated as gross misconduct and may result in withdrawal of any offer of employment.

Professional Registration

Where professional registration is required for a role, applicants must provide evidence of current registration with the appropriate regulatory body.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP);
- Play Therapy UK (PTUK);
- Social Work England;
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC);
- General Teaching Council equivalents; or
- any other relevant professional regulator.

Registration status will be verified before appointment and may be periodically reviewed throughout employment.

Applicant Declaration

Every applicant must complete and sign a declaration confirming that:

- all information provided is complete and accurate;



- they understand that false or misleading information may result in disqualification or dismissal;
- they consent to appropriate safer recruitment checks being undertaken;
- they understand the organisation's commitment to safeguarding;
- they agree to notify the organisation of any circumstances affecting their suitability during the recruitment process; and
- they understand that appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of all safer recruitment checks.

Electronic applications will require applicants to sign the declaration at interview before progressing further.

Verification of Information

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC reserves the right to verify any information provided throughout the recruitment process.

Where discrepancies are identified, applicants will be given an opportunity to provide clarification.

Deliberate falsification, omission or misrepresentation of information will normally result in removal from the recruitment process.

8. Shortlisting

Shortlisting forms an important part of the safer recruitment process and must be undertaken fairly, consistently and objectively.

The purpose of shortlisting is not only to identify applicants who best meet the requirements of the role but also to identify any information that requires further exploration before appointment.

Safeguarding considerations remain central throughout this stage.

Shortlisting Panel

Applications will normally be shortlisted by a panel consisting of at least two appropriately appointed members of staff.

Where possible:

- one panel member will be the recruiting manager;
- one panel member will have operational knowledge of the role;
- at least one panel member will have completed recognised Safer Recruitment training; and
- panel membership will reflect equality, diversity and fairness wherever practicable.

Individuals with a conflict of interest must withdraw from the process.

Assessment Against the Person Specification

Applicants will be assessed objectively against the published person specification.

Assessment will consider:

Essential Criteria

Applicants must demonstrate that they meet all essential criteria for the role.

Failure to meet essential criteria will normally result in the application not progressing.

Desirable Criteria

Where applicants meet the essential criteria, desirable criteria may be used to distinguish between candidates.

These may include:



- additional qualifications;
- specialist experience;
- therapeutic knowledge;
- SEND experience;
- outdoor learning experience;
- leadership experience; and
- additional professional skills relevant to the role.

Safeguarding Considerations

Shortlisting is not solely an assessment of qualifications and experience.

The panel will remain professionally curious and identify any safeguarding issues requiring further exploration.

Examples include:

- repeated short-term employment;
- frequent changes of role;
- unexplained career moves;
- disciplinary history where disclosed;
- safeguarding declarations;
- inconsistencies within applications;
- missing information; and
- concerns identified through previous recruitment processes where legally appropriate.

The existence of safeguarding questions does not automatically prevent progression but will inform interview planning.

Employment History

Employment history will be scrutinised carefully.

The panel will consider:

- chronological continuity;
- unexplained gaps;
- overlapping dates;
- inconsistencies;
- reasons for leaving previous employment;
- movement between roles; and
- employment involving children.

Applicants should expect to discuss any anomalies during interview.

Professional Conduct

Applications will be reviewed for evidence of professional conduct and values consistent with the organisation.

The panel may consider:

- quality and accuracy of the application;
- professionalism;
- attention to detail;
- motivation for the role;
- understanding of safeguarding responsibilities;
- commitment to equality and inclusion;
- alignment with organisational values; and
- evidence of reflective practice.



Recording Shortlisting Decisions

The reasons for every shortlisting decision will be recorded.

Records will include:

- assessment against essential criteria;
- assessment against desirable criteria;
- safeguarding matters requiring exploration;
- interview themes;
- reasons for progressing or rejecting applicants; and
- panel members' decisions.

Recruitment records will be retained in accordance with the organisation's data retention procedures.

Invitation to Interview

Applicants selected for interview will receive written confirmation containing:

- interview date and time;
- venue or online arrangements;
- interview panel members;
- assessment activities where applicable;
- documentation required;
- identification requirements;
- requests for reasonable adjustments; and
- details of any additional recruitment exercises.

9. Interview Process

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that interviews are one of the most important opportunities to assess an applicant's suitability to work with children and young people. Interviews are designed not only to assess competence and experience but also to explore values, behaviours, professional judgement and safeguarding understanding. The interview process will be structured, evidence-based and consistent across all candidates.

Interview Panel

Every interview panel will consist of at least two interviewers.

Where reasonably practicable:

- at least two panel members will have successfully completed recognised Safer Recruitment training;
- panel members will have reviewed all application documentation before interview;
- panel members will agree interview questions and scoring criteria beforehand; and
- all panel members will contribute to recruitment decisions.

The panel will remain objective, professional and free from bias throughout the process.

Structure of the Interview

Interviews may include:

- structured interview questions;
- safeguarding discussions;
- values-based interviewing;
- behaviour-based questions;
- competency-based questions;



- practical activities;
- written exercises;
- presentations;
- role-play scenarios;
- observations of interaction where appropriate; and
- opportunities for applicants to ask questions.

Assessment methods will be proportionate to the role.

Motivation to Work with Children

Applicants will be asked to explain:

- why they wish to work with children and young people;
- what attracts them to Apple Tree Farm Services CIC;
- their understanding of the needs of vulnerable children;
- their commitment to safeguarding; and
- what they believe constitutes safe professional practice.

Responses should demonstrate child-centred values rather than personal fulfilment alone.

Safeguarding Understanding

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of:

- safeguarding responsibilities;
- recognising abuse and neglect;
- professional curiosity;
- recording concerns;
- reporting procedures;
- information sharing;
- contextual safeguarding;
- child-centred decision-making; and
- the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Applicants are not expected to know every procedural detail but should demonstrate sound safeguarding judgement.

Professional Curiosity

Interview questions will explore an applicant's ability to:

- notice changes in behaviour;
- ask appropriate questions;
- challenge assumptions;
- recognise cumulative harm;
- seek advice when uncertain;
- remain professionally inquisitive; and
- avoid making assumptions about children or families.

Managing Professional Boundaries

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of professional boundaries.

Discussion may include:

- relationships with children;
- relationships with families;
- social media;
- gifts;
- confidentiality;



- lone working;
- physical contact;
- maintaining therapeutic relationships; and
- conflicts of interest.

Attitudes Towards Behaviour

As a therapeutic organisation, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC seeks applicants who understand behaviour as communication.

