



Zoolab Limited

Safer Recruitment Policy

Revision Date: May 2023

Reviewed by: Nicola Stephenson, Director

Date of Next Review: May 2024

Introduction

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

Aims & Objectives

The aims of the Safer Recruitment policy are to help deter, reject, or identify people who might pose risk to our audience groups or are otherwise unsuited to working with them by having appropriate procedures in place for appointing staff.

The aims of ZooLab's recruitment policy are as follows:

- To ensure the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of merits, abilities and suitability for the position
- To ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently
- To ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age
- To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations or guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (KCSIE), and any guidance or code of practice published by the DBS.
- To ensure that ZooLab meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

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

ZooLab has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and selection and will seek to recruit the best applicant for the job. This is based on the applicants abilities, qualifications, experience, and merit as measured against the job description and person specification.

The recruitment process will be completed in a professional, timely, and responsible manner and in compliance with current employment legislation, and relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with the applicant, they must declare it as soon as they are aware of the individuals application and avoid any involvement in the recruitment process.

ZooLab aims to operate this procedure consistently and thoroughly while obtaining and evaluating information from and about applicants applying for a job with ZooLab.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Directors to:

- Ensure that ZooLab has effective policies and procedures in place for all recruitment in accordance with legal requirements
- Monitor compliance with them

It is the responsibility of HR services to:

- Ensure that ZooLab operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff.

ZooLab's Head of People and Compliance takes overall responsibility for ensuring Safer Recruitment practices are complied with across the company.

Recruitment and Selection

1. CV's and covering letter

ZooLab advertises for all positions via external channels. We receive a large volume of applications for most roles, which are filtered to ensure relevant skills, qualifications and experience. Applicants are sent a list of questions to ensure initial criteria is met. This includes questions regarding DBS checks to be completed and animal licencing process. If candidates meet this criteria, they will be invited to an initial screening interview which is a short interview via Zoom. Questions will be asked regarding experience, motivations, and also checks regarding suitability to operate within our audience groups. Staff complete declaration regarding convictions and working with children and vulnerable people. Our public facing positions are exempt from Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and this is made clear.

2. Job Description and Person Specification

Our job descriptions clearly and accurately set out duties and responsibilities of the job role. The person specification informs the selection decision. It outlines the skills, experience and abilities required to conduct the role. The person specification includes reference to working with children and vulnerable audience groups.

3. References

References are requested directly after the initial shortlisting process. The only exception is where the candidate has indicated on the employment form that they do not wish for their current employer to be contacted at that stage. In such cases, references are taken up directly after interview. All offers are subject to a minimum of 2 references which are considered satisfactory. One reference must be from a current employer or most recent. One should be from an employer where the applicant worked with children or vulnerable groups. The referee should not be a relative. References must always be sought and obtained directly from the referee and their purpose is to provide objective and factual information to support hiring decisions.

All referees are asked for their views on whether the applicant is suitable for the role and whether they are suitable for working with children and vulnerable groups.

Any discrepancies will be followed up. Ideally, a follow up phone call to each referee to confirm their reference is accurate should be completed.

4. Interviews

There will be a face to face interview where possible, alternatively via video call. A minimum of 2 interviewers should be present. The interview should serve to explore the applicants experience and skills in more detail, questioning any anomalies, gaps in employment or otherwise. The interviewers will consider safer recruitment practices at all times to ensure that they are satisfied that the candidate meets safeguarding criteria.

Any information regarding previous disciplinary/ allegations/ cautions or convictions will be addressed if relevant here, and if outlined on application form.

At least one interviewer will undertake safer recruitment training, with regular refreshers.

All applicants must bring evidence of their identity, address and qualifications to interview. Original documents only. This should be photocopied if in person or shown on screen if remote. Unsuccessful applicants documents will be destroyed within 6 months.

Offer of Employment/ New Employee Process

1. Pre employment checks

In accordance with KCSIE recommendations, ZooLab carries out a number of pre employment checks in respect of prospective employees.

