



Auntie's Cookery Academy

Vetting and Recruitment Policy for Staff and Volunteers

1. Policy Statement and Scope

Purpose

This policy sets out ACA's approach to the safe, fair, and inclusive recruitment of all staff, volunteers, trustees, and contractors.

It ensures that anyone engaged in our work is suitable, capable, and aligned with our safeguarding, equality, and inclusion values.

ACA is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for everyone, including children, young people, adults at risk, and colleagues.

We actively seek to identify, deter, and reject individuals who may pose a risk to others while promoting fairness, accessibility, and respect for all applicants — regardless of background, disability, neurodiversity, or lived experience.

Scope

This policy applies to all recruitment and selection processes for:

- Paid employees
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Contractors and sessional staff

It should be read alongside ACA's related policies, including:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Accessibility Statement
- Conflict of Interest Policy

2. The Recruitment and Selection Process

Recruitment at ACA follows a structured, transparent process to ensure consistency, safety, and fairness.

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2.1 Defining the Role

Before advertising, each role is carefully reviewed to clarify its purpose, responsibilities, and safeguarding requirements.

Job Description (JD):

- Outlines key duties, supervision arrangements, and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Includes any physical, emotional, or cognitive requirements — ensuring adjustments can be made for accessibility.

Person Specification (PS):

- Lists essential and desirable criteria based on skills, experience, and qualifications.
 - Includes an explicit requirement for a commitment to safeguarding, equality, and inclusive practice.
 - Ensures that criteria are applied flexibly, considering reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities or neurodivergent profiles.
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2.2 Advertising and Application

Advertising:

- All adverts must state ACA's commitment to safeguarding, equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- For paid roles, salary ranges are openly published.
- Vacancies are advertised in accessible formats and, where possible, through channels that reach underrepresented groups.

Application Process:

- A standard application form must be used for all candidates, including volunteers (CVs alone are not accepted).
 - Applicants are asked to disclose full education and employment history, gaps, and referees.
 - The form confirms the right to work in the UK and includes a safeguarding declaration.
 - ACA will provide accessible formats or support with the application process when requested.
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2.3 Shortlisting and Interviews

Shortlisting:

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- Conducted using objective, role-related criteria.
- Applicants are assessed fairly and consistently, with consideration for reasonable adjustments.
- Gaps or inconsistencies in history are noted for clarification at interview.

Interviews:

- Conducted by at least two panel members, one of whom must have completed safer recruitment training.
- Interview questions assess safeguarding understanding, professional boundaries, and inclusive attitudes.
- Reasonable adjustments (e.g. extra time, alternative communication methods, quiet spaces) are provided where required.
- The process may include practical or written exercises relevant to the role.

3. Vetting and Background Checks

All offers of employment or volunteering are conditional on the satisfactory completion of pre-appointment checks.

3.1 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

- Enhanced DBS checks (including Barred List checks where appropriate) are required for anyone in regulated activity.
Checks are renewed at least every three years.
- Candidates must declare any convictions, cautions, or bind-overs, and discuss them confidentially with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

3.2 References

- At least two satisfactory references are required for all roles.
- Wherever possible, at least one reference should be professional - for example, from a current or former employer, supervisor, tutor, or organisation the applicant has volunteered with.
- The second reference may be personal if preferred, provided it comes from someone who can comment on the applicant's character, reliability, and suitability for the role.
- Family members or close friends may not act as referees.
- References should confirm relevant dates, roles or relationship, and comment on the applicant's conduct, safeguarding awareness, and any known concerns regarding suitability to work with vulnerable people.

3.3 Additional Checks

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- **Identity Verification:** Original documents confirming identity and qualifications are required.
 - **Right to Work:** Verified for all paid roles.
 - **Overseas History:** Police or character checks required for anyone who has lived or worked abroad for 12+ months in the past 5 years.
 - **Disqualification Checks:** Relevant to childcare or charity trustee roles.
 - **Medical Fitness:** A post-offer medical questionnaire may be required, ensuring any adjustments needed under the Equality Act 2010 are discussed and implemented.
 - **Online Checks:** May be conducted on publicly available information, in line with Data Protection legislation.
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4. Induction, Training and Monitoring

Induction:

All new starters complete an induction covering ACA's safeguarding, health and safety, equality, and data protection policies.

Training:

- Paid staff complete certificated safeguarding training within one month of appointment, renewed annually.
- Volunteers supporting vulnerable individuals complete Level 1 or 2 safeguarding training.
- Inclusive practice, disability awareness, and equality training are part of ongoing development.

Supervision and Review:

- Employees and volunteers receive regular supervision and annual appraisal.
- The induction and supervision process provides an opportunity to review accessibility and any reasonable adjustments required.

Record Keeping:

- A central record of recruitment, vetting, and DBS checks is maintained in line with ACA's Data Protection Policy.
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5. Commitment to Accessibility and Inclusion

ACA recognises that individuals' abilities and experiences vary widely.
We commit to:

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- Providing accessible recruitment materials and reasonable adjustments at all stages.
 - Encouraging applications from underrepresented groups.
 - Valuing lived experience and diverse perspectives as strengths.
 - Ensuring neurodiverse and disabled applicants are not disadvantaged by rigid processes.
 - Treating all individuals with respect, dignity, and fairness throughout their engagement.
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6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **at least once every 12 months**, or sooner if:

- Relevant laws, regulations, or guidance change;
- A serious incident, complaint, or near miss occurs;
- Feedback from learners, staff, or partners suggests improvements; or
- Operational changes make an update necessary.

This includes review following changes to safeguarding legislation, recruitment legislation, or any incidents involving non-compliance with recruitment procedures.

Signed: 

Printed Name: Emily-Jane Dale

Job Title: CEO and Chair

Date: 7th November 2025

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