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High School

## **ONLINE SEARCHES OF SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES POLICY**

<b>Governance</b>	Governing Body
<b>Policy Officer</b>	Deputy Headteacher
<b>Review Date</b>	November 2022
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Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) now recommends you consider doing an online search of shortlisted candidates. Find out how to search fairly and effectively, and download our form to record an online search.

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### 1.What are the requirements as specified by KCSIE 2022?

#### Safeguarding

[Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\)](#) states that schools “should consider” carrying out an online search as part of due diligence on shortlisted candidates (see paragraph 220). This is a new addition to the legislation that will apply from September 2022.

Although GSHS is **not required** to carry out an online search by KCSIE, when we go through the recruitment process, we give consideration as to whether or not it would be useful to identify any safeguarding or suitability issues. However, GSHS recognises that an online search is not a replacement or an alternative for other recruitment checks.

#### Data protection

Data protection law applies to online searches the same as any other part of the application process.

Searching for, and collecting information about a candidate counts as a data processing activity. GSHS will therefore comply with the 7 principles of data processing set out under the [UK GDPR](#). Every piece of personal data that we hold will be:

- Processed lawfully, fairly and transparently
- Collected for specific, explicit and legitimate purposes
- Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary to achieve your purpose with it
- Accurate and kept up to date
- Processed and held securely
- Only retained for as long as is necessary to achieve your purpose with it

The 7th principle is that:

- GSHS is responsible for complying with these principles, and must be able to show that it is complying

GSHS also recognises the need to meet at least 1 of the 6 [lawful bases for processing personal data](#).

The most suitable basis for carrying out an online search is likely to be **public task**, because we are processing the data to carry out our duty of safeguarding and safer recruitment, which is in the public interest.

## **Equality and fair hiring practices**

The [2010 Equality Act protects](#) people from discrimination in the hiring process. GSHS recognises that employers must not discriminate between candidates on the basis of the [9 protected characteristics](#).

GSHS understands that conducting an online search can increase the risk of being accused of bias in the hiring process, because we could find out this additional personal information and has produced a process below to ensure our online searches fair and consistent for all shortlisted candidates.

## **2. Conducting a search**

### **2.1 Define the scope of the search**

In agreement with Governors, GSHS has decided in advance where we will look, what we will search for, and what we are looking for which is any information that may suggest the shortlisted candidate:

- Is unqualified for the role
- Poses a potential safeguarding risk
- Risks damaging the reputation of your school or trust

Please see template for further details.

### **2.2 Inform applicants they'll be subject to an online search if shortlisted**

We will ensure that we inform applicants that the search isn't part of the [shortlisting process](#) itself, and that they'll have a chance to address any issues of concern that come up during the search at interview. This statement will be included in an email to candidates confirming that you've received their application.

### **2.3 Have a different member of staff carry out the searches**

GSHS recognises that finding out personal information about a candidate can lead to unconscious bias. Therefore the person doing the searches will not have any involvement in conducting interviews or making decisions about recruitment.

Searchers must not share any irrelevant personal information from the search with the interviewers. They should only share information that suggests the candidate:

- Is unqualified for the role

- Poses a potential safeguarding risk
- Risks damaging the reputation of your school or trust

This one step won't remove unconscious bias from your recruitment process, but it's a good step to take to prevent bias stemming from online searches. For more support on how to reduce bias throughout your recruitment process, take a look at another of our [articles](#).

## **2.4 Make a record of the search**

The searcher will complete the template for the online search record which will help them record:

- Who carried out the search
- Which search terms were used and which sites were looked at
- The date and time of the search
- Details of any concerns raised

It shouldn't include any irrelevant personal information.

## **2.5 Raise any concerns during the interview**

GSHS will always give the candidate the chance to comment on issues or incidents that arise from an online check.

## **3. What to look for**

GSHS recognises that online searches may reveal:

- A work history that doesn't match the CV and references provided (for example on LinkedIn)
- An education history that doesn't match the stated qualifications
- Attitudes that suggest the candidate is unsuitable for the role or risks damaging your school's reputation, for example posting pictures of/with students or expressing discriminatory opinions

However, GSHS will take a cautious approach and understands that the results of an online search may be misleading. We are aware that any information found may be:

- Out of date
- Out of context or untrue
- Relating to someone else, especially if the candidate has a common name or uses a pseudonym for social media

GSHS reserves the right to ask candidates about any issues of concern that come up in the search can avoid any confusion and could explain inaccuracies

#### **4. Being consistent when carrying out searches**

GSHS will ensure we conduct the same searches on every shortlisted candidate for a role. This is important because it will:

- Reduce any risk of being accused of bias
- Limit the amount of personal information we find
- Save time

Before beginning the search, we will follow the same list of where we will look for information and follow the same list as a guide for every shortlisted candidate.

It will cover:

- The websites we look at
- The exact search terms you'll use, for example, 'candidate's name' + 'current school/employer'

Our search record (linked to in section 2) lists the sites and terms we will use.

#### **Consistency is crucial for social media searches**

Social media profiles are most likely to contain irrelevant personal information, including protected characteristics, and risk accusations of bias in the hiring process.

GSHS will endeavour to take consistent approach to social media through

- Searching for candidates on the same websites
- Only looking at public profiles - accounts that anyone can view - and never trying to connect with candidates in order to access restricted profiles
- A limit on the number of profiles you'll look at to try and find the correct candidate
- A consistent response to any internet filtering system your school has. For example, if Facebook is blocked on the school network, we should not look at Facebook profiles for any candidates

## Online search record

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### How to use this form

- Fill in the 'search parameters' column. Adapt the example parameters to your needs
- Once you've adapted the form to suit your needs, make a separate copy for each candidate and give these to the staff member who will carry out the searches. They should not be involved in carrying out interviews or making recruitment decisions
- Have the staff member carry out the searches as directed by the search parameters
- Ask them to return the forms back to you before you conduct interviews. Raise any concerns with the candidates

Candidate name:

Role shortlisted for:

Searcher name:

Date and time of online search:

SEARCH PARAMETERS	CONCERNS RAISED
<p>Google search: The following terms, looking at the first page of results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Candidate name'</li><li>• 'Candidate name' + 'current school/employment'</li><li>• 'Candidate name' + 'previous school/employment'</li><li>• 'Candidate name' + 'educational institution'</li><li>• 'Candidate name' + 'job title'</li></ul> <p>Websites: The candidate's name was typed into the search function of the following websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LinkedIn</li></ul>	<p>Only record information that suggests the candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is unqualified for the role</li><li>• Poses a potential safeguarding risk</li><li>• Risks damaging the reputation of your school/trust</li></ul> <p><b>Don't</b> include any irrelevant personal information.</p>

SEARCH PARAMETERS	CONCERNS RAISED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Twitter (checked the top 10 results)</li><li>• Facebook (checked the top 10 results)</li><li>• Their current school's website</li></ul>	