

SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

Switch Rugby Ltd (trading as Switch Rugby and Switch Mentoring)

Date of this version	Review cycle	Reviewed / approved by	Next review date
10/03/2023	Annual	Matt Sheppard	10/03/2024
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1** Switch Rugby Ltd (trading as Switch Rugby and Switch Mentoring) ('Switch') applies this policy to every appointment so that only people who are suitable to work with children are appointed, and those who are not are deterred and rejected.
- 1.2** Every role at Switch involves regulated activity with children. Coaches and mentors work with children frequently, often one-to-one, off school premises and in their own vehicles. Following the Crime and Policing Act 2026 there is no 'supervised' exemption from regulated activity. No one may have contact with children on behalf of Switch until the checks in this policy are complete and recorded.
- 1.3** All Switch staff are directly employed. This policy applies to every employee, and anyone else who works with children on Switch's behalf (for example a student on placement), who is checked to the same standard before they work with children for Switch.
- 1.4** This policy follows Part three of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE). Switch is not a school, but every school that commissions Switch relies on our written assurance that we apply equivalent checks, and our Statement of Assurance and Mentoring Service Level Agreement 2026-27 promise this.
- 1.5** The Director, Matt Sheppard, is responsible for this policy and for the central record in section 7. Recruitment decisions are made by a panel of the Director and the Head of Rugby, Gary Townsend. The Director holds, or will complete by 31 December 2026, accredited safer recruitment training, and at least one member of every shortlisting and interview panel holds it.

2. PLANNING AND ADVERTISING

- 2.1** Before a role is advertised the Director agrees a job description and person specification that set out the duties, the contact the role has with children, and the qualifications, experience and qualities required, including the safeguarding responsibilities of the post.
- 2.2** Every advertisement and application pack states that:
 - Switch is committed to safeguarding children and expects all staff to share that commitment;
 - the post involves regulated activity with children and is subject to an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information, references, an online search and the other checks in section 6;
 - **it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children;** and

- Switch is an equal opportunities employer.
- 2.3 Applicants complete Switch's application form. CVs are not accepted in place of the form. The form requires a full employment history since leaving school, with dates and explanations for any gaps, details of relevant qualifications, two referees as described in section 4, and a signed declaration that the information given is true. Incomplete forms are not shortlisted.
- 2.4 The application pack includes, or links to, the Safeguarding Policy and the statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders below.

Recruitment of ex-offenders

- 2.5 Switch uses criminal record information fairly and only to assess suitability for work with children. Having a criminal record does not automatically bar anyone from working for Switch.
- 2.6 All Switch roles are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975. Applicants must therefore declare all convictions and cautions, including those that would otherwise be spent, except those that are protected under the DBS filtering rules and do not appear on a certificate. Applicants are not asked about, and Switch does not take into account, protected cautions or convictions.
- 2.7 Self-declared information (section 3) and any content on a DBS certificate is discussed openly with the candidate at interview or before appointment. Switch considers the nature and seriousness of the offence, how long ago it happened, the person's age at the time, whether there is a pattern, whether it is relevant to working with children, and what has changed since. The decision and its reasons are recorded and kept in line with section 11.
- 2.8 Anyone who is barred from working with children, or who fails to disclose information they were required to disclose, will not be appointed, and any appointment already made will be withdrawn. Switch will report a barred applicant to the DBS and, where appropriate, the police.

3. SHORTLISTING

- 3.1 At least two people, one of whom holds safer recruitment training, shortlist against the person specification. They look for gaps in employment, repeated changes of job, moves away from work with children without explanation, and any inconsistencies. Anything found is noted and put to the candidate at interview.
- 3.2 Shortlisted candidates, and only shortlisted candidates, are asked to complete a self-declaration of any criminal record or other information that may make them unsuitable to work with children, before the interview. The self-declaration is not requested on the application form and is not used to decide who is shortlisted. Its purpose is to allow relevant information to be discussed at interview before the DBS certificate arrives.
- 3.3 The self-declaration asks whether the candidate has a criminal history, is included on the children's barred list, is prohibited from teaching or from managing an independent school, has been disqualified from working with children in any other way, or is subject to any current investigation or sanction by an employer, regulator or governing body.
- 3.4 Switch carries out an online search of publicly available information about each shortlisted candidate, using a general search engine and public social media, and records what was searched and found. Candidates are told in the invitation to interview that this will happen. Anything relevant is explored with the candidate at interview. Information about protected characteristics is not recorded or used.

