

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all recruitment, selection, and employment practices at Step Ahead are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and legally compliant. It aims to:

- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- Ensure all candidates, including staff and volunteers, are subject to a safe recruitment process;
- Attract individuals with skills, experience, and values aligned to Step Ahead's mission;
- Comply with UK law on employment, equality, immigration, safeguarding, and data protection.

This policy applies to:

- All paid staff, volunteers, and interns;
- Permanent, fixed-term, and temporary roles;
- Recruitment undertaken directly or through external agencies;
- All stages of recruitment, from advertising to induction and probation.

EQUALITY COMMITMENT

Step Ahead is committed to treating all people fairly and without unlawful discrimination. No applicant or employee will be treated less favourably based on:

- Race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, belief, or any other protected characteristic.

Our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policies ensure:

- Staff ratios reflect or exceed national averages;
- Recruitment, training, promotion, and employment practices are monitored to prevent discrimination;
- Knowledge, experience, and personal attributes beyond formal qualifications are considered, particularly for under-represented groups;
- Disabilities are accommodated according to the Equality Act 2010.

RECRUITMENT POLICY

Job Description

- Each vacancy for staff or volunteers will have a written job description or role profile, which will be written or updated when a vacancy arises.
- Job descriptions and role profiles will clearly outline the main duties, responsibilities, and reporting arrangements for the role.
- Job descriptions are flexible to allow for reasonable adjustments to be made for candidates with disabilities, in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- All staff and volunteers will be provided with a job description or role profile appropriate to their role, prior to or at the start of their engagement.
- All job descriptions and role profiles will include:
 - A requirement to comply with Step Ahead's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures;
 - Clear expectations regarding professional boundaries, appropriate behaviour, and conduct;
 - Responsibilities relating to dignity, respect, equality, and safeguarding of children and/or vulnerable adults, where applicable.
- Job descriptions will include standard organisational information used across Step Ahead roles and will be retained as part of recruitment records.

Person Specification

- Defines essential and desirable skills, knowledge, and attributes.
- Provides the basis for shortlisting and interview questions.
- Supports fair, objective, and testable selection criteria, including Genuine Occupational Qualifications where justified.

Advertising

- Vacancies advertised widely to attract a diverse pool.
- Placement in local, national, and specialist media, job centres, and outreach to under-represented groups.
- Adverts must include:
 - Main purpose of the role
 - Closing date (minimum 21 days)
 - Salary, hours, and contact details
- A copy of the advert is retained in the recruitment file.

Information to Applicants

Applicants will receive, where possible:

- Covering letter with interview date and contact person
- Job description and person specification
- Summary of terms and conditions
- Background information about Step Ahead
- Interview process outline and instructions for reasonable adjustments

SELECTION AND SAFER RECRUITMENT

Responsibility

- The Managing Director, in consultation with appropriate staff, oversees the recruitment process.
- All selection decisions must involve at least two panel members, not an individual.

Interviewing

- Structured interviews aligned with person specification.
- Questions prepared and agreed by directors; all applicants asked the same core questions.
- Assessment forms completed independently before discussion.
- Additional methods (presentations, exercises, psychometric tests) may be used if unbiased.
- Commitment to equality is assessed during the interview.

References and DBS Checks

- Minimum of two references collected after interviews, with the applicant's permission.
- DBS checks will only be carried out for roles where they are legally required (e.g., positions involving work with vulnerable adults or children). The outcome of a DBS check may affect the appointment decision.

Eligibility to Work in the UK

- Applicants must provide proof of eligibility to work under Asylum and Immigration Act 1986 (passport, National Insurance number, work permit, etc.).
- Same criteria applied consistently to all candidates to avoid discrimination.

Selection and Rejection

- Selection decisions based on essential criteria from the person specification.

- Consensus used where possible; unsuccessful applicants informed in a timely manner.
- Offers confirmed in writing subject to references, right-to-work, any required DBS checks, and satisfactory probation.

