



Safer Recruitment Policy

1. Introduction

Actcessible is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and representative environment where all participants — especially children, young people, and adults at risk — are protected from harm. This policy outlines how we recruit safely and responsibly, in line with safeguarding legislation, our values of inclusion and dignity, and our commitment to accessibility and equal opportunities.

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, freelance creatives, and volunteers engaged by Actcessible.

2. Key Principles

- We ensure all individuals representing Actcessible are suitable for their roles and share our values of access, inclusion, and safeguarding.
- We use fair, transparent, and inclusive recruitment methods that reduce the risk of unsuitable individuals being engaged.
- Safer recruitment is an ongoing process and includes post-recruitment supervision, monitoring, and reflection.
- Feedback from beneficiaries and partner organisations is welcomed and contributes to performance review.
- We aim to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) (KCSIE), the Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015 (the Prevent Duty Guidance), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

3. Actcessible's Roles and Responsibilities

As a registered charity working with children, young people, and adults at risk, Actcessible has a legal and ethical duty to recruit safely and transparently. The Board of Trustees, Artistic Director, and designated staff members are jointly responsible for ensuring that this Safer Recruitment Policy is implemented in practice and regularly reviewed.

Specifically, Actcessible is responsible for:

- **Ensuring legal compliance**, including adherence to relevant safeguarding legislation, charity law, and guidance issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the Charity Commission, and other regulatory bodies.
- **Embedding safeguarding and equality into every stage** of recruitment, induction, and supervision processes.

- **Clearly defining roles**, responsibilities, and expectations in job descriptions and freelance briefs.
- **Ensuring all relevant positions undergo appropriate pre-engagement checks**, including enhanced DBS checks and reference verification.
- **Maintaining secure and confidential records** of recruitment activity, in line with data protection law and Actcessible's Data Protection Policy.
- **Providing safeguarding training** and access guidance to all new appointees before they begin work.
- **Monitoring and responding to concerns** relating to conduct, suitability, or safeguarding risks throughout the duration of any role.
- **Reviewing and updating this policy** annually or in response to changes in legislation or best practice guidance.

The charity's leadership team and Board of Trustees are committed to upholding a culture of safety, inclusion, and integrity in all recruitment and engagement activities.

3. Recruitment Procedures

3.1 Advertising

Actcessible is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, safeguarding, and inclusive practice from the very first point of contact. All job adverts, freelance briefs, and volunteer recruitment calls will:

- **Clearly state** our commitment to safeguarding and safer recruitment
- **Encourage applications** from underrepresented groups, including disabled, Deaf, neurodivergent, and global majority applicants
- **Highlight Actcessible's values** of access, inclusion, safety, and dignity
- **Include accessibility information**, including how to request adjustments to the recruitment process
- **State that all roles working with children or adults at risk require an enhanced DBS check** and adherence to our safeguarding procedures
- Be **published in inclusive and widely accessible formats**, and wherever possible, shared across a range of platforms and networks that reach diverse audiences (e.g. Disability Arts Online, Youth Arts Network, Theatre Digs Booker, and inclusive sector-specific mailing lists)
- **Avoid unnecessary barriers**, such as academic requirements not essential to the role, and use plain English to ensure the advert is understandable to a wide audience
- Ensure that all applicants are made aware that **references and safeguarding checks are standard practice**, and that Actcessible may request further information where safeguarding concerns arise

All recruitment materials will be reviewed by the Artistic Director or a designated trustee before publication to ensure they uphold Actcessible's values and legal duties.

3.2 Job Descriptions and Specifications

Actcessible ensures that every role — whether employed, voluntary, freelance, or governance-based — is clearly defined to promote safeguarding, equality of opportunity, and accessibility from the outset.

All roles will be accompanied by either a **job description** (for staff, volunteers, or trustees) or a **role specification/brief** (for freelance creative positions). These documents outline the expectations, responsibilities, and safeguarding requirements relevant to the role.

For Administrative, Governance, and Volunteer Roles:

Each job description will:

- Clearly outline the **main duties and responsibilities**
- Specify whether the role involves **regulated activity** or access to children, young people, or adults at risk
- Indicate whether an **enhanced DBS check is required**
- Include a description of the role's **safeguarding responsibilities**
- Define **reporting lines or supervision structure**
- Reflect Actcessible's commitment to **inclusion, dignity, and access**
- Ensure clarity regarding **time commitment**, location, and expectations

Each accompanying person specification will:

- Clearly distinguish **essential** and **desirable** criteria
- Focus on relevant experience and values, particularly around safeguarding, communication, and inclusion
- Avoid unnecessary academic or professional requirements
- Use **inclusive, jargon-free language**
- State that **reasonable adjustments** are available during recruitment and onboarding

For Freelance Creative Roles (e.g. Actors, Directors, Workshop Leaders):

Given the short-term and project-based nature of these roles (e.g. 14-day performance residencies), Actcessible provides a **creative brief or freelance role specification** instead of a formal job description.

Each freelance brief will:

- Clearly explain the **purpose of the project**, intended audience, and creative context
- Outline the **key expectations**, including rehearsal participation, audience interaction, and commitment to inclusive practice
- Identify whether the work takes place in **regulated settings** such as schools or hospitals, and whether an **enhanced DBS** is required
- Clarify the **length and structure** of the engagement (e.g. 14 days including rehearsal and performance)
- Include expected professional standards aligned with Actcessible's **Safeguarding, Code of Conduct, and Confidentiality Policies**
- Offer flexible application options (e.g. video, BSL, voice recording) to reflect Actcessible's commitment to access

Each freelance specification will:

- Focus on **core values** such as safeguarding awareness, adaptability, inclusive communication, and audience sensitivity
- Avoid exclusive requirements not essential to performance quality (e.g. unnecessary academic credentials)
- Explain how any submitted materials (e.g. audition videos) will be handled securely and in compliance with the Data Protection Policy
- Offer the opportunity for **reasonable adjustments** at every stage of the process

3.3 References

Actcessible recognises that requesting references is an essential part of safer recruitment, especially for any role involving children, young people, or adults at risk. However, we also recognise the need to apply these processes proportionately, depending on the type and duration of the role.

For Staff, Trustees, Volunteers, and Freelancers Working in Ongoing or Unsupervised Roles:

- A **minimum of two references** will be requested.
- Referees should be able to comment on the applicant's **character, conduct, and suitability to work with vulnerable people**.
- At least one reference should be from a **recent line manager, tutor, or supervisor** in a relevant setting.
- References **must not come from family members or close personal friends**.
- References will be:
 - Requested in writing
 - **Followed up by phone** where safeguarding relevance is high
 - **Checked for discrepancies**, vague responses, or any cause for concern
- No individual will begin **unsupervised work** or be deployed in a regulated activity without two satisfactory references.
- If references raise concerns, the matter will be discussed with the DSL and may result in the withdrawal of the offer.

For Freelance Creative Practitioners (e.g. Actors) Engaged for Short-Term or Supervised Work:

For one-off, day-based, or fully supervised engagements (e.g. an actor delivering a single in-school performance alongside a staff member):

- At least **one reference** will be requested where time permits.
- Where actors have an **up-to-date enhanced DBS**, and are **fully supervised throughout** the engagement, Actcessible may use a combination of:
 - Verified DBS and ID check
 - Professional website, portfolio, or recent testimonial
 - A written declaration of suitability
- However, **if a creative freelancer is working unsupervised** or in a regulated activity setting, **two references are mandatory** regardless of engagement length.

In all cases:

- **Family references will not be accepted** unless explicitly agreed by the Artistic Director or Chair of Trustees with documented justification.
- All references will