4. REFERENCES

- 4.1** Two written references are required for every appointment. One must be from the candidate's current or most recent employer. Where the candidate has worked with children elsewhere, the other must be from the most recent employer where they did so. If the candidate has never worked, references come from a school, college or other person who can comment on suitability, not a relative.
- 4.2** References are requested before interview wherever possible, so that anything raised can be discussed with the referee and the candidate, and are always obtained and checked before an appointment is confirmed. Candidates are told on the application form that this is Switch's practice.
- 4.3** Switch:
- requests references directly from the referee, on Switch's reference form, and never accepts references or testimonials supplied by the candidate;
 - does not accept open references ('to whom it may concern');
 - checks that a reference comes from a legitimate source by confirming it by telephone with the referee through the employer's published switchboard or main number, and by checking that an emailed reference comes from the organisation's own domain;
 - requires the reference to be completed by a senior person with authority to speak for the employer, and where the referee is a school, countersigned by the headteacher or a senior leader where possible; and
 - compares each reference with the application form and puts any discrepancy to the referee and the candidate. A written note is kept of every such conversation.
- 4.4** Referees are always asked specific questions about:
- the candidate's suitability to work with children;
 - whether the referee has any safeguarding concerns about the candidate;
 - any substantiated safeguarding allegations or concerns about the candidate that met the harm threshold (facts, not opinions);
 - any disciplinary action, including time-expired warnings, relating to the safety or welfare of children;
 - the candidate's reason for leaving; and
 - the candidate's performance and conduct in the post.
- 4.5** Where necessary Switch contacts previous employers not named as referees to clarify anomalies, and records what was said.

5. INTERVIEW

- 5.1** Every candidate is interviewed face to face by at least two people, one of whom holds safer recruitment training. The panel is normally the Director and the Head of Rugby. Candidates are told in advance what the selection process involves and asked whether they need any adjustments.
- 5.2** All candidates are asked the same core questions, based on the person specification. The interview always includes:
- scenario and values-based questions that test the candidate's attitude to children, understanding of boundaries and safeguarding, and how they would respond to a disclosure, a request from a young person to keep something secret, or being alone with a young person in a car or venue;

- their motivation for working with children;
- exploration of any gaps or discrepancies in the application, the references or the online search; and
- discussion of anything disclosed on the self-declaration.

5.3 At interview the candidate brings, and the panel sees and copies, original documents proving identity (see section 6), and original certificates for the qualifications claimed. If the application was signed electronically the candidate signs a hard copy at interview.

5.4 The panel records its assessment of each candidate against the person specification and the reasons for its decision.

6. PRE-APPOINTMENT CHECKS

6.1 Every offer of appointment is conditional on satisfactory completion of the checks below. The Director completes and records each check on the central record (section 7) before the person works with children.

No one has contact with a child on behalf of Switch until the Director has seen their enhanced DBS certificate with children's barred list information and all other checks in this table are complete and recorded. Switch does not use the separate barred list check to allow an earlier start.

Check	What Switch does	When
Identity	Original photo ID, proof of current address and, where available, birth certificate seen and copied, following DBS identity checking guidelines. Alert to changes of name; all names used are checked.	Interview
Right to work in the UK	Original documents or Home Office share code checked and copied.	Before appointment
Enhanced DBS with children's barred list	Applied for through Switch. The original certificate is seen by the Director; number, date and outcome recorded. Any content is discussed with the candidate and a risk assessment recorded before any decision. Switch does not require registration with the DBS Update Service.	Before any contact with children
Overseas checks	Where the person has lived or worked outside the UK in the last 10 years, a criminal record check or certificate of good conduct from each country, or where that cannot be obtained, alternative evidence and a recorded risk assessment.	Before appointment
Qualifications	Original certificates seen for coaching qualifications (England Rugby awards where relevant), first aid, safeguarding and any other qualification required by the person specification.	Interview / before appointment
References	Two references obtained, verified and compared with the application as in section 4.	Before interview where possible; always before appointment
Online search	Carried out and recorded as in section 3.	Shortlisting
Medical fitness	Signed declaration that the person is physically and mentally fit to carry out the role, with any adjustments needed discussed.	Before appointment
Driver documents	For anyone who will transport young people: driving licence and DVLA share code, a copy of the insurance certificate and schedule showing business use added, MOT, vehicle tax and the signed driver declaration in the Vehicle Risk Assessment.	Before transporting any young person

- 6.2** Switch does not run provision for children under eight, so the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018 do not apply.
- 6.3** Anyone who is not an employee (for example a student on placement) undergoes all of the checks above before working with children for Switch. Switch does not accept a DBS certificate obtained by another organisation unless the original is seen, it includes children's barred list information, it was issued for the same type of work, and the person confirms in writing that nothing has changed since.

