



Fun and Education Through Farming

Safer Recruitment and Staff Retention Policy

DATE CREATED: November 2018

DATE REVIEWED: November 2023

SIGNATURE:

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: November 2024

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with any new recommendations or legislation as it is made available.

Key Personnel			
Role	Name	Tel.	email
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Wendy Self	01225 751675	manager@larkrisfarm.org.uk
Safeguarding Lead	Lucy Allen	01225 751675	asstmanager@larkrisefarm.org.uk
Deputy Safeguarding Trustees	Jane Wallis	01225 751675	vicechair@larkrisefarm.org.uk



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POLICY STATEMENT

Larkrise Community Farm (also referred to as LCF/The Farm in this document) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all the vulnerable adult and school age students in our care. We take all reasonable and sensible measures to ensure they are kept safe from harm.

Commitment to the safe recruitment of staff to Larkrise Community Farm is our top priority and the first step to safeguarding. As an employer, LCF expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Our Safer Recruitment Policy is designed to help protect and ensure the safety of the students who attend or visit the farm; as well as our adult volunteers/staff who provide for their supervision and care.

INTRODUCTION

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Safer Recruitment Policy is to help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse our vulnerable students or are otherwise unsuited to working with them, by having appropriate procedures for appointing staff.

The aims of the Farm's recruitment policy are as follows:

- to ensure that the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of their merits, abilities and suitability for the position;
- to ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently;
- to ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age;
- to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including the statutory guidance such as the Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015 (the Prevent Duty Guidance) and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS);
- to ensure that LCF meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children, young people and adults by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

Employees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy.



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LCF has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and will seek to recruit the best applicant for the job. The recruitment and selection process should ensure the identification of the person best suited to the job at the Farm based on the applicant's abilities, qualification, experience and merit as measured against the job description and person specification.

The recruitment and selection of staff will be conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner, in compliance with current employment legislation, relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant, they must declare it as soon as they are aware of the individual's application and avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

LCF aims to operate this procedure consistently and thoroughly while obtaining, collating, analysing and evaluating information from and about applicants applying for job vacancies at The Farm.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the Trustees to:

- Ensure that LCF has effective policies and procedures in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance all the legal requirements.
- Monitor the Farm's compliance with them.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees and Farm Management involved in the recruitment to:

- Ensure that the LCF operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work at the Farm.
- To monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document.
- Promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at every stage of the procedure.

The Trustees have delegated responsibility to the Farm Manager to lead in appointments of Support Staff. The Trustees have delegated responsibility to the Business Operations Manager in appointments of Office Staff. One or more Trustees will be involved in management appointments.



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DEFINITION OF REGULATED ACTIVITY AND FREQUENCY

The full legal definition of regulated activity is set out in Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. HM Government has produced a [Factual note on regulated activity in relation to children](#). Regulated activity includes:

teaching, training, instructing, or supervising children if the person is unsupervised, or providing advice or guidance on well-being;

Work under the above is regulated activity only if done regularly. Some activities are always regulated activities, regardless of their frequency or whether they are supervised or not. This includes:

Relevant personal care:

- personal care includes helping a student, for reasons of age, illness or disability, with eating or drinking, or in connection with toileting, washing and dressing.

Any position undertaken at, or on behalf of LCF will amount to "regulated activity" if it is carried out:

- frequently, meaning once a week or more; or
- satisfies the "period condition", meaning four times or more in a 30 day period; and provides the opportunity for contact with our vulnerable students.

Roles which are carried out on an unpaid/voluntary basis will only amount to regulated activity if, in addition to the above, they are carried out on an unsupervised basis.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURE ADVERTISING

To ensure equality of opportunity, LCF will advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of applicant as possible, normally this entails an external advertisement.

Any advertisement will make clear the Farm's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Job descriptions will include statement/s regarding the individual's safeguarding responsibilities.

Job specifications will include a statement regarding the need for enhanced DBS check under a 'Child and Adult Workforce' type as appropriate to the role and contact with our students.



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All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

APPLICATION FORMS

Larkrise Community Farm uses its own application form, and all applicants for employment will be required to complete an application form containing questions about their academic and full employment history and their suitability for the role (in addition all applicants are required to account for any gaps or discrepancies in employment history). Incomplete application forms will not be shortlisted.

