

# SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

2025 - 2026

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## **SSBD Safer Recruitment Policy**

### **1. Policy Statement**

At Small Steps Big Dreams (SSBD), safeguarding the welfare of our students is paramount. We are dedicated to implementing the highest standards of safer recruitment to ensure a secure, supportive, and inclusive environment. This policy outlines the principles and procedures we follow when recruiting interns, staff, and contractors, aligned with UAE laws and international best-practices.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals involved in recruitment and selection at SSBD, including senior leaders, certified Behavior Analysts, certified or non-certified Therapists, HR personnel, and external recruitment partners. It encompasses the hiring of all employees, interns, and contractors.

### **3. Core Principles**

Our recruitment approach reflects SSBD's core values of evidence-based interventions, compassionate care, and quality services. We seek to appoint individuals who demonstrate commitment to these values and have a strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities within the context of ABA and school inclusion.

### **4. Legal and Regulatory Alignment**

SSBD's recruitment practices comply fully with relevant UAE legislation, including Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law), as well as international safeguarding standards. We ensure that all processes meet or exceed requirements set forth by local authorities and reflect best practice globally.

## **5. Recruitment Aims**

The goal of our safer recruitment process is to ensure that individuals who are hired to work with vulnerable populations, such as children or adults at risk, are thoroughly vetted and assessed for their suitability. These practices are designed to prevent individuals who may pose a risk from gaining access to these groups. Through this process we aim to attract and appoint the most suitable candidates who uphold the highest ethical and professional standards.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

All recruitment panels at SSBD include at least one member who has completed the NSPCC-accredited *Safer Recruitment in Education and Skills* training, with refresher training required every two years. This applies to all senior leaders involved in the selection process, ensuring that safeguarding considerations are central at every stage.

## **7. Advertising and Recruitment Materials**

All job advertisements and internship postings clearly state SSBD's commitment to safeguarding. The following statement is included in every advert: "SSBD is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff, interns, and volunteers to share this commitment."

## **8. Application and Shortlisting**

The Human Resources team reviews applications submitted through platforms such as LinkedIn, the SSBD careers page, and other recruitment websites. Candidates are shortlisted based on meeting the essential criteria, typically including 2 to 3 years of ABA experience, possession of valid RBT/IBT/ABAT certifications, attested academic degrees, and other relevant qualifications. Shortlisted candidates must complete an SSBD Employment Application Form, which gathers detailed information about visa status, salary expectations, employment history, and references. During interviews, candidates are asked to explain any gaps or inconsistencies in their employment history. Candidates who present unresolved safeguarding risks or red flags will not be considered for appointment, regardless of qualifications.

## **9. References**

Two professional references are required for each candidate, with at least one from the most recent employer or educational supervisor. These references provide insights into the candidate's past performance, conduct, disciplinary history, and suitability for working with children and vulnerable populations. HR staff verify references directly through phone or email and document any discrepancies or concerns for further assessment.

## **10. Pre-Employment Vetting**

Candidates who progress to the final stages of recruitment must complete a comprehensive employment application form and are invited to submit an optional disclosure of any past or ongoing involvement in safeguarding investigations. As part of our safer recruitment protocol, candidates must provide documentation for background verification, including: proof of identity, attested academic and professional qualifications, police clearance certificates from all countries of residence in the past three years, a good conduct certificate from the country of origin, and, where applicable, an International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC). Child Protection and Prohibited List checks are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the candidate's nationality. Prior to starting employment, candidates must also submit an Occupational Health Certificate to confirm fitness for duty. Post-employment vetting measures may be applied in specific cases if new information emerges, or if further checks are required due to changes in role, visa status, or safeguarding regulations. SSBD reserves the right to request updated documentation and to reassess suitability for continued employment based on safeguarding or compliance grounds.

## **11. The Selection Process**

Initial interviews, conducted by the HR Manager, explore candidates' qualifications, safeguarding awareness, and any anomalies in their application. Candidates who pass this pre-screening process are then interviewed by a member of senior staff, such as a certified behavior analyst or program director. Only those who successfully pass this interview are invited to participate in a practical demonstration session working directly with an SSBD learner. This supervised session assesses the candidate's ability to apply ABA methods compassionately and competently. The interview process incorporates safeguarding questions and scenarios to

evaluate candidates' understanding and commitment. All job offers are conditional, pending satisfactory completion of all vetting, reference checks, and credential verification.

## **12. Contractors and External Vendors**

Any contractors and third-party vendors engaged by SSBD must comply with our safer recruitment standards. As part of the supplier onboarding process, this includes verifying identity, providing a valid certificate of good conduct, and submitting proof of professional qualifications where applicable. SSBD maintains a Preferred Supplier List (PSL), a vetted group of approved recruitment agencies and service providers who meet our safeguarding, compliance, and background-check standards. Only suppliers on the PSL are permitted to provide services that involve student contact or access to school premises.

## **13. Induction and Ongoing Professional Development**

New hires and interns at SSBD receive comprehensive safeguarding training as part of their induction, which is provided by RedRock Frontline Training and recorded in the SQM by the HR Coordinator. To maintain high standards, all personnel undertake mandatory annual refresher training. Senior staff and certified Behavior Analysts complete accredited Safer Recruitment Training and are tasked with mentoring staff and interns on safeguarding principles.

## **14. Single Central Record**

SSBD maintains a Single Central Record (SCR) that logs all recruitment checks for employees, interns, and contractors. This includes dates and outcomes of background verifications, reference checks, qualifications validation, and safeguarding training completion.

## **15. Continuous Improvement**

To uphold the highest safeguarding standards, SSBD reviews this policy annually or sooner if needed. Updates should reflect changes in UAE legislation and evolving international best-practices. Input from staff feedback, audit results, and advancements in child protection research inform ongoing enhancements to our recruitment process. To ensure ongoing compliance with

safeguarding standards and continuous improvement across all campuses, SSBD undergoes an annual external safeguarding audit conducted by an independent, qualified safeguarding professional. This audit evaluates the center's adherence to child protection protocols, safer recruitment practices, staff training, and documentation procedures. As part of the audit, recruitment records are sampled and reviewed to ensure all pre-employment checks, vetting procedures, and recruitment panel requirements are consistently followed across all SSBD sites housed within GEMS schools. This policy should be read in conjunction with the *HR Policy*, *Staff Handbook*, *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, and the *Whistleblowing Policy*.

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