7. SINGLE CENTRAL RECORD

- 7.1** Switch keeps a single central record of everyone who works with children on its behalf. The record shows, for each person, the date each check was completed and by whom, and whether it was satisfactory. It records:
- full name, role and start date;
 - identity check;
 - right to work check;
 - enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information: certificate number, issue date and outcome;
 - overseas checks where applicable;
 - two references received and verified;
 - online search completed;
 - qualifications verified (coaching, first aid, safeguarding);
 - medical fitness declaration;
 - safeguarding training, Prevent awareness training and KCSIE Part one confirmation, with dates;
 - Behaviour Code for Adults signed, with date;
 - annual self-declaration received, with date;
 - date of the next DBS re-check; and
 - for drivers: licence, insurance, MOT and tax dates and the date of the last annual document check.
- 7.2** The central record is kept electronically in Switch's Google Workspace, with access limited to the Director and the Deputy DSL. DBS certificates themselves are not kept on it (see section 11).
- 7.3** An extract from the central record for the staff working with a particular school is issued with the Statement of Assurance at the start of each academic year, and on request, and Switch confirms in its Statement of Assurance that all staff placed with the school have been checked in accordance with this policy. Switch notifies the school of any change of staff working with its pupils.

8. INDUCTION

- 8.1** Before working with children, and in any case within the first two weeks, every new starter completes an induction with the Director covering:
- the Safeguarding Policy, including how to recognise and report a concern, and the Child Protection Incident Record;
 - the Behaviour Code for Adults, which they sign;
 - the LADO Procedures and the low-level concerns process, including self-referral;

- the Whistleblowing Policy;
- the Data Protection and Data Security Policy and the rules on personal devices, phones, messaging and images;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 Part one, read and confirmed in writing;
- the Vehicle Risk Assessment and the driver declaration, for anyone who will transport young people, and the Off-Site Venue Risk Assessment;
- safeguarding training and Prevent awareness training, completed before any work with children;
- the Health and Safety Policy, first aid arrangements and accident reporting; and
- shadowing an experienced coach or mentor on at least one session before delivering alone.

8.2 Completion of each induction item is recorded on the central record.

9. PROBATION

- 9.1** All new employees serve a probationary period of six months, which may be extended in writing where more time is needed to assess suitability. Anyone else working with children on Switch's behalf is reviewed at the same points.
- 9.2** Probation is reviewed by the Director part way through and at the end of the period. Each review includes a safeguarding practice review: a discussion of how the person has handled safeguarding, boundaries and record-keeping; a check of their Session Logs; and at least one observed session. Any concern about the person's suitability to work with children is dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy or the LADO Procedures, not left to the end of probation.
- 9.3** Employment is confirmed in writing at the end of probation.

10. ONGOING SUITABILITY

- 10.1** Every member of staff signs an annual self-declaration confirming whether they have received any conviction, caution, reprimand or warning; are subject to any police, social care or regulatory investigation; have had any restriction placed on their contact with children; or have had any other change in circumstances relevant to their suitability to work with children.
- 10.2** It is a condition of every contract, and of every placement agreement, that the person tells the Director immediately, and before their next session, if any of the matters in 10.1 arise. Failure to do so is gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy.
- 10.3** Enhanced DBS checks with children's barred list information are renewed every three years. Switch does not require staff to register with the DBS Update Service.
- 10.4** New checks are carried out, as if the person were a new starter, where there has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more, or where a concern arises about a person's suitability to work with children.
- 10.5** Driver documents listed in section 6 are checked annually and whenever the person changes vehicle or insurer, and the check is recorded on the central record. Drivers tell the Director of any change to their licence, insurance, MOT, vehicle or health that affects driving immediately, and in any case before their next journey with a young person. Anyone whose documents lapse stops transporting young people until they are back in order.
- 10.6** Every member of staff completes safeguarding training annually, keeps their first aid qualification in date, re-reads KCSIE Part one annually and confirms this in writing. The Director's DSL training is refreshed at least every two years; the current refresher is booked for autumn 2026. The Deputy DSL will complete DSL training by 31 December 2026.

11. RECORDS AND RETENTION

- 11.1** Recruitment records for unsuccessful candidates (application forms, self-declarations, interview notes, references and online search notes) are kept for six months after the appointment decision and then securely destroyed.
- 11.2** Records for successful candidates are kept on their personnel file for six years after employment ends.
- 11.3** DBS certificate content is not retained. The certificate number, issue date and outcome are recorded on the central record. Where a certificate has to be held for a decision or a dispute it is stored securely and destroyed within six months, in line with the DBS code of practice.
- 11.4** All recruitment records are handled in line with the Data Protection and Data Security Policy. Access is limited to the Director and the Deputy DSL.

Approved by	Signature	Date
Matt Sheppard, Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead		1 September 2026