Interview discussions will explore:

- emotional regulation;
- trauma-informed approaches;
- attachment-aware practice;
- restorative responses;
- de-escalation;
- co-regulation;
- maintaining safety;
- reflective practice; and
- balancing empathy with appropriate boundaries.

Applicants demonstrating punitive or discriminatory attitudes may be considered unsuitable.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how they would:

- promote inclusion;
- challenge discrimination;
- respect diversity;
- support neurodivergent children;
- make reasonable adjustments;
- value children's identities; and
- create environments where everyone feels safe and respected.

Whistleblowing

Applicants will be asked how they would respond if they observed unsafe practice by a colleague.

Discussion will explore:

- willingness to challenge;
- understanding of whistleblowing;
- confidence to escalate concerns;
- safeguarding responsibilities; and
- organisational accountability.

Low-Level Concerns

Applicants should demonstrate an understanding that:

- professional conduct matters;
- low-level concerns should be shared appropriately;
- early intervention protects children and staff;
- safeguarding culture relies upon openness; and
- concerns should never be ignored.



Resilience and Wellbeing

Working with vulnerable children can be emotionally demanding.

Applicants may be asked about:

- maintaining resilience;
- reflective practice;
- seeking support;
- responding to challenge;
- managing stress;
- learning from mistakes; and
- commitment to professional development.

Teamwork

Applicants should demonstrate an ability to:

- work collaboratively;
- communicate effectively;
- contribute to safeguarding discussions;
- respect professional differences;
- support colleagues; and
- participate positively within multidisciplinary teams.

Confidentiality

Interview discussions will explore applicants' understanding of:

- confidentiality;
- lawful information sharing;
- safeguarding exceptions;
- professional record keeping; and
- data protection responsibilities.

Behaviour-Based Questions

Interview panels will use behaviour-based questions to explore previous experience.

Examples may include:

- "Tell us about a time you managed a safeguarding concern."
- "Describe a situation where you challenged unsafe practice."
- "Tell us about a time you helped a distressed child feel emotionally safe."

Past behaviour is often a useful indicator of future professional practice.

Values-Based Questions

Values-based questions will assess whether applicants' personal values align with those of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

Topics may include:

- compassion;
- integrity;
- accountability;
- empathy;
- inclusion;
- professionalism;
- child-centred practice;
- reflective learning; and
- safeguarding culture.



Safeguarding Scenario Questions

All interviews will include safeguarding scenarios appropriate to the role.

Scenarios may explore:

- responding to disclosures;
- professional boundaries;
- allegations against adults;
- low-level concerns;
- online safety;
- child-on-child abuse;
- emotional regulation;
- managing conflict;
- confidentiality;
- information sharing; and
- escalation of safeguarding concerns.

Responses will be assessed not only for technical knowledge but also for judgement, reasoning, professional curiosity and commitment to keeping children safe.

Interview Records and Appointment Decisions

Interview outcomes will be recorded using a standardised scoring framework. Panel members will document the evidence supporting their assessment of each candidate, including safeguarding strengths, areas requiring clarification and any concerns identified during the process.

Appointment decisions will be based on the candidate's ability to meet the published criteria, demonstrate alignment with the organisation's values and provide clear evidence of their suitability to work safely with children and young people. Where safeguarding concerns remain unresolved, the organisation will not make an appointment unless those concerns have been satisfactorily investigated and addressed.

Successful completion of the interview does not constitute an offer of employment. Any offer will remain conditional upon the satisfactory completion of all pre-employment and safer recruitment checks detailed within this policy.

10. Pre-employment Checks

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to ensuring that no individual commences employment, volunteering or regulated activity until all appropriate pre-employment and safer recruitment checks have been satisfactorily completed.

These checks form a fundamental part of the organisation's safeguarding arrangements and are designed to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and young people.

Conditional offers of employment will only become confirmed once all required checks have been completed and deemed satisfactory.

The level of checking undertaken will be proportionate to the nature of the role, the level of contact with children and current statutory requirements.

Where concerns arise during any pre-employment check, the organisation will undertake an individual risk assessment before making any appointment decision. Safeguarding considerations will always take precedence.

Required Pre-employment Checks



Check	Purpose	Requirement
Identity Verification	To confirm the applicant's identity using original photographic identification and supporting documentation.	Required for all appointments before employment commences.
Enhanced DBS Check	To identify criminal history relevant to working with children.	Required for all roles involving regulated activity or where appropriate following risk assessment.
Children's Barred List Check	To confirm that the individual is not legally barred from working with children.	Required before commencing any regulated activity. Individuals must not begin regulated activity until satisfactory barred list information has been obtained.
Right to Work in the UK	To confirm legal entitlement to work in the United Kingdom.	Original documentation must be verified before employment begins.
References	To verify employment history, professional conduct and suitability to work with children.	Two satisfactory references must normally be obtained before appointment.
Employment History Verification	To verify chronological employment history and explore any anomalies or gaps.	Required for every appointment.
Qualification Verification	To confirm essential qualifications required for the role.	Original certificates or equivalent evidence must be seen where qualifications are essential.
Professional Registration	To verify registration with any relevant professional or regulatory body.	Required where registration is a condition of employment or professional practice.
Overseas Criminal Record Checks	To assess suitability where applicants have lived or worked overseas.	Appropriate overseas police certificates or equivalent evidence will be obtained where reasonably practicable.
Online Search	To identify publicly available information relevant to safeguarding and professional suitability.	Undertaken for shortlisted candidates where appropriate in accordance with KCSIE and this policy.
Health Declaration / Occupational Health Assessment	To ensure applicants are medically fit to undertake the essential duties of the role and identify any reasonable adjustments required.	Required following a conditional offer and managed in accordance with equality legislation.
Prohibition Checks	To confirm that an individual is not prohibited from carrying out teaching work or other	Undertaken where relevant to the specific role.



Check	Purpose	Requirement
Section 128 Direction Check	regulated professional activities. To establish whether an individual is prohibited from participating in the management of an independent educational setting.	Undertaken where legislation or the role requires.
Childcare Disqualification Requirements	To identify any statutory disqualification from relevant childcare provision.	Undertaken where the role falls within the scope of current childcare legislation.

Conditional Offers of Employment

All offers of employment made by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will be conditional upon the satisfactory completion of all required safer recruitment checks.

A conditional offer may be withdrawn where:

- information provided by the applicant is inaccurate or misleading;
- safeguarding concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved;
- statutory checks are unsatisfactory;
- references raise concerns regarding suitability;
- qualifications cannot be verified;
- required documentation is not provided;
- the applicant is barred from working with children; or
- other information comes to light that would make the appointment unsuitable.

