



Safer Recruitment Policy

For the purposes of this document, 'staff' refers to anyone employed formally by Debate Mate Schools Limited and / or Debate Mate Limited ("DM Group"), and 'mentors' refers to our volunteers who receive a stipend payment for the sessions they deliver.

The DM Group is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults, and to the care and development of children within our school and educational communities. In order to minimise the risk of harm to children, young people and adults from our staff and mentors, we will carefully select, train and support all staff and mentors in line with our Safer Recruitment guidelines.

This means that we will:

- Ensure that our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive, fair, consistent and transparent.
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent those who might harm children or adults at risk from working for us.
- Adhere to safer recruitment guidance and standards, responding positively to changing understandings of good safer recruitment practice.

Safer recruitment guidelines

Safer recruitment means thinking about and including issues to do with safeguarding at every stage of the recruitment process. We know people who seek to harm others may look for an organisation or project where they can have access to children or adults at risk and where good recruitment practices are not in place.

Our safer recruitment guidelines mean that potential staff and mentors must:

At the recruitment stage:

- Complete the specified **application process** for the role to which they have applied.
- Undertake **an interview** to assess suitability and capability to carry out the role.

At the approval stage (if offered a role):

- Undergo an **Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service** check.
- Complete appropriate training for their role as a mentor, which includes **Safeguarding Training** (mentors only).
- **Sign a Mentor Memorandum of Understanding**, which sets out their role and responsibilities (mentors only).
- **Provide identity documents** including photographic identity as part of the Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- Provide **one / two references** depending on position (staff only). Entry level staff may provide one reference while mid / senior staff will need to provide two references.
- Provide evidence of their **right to work in the UK** (staff only).



At the induction stage (once the role has been approved):

- Complete appropriate training for their role, which includes completing an online **safeguarding training course** (staff only)
- **Sign a contract of employment** which sets out their roles and responsibilities (staff only).
- Read and confirm they understand our policies, including our **Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**.
- Receive **additional Safeguarding Training from DSL**, which includes outline Debate Mate's Policy and Procedures (staff only).

While carrying out their role:

- Be provided with **regular opportunities for support and development**.
- **Mentors have weekly contact with a Debate Mate Programme Director** and will be offered further training throughout the year.
- **Staff have regular check-ins with senior members of staff**, and receive ongoing training and development opportunities.

Confidential Self-Declaration

Between the approval and induction stages, we offer all staff and mentors the opportunity to make a confidential disclosure of any past convictions. The purpose is to offer the applicant the opportunity to share any information before it is disclosed through the criminal record check. Applicants with information to share have indicated that they have valued this opportunity to be honest from the outset of the process.

The information on this form is treated in confidence, and seen only by those involved in the recruitment process, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Following any submission of the form, we thank applicants for their disclosure and notify them that we will arrange a time to discuss this when their DBS certificate has been issued.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are a key element of our safer recruitment practices. In accordance with UK Government guidance on DBS checks in England and Wales, all of our staff and mentors undergo an Enhanced Check to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people on our programmes, and to ensure that the people in our care are protected from harm.

The Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and mentor roles and aim to select people based on their skills, abilities, experience and knowledge. This assessment will take place before any assessment of a person's criminal record.

Having a criminal record will not automatically bar someone from working or being a mentor with Debate Mate. Any person with a criminal record will be assessed for risk to children and adults, which will depend on the circumstances and background of their offences.



As an organisation using criminal records checks to assess person's suitability, we will:

- treat all applicants for positions fairly
- only ask a person to provide details of convictions and cautions we are legally entitled to know about.
- not discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check based on a conviction or other information revealed.
- have an open and measured discussion about any offences or other matter that might be revealed with the person as part of the approval process.
- ensure all those who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences.

Assessing suitability.

Any assessment of suitability, based on criminal records check information, will take into consideration the nature of the offence, the number of offences, the age of the person at the time of the offence and the time period since the offence. Particular attention will be given to all offences against children or adults at risk, or of a sexual, violent or threatening nature, as these are in direct conflict with our aims and values. Any unspent convictions involving sexual, violent or threatening offences will automatically result in a decision not to approve a person for a role.

Where there is no risk to children, adults at risk or other mentors, we are committed to the active rehabilitation and integration of previous offenders and would seek to offer support and guidance for anyone with a non-violent criminal record.

If the criminal records check is returned with information on it, we will:

- arrange a time to have a conversation with the person about the information provided.
- ask for a reference.
- two members of the senior management team will make a decision based on the assessment criteria below
- the Safeguarding Trustee will be notified of any decision.

Assessing suitability criteria.

The Senior Management team will consider the following questions:

1. Is the person barred from working with children or adults at risk?
2. Did the person openly disclose information about the offence?
3. Did the offence result in a conviction, caution or reprimand?
4. Does the offence involve violent or threatening behaviour?
5. Does the offence involve children or young people?
6. Is the offence spent?
7. Was the person a child (under 18) at the time of the offence?
8. Was this a singular offence?

Once a decision has been made, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will inform the candidate.