The application form will include the applicant's declaration regarding convictions and working with children and vulnerable adults and will make it clear that the post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. CV's alone will not be accepted.

It is unlawful for Larkrise Community Farm to employ anyone who is barred from working with children and vulnerable adults. It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children and vulnerable adults to apply for a position at LCF. All applicants will be made aware that providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected, and referral to the police and/or DBS.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

A job description is a key document in the recruitment process and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the recruitment process. It will clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job role.

The person specification is of equal importance and informs the selection decision. It details the skills, experience, abilities and expertise that are required to do the job. The person specification will include a specific reference to suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults.

REFERENCES

References for shortlisted applicants will be sent for immediately after short listing. The only exception is where an applicant has indicated on their application form that they do not wish their current employer to be contacted at this stage. In such cases, this reference will be taken up immediately after interview.

All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two references which are considered satisfactory by the Farm. One of the references must be from the applicant's current or



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most recent employer. The referees should not be a relative. References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee, and their purpose is to provide objective, factual information to support appointment decisions.

REFERENCES (Cont..)

All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the job for which they have applied and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. Referees will also be asked to confirm that the applicant has not been radicalised so that they do not support terrorism or any form of "extremism".

Please note that no questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer of employment being made.

Any discrepancies or anomalies will be followed up. Direct contact by correspondence will be undertaken with each referee to verify the reference.

Larkrise Community Farm does not accept open references, testimonials or references from relatives.

INTERVIEWS

There will be a face-to-face interview, and a minimum of two interviewers will see the applicants for the vacant position. The interview process will explore the applicant's ability to carry out the job description and meet the person specification. It will enable the panel to explore any anomalies or gaps that have been identified to satisfy themselves that the chosen applicant can meet the safeguarding criteria (in line with Safer Recruitment Training).

Any information regarding past disciplinary action or allegations, cautions or convictions will be discussed and considered in the circumstances of the individual case during the interview process if it has been disclosed on the application form.

At least one member of any interviewing panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training or refresher training as applicable. Short listed candidates will undergo an online search as part of LFC's due diligence on the shortlisted candidates



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All applicants who are invited for an interview will be required to bring evidence of their identity, address and qualifications. Original documents will only be accepted, and photocopies will be taken. Unsuccessful applicant documents will be destroyed six months after the recruitment programme.



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OFFER OF APPOINTMENT AND NEW EMPLOYEE PROCESS

LCF carries out a number of pre-employment checks in respect of all prospective employees.

If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the **formal interview**, any such offer will be conditional on the following:

- the agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of a contract incorporating LCF's standard terms and conditions of employment;
- verification of the applicant's identity;
- the receipt of two references one of which should be from the applicant's most recent employer that LCF considers being satisfactory;
- LCF is satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of any proceedings before a professional conduct panel or equivalent body in the UK or any other country for any reason which prevents the applicant working at the Farm;
- alternatively, information which, in the LCF's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the Farm;
- where the position amounts to "regulated activity" the receipt of an enhanced disclosure from the DBS which LCF considers to be satisfactory;
- where the position amounts to "regulated activity" confirmation that the applicant is not named on the Children's Barred List*;
- confirmation that the applicant is not subject to a direction under section 79 of the Charities Act 2016 which prohibits, disqualifies or restricts them from working at a charity, taking part in the management of an independent charity;
- verification of the applicant's fitness for the role; verification of the applicant's right to work in the UK;
- any further checks which are necessary as a result of the applicant having lived or worked outside of the UK; and
- verification of professional qualifications which LCF deems a requirement for the post, or which the applicant otherwise cites in support of their application (where they have not been previously verified).

*LCF is not permitted to check the Children's Barred List unless an individual will be engaging in "regulated activity". LCF is required to carry out an enhanced DBS check under a 'Child and Adult Workforce' type for all staff, volunteers and Trustees who will be engaging in regulated activity. However, LCF can also carry out an enhanced DBS check on a person who would be carrying out



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regulated activity but for the fact that they do not carry out their duties frequently enough i.e. roles which would amount to regulated activity if carried out more frequently.

OFFER OF APPOINTMENT AND NEW EMPLOYEE PROCESS Cont..

Whether a position amounts to "regulated activity" must, therefore, be considered by Larkrise Community Farm in order to decide which checks are appropriate. It is however likely that in nearly all cases LCF will be able to carry out an enhanced DBS check and a Children's Barred List check.