The organisation reserves the right to undertake additional enquiries where necessary to safeguard children.

Commencement of Employment

Individuals must **not** commence regulated activity until all statutory safeguarding checks have been satisfactorily completed.

In exceptional circumstances where an individual begins work before receipt of an Enhanced DBS certificate (where legally permissible), this will only occur following:

- written approval from the Director;
- completion of all other recruitment checks;
- receipt of satisfactory Children's Barred List information where required;
- completion of a documented safeguarding risk assessment;
- implementation of appropriate supervision arrangements; and
- written confirmation that the arrangement complies with current statutory guidance.

Such arrangements will be exceptional, time-limited and subject to regular review.

Risk Assessment Following Disclosure

Where information disclosed through pre-employment checks raises concerns, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will undertake an individual risk assessment.

Factors considered may include:

- the nature and seriousness of the information disclosed;
- relevance to the role;
- safeguarding implications;



- age of the offence or incident;
- pattern of behaviour;
- evidence of rehabilitation;
- legal restrictions;
- professional conduct; and
- the best interests of children.

The welfare of children will always remain the overriding consideration.

11. References

Obtaining and scrutinising references is a critical element of safer recruitment. References provide independent verification of an applicant's employment history, professional conduct and suitability to work with children and should be considered alongside all other recruitment information.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that references should not simply confirm employment history but should contribute meaningfully to safeguarding decision-making.

Number and Source of References

The organisation will normally obtain **a minimum of two professional references** before confirming any appointment.

Wherever possible:

- one reference must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer;
- where the applicant currently works with children, one reference must be from that employer;
- references should normally come from two different organisations;
- character references alone will not be accepted in place of professional references for roles involving children;
- references from family members or close personal friends will not be accepted.

Where an applicant has limited employment history, alternative professional referees may be accepted following discussion with the recruiting manager.

References Must Come Directly from the Referee

To maintain the integrity of the recruitment process:

- references must be obtained directly by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC;
- references provided by applicants will not normally be accepted;
- references must be received directly from the referee or employing organisation;
- references must not be altered or amended by applicants.

Where authenticity cannot be confirmed, further verification will be undertaken.

Organisational Email Addresses

Wherever possible, references should be received from an identifiable organisational email address.

Where this is not possible, additional verification will be undertaken.

Verification may include:

- telephone confirmation;
- confirmation through organisational contact details;
- verification via official websites;
- confirmation of referee identity.

The organisation will take reasonable steps to ensure references are genuine.



Information to be Confirmed

Reference requests will normally ask referees to confirm:

- dates of employment;
- job title;
- duties and responsibilities;
- employment status;
- attendance record where appropriate;
- reason for leaving;
- professional conduct;
- reliability;
- relationships with colleagues;
- suitability to work with children;
- safeguarding responsibilities undertaken;
- any disciplinary findings;
- any ongoing disciplinary processes;
- whether safeguarding allegations have been made;
- whether concerns regarding professional boundaries have arisen;
- whether they would re-employ the individual; and
- any additional information relevant to the applicant's suitability.

Reference requests will include a statement explaining that the role involves working with children and requesting disclosure of any safeguarding concerns relevant to the appointment.

Verification of Employment History

References must verify:

- employment dates;
- periods of absence where relevant;
- job title;
- level of responsibility; and
- reason for leaving.

Any discrepancies between the application form and references will be investigated before an appointment is confirmed.

Safeguarding Questions

Reference requests will specifically ask whether the referee is aware of:

- any safeguarding concerns;
- allegations relating to children;
- concerns regarding professional boundaries;
- misconduct relating to children;
- ongoing investigations;
- disciplinary findings relevant to safeguarding;
- concerns regarding honesty or integrity; or
- any reason why the applicant should not work with children.

The organisation expects referees to provide honest, accurate and factual responses.

Scrutiny of References

References will never be treated as an administrative exercise.

Recruiting managers will carefully scrutinise every reference and compare it with:

- the application form;



- employment history;
- interview responses;
- safeguarding declarations; and
- other recruitment information.

Professional curiosity will be exercised throughout.

Discrepancies and Concerns

Any discrepancy, omission or concern identified within a reference will be explored before any appointment is confirmed.

This may include:

- seeking clarification from the referee;
- discussing concerns with the applicant;
- requesting additional references;
- undertaking further safeguarding enquiries; or
- withdrawing the conditional offer where appropriate.

Examples requiring further investigation include:

- unexplained employment gaps;
- inconsistent dates;
- vague or incomplete references;
- safeguarding concerns;
- disciplinary issues;
- repeated short-term employment;
- reluctance to answer safeguarding questions; or
- concerns regarding professional conduct.

No appointment will be confirmed while significant safeguarding concerns remain unresolved.

Unsatisfactory References

An unsatisfactory reference does not automatically prevent employment but will always trigger further enquiries.

Where concerns remain following investigation, the conditional offer of employment may be withdrawn.

Safeguarding considerations will always take precedence over recruitment needs.

12. Online Searches

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that publicly available online information may, in some circumstances, assist in assessing an applicant's suitability to work with children and young people.

In line with the principles contained within *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*, the organisation may undertake proportionate online searches of shortlisted candidates before appointment.

Online searches are **not** intended to replace other safer recruitment checks and will never be used as the sole basis for recruitment decisions.

Purpose of Online Searches

The purpose of an online search is to identify publicly available information that may be relevant to:

- safeguarding;
- child protection;



- professional conduct;
- suitability to work with children;
- unlawful discrimination;
- hate crime;
- extremist activity;
- criminal behaviour;
- dishonesty;
- breaches of professional standards; or
- other behaviour that may call into question an applicant's suitability for the role.

The organisation will not seek information that is unrelated to the applicant's suitability to work with children.

Timing of Searches

Where undertaken, online searches will normally be completed:

- after shortlisting;
- before a final offer of employment; and
- before employment commences.

This ensures that any relevant information can be considered appropriately and discussed with the applicant where necessary.

Scope of Searches

Only information that is publicly accessible without attempting to bypass privacy settings will be considered.

The organisation will not:

- request access to private social media accounts;
- require applicants to disclose passwords;
- create false online identities;
- attempt to access restricted information; or
- monitor applicants unlawfully.

Searches will be proportionate to the nature of the role.

Fairness and Consistency

Online searches will be undertaken consistently for all shortlisted candidates applying for the same role.