OFFSHORE STAFF

Step Ahead recognises that some roles may be undertaken by staff based outside the United Kingdom (“offshore staff”). This section ensures that recruitment, vetting, and management of offshore staff maintains the same standards of safety, fairness, and legal compliance as UK-based recruitment.

This applies to all employees, contractors, or volunteers engaged by Step Ahead who are based outside the UK, whether working remotely or through partner organisations or agencies.

Recruitment and Selection

- Offshore staff will be recruited using the same fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory processes outlined in this policy.
- Job descriptions and person specifications will clearly state if a role is offshore or remote-based.
- Selection will be conducted by at least two panel members and follow structured interview processes.
- Consideration will be given to time zones, communication methods, and cultural context to ensure fair assessment.

Vetting and Background Checks

- Appropriate identity verification must be completed for all offshore staff.
- Equivalent background checks to UK DBS requirements will be sought in the individual’s country of residence, where available and appropriate.
- Where formal checks are not available, additional references and alternative verification methods will be used to ensure suitability.
- A minimum of two references will be obtained and verified.
- All vetting processes must be risk-assessed and documented.

Safeguarding

- Offshore staff engaged in roles involving children or vulnerable adults must meet the same safeguarding standards as UK-based staff.
- They must comply with Step Ahead’s Safeguarding Policy and Procedures at all times.
- Additional supervision, training, and monitoring may be implemented where there are increased safeguarding risks due to remote working or jurisdictional differences.

Legal and Compliance Considerations

- Step Ahead will ensure compliance with relevant UK legislation as well as applicable local employment laws in the country where the offshore staff member is based.
- Appropriate contractual arrangements will be in place, clearly outlining responsibilities, confidentiality, and safeguarding obligations.

- Data protection requirements under UK GDPR will be maintained, including secure handling and transfer of personal data across borders.

Management and Supervision

- Offshore staff will receive appropriate induction, training, and ongoing supervision.
- Clear reporting lines and communication processes will be established.
- Performance and conduct will be monitored in line with organisational standards.

Equality and Inclusion

- Offshore staff will be treated fairly and with respect, in line with Step Ahead's equality and diversity commitments.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required, taking into account local contexts and working conditions.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENTS

Step Ahead aspires to a diverse workforce and a safe working environment. Commitments include:

- Fair and non-discriminatory treatment for all employees;
- Dignity and respect at work;
- Zero tolerance for harassment and bullying;
- Providing induction, training, and development to meet employees' needs;
- Reviewing recruitment, selection, training, and promotion for fairness;
- Supporting career development and promotion opportunities;
- Modifying employment practices to reduce barriers for disadvantaged groups;
- Following UK legislation and government guidance.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Recruitment, selection, and promotions conducted non-discriminatorily and monitored.
- Training and development offered widely and inclusively.
- Appraisals used to support development.
- Recruitment materials designed to eliminate bias.
- Psychometric or ability testing free of bias.
- Monitoring of recruitment, selection, and promotion undertaken to assess policy success.

INFORMATION RETENTION AND DATA PROTECTION


- Complies with Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR.
- Personnel records include contracts, personal information, next-of-kin, qualifications, training, and appraisal records.
- Unsuccessful applicants' data kept securely for 1 year, then destroyed.
- DBS disclosure information kept separately and securely.
- Records retained only for audits, complaints, or tribunal purposes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- CEO/Board / Senior Leadership: Approve policy, ensure legal compliance.
- Hiring Managers: Implement policy, ensure fair and safe recruitment.
- HR / Recruitment Staff: Support managers, maintain records, ensure right-to-work, DBS (if required), and data protection compliance.
- All Staff Involved in Recruitment: Conduct recruitment ethically, maintain confidentiality, avoid conflicts of interest.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Employee Handbook
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection & Privacy Notice

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Document Title: Safer Recruitment and Vetting Policy	
Version Number: 2.3	Document Owner: Corporate Support
Date Approved: 21 February 2025	Approved By: Jackie Bedford, CEO
Effective Date: 21 February 2025	
Superseded Version: 1	
Date of Last Review: 09 April 2026	Date of Next Review: 1 July 2027