Safer Recruitment Policy

(including selection, vetting, DBS checks, regulated activity, volunteers, contractors and ongoing suitability)

ABA Pathways

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are statutory, regulatory, safeguarding, commissioning or operational changes.

Approved by:	Last reviewed on:	Next review due by:
Rianna Ritchie	September 2026	September 2027

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1. Aims and safer recruitment principles

ABA Pathways is committed to recruiting and retaining adults who are suitable to work with children and young people and who share our commitment to safeguarding, dignity, inclusion and high-quality person-centred support. Safer recruitment is an ongoing safeguarding process, not a single Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

- Place the welfare and safety of children and young people at the centre of recruitment decisions.
- Deter unsuitable applicants by making safeguarding expectations clear from the outset.
- Use structured, fair and proportionate recruitment processes that test both competence and suitability to work with children.
- Identify and explore gaps, inconsistencies, concerns or patterns rather than making assumptions.
- Complete all checks required for the role and record the rationale for recruitment decisions.
- Apply safer recruitment standards to employees, directors where relevant, self-employed practitioners, agency workers, subcontractors, volunteers, students and others according to their role.
- Maintain professional curiosity after appointment: vetting at recruitment does not remove the need for supervision, safeguarding culture and action on concerns.

2. Scope

This policy applies to recruitment and engagement across ABA Pathways' early intervention, alternative provision, direct educational placements, respite, community support, home-based work, overnight support, consultancy and related services. It applies to paid and unpaid roles where an adult may have contact with children or access to information, premises or systems relevant to safeguarding.

Where a commissioning school, local authority, agency or other organisation retains a recruitment responsibility, ABA Pathways will obtain appropriate written assurance and will not assume that another organisation has completed a check unless this has been confirmed.

3. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to the current legal and statutory framework in England, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, particularly Part Three: Safer Recruitment.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended.
- Crime and Policing Act 2026, including the removal from 1 September 2026 of the previous supervision exemption from regulated activity with children.
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- Police Act 1997 and relevant DBS legislation and guidance.
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order, including filtering provisions.
- Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018, where applicable.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and current right-to-work requirements.
- UK data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable.

ABA Pathways will use current DfE and DBS guidance when determining whether a role is regulated activity and which level of criminal-record check is legally available. Requirements will be reviewed whenever a role or its duties change.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Directors

- Maintain effective safer recruitment arrangements and sufficient resources to implement them.
- Ensure recruitment responsibilities are allocated to people with appropriate knowledge and training.
- Ensure at least one person involved in interviews for roles working with children has completed appropriate safer recruitment training.
- Ensure concerns identified during recruitment are explored, documented and resolved before appointment.
- Ensure the Single Central Record (SCR) and personnel records are maintained and audited.
- Make or oversee decisions where information disclosed during recruitment may affect suitability.

4.2 Recruitment panel members

- Declare any conflict of interest or prior relationship with an applicant.
- Apply the agreed selection criteria consistently.
- Maintain confidentiality and avoid discriminatory assumptions.
- Explore safeguarding-relevant information, gaps and inconsistencies appropriately.
- Keep clear records of the evidence considered and decisions made.

4.3 Applicants and workers

Applicants and workers are expected to provide accurate and complete information, cooperate with lawful checks and notify ABA Pathways of relevant changes in circumstances where required by law, contract, professional standards or safeguarding procedures.

5. Recruitment planning and role design

Before recruitment begins, ABA Pathways will define the role, its responsibilities, the level and nature of contact with children, whether the work is regulated activity, and the checks required.

- Job descriptions and role profiles will identify safeguarding responsibilities.
- Person specifications will include the skills, experience, attitudes and behaviours required for safe work with children.
- The recruitment plan will identify who will shortlist, interview, verify documents and make the appointment decision.
- Where a role includes intimate/personal care, overnight work, transport, lone working, home visits or significant behaviour support, these responsibilities will be made explicit.
- Self-employed status does not reduce safeguarding expectations; checks will be based on the work actually undertaken.