Recruiting managers will ensure searches are:

- proportionate;
- objective;
- evidence-based;
- non-discriminatory;
- relevant to safeguarding; and
- compliant with equality legislation.

Personal characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 will not influence recruitment decisions unless directly relevant to safeguarding or legal requirements.

Relevant Findings

Where an online search identifies information that may be relevant to the recruitment decision:

- the information will be verified where reasonably possible;
- assumptions will not be made without evidence;



- the applicant will be given an opportunity to respond or provide context;
- information will be considered alongside all other recruitment evidence; and
- recruitment decisions will remain proportionate and evidence-based.

The organisation recognises that online content may be inaccurate, historic, manipulated or taken out of context.

Record Keeping

Where an online search identifies information that influences recruitment decisions, a factual record will be made explaining:

- what information was identified;
- why it was considered relevant;
- discussions held with the applicant;
- the outcome of those discussions; and
- the final recruitment decision.

Information unrelated to safeguarding or professional suitability will not be retained.

Data Protection and GDPR

Online searches will be undertaken in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

The organisation will ensure that:

- processing is lawful, fair and transparent;
- only relevant information is considered;
- information is handled confidentially;
- unnecessary personal information is not retained;
- applicants' privacy rights are respected; and
- records are securely stored and disposed of in accordance with the organisation's retention schedule.

The purpose of online searches is to support safeguarding, protect children and ensure the appointment of individuals who share the values, integrity and professional standards expected by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

13. Conditional Offers of Employment

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that an interview alone cannot determine an applicant's suitability to work with children and young people. Every offer of employment is therefore made on a strictly conditional basis and is subject to the satisfactory completion of all required safer recruitment and pre-employment checks.

A conditional offer does not constitute confirmation of employment and does not create a contractual right to commence work until all required checks have been satisfactorily completed and formally approved.

The organisation reserves the right to withdraw a conditional offer where information comes to light that raises concerns regarding an applicant's suitability to work with children or where required checks cannot be satisfactorily completed.

Safeguarding considerations will always take precedence over operational need or recruitment timescales.

Conditions of Appointment

A conditional offer of employment will normally be subject to satisfactory completion of the following:

- ✓ Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance appropriate to the role.



- ✓ Children's Barred List information where the role constitutes regulated activity.
 - ✓ Two satisfactory professional references that meet the requirements of this policy.
 - ✓ Verification of identity.
 - ✓ Verification of employment history.
 - ✓ Verification of qualifications and professional registrations where required.
 - ✓ Verification of the applicant's legal right to work in the United Kingdom.
 - ✓ Completion of all statutory safeguarding and suitability checks relevant to the role.
 - ✓ Satisfactory health declaration or occupational health assessment where appropriate.
 - ✓ Completion of the applicant's safeguarding and suitability declaration.
 - ✓ Any additional statutory checks required by legislation, including prohibition checks, Section 128 checks or childcare disqualification requirements where applicable.
- Only once these checks have been completed and approved may a formal contract of employment be issued.

Safeguarding Declaration

Before appointment is confirmed, successful applicants will be required to complete a safeguarding declaration confirming that:

- they remain suitable to work with children;
- there have been no changes to information previously disclosed;
- they are not subject to any safeguarding investigation or professional restriction that has not already been declared;
- they understand their safeguarding responsibilities; and
- they agree to comply with all safeguarding policies and procedures throughout their employment.

Applicants are expected to notify the organisation immediately if circumstances change between receiving a conditional offer and commencing employment.

Failure to Meet Conditions

A conditional offer may be withdrawn where:

- mandatory safeguarding checks are unsatisfactory;
- references raise unresolved safeguarding concerns;
- qualifications or identity cannot be verified;
- the applicant is barred from working with children;
- false or misleading information has been provided;
- statutory requirements cannot be satisfied; or
- other information comes to light indicating that appointment would not be in the best interests of children.

Where appropriate, applicants will be given an opportunity to provide clarification before a final decision is made.

Commencement of Employment

No individual will commence employment until the Director (or delegated recruiting manager) has confirmed that all required pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed.

In exceptional circumstances where legislation permits employment to begin before receipt of the Enhanced DBS certificate, this will only occur following:

- completion of all other statutory checks;



- receipt of satisfactory Children's Barred List information where required;
- a written safeguarding risk assessment;
- approval from the Director;
- implementation of enhanced supervision arrangements; and
- confirmation that the arrangement complies with current statutory guidance.

Such arrangements will be exceptional and reviewed regularly until all checks have been completed.

Unsupervised Access to Children

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts a precautionary approach to safeguarding.

No employee, volunteer, trainee, contractor or agency worker will undertake unsupervised work with children or young people until all mandatory safeguarding checks relevant to their role have been completed and deemed satisfactory.

This includes:

- one-to-one therapeutic work;
- transport of children;
- home visits;
- off-site activities;
- overnight activities;
- lone working; and
- any other regulated activity.

Managers are responsible for ensuring appropriate supervision arrangements remain in place until written confirmation is given that the individual has been fully cleared to undertake unsupervised duties.

14. Single Central Record (SCR)

Although Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is not legally required to maintain a Single Central Record (SCR) in the same manner as maintained schools and academies, the organisation recognises that maintaining a comprehensive record of safer recruitment checks represents best practice and demonstrates a strong safeguarding culture.

The organisation therefore maintains a Single Central Record to provide assurance that all required safer recruitment checks have been completed before individuals begin work with children.

The SCR supports:

- safeguarding governance;
- organisational accountability;
- quality assurance;
- inspection readiness;
- safer recruitment audits;
- commissioner assurance; and
- ongoing monitoring of workforce suitability.

The Single Central Record forms part of the organisation's wider safeguarding framework and complements individual personnel files rather than replacing them.

Individuals Included on the SCR

The Single Central Record will normally include all individuals engaged in work on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC where safer recruitment checks are required.

This includes:

- permanent employees;



- fixed-term employees;
- casual staff;
- sessional workers;
- volunteers;
- Board Directors involved in regulated activity or management responsibilities;
- self-employed practitioners;
- counsellors;
- Play Therapists;
- Drawing and Talking Practitioners;
- contractors providing services involving contact with children;
- agency workers;
- trainees;
- apprentices;
- students on placement; and
- any other individual for whom safer recruitment checks are considered appropriate.

Information Recorded

The Single Central Record will normally record the completion (rather than the detail) of safer recruitment checks.

