

My ref: AL/LB  
Your ref:

Date: 14 October 2015

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**Children, Families and Adults Services**  
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To:  
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Dear colleague

### **Safe Recruitment in Cambridgeshire Schools 2015**

As you are aware, Cambridgeshire County Council's Internal Audit team are commissioned annually to review safer recruitment practice in Cambridgeshire schools. The auditors also produce a composite report on their findings, the content of which I relay to all schools via this annual 'Safer Recruitment in Schools' letter.

The overall assurance level for 2014/2015 is 'Moderate'. Whilst it is encouraging to note that there has been some improvement in the number of schools given substantial assurance, an increase of 7% compared to last year's audit, this is clearly not the assurance level that we aspire to. For your reference, the levels of assurance used by the auditors can be seen in the table below.

Full Assurance	There is a sound system of control designed to address the relevant risks with controls being consistently applied.
Substantial Assurance	There is a sound system of control, designed to address the relevant risks, but there is evidence of non-compliance with some of the controls.
Moderate Assurance	Whilst there is a basically a sound system of control, designed to address the relevant risks, there are weaknesses in the system, that leaves some risks not addressed and there is evidence of non-compliance with some of the controls.
Limited Assurance	The system of control is weak and there is evidence of non-compliance with the controls that do exist which may result in the relevant risks not being managed.
No Assurance	There is no system of internal control. Risks are not being managed.

The report identified key failings and areas of weakness that we must strive to address in order to ensure we are providing a safe school environment for pupils.

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The key areas of weakness are summarised as follows, along with required actions for all schools to take:

### 1. Job descriptions and person specifications

In a significant proportion of job descriptions and person specifications reviewed, there was no specific reference to pupil safeguarding responsibilities. All employees need to be fully engaged in this regard and not be allowed to work under the misapprehension that responsibility for safeguarding belongs to someone else.

**Action:**

All schools should ensure that they are fulfilling the requirement to include details of safeguarding responsibilities in all job descriptions.

### 2. Review of application form

Schools were found to not always be checking application forms sufficiently to identify gaps in employment, training history, and periods of time spent abroad. Failure to undertake this check thoroughly and follow up on gaps on application forms may place pupils and staff at risk.

**Action:**

All schools should ensure that gaps in employment and training history are identified and pursued with candidates and that assurance is also obtained for periods of time spent abroad.

### 3. Shortlisting and interviewing

Weaknesses were identified in both the shortlisting and interview process. In some schools there was no evidence to confirm compliance with the requirement to have at least one recruitment panel member trained in safer recruitment. The risk is that schools may not be vigilant in identifying employees who may present a risk to pupils and staff.

**Action:**

All schools should ensure that they are following safer recruitment procedures and retaining evidence and appropriate records to demonstrate that this.

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### 4. Pre-employment checks

Schools did not always have evidence on file to demonstrate that pre-employment checks had been carried out. Key areas of weakness were lack of evidence of references, the right to work in the UK, prohibition checks and medical clearance. Failure to carry out appropriate pre-employment checks may lead to risk to pupils, staff and educational standards as a result of unsuitable applicants being appointed.

**Action:**

All schools should be clear on the pre-employment checks that are required and ensure that they are carried out and clearly evidenced.

### 5. DBS checks

Instances were identified where a new employee had commenced work prior to DBS clearance. While, in some cases, a Barred List check had been completed, a formal risk assessment had not been carried out and documented. Failure to follow the risk assessment procedure may lead to employees working without appropriate supervision thus causing potential risk to pupils.

**Action:**

All schools should be aware that the Barred List check alone is not regarded as sufficient clearance if DBS clearance has not been obtained prior to the person starting work. In this scenario, schools must ensure that a formal risk assessment is completed, signed and held on file.

### 6. Single Central Record

In some cases, the Single Central Record had not been completed fully or correctly. Instances included employees and regular visitors not being included on the record, inappropriate use of “n/a”, and a failure to correctly include details of the person undertaking the checks and the date.

**Action:**

All schools should ensure that they are aware of the requirements of the Single Central Record and that compliance is confirmed and evidence during management checks.

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## Safe Recruitment in Cambridgeshire Schools 2015

At the start of term a revised Model Safer Recruitment Policy and an updated Safer Recruitment Checklist were emailed to all schools and academies. These are important documents to help schools recruit safely and can be downloaded from the Learn Together website <https://www.learntogether.org.uk/Pages/Welcome.aspx> search 'Safer Recruitment'.

I trust that you find this to be a useful summary of the Safe Recruitment in Cambridgeshire Schools report. Each year these audits identify a small number of schools who are not following the Safer Recruitment Policy. These schools are exposing themselves and their pupils to unnecessary levels of safeguarding risk as well as a significant risk of adverse inspection judgements. It becomes increasingly difficult to understand why these risks are being taken and why the audit assurance rating remains at moderate. The Council is more than willing to consider any comments about the administrative burden of the Safer Recruitment Policy and how this might be streamlined without increasing safeguarding risk. In the mean time I strongly urge you to pay particular attention to the key findings as outlined and to take necessary steps to ensure that the associated actions are completed in your school.

Yours sincerely



Adrian Loades  
Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services