6. Advertising and applicant information

Recruitment materials will communicate ABA Pathways' safeguarding culture before application.

- Advertisements will state ABA Pathways' commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and that appropriate safeguarding checks will be undertaken.

- The safeguarding responsibilities of the role will be clear.
- Where relevant, the advert will state that the role involves regulated activity with children.
- Where the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, applicants will be given appropriate information about disclosure and protected/filtered convictions and cautions.
- Applicants will be directed to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant recruitment/privacy information.

7. Application forms and declarations

ABA Pathways will normally use a structured application form rather than accepting a curriculum vitae alone for roles working with children. A CV may supplement, but will not replace, the information required by the application process.

- Applicants will provide full employment and education history, with explanations for gaps.
- Application information will include relevant qualifications, professional registrations and referees.
- Where the role is regulated activity, information provided to applicants will make clear that a barred person must not apply to engage in regulated activity.
- Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete an appropriate self-declaration of relevant criminal-record or suitability information before interview, in line with KCSIE, rehabilitation-of-offenders and filtering requirements.
- Applicants will sign or otherwise formally confirm that information supplied is accurate and complete.
- False, misleading or deliberately omitted information may result in withdrawal of an offer or further action if discovered after appointment.

8. Shortlisting and online due-diligence searches

Shortlisting will normally be completed by at least two people using the agreed person specification and selection criteria.

- Application forms will be scrutinised for gaps, inconsistencies, unexplained changes, repeated short employment periods or other matters requiring clarification.
- Shortlisting decisions will be based on evidence relevant to the role and will comply with equality law.
- ABA Pathways will consider an online search of shortlisted candidates as part of safeguarding due diligence. Candidates will be informed that publicly available online information may be reviewed.
- Online searches are not intended to investigate protected characteristics, private life generally or political/religious views. Only information relevant to safeguarding or suitability for the role will be considered.
- Any potentially relevant online information will be verified and discussed with the candidate before an adverse decision is made; screenshots or unnecessary personal information will not be retained without a lawful reason.

9. References and employment history

References are an important safeguarding check and will be obtained and scrutinised with the same care as other recruitment information. References should be obtained before interview where possible so that concerns can be explored with the candidate.

- Open references or testimonials supplied by the candidate will not be accepted as a substitute for direct references.

- References will be sought directly from the referee using professional contact details wherever possible.
- At least one reference should normally be from the current or most recent employer; where the applicant has worked with children, ABA Pathways will seek a reference from the relevant employer from the most recent period of work with children where appropriate.
- References should be completed by a senior person with appropriate authority; where the referee is school-based, confirmation by the headteacher/principal or equivalent will be sought where appropriate.
- Referees will be asked about suitability to work with children and any substantiated safeguarding concerns or disciplinary matters that are relevant and lawfully disclosable.
- Information in references will be compared with the application and employment history. Discrepancies, vague responses or concerns will be followed up directly.
- References will not be relied upon until their authenticity is reasonably established.

10. Interview and selection

Interview is a safeguarding opportunity as well as an assessment of skills and experience. Questions will be structured, role-relevant and sufficiently probing to explore suitability.

- Candidates will be asked to explain gaps, frequent changes of employment or other inconsistencies.
- The panel will explore motivation for working with children and attitudes towards safeguarding, boundaries, dignity, behaviour, SEND, equality and professional accountability.
- Scenario or competency questions may be used to explore how a candidate would respond to concerns, disclosures, unsafe practice or conflict with a colleague.
- Role-specific competence may be assessed through tasks, presentations, written exercises or observation where appropriate.
- Information from self-declarations, references or online due diligence that requires clarification will be discussed fairly and recorded.
- Interview records will show the evidence considered and the rationale for the selection decision.