Information may include:

- full name;
- role;
- employment start date;
- identity check completed;
- right to work check completed;
- Enhanced DBS completed;
- Children's Barred List check completed where applicable;
- prohibition check completed where applicable;
- Section 128 check completed where applicable;
- childcare disqualification check completed where applicable;
- overseas criminal record check completed where applicable;
- qualifications verified;
- professional registration verified;
- references received and scrutinised;
- online search completed where applicable;
- safeguarding declaration completed;
- date of induction;
- safeguarding training completed; and
- date checks were authorised.

The SCR will not routinely contain confidential DBS certificate information beyond that necessary to demonstrate compliance.

Maintaining the SCR

Responsibility for maintaining the Single Central Record rests with the Director or delegated senior manager.

The record will be:

- updated promptly following recruitment;
- reviewed regularly;
- audited periodically;



- stored securely;
- accessible only to authorised personnel; and
- made available during inspection or safeguarding audit where appropriate.

Regular audits will be undertaken to ensure:

- no required checks are missing;
- information remains accurate;
- statutory checks remain current where renewal is required; and
- safeguarding assurance can be demonstrated.

Data Protection

The Single Central Record contains personal information and will be managed in accordance with:

- UK GDPR;
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- organisational confidentiality procedures; and
- records management policies.

Access will be restricted to individuals with legitimate safeguarding or management responsibilities.

15. Induction

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safer recruitment does not end when an appointment is made. Effective induction is an essential continuation of the safer recruitment process and plays a critical role in embedding safeguarding knowledge, organisational values and professional expectations.

Every newly appointed employee, volunteer, trainee, contractor or agency worker will complete an induction programme appropriate to their role before undertaking unsupervised work with children.

The induction process is designed to ensure that every individual understands:

- their safeguarding responsibilities;
- organisational expectations;
- professional standards;
- reporting procedures;
- therapeutic approaches;
- health and safety requirements; and
- the values underpinning Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

Induction will be proportionate to the role but will always prioritise safeguarding.

Mandatory Induction Before Lone Working

Before any individual undertakes lone working, one-to-one therapeutic support or any unsupervised contact with children, they must have completed induction covering the following areas.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

All staff must:

- read the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- understand safeguarding responsibilities;
- know how to recognise abuse and neglect;
- understand reporting procedures;
- know the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs; and



- understand the importance of professional curiosity.
- Staff will confirm in writing that they have read and understood the policy.

Staff Code of Conduct

Staff must understand:

- expected standards of behaviour;
- professional integrity;
- appropriate relationships;
- social media expectations;
- use of mobile devices;
- confidentiality;
- conflicts of interest; and
- professional accountability.

Whistleblowing Policy

Staff will receive guidance regarding:

- raising concerns;
- challenging unsafe practice;
- protections available to whistleblowers;
- reporting routes; and
- the organisational expectation that safeguarding concerns are always reported.

Low-Level Concerns Policy

Staff will understand:

- what constitutes a low-level concern;
- why early reporting is important;
- recording procedures;
- professional boundaries; and
- how low-level concerns contribute to safeguarding culture.

Health and Safety

Induction will include:

- site safety;
- emergency procedures;
- manual handling where relevant;
- animal safety;
- infection control;
- accident reporting;
- risk assessments;
- use of equipment; and
- lone working procedures.

Behaviour and Therapeutic Practice

New staff will receive induction regarding the organisation's therapeutic model and

Behaviour Policy, including:

- trauma-informed practice;
- attachment-aware approaches;
- PACE principles;
- neuro-affirming practice;



- emotional regulation;
- co-regulation;
- de-escalation;
- restorative approaches; and
- behaviour as communication.

Staff will understand that therapeutic relationships are central to safeguarding and emotional safety.

Online Safety

Staff will receive induction covering:

- online safeguarding;
- professional use of technology;
- appropriate communication;
- digital confidentiality;
- acceptable use of organisational devices;
- AI-related safeguarding risks;
- cyber security; and
- reporting online concerns.

Prevent Duty

Where appropriate to their role, staff will receive Prevent awareness training and understand:

- the organisation's statutory responsibilities;
- indicators of radicalisation;
- reporting procedures; and
- the role of the DSL in responding to Prevent concerns.

Emergency Procedures

Before working independently, staff must understand:

- emergency evacuation procedures;
- first aid arrangements;
- missing child procedures;
- critical incident response;
- emergency safeguarding procedures;
- contacting emergency services; and
- incident reporting requirements.

Professional Boundaries

Induction will reinforce expectations regarding:

- relationships with children;
- relationships with families;
- confidentiality;
- transporting children;
- gifts;
- physical contact;
- social media;
- communication outside working hours;
- home visits; and
- maintaining appropriate therapeutic boundaries.



Record Keeping

All staff will receive instruction regarding:

- accurate record keeping;
- safeguarding recording;
- factual recording;
- confidentiality;
- information sharing;
- GDPR;
- secure storage of records; and
- organisational recording systems.

High-quality recording is recognised as a safeguarding responsibility.

Induction Supervision

New employees will receive regular supervision throughout their induction period to ensure they understand and can apply organisational policies in practice.

Supervision will provide opportunities to:

- discuss safeguarding responsibilities;
- reflect upon practice;
- identify additional learning needs;
- review confidence and competence;
- reinforce organisational values; and
- ensure readiness for independent working.

Managers will not authorise lone working until they are satisfied that the individual has demonstrated the knowledge, competence and professional judgement necessary to work safely with children and young people.

Completion of Induction

Completion of induction will be formally recorded and retained within the employee's personnel file.

The induction record will confirm:

- policies read and understood;
- mandatory training completed;
- safeguarding induction completed;
- supervision undertaken;
- any outstanding actions; and
- the manager's authorisation for the individual to undertake independent duties.

Induction should be viewed as the beginning of a programme of continuous professional development rather than a one-off event. Learning will continue through supervision, appraisal, mandatory safeguarding updates and reflective practice, ensuring that the organisation's safeguarding culture remains embedded throughout every stage of employment.

16. Probationary Period

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safer recruitment extends beyond appointment. The probationary period provides an important opportunity to assess whether a newly appointed employee consistently demonstrates the competence, values, behaviours and professional judgement required to work safely with children and young people.



The purpose of probation is to support successful integration into the organisation while providing structured opportunities to monitor performance, safeguarding practice and ongoing suitability for employment.

Completion of safer recruitment checks alone does not confirm long-term suitability to work with children. Suitability must be demonstrated consistently through day-to-day practice.