A personal file checklist will be used to track and audit paperwork obtained in accordance with Safer Recruitment Training. The checklist will be retained on personal files.

DBS CERTIFICATES

It is LCF's policy that the DBS disclosure (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks of the Child and Adult Workforce type **must be** obtained before the commencement of employment in respect of all new employee positions at LCF which amount to "regulated activity" as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended). The purpose of carrying out an Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity is to identify whether an applicant is barred from working with children by inclusion on the Vetting and Barring Lists (formerly list 99) and to obtain other relevant suitability information.

Candidates will be advised about this during interview and that the process will involve checking any previous convictions. Unless they already have a valid Enhanced DBS certificate the DBS process will be administered via Disclosure Services Ltd.

Successful candidates must also be registered with the Update Service on: 'www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service'. This is a yearly subscription that must be carried out within 30 days of the issue date on the certificate and the successful candidate will agree to LCF checking this service as necessary.

The DBS no longer issue Disclosure Certificates to employers; therefore employees/applicants are required to bring their original Certificate to the Office Administrator within seven days of issue, or before they commence work or any project involving regulated activity.

It is LCF's policy to re-check employee's DBS Certificates every year and in addition, any employee that takes leave for more than three months (i.e., maternity leave, career break, etc) must be rechecked before they return back to work.

Members of staff at LCF are aware of their obligation to inform the Board of Trustees and Farm Management of any cautions or convictions that arise between these checks taking place.



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DBS checks will still be requested for applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence.



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DEALING WITH CONVICTIONS

Larkrise Community Farm operates a formal procedure if a DBS Certificate is returned with details of convictions. Consideration will be given to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and also:

- the nature, seriousness and relevance of the offence;
- how long ago the offence occurred;
- one-off or history of offences;
- changes in circumstances,
- decriminalisation and remorse.

A formal meeting will take place face-to-face to establish the facts with the Board of Trustees and Farm Management. A decision will be made following this meeting. If that relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is volunteered by an applicant during the recruitment process or obtained through a disclosure check, the Board of Trustees and Farm Management will evaluate all of the risk factors above before a position is offered or confirmed.

If an applicant wishes to dispute any information contained in a disclosure, they may do so by contacting the DBS. In cases where the applicant would otherwise be offered a position were it not for the disputed information, LCF may, where practicable and at its discretion, defer a final decision about the appointment until the applicant has had a reasonable opportunity to challenge the disclosure information.

THE REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS ACT 1974

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply to positions which involve working with, or having access to, children or vulnerable adults. Therefore, any convictions and cautions that would normally be considered 'SPENT' **must be** declared when applying for any position at Larkrise Community Farm.

PROOF OF IDENTITY, RIGHT TO WORK IN THE UK, VERIFICATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND/OR PROFESSIONAL STATUS

All applicants invited to attend an interview at LCF will be required to bring their identification documentation such as passport, birth certificate, driving licence, etc. with them as proof of identity/eligibility to work in the UK in accordance with those set out in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and DBS identity checking guidelines. All documents provided must be legible and in good condition. LCF does not discriminate on the grounds of age, ethnicity, gender or religion.



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Where an applicant claims to have changed their name by deed poll or any other means (e.g. marriage, adoption, statutory declaration) they will be required to provide documentary evidence of the change.

MEDICAL FITNESS

LCF is required to verify the medical fitness of anyone to be appointed to a post at the Farm, **after** an offer of employment has been made but **before** the appointment can be confirmed.

All applicants are requested to complete a medical questionnaire and where appropriate a doctor's medical report may be required. This information will be reviewed against the Job Description and the Person Specification for the particular role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements of the role. LCF is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010. No job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, obtaining medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.

OVERSEAS CHECKS

Applicants who have lived/travelled abroad for more than three months within the previous year will need to obtain criminal records check from the relevant country. The applicant will not be permitted to commence work until the overseas information has been received and is considered satisfactory by Larkrise Community Farm.

INDUCTION PROGRAMME

All new employees will be given an induction programme which will clearly identify LCF's Policies and procedures, including all relevant the Child/Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding and Protection policies. and make clear the expectations which will govern how staff carry out their roles and responsibilities.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

In addition to the various staff records kept at LCF and on individual personnel files, a record of recruitment and vetting checks is kept. This is kept up-to-date and retained by the Administration Officer (for staff and farm volunteers) and will contain details of the following: -

- all employees who are employed to work at LCF;
- all others who have been chosen by LCF to work in regular contact with our students.



