

HSLC Online Check Guidance



Background and Guidance

With effect from 1 September 2022 a new requirement for online checks has been included in Keeping Children Safe in Education. The requirement can be found in KCSIE as follows:

Part 3 – Safer Recruitment

Shortlisting – Paragraph 221 which states:

“In addition, as part of the shortlisting process schools and colleges should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school or college might want to explore with the applicant at interview.”

The ERYC Safeguarding in Education Team has continued to liaise with the DfE for further information on online searches and what is expected of schools. They have also been involved in a multi-sector working group with the DfE, Local Authorities, recruitment / employment sector and other interested parties. The DfE position, and therefore the Safeguarding Consortium’s position, continues to be that:

- an ‘online search’ is not a ‘social media search’ – searching applicants’ social media activity can introduce discrimination and bias; it can also encourage recruiters to seek information covertly rather than overtly.
- ‘should’ in statutory guidance means you should do it unless you have a good reason not to. It is difficult to think of any circumstances in which it might not be appropriate to undertake an online check for a post in a school setting.
- the school does not need consent to carry out the search however, the applicant has a right to know beforehand that an online search will be conducted if they are shortlisted. This will be done through our recruitment documentation.

HSLC will work in accordance with the DfE and Safeguarding Consortium’s position.

How will we conduct an online search?

The check will be conducted by a senior, appropriate member of staff who is not involved in the recruitment process. This is to ensure impartiality. The nominated person is currently our Deputy IT Manager. There are parameters in place to ensure that the online checks are consistent, as judgements on appropriateness and professionalism could be subjective.

What sites will we check?

We will use two different search engines, for example Google, Bing, LinkedIn or Yahoo.

What are we looking for?

Only information or evidence which is relevant to an individual's suitability to work with children should be considered. Any information which does not raise any question about a candidate's suitability to work with children must not be considered. Examples of any incidents or issues to be considered are as follows:

- Any content that is extremist in nature or demonstrates support for such views or beliefs;
- Shared views of a discriminatory nature;
- Information available online that contradicts information within the candidate's employment history as shared on their application form;
- Information alluding to cautions or convictions such as those published in the press;
- Images or information that brings their professional integrity into question.

Any information determined to be of concern or requiring further exploration will be shared with the Headteacher by HR.

Recording the search

The person completing the search will complete the written template record and will forward this to the HR Manager. The written record will be retained in line with our GDPR policy. The online search date will be recorded on the SCR for the successful candidate.