11. Conditional offers and pre-appointment checks

All offers for roles involving work with children are conditional on satisfactory completion of the checks required for that role. No single check establishes suitability.

- Identity, using appropriate original or approved digital evidence.
- Right to work in the United Kingdom.
- Enhanced DBS check and children's barred list information where the role is regulated activity.
- Separate barred list check where legally permitted and required because a person is to begin regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available.
- Relevant overseas checks where the applicant has lived or worked outside the UK.
- Professional qualifications and registration where these are required or claimed.
- Health/fitness information only to the extent lawful and necessary to establish ability to perform intrinsic role requirements and identify reasonable adjustments.
- Childcare disqualification checks/assessment where the legislation applies.
- References and employment-history checks.

- Any role-specific prohibition, restriction or professional-status checks that are legally required or relevant.

Where a check raises information, ABA Pathways will make an individual, proportionate risk assessment rather than applying an automatic exclusion unless the law prohibits the person from undertaking the role.

12. DBS checks and regulated activity

ABA Pathways will determine DBS eligibility from the actual duties of the role. An enhanced DBS certificate with children's barred list information will be obtained where the person will engage in regulated activity with children.

From 1 September 2026, the previous supervision exemption no longer removes a person from regulated activity merely because their work is supervised. Where a person teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children with the statutory frequency or overnight, the role may be regulated activity even when supervised.

- ABA Pathways will reassess DBS eligibility whenever duties or working patterns change.
- Personal care, certain healthcare activities and overnight activity may constitute regulated activity irrespective of the general frequency test.
- A barred person must never be permitted to engage in regulated activity with children.
- DBS certificates will be checked against identity information and any disclosed information considered through a documented suitability decision.
- Use of the DBS Update Service does not remove the need to see the original certificate where required, verify identity and assess whether the certificate is appropriate for the workforce and role.
- Where the EYFS statutory framework applies and an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information is required, the individual will not begin the relevant EYFS work until the required certificate has been received and checked.

13. Childcare disqualification

ABA Pathways will apply the Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018 only to roles and settings that fall within scope. The requirements will not be applied on a 'just in case' basis to people outside scope.

- Where a role is in scope, the individual will be informed of the legal requirements and their duty to notify ABA Pathways of relevant changes.
- Where ABA Pathways decides a role is outside scope, the basis for that decision may be recorded where appropriate.
- Disqualification by association is not applied to school-based staff under the 2018 arrangements; ABA Pathways will not ask intrusive questions about household members unless a different legal regime genuinely applies.
- Where a person is disqualified, ABA Pathways will not permit them to undertake relevant childcare unless a lawful waiver applies.

14. Overseas checks and right to work

For applicants who have lived or worked outside the UK, ABA Pathways will consider what additional checks are appropriate so that relevant events occurring overseas are not overlooked.

- Right-to-work checks will be completed in accordance with current Home Office requirements.

- Where appropriate and available, criminal-record or good-conduct information from the relevant country will be sought.
- ABA Pathways will consider the reliability and availability of overseas information and may seek additional references or evidence where formal checks are unavailable.
- Overseas checks do not replace the DBS check where the role is eligible for one.

15. Qualifications, professional status and prohibition checks

Qualifications and professional credentials that are essential to the role or relied upon in selection will be verified. ABA Pathways will check professional registration directly with the relevant register where appropriate.

- Claims of UKBA(cert), BCBA or other professional credentials will be verified where they are material to the role.
- Where a statutory prohibition or restriction check applies to a role, the appropriate current DfE or professional system will be used.
- ABA Pathways will not present historic or discontinued credentials as a current mandatory requirement.

16. Agency staff, subcontractors and third-party workers

ABA Pathways remains responsible for assuring itself that people supplied by another organisation are appropriately checked for the work they will undertake.