Length of Probation

Unless otherwise specified within the contract of employment, new employees will normally be subject to either:

- a **three-month probationary period** for temporary, casual or lower-risk roles; or
- a **six-month probationary period** for permanent positions, leadership roles or positions involving significant safeguarding responsibilities.

The duration of probation will be confirmed within the employee's contract of employment. Where concerns arise, the probationary period may be extended in accordance with the organisation's Probation Policy and employment legislation.

Purpose of Probation

During probation the organisation will assess whether the employee:

- demonstrates safe practice;
- consistently upholds safeguarding responsibilities;
- performs the duties of the role to the required standard;
- demonstrates behaviours consistent with organisational values;
- integrates effectively within the team;
- develops appropriate relationships with children and families;
- maintains professional boundaries;
- demonstrates reliability and accountability; and
- remains suitable to work with children and young people.

Probation should also provide an opportunity for employees to seek support, reflect on practice and identify learning needs.

Supervision

Employees will receive regular supervision throughout the probationary period.

Supervision will provide opportunities to:

- reflect upon practice;
- discuss safeguarding matters;
- review workload;
- identify learning needs;
- receive constructive feedback;
- discuss wellbeing;
- reinforce organisational expectations; and
- ensure safeguarding remains central to practice.

Formal supervision meetings will normally take place at agreed intervals throughout probation and will be recorded.

Additional supervision may be provided where employees undertake complex therapeutic work or where safeguarding concerns arise.

Safeguarding Observations



Managers will undertake observations of practice during probation to assess the employee's ability to apply safeguarding principles within their day-to-day work.

Observations may consider:

- interactions with children;
- therapeutic relationships;
- communication style;
- behaviour management;
- emotional regulation;
- application of trauma-informed practice;
- use of PACE principles;
- professional boundaries;
- safeguarding awareness;
- recording standards; and
- adherence to organisational policies.

Feedback will be provided promptly and any required improvements agreed through an action plan.

Professionalism

Throughout probation employees will be expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of professional conduct.

Assessment will include:

- punctuality;
- reliability;
- honesty and integrity;
- communication;
- accountability;
- teamwork;
- confidentiality;
- respect for colleagues and families;
- willingness to learn;
- compliance with organisational policies; and
- commitment to safeguarding.

Professional conduct both within and outside the workplace may be considered where it affects suitability to work with children.

Attendance

Attendance and timekeeping will be monitored throughout probation.

Managers will consider:

- attendance levels;
- punctuality;
- notification of absence;
- reliability;
- compliance with absence reporting procedures; and
- any emerging patterns of concern.

The organisation recognises its responsibilities under equality legislation and will ensure that attendance is managed fairly and appropriately where disability or other protected characteristics are relevant.

Suitability to Work with Children



Probation provides an opportunity to confirm that the employee remains suitable to work with children and young people.

Managers will consider whether the employee:

- consistently places children's welfare first;
- demonstrates sound safeguarding judgement;
- maintains appropriate professional boundaries;
- follows safeguarding procedures;
- demonstrates professional curiosity;
- contributes positively to safeguarding culture;
- behaves in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct; and
- demonstrates values consistent with Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

Where concerns arise regarding suitability, these will be addressed promptly through supervision and, where necessary, formal capability or disciplinary procedures.

Probation Review Meetings

Formal probation reviews will normally take place:

- during the early stages of employment;
- at the midpoint of probation; and
- before confirmation of appointment.

Review meetings will consider:

- progress against objectives;
- safeguarding competence;
- training completed;
- supervision outcomes;
- attendance;
- professional conduct;
- ongoing suitability; and
- any support required.

The outcome of each review will be recorded.

Confirmation of Appointment

At the conclusion of the probationary period, the manager will determine whether employment should:

- be confirmed;
- be extended subject to further review; or
- be terminated in accordance with contractual arrangements and employment legislation.

Confirmation of appointment signifies that the employee has successfully demonstrated the competence, professionalism and safeguarding standards expected by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC. It does not remove the ongoing expectation that suitability to work with children will continue to be monitored throughout employment.

17. Ongoing Suitability

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding is a continuous responsibility and that suitability to work with children cannot be determined solely at the point of recruitment.

All employees, volunteers, directors, contractors and other adults working on behalf of the organisation have an ongoing professional and contractual duty to remain suitable to work with children and to disclose any information that may affect that suitability.



Maintaining a safe workforce requires openness, honesty and shared responsibility. Staff are therefore expected to notify the organisation immediately of any circumstance that could reasonably be considered relevant to their continued employment.

Duty to Disclose

Individuals must notify the Director as soon as reasonably practicable if they become subject to:

- arrest for a criminal offence;
- police investigation;
- criminal charge;
- police caution;
- conviction;
- conditional caution;
- court order affecting their ability to work with children;
- safeguarding investigation by any organisation;
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) involvement;
- investigation by Children's Social Care;
- investigation by a professional regulator;
- suspension from professional registration;
- restrictions placed upon professional practice;
- inclusion on a barred list;
- prohibition from regulated activity;
- childcare disqualification;
- immigration or right-to-work changes; or
- any other circumstance that may reasonably affect their suitability to work with children.

This duty applies regardless of whether the matter occurred inside or outside the workplace.

Safeguarding Investigations

Employees must inform the organisation immediately if they become the subject of:

- safeguarding allegations;
- safeguarding investigations;
- child protection enquiries;
- police investigations involving children;
- domestic abuse investigations where relevant to safeguarding;
- investigations concerning inappropriate online behaviour;
- professional boundary concerns; or
- allegations that may undermine confidence in their ability to work safely with children.

The organisation recognises that an allegation does not imply guilt. Every matter will be considered fairly, confidentially and in accordance with statutory guidance.

Professional Registration

Employees holding professional registration must immediately notify the organisation if:

- their registration lapses;
- conditions are imposed upon their registration;
- they become subject to fitness to practise proceedings;
- they are suspended;



- they are removed from a professional register; or
- they receive any sanction affecting their professional practice.

Changes Affecting Suitability

Employees must also disclose any significant change that may affect their suitability to undertake their role safely.

Examples include:

- restrictions imposed by another employer;
- conflicts of interest;
- changes affecting legal entitlement to work;
- circumstances affecting their ability to maintain professional boundaries; or
- any matter likely to undermine public confidence in their ability to safeguard children.

The organisation recognises that many personal circumstances will have no bearing on professional suitability. Employees are encouraged to seek advice where uncertain whether disclosure is required.

Assessment of Information

Where information is disclosed, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will undertake a proportionate and individual risk assessment.

