



Zoolab Limited

Safer Recruitment Policy

Revision Date: May 2025

Reviewed by: Nicola Stephenson, Director

Date of Next Review: May 2026

Introduction

ZooLab is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all audience groups, including children and vulnerable adults. As an employer, we expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Safer Recruitment Policy are to help deter, reject, or identify people who may pose a risk to our audience groups, or who are otherwise unsuited to working with them, by having robust recruitment and selection procedures in place.

The aims of ZooLab's recruitment policy are to:

- Ensure the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of merit, ability, and suitability for the role
- Ensure that all job applicants are considered fairly, equally, and consistently
- Ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds, including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, disability, or age
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations, and statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE – latest version) and guidance issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Ensure that ZooLab meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks

Employees involved in recruitment and selection are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with this policy.

ZooLab operates a principle of open competition and seeks to recruit the best candidate based on ability, qualifications, experience, and merit, as measured against the job description and person specification.

Recruitment will be conducted in a professional, timely, and responsible manner and in compliance with employment law, safeguarding legislation, and statutory guidance.

Any member of staff involved in recruitment who has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant must declare this immediately and take no part in the recruitment process.

ZooLab aims to operate this procedure consistently and thoroughly while obtaining and evaluating information about all applicants.

Roles and Responsibilities

Directors

- Ensure effective recruitment policies and procedures are in place and compliant with legal requirements
- Monitor compliance with these procedures

HR Services

- Ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed
- Ensure all appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out

Head of People and Compliance

- Holds overall responsibility for ensuring Safer Recruitment practices are implemented and adhered to across the organisation

Recruitment and Selection

1. Applications (CVs and Covering Letters)

ZooLab advertises all roles via external recruitment channels. Applications are shortlisted against essential criteria relating to skills, qualifications, and experience.

Applicants are required to complete screening questions, including those relating to DBS eligibility and animal licensing requirements. Suitable candidates are invited to an initial screening interview, typically conducted remotely.

Applicants are required to complete declarations relating to convictions and suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. Public-facing roles are

exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and this is clearly communicated during recruitment.

2. Job Description and Person Specification

Job descriptions clearly define duties and responsibilities. Person specifications outline the skills, experience, and attributes required, including suitability for working with children and vulnerable audience groups.

3. References

A minimum of two satisfactory references are required prior to confirmation of employment.

- One reference must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer
- Where applicable, one reference should be from an employer where the applicant worked with children or vulnerable adults
- Referees must not be relatives

References are sought directly from referees and include questions about the applicant's suitability to work with children and vulnerable groups. Any discrepancies are followed up, and references may be verified by telephone.

4. Interviews

Interviews are conducted face-to-face where possible, or via video call where necessary. A minimum of two interviewers will be present.

Interviews explore experience, skills, employment history, and suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. Gaps in employment and any disclosed information relating to safeguarding are discussed appropriately.

At least one interviewer will have completed Safer Recruitment training.

Applicants must provide original evidence of identity, address, and qualifications. Documents are copied securely or viewed on screen for remote interviews. Documentation relating to unsuccessful candidates is destroyed within six months.

Offer of Employment and Pre-Employment Checks

All offers of employment are conditional upon satisfactory completion of the following:

- Signed contract and agreed start date
- Verification of identity
- Two satisfactory references
- Enhanced DBS disclosure with Children's Barred List check (where applicable)
- Confirmation the individual is not subject to a Section 142 direction under the Education Act 2002
- Verification of right to work in the UK
- Verification of relevant qualifications
- Medical fitness for the role
- Overseas criminal record checks where applicable

A pre-employment checklist is used and retained on the personnel file for audit purposes.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Roles involving direct work with children or vulnerable adults are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Applicants must therefore declare all cautions and convictions, including those that would otherwise be considered spent.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Enhanced DBS checks are required for all public-facing staff and include checks against the Children's Barred List where applicable. DBS clearance must be obtained prior to commencing employment.

Employees are required to inform ZooLab of any cautions or convictions that arise during their employment.

Applicants with limited UK residency or overseas residence are subject to additional checks in line with DBS guidance.

DBS Update Service

Employees may choose to subscribe to the DBS Update Service at their own cost. ZooLab will:

- Obtain consent to carry out status checks
- Verify identity and original DBS certificates
- Ensure the check is appropriate to the workforce and role

Identification, Right to Work, and Qualifications

Applicants must provide valid proof of identity and right to work in the UK in accordance with immigration legislation and DBS identity guidelines. Evidence of name changes must be provided where applicable. Qualifications stated in applications must be verified.

Medical Fitness

Medical fitness is verified for Educational Animal Presenter roles via a medical questionnaire and, where appropriate, medical evidence. ZooLab complies with the Equality Act 2010 and considers reasonable adjustments before any decision relating to medical fitness is made.

Overseas Checks

Applicants who have lived or worked abroad for three months or more must provide an overseas criminal record check where available. Employment will not commence until satisfactory clearance is obtained.

Induction

All new employees complete an induction which includes safeguarding training (e.g. NSPCC), familiarisation with ZooLab safeguarding policies, and awareness of KCSIE expectations.

Record Retention and Data Protection

Pre-employment information is retained securely within personnel files for the duration of employment in line with UK GDPR and data protection legislation. Information relating to unsuccessful applicants is destroyed within six months.

Ongoing Employment and Safeguarding

Safer recruitment forms part of ZooLab's wider safeguarding framework. Ongoing training, supervision, and appraisal ensure continued suitability.

Leaving Employment and DBS Referrals

ZooLab has a legal duty to make referrals to the DBS where an individual:

- Has applied for a role while barred
- Has been removed from regulated activity, or left prior to removal, due to posing a risk to a child or vulnerable adult

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored through recruitment audits and reviewed annually by HR. Outcomes are reported to Senior Management.