If the decision is made to make an employment offer, any such offer is conditional of:

- The agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of the contract
- Identification verification
- Receipt of 2 references which we consider satisfactory
- Enhanced disclosure check completed and considered satisfactory
- Confirmation that the employee is not named on the Childrens Barred List
- Confirmation that the employee is not subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 which prohibits, disqualifies or restricts them from working in a position which involves regular contact with children
- Verification of applicants medical fitness for work
- Verification of applicants right to work in the UK
- Any further checks required as a result of the applicant having lived or worked outside of the UK

- Verification of any relevant professional qualifications

A personal file checklist will be used to track and audit paperwork obtained in accordance with Safer Recruitment training. The checklist will be retained on personnel files.

2. Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

This does not apply to positions involving directly working with children or vulnerable groups. Therefore any cautions or convictions that would normally be considered 'SPENT'm must be declared when applying for a role with ZooLab.

3. Disclosure and Barring Service

Enhanced disclosure checks are conducted on all public facing staff. This includes a check of the Childrens Barred List. The purpose of carrying out an enhanced check is to identify whether an applicant is barred from working with children and to obtain other relevant suitability information.

The enhanced DBS check is completed prior to commencement of employment for any new staff member. Zoolab employees are aware of their obligation to inform management of any cautions or convictions that arise between checks taking place.

DBS checks still obtained for applicants with little or no previous UK residence or with a recent period of overseas residence.

4. Portability of DBS certification

Staff may wish to join the update service if they are likely to require another check in the future. There is a fee of £13 per annum for this, which is payable by the employee.

ZooLab will:

- Obtain consent from the applicant to conduct a search
- Confirm identify on certificate
- Examine original certificate to ensure it is for the appropriate workforce and level of check

The update check would identify and advise whether there has been any change to the information recorded, since initial certificate was issued. Applicants will see a full list of all organisations that have carried out a check on their account.

5. DBS certificate

DBS no longer issue certificates to the employer, and the applicant must bring certificate with them to all venues to prove checks have been completed. ZooLab will electronically hold a photocopy of this.

6. Proof of ID, right to work in the UK and verification of qualifications and/or professional status

All applicants invited to attend an interview will be required to bring their ID documentation such as passport, driver's license, birth

certificate etc. with them as proof of ID/ eligibility to work in the UK in accordance with immigration, asylum and nationality act 2006 and DBS identity checking guidelines.

When an applicant claims to have changed their name by deed poll or any other means they will be required to prove documentary evidence of this change.

In addition, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have actually obtained any academic or vocational qualification as laid out in their CV.

7. Medical Fitness

ZooLab medically verifies all staff appointed into Educational Animal Presenter positions within the company. A medical questionnaire is completed and where appropriate a doctors report may be obtained. ZooLab is aware of the Equality Act 2010 and no job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant obtaining medical evidence and considering other physical and mental requirements of the role.

8. Overseas checks

Applicants who have lived abroad or travelled abroad for more than 3 months will need to obtain a criminal record check from the relevant country. The applicant cannot commence work until overseas information has been received and considered satisfactory by the employer.

9. Induction process

All new employees will undertake an induction process, within which they will complete a child safeguarding course (NSPCC) and be required to familiarise themselves with our safeguarding policy as well as the KCSIE framework and other relevant documentation. Expectations will be made clear throughout the training process.

Record Retention/ Data Protection

ZooLab is legally required to undertake pre-employment checks. Therefore, if the applicant is successful in their role, ZooLab will retain this information within their personnel file. This includes copies of ID, medical fitness, right to work in the UK and qualifications. Medical information may be used to help us discharge our obligations as an employer. This information is kept for the duration of the employees service with the company. This is kept in a secure file. Any notes or information gathered on unsuccessful applicants will be destroyed within a period of 6 months.

Ongoing Employment

ZooLab acknowledges that safer recruitment goes beyond the initial recruitment and selection process but should be part of a larger framework for employees. Therefore, regular training and support is given to staff as identified through the appraisal and development process.

1. Leaving employment

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely, there may be occasions where allegations of serious misconduct is raised. This policy is primarily concerned with the promotion of safer recruitment and details of the pre-employment checks that will be undertaken prior to employment. Whilst these are pre-employment checks, we have a duty to make a referral to the DBS service in circumstances where an individual:

- Has applied for a position despite being barred from working with children
- Has been removed, or have left prior to being removed, because they have harmed, or pose a risk, to a child or vulnerable person.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The HR department will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is monitored and evaluated throughout the company. This is undertaken through formal audits of job vacancies, and a yearly safer recruitment audit which will be presented to Senior Management.