The assessment may consider:

- safeguarding implications;
- relevance to the role;
- seriousness of the matter;
- legal restrictions;
- advice from statutory agencies;
- impact upon children;
- professional standards;
- available evidence; and
- any mitigating circumstances.

The welfare of children will remain the paramount consideration.

Ongoing Monitoring

Suitability to work with children will continue to be monitored through:

- supervision;
- appraisal;
- safeguarding supervision;
- observations of practice;
- mandatory safeguarding training;
- professional registration checks where appropriate;
- DBS re-checks where organisational policy requires;
- review of professional conduct;
- low-level concern reporting;
- whistleblowing procedures; and
- safeguarding audits.

Managers have a responsibility to address concerns promptly and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

Failure to Disclose



Failure to disclose information that may affect suitability to work with children may be treated as a serious breach of trust and confidence.

Depending upon the circumstances, failure to disclose may result in:

- formal investigation;
- disciplinary action;
- suspension;
- dismissal;
- referral to professional regulators;
- referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service; or
- notification to statutory safeguarding agencies.

Safeguarding responsibilities continue throughout employment and beyond the completion of probation.

18. Agency Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding responsibilities apply equally to individuals who are not directly employed by the organisation.

Agency workers, volunteers, contractors, consultants, students, trainees and self-employed practitioners may all have contact with children and young people and must therefore meet appropriate safer recruitment standards before commencing work.

The organisation will seek assurance that every adult working on its behalf is suitable for the role they undertake.

General Principles

Before commencing work, all agency staff, volunteers and contractors must:

- understand the organisation's safeguarding expectations;
- comply with safeguarding procedures;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- complete induction appropriate to their role;
- understand reporting procedures; and
- work only within the scope of their authorised responsibilities.

No individual may commence work until appropriate verification has been completed.

Agency Staff

Where agency workers are supplied by an external employment business, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will obtain written confirmation that the agency has completed all required safer recruitment checks.

This confirmation will normally include:

- identity verification;
- Enhanced DBS check where appropriate;
- Children's Barred List check where applicable;
- right to work verification;
- qualification checks;
- reference checks;
- suitability assessment; and
- confirmation that the individual is suitable to work with children.

Agency workers will also receive local safeguarding induction before beginning work.

Volunteers



The organisation values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to ensuring that volunteering opportunities remain safe for children and volunteers alike. The level of safer recruitment checks undertaken will be proportionate to the volunteer role and associated safeguarding risks.

Volunteers may be required to complete:

- an application form;
- interview or informal discussion;
- references;
- identity verification;
- Enhanced DBS check where appropriate;
- safeguarding declaration;
- induction;
- safeguarding training; and
- ongoing supervision.

Volunteers will not undertake duties beyond those authorised by the organisation.

Contractors and External Providers

Where contractors or external organisations provide services involving contact with children, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will obtain appropriate assurance that safer recruitment requirements have been met.

This may include:

- written confirmation of DBS clearance where appropriate;
- confirmation of safeguarding policies;
- verification of professional qualifications;
- evidence of insurance;
- confirmation of professional registration where relevant;
- safeguarding training records; and
- confirmation of staff suitability.

Contracts and service agreements will clearly define safeguarding expectations.

Self-Employed Practitioners

Self-employed counsellors, therapists and specialist practitioners engaged by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will be required to provide evidence of:

- Enhanced DBS clearance where appropriate;
- professional registration;
- qualifications;
- insurance;
- references;
- safeguarding training;
- identity;
- right to work; and
- ongoing suitability.

The organisation retains responsibility for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place regardless of employment status.

Students, Apprentices and Trainees

Students, apprentices and trainees will undergo safer recruitment checks appropriate to their role before commencing placement.

They will:



- receive safeguarding induction;
- work under appropriate supervision;
- understand reporting procedures;
- remain within the limits of their competence; and
- receive regular supervision throughout their placement.

Verification Before Commencement

Before any agency worker, volunteer, contractor, trainee or external practitioner begins work, the recruiting manager must verify that all required documentation has been received and is satisfactory.

Verification will normally include:

- identity;
- DBS status where appropriate;
- safeguarding assurances;
- qualifications where relevant;
- professional registration where applicable;
- insurance where appropriate;
- induction completed; and
- understanding of organisational safeguarding procedures.

No individual covered by this section will undertake unsupervised work with children until the organisation is satisfied that all safeguarding requirements have been met.

19. Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Information Management

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that accurate record keeping is an essential component of safer recruitment and safeguarding. Recruitment records provide evidence that appropriate safer recruitment procedures have been followed, support organisational accountability and enable the organisation to demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance and employment legislation.

All recruitment records will be managed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, employment legislation and the organisation's Data Protection and Record Retention Policies.

The organisation will ensure that personal information is:

- collected lawfully and fairly;
- processed only for legitimate recruitment purposes;
- accurate and kept up to date;
- retained only for as long as necessary;
- protected against unauthorised access, loss or misuse;
- accessible only to authorised personnel; and
- securely destroyed when no longer required.

Recruitment records form part of the organisation's wider safeguarding framework and contribute to the evidence base demonstrating that appropriate safer recruitment arrangements have been implemented.

Recruitment Documentation

A recruitment file will normally be created for every recruitment exercise.

Where appropriate, recruitment documentation may include:

- workforce planning records;
- recruitment approval documentation;
- job descriptions;



- person specifications;
- recruitment advertisements;
- application forms;
- self-disclosure forms;
- interview invitations;
- interview questions and scoring matrices;
- interview notes;
- practical assessment records;
- identity verification records;
- qualification verification records;
- professional registration verification;
- right to work documentation;
- references;
- DBS documentation;
- safeguarding declarations;
- online search records where undertaken;
- conditional offer documentation;
- induction records;
- probation records; and
- correspondence relating to the recruitment process.

The organisation will ensure recruitment documentation is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that recruitment decisions were objective, evidence-based and compliant with safer recruitment principles.

Confidentiality

Recruitment information is confidential and will only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate business or safeguarding need to access it.

All individuals involved in recruitment are expected to:

- maintain confidentiality throughout the recruitment process;
- handle applicants' information respectfully;
- avoid unnecessary disclosure of personal information;
- store recruitment records securely;
- discuss recruitment decisions only with authorised individuals; and
- comply with organisational confidentiality requirements.

Information relating to criminal records, safeguarding concerns or medical information will receive additional protection and will only be accessible to appropriately authorised personnel.

Unauthorised disclosure of recruitment information may constitute misconduct.

Data Protection and UK GDPR

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will process recruitment information in accordance with the principles of UK GDPR.

Recruitment information will be:

- processed lawfully, fairly and transparently;
- collected only for specified recruitment purposes;
- limited to information necessary for recruitment decisions;
- accurate and regularly reviewed;
- retained only for appropriate periods;
- protected through appropriate technical and organisational measures; and



- securely disposed of once retention periods have expired.

Applicants will be informed of how their personal information will be processed through the organisation's Recruitment Privacy Notice.

Applicants have the right to request access to personal information held about them, subject to legal exemptions.

Retention of Recruitment Records

Recruitment records will be retained only for as long as necessary to fulfil legal, safeguarding and organisational requirements.

Unless legislation changes, the organisation will normally retain recruitment records in accordance with the following schedule:

Record	Recommended Retention Period
Successful applicant recruitment records	Duration of employment plus six years after employment ends
Personnel file (including recruitment documentation)	Six years after employment ceases (unless a longer retention period applies for safeguarding or legal reasons)
Unsuccessful applicant records	Six months following completion of the recruitment process unless a longer period is required due to legal proceedings or with the applicant's consent
Interview notes and scoring records	Six months after recruitment decision
DBS certificate information	Not retained. Only the certificate number, date of issue and level of check will normally be recorded, unless legislation permits otherwise
Identity verification records	Retained within the personnel file where appropriate
Right to work documentation	Duration of employment and for the statutory retention period following employment
Single Central Record	Maintained throughout employment and updated as required

Where safeguarding investigations, litigation, insurance claims or regulatory enquiries are ongoing, records may be retained beyond these periods until the matter has been fully concluded.

Secure Storage

Recruitment records will be stored securely to prevent unauthorised access, loss, alteration or disclosure.

The organisation will ensure that:

- paper records are stored in locked cabinets within secure offices;
- electronic records are password protected and encrypted where appropriate;
- access is restricted according to role;
- confidential information is transmitted securely;
- regular backups are undertaken for electronic records;
- records are protected against accidental loss or damage; and
- secure destruction methods are used when records reach the end of their retention period.

Managers are responsible for ensuring recruitment records remain secure throughout their lifecycle.



Access to Recruitment Records

Access to recruitment documentation will normally be restricted to:

- the Board of Directors where appropriate;
- the Director;
- authorised recruiting managers;
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead where safeguarding issues arise;
- Human Resources support where applicable;
- inspectors or auditors acting within their statutory powers; and
- other authorised individuals with a legitimate business need.

Access will be recorded where appropriate to maintain accountability.

Disposal of Recruitment Records

At the end of the retention period, recruitment records will be securely destroyed.

Paper documentation will be confidentially shredded or disposed of using approved confidential waste services.

Electronic records will be permanently deleted in accordance with the organisation's data destruction procedures.

The organisation will ensure that confidential information cannot be reconstructed following disposal.

20. Monitoring, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to maintaining the highest standards of safer recruitment through effective governance, regular monitoring and continuous quality improvement.

The organisation recognises that safer recruitment is not a static process. Recruitment practice must evolve in response to changes in legislation, statutory guidance, inspection findings, safeguarding reviews and organisational learning.

Monitoring arrangements are designed to provide assurance that recruitment procedures remain lawful, effective and consistent with the organisation's safeguarding culture.

Annual Policy Review

This policy will be formally reviewed at least annually.

Earlier review will take place where:

- legislation changes;
- statutory guidance is updated;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education is revised;
- Ofsted publishes new expectations;
- safeguarding reviews identify learning;
- organisational changes require amendment; or
- recruitment audits identify areas requiring improvement.

The Board of Directors will approve all substantive amendments.

Single Central Record Audit

The Single Central Record will be reviewed regularly to ensure:

- all required individuals are included;
- statutory checks have been completed;
- information remains accurate;
- dates are correctly recorded;
- no required documentation is missing; and



- safeguarding assurance can be demonstrated.
- Any discrepancies identified during audit will be addressed immediately.

Board Oversight

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for ensuring that safer recruitment arrangements remain effective.

The Board will receive appropriate assurance regarding:

- implementation of this policy;
- recruitment compliance;
- safeguarding risks relating to recruitment;
- recruitment audit findings;
- significant recruitment issues;
- outcomes of safeguarding reviews affecting recruitment;
- training compliance; and
- policy review recommendations.

The Board will satisfy itself that safer recruitment remains embedded within the organisation's safeguarding culture and governance framework.

Safeguarding Reviews

Recruitment procedures will be reviewed following:

- safeguarding incidents;
- allegations against adults;
- low-level concerns;
- whistleblowing investigations;
- safeguarding audits;
- serious incident reviews;
- local safeguarding practice reviews;
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews;
- Ofsted inspections; and
- recommendations issued by safeguarding partners.

The purpose of these reviews is to identify whether recruitment procedures remain effective or require strengthening.

Learning from Incidents

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to fostering a culture of openness, reflection and continuous learning.

Where recruitment or safeguarding issues arise, the organisation will seek to identify:

- what happened;
- why it happened;
- whether recruitment processes were followed;
- whether safeguarding opportunities were missed;
- what learning can be identified;
- whether policy changes are required;
- whether additional training is needed; and
- how similar issues can be prevented in the future.

The organisation will promote a just culture in which learning is prioritised over blame, while maintaining appropriate accountability where standards have not been met.

Learning arising from incidents will be shared appropriately through:

- supervision;



- team meetings;
- safeguarding updates;
- policy revisions;
- training programmes;
- reflective practice sessions; and
- governance reporting.

Recruitment Training

The effectiveness of this policy depends upon the competence of those responsible for recruitment.

The organisation will monitor:

- completion of recognised Safer Recruitment training;
- safeguarding training compliance;
- induction completion;
- refresher training;
- supervision arrangements; and
- continuing professional development.

Managers involved in recruitment will be expected to maintain current knowledge of statutory guidance and safer recruitment best practice.

Continuous Improvement

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to continuously strengthening its safer recruitment arrangements.

The organisation will actively seek feedback from:

- recruiting managers;
- interview panel members;
- new employees;
- volunteers;
- safeguarding leads;
- inspectors;
- commissioners; and
- partner agencies.

Feedback will be used to review recruitment procedures, improve candidate experience and strengthen safeguarding arrangements.

The organisation recognises that effective safer recruitment is fundamental to protecting children and young people. Through robust governance, reflective practice and continuous improvement, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will ensure that recruitment remains one of the strongest foundations of its safeguarding culture.

This policy was last reviewed on: 10/07/2026


Signed:

Farm Manager