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This will cover volunteers, Trustees, and people brought in to provide employment contracted services.



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RECORD RETENTION/DATA PROTECTION

LCF is legally required to undertake the above pre-employment checks. Therefore, if an applicant is successful in their application, LCF will retain on their personnel file any relevant information provided as part of the application process. This will include copies of documents used to verify identity, right to work in the UK, medical fitness and qualifications. Medical information may be used to help LCF to discharge its obligations as an employer e.g. so that the Farm may consider reasonable adjustments if an employee suffers from a disability or to assist with any other workplace issue.

This documentation will be retained by LCF for the duration of the successful applicant's employment at the Farm. All information retained on employees is kept centrally in the Finance Office, in a lockable and secure cabinet. The same policy applies to any suitable information obtained about volunteers involved with the Farm's activities.

Larkrise Community Farm will retain all interview notes on all unsuccessful applicants for a period of 6 months, after which time the notes will be confidentially destroyed (i.e. shredded). The six-month retention period is in accordance with the GDPR.

ONGOING EMPLOYMENT

Larkrise Community Farm recognises that safer recruitment and selection is not just about the start of employment but should be part of a larger policy framework for all staff.

LCF will, therefore, provide ongoing training and support for all staff, as identified through six monthly check in conversations which focus on performance and skill development, in addition to a review of safeguarding issues/practice.

Where concerns are raised in relation to an individual's behaviour that gives rise to safeguarding concerns, this is channelled appropriately through the Allegation Management procedures.

LEAVING EMPLOYMENT AT LARKRISE COMMUNITY FARM

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely, there will be occasions when allegations of serious misconduct or abuse against children or vulnerable adults are raised. This policy is primarily concerned with the promotion of safer recruitment and details the pre-employment checks that will be undertaken prior to employment being confirmed. While these are pre-employment checks LCF also has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS in circumstances where an individual:

- has applied for a position at LCF despite being barred from working with children and vulnerable adults;
- or has been removed by LCF from working in regulated activity (whether paid or unpaid);



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- or has resigned prior to being removed, because they have harmed, or pose a risk of harm to, a child or vulnerable adult.

CONTRACTORS AND AGENCY STAFF

Contractors engaged by LCF on an adhoc basis will never be left alone with LCF clients. All LCF staff will be notified in advance if contractors are expected on the premises.

Agencies who supply staff to LCF must also complete the pre-employment checks, which LCF would otherwise complete for its staff. Again, LCF requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before an individual can commence work at the Farm.

If Larkrise Community Farm employs contractors in a regulated activity, they will be required to have an enhanced DBS check under a 'Child and Adult Workforce' type will before they can commence work at the Farm.

VOLUNTEERS

LCF will request an enhanced DBS check under a 'Child and Adult Workforce' type and Children's Barred List information for all volunteers undertaking regulated activity with children at or on behalf of LCF (the definition of regulated activity set out above will be applied to all volunteers). Under **no** circumstances will LCF allow an unchecked volunteer to have unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults.

It is LCF's policy that a new DBS certificate is required for volunteers who will engage in regulated activity but who have not been involved in any activities with the Farm for one year or more. Volunteers who have taken a break will be asked to declare any new convictions since their last DBS check within the one year period.

In addition, LCF will seek to obtain such further suitability information about a volunteer as it considers appropriate in the circumstances. This may include (but is not limited to) the following:

- formal or informal information provided by staff and other volunteers;
- two character references, ideally one from the volunteer's most recent place of work and one other relevant source;
- an informal safer recruitment interview;
- online background checks.

SAFEGUARDING

We believe that our students have the right to work in a supportive, caring and safe environment which includes the right to protection from all types of abuse; where staff are vigilant for signs of any child or adult in distress and are confident about applying the processes to avert and alleviate any such problems.

If any behaviour is a concern in relation to safeguarding, LCF procedures and processes will always be followed, in accordance with our Child Protection/Safeguarding policies.



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Any concerns will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Lucy Allen, and reported to the Farm Management and Board of Trustees. Our Safeguarding Trustee is Jane Wallis.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Board of Trustees will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is monitored, evaluated and reviewed. This will be undertaken through formal annual audits of all Policies and Procedures.