- Written confirmation will be obtained from the agency or third-party organisation that the required identity, DBS/barred-list, right-to-work, qualification and other relevant checks have been completed.
- ABA Pathways will verify that the person presenting for work is the same person on whom the checks were completed.
- Where the worker's role is regulated activity, written assurance must cover the appropriate barred-list information.
- Any information disclosed by an agency about suitability, allegations, restrictions or risk will be considered before deployment.
- Subcontractor status does not reduce the safeguarding checks required for the role.

17. Volunteers, students, trainees and work experience

17.1 Volunteers

- Each volunteer role will be assessed against the current definition of regulated activity before the person starts.
- Where a volunteer engages in regulated activity, an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information will be obtained.
- Supervision alone does not remove a volunteer from regulated activity where the statutory activity/frequency conditions are met.
- Where a volunteer role is not regulated activity, ABA Pathways will decide whether an enhanced DBS check without barred-list information is legally available and proportionate, supported by a risk assessment.
- Volunteers will receive safeguarding induction, role boundaries and supervision appropriate to the work.

17.2 Students and trainees

Students and trainees will be subject to checks appropriate to their role and whether they are in regulated activity. Where a training provider has completed checks, ABA Pathways will obtain suitable written confirmation and verify identity.

17.3 Work experience

ABA Pathways will not request DBS checks from work-experience employers or supervisors simply because a young person attends a placement. The actual duties and statutory definition of regulated activity will be considered. Where an adult supervising a child on work experience is in regulated activity, the appropriate check will be required.

18. Contractors and visitors

Contractors and visitors are not automatically treated as staff. Their access, supervision and checks will reflect the nature, frequency and location of their work.

- Contractors engaging in regulated activity will require the appropriate enhanced DBS and barred-list checks.
- Where a contractor is not in regulated activity but may have opportunity for contact with children, ABA Pathways will consider whether checks are legally available and what supervision/access controls are needed.
- Identity will be checked on arrival where appropriate and access to children will be controlled.
- Professional visitors sent by a known organisation may be admitted on the basis of appropriate prior written assurance where this is sufficient and proportionate.
- Visitors must not be given unsupervised access to children merely because they hold a DBS certificate.

19. Single Central Record and recruitment records

ABA Pathways will maintain a central record of recruitment and vetting information appropriate to its provision and commissioning responsibilities. Where commissioners require confirmation of safer-recruitment checks, this will be provided without unnecessary disclosure of personal data.

- The record will show the checks completed, the date of each check and who carried it out, in line with applicable requirements.
- Recruitment files will contain sufficient evidence to demonstrate a defensible decision-making process.
- DBS certificate information will be handled in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice and data-protection requirements; copies will not be retained longer than necessary.
- Any risk assessment used to permit work while a non-statutory check is outstanding will be exceptional, documented, authorised and subject to safeguards. ABA Pathways will not permit regulated activity where a legally required barred-list/DBS requirement prevents this.

20. Starting work, induction and probation

Safer recruitment continues after appointment. New workers will receive safeguarding induction before or at the start of work and supervision proportionate to their role.

- All staff will read KCSIE 2026 Part One in full where KCSIE applies to the provision and will follow ABA Pathways' Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

- Induction will cover the DSL arrangements, reporting concerns, allegations against adults, low-level concerns, whistleblowing, professional boundaries, online safety, behaviour support and relevant role-specific risks.
- Probation/initial review will consider conduct, safeguarding practice, reliability, competence, boundaries and response to supervision as well as technical performance.
- Concerns during probation will be recorded and addressed promptly rather than deferred to the end of the probationary period.

21. Ongoing suitability and existing staff

ABA Pathways will maintain a culture in which suitability to work with children is considered throughout engagement.

- Existing staff may be subject to new checks where concerns arise, where a person moves into regulated activity, where a legal requirement changes or where a check is otherwise required by current guidance.
- Role changes will trigger a review of DBS eligibility and any additional training or competence requirements.
- Staff must disclose relevant changes in circumstances in accordance with their contract, professional duties and safeguarding requirements.
- Supervision, incident review, complaints, low-level concerns and safeguarding information will be used to identify patterns that may require action.

22. Concerns, allegations, low-level concerns and referrals

Recruitment checks do not replace procedures for managing concerns about adults. Any allegation, safeguarding concern or low-level concern arising before or after appointment will be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

- Where information suggests that an applicant or worker may pose a risk to children, ABA Pathways will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police, DBS or other relevant body as appropriate.
- ABA Pathways will make a DBS referral where the statutory referral conditions are met, including where a person is removed from regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left, because the harm test/relevant conduct criteria are met.
- Resignation, termination of a subcontract or withdrawal of an application will not prevent safeguarding information from being considered or referred where there is a legal duty to do so.
- Where professional misconduct may require referral to a regulator or professional body, ABA Pathways will consider and make the appropriate referral.

23. Data protection, confidentiality and retention

Recruitment information is confidential and will be processed lawfully, fairly and proportionately. Criminal-record and health information receive additional protection.

- Only people who need recruitment information for a legitimate purpose will have access to it.
- Information about protected/filtered convictions or irrelevant personal information will not be used unlawfully.
- Recruitment and vetting records will be retained in accordance with legal, safeguarding and organisational retention requirements.
- Applicants will be provided with appropriate privacy information about how their data is used.

- Online-search information that is irrelevant to safeguarding or appointment will not be retained.

24. Monitoring, audit and quality assurance

- Directors will periodically audit recruitment files and the central record to identify missing, expired, inconsistent or incomplete information.
- Safer recruitment training will be refreshed as needed to reflect changes in KCSIE, DBS rules and organisational learning.
- Recruitment practice will be reviewed following safeguarding incidents, complaints, audit findings or changes in legislation/guidance.
- Commissioner assurance requests will be used as an additional opportunity to test the quality of recruitment records.
- Identified weaknesses will have a named action, responsible person and completion date.

25. Links with other policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Low-Level Concerns procedures
- Allegations Against Staff procedures
- Data Protection / Privacy Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Medication Administration Policy
- Volunteer / Student procedures where applicable

Appendix 1: ABA Pathways safer recruitment checklist

- Role description and person specification include safeguarding responsibilities.
- Regulated-activity status and required DBS level identified.
- Advert includes safeguarding statement and appropriate ROA wording.
- Application form complete; employment/education history scrutinised.
- Shortlisting completed by at least two people where practicable.
- Self-declaration obtained from shortlisted candidate where appropriate.
- Online due-diligence search considered and any relevant issue explored.
- References obtained directly and verified; discrepancies resolved.
- Interview explores safeguarding suitability, boundaries and gaps.
- Identity verified.
- Right to work verified.
- DBS certificate / Update Service status checked at the correct level.
- Children's barred list information obtained where legally required.
- Overseas checks considered/completed.
- Qualifications/professional registration verified.
- Childcare disqualification considered where applicable.
- Agency/third-party written assurance obtained where applicable.
- Recruitment decision and any risk assessment documented.
- Central record updated.
- Safeguarding induction and probation/review arrangements confirmed.

Appendix 2: Recruitment decision-making and escalation

Where potentially adverse information is identified, ABA Pathways will not make a decision solely on the existence of information unless the law requires exclusion. The decision-maker will consider:

- The nature, seriousness and relevance of the information to the role.
- Whether the information is verified and from a reliable source.
- The age of the information and the applicant's age at the time.
- Any pattern of behaviour or repeated concerns.
- The applicant's explanation and evidence of changed circumstances.
- The degree of access to children, level of supervision and specific duties.
- Whether the person is legally barred, disqualified or prohibited from the work.
- Whether advice is required from the LADO, DBS, HR/legal adviser, regulator or commissioning body.
- Whether reasonable safeguards could manage the risk without compromising children's welfare.
- The rationale for the final decision, recorded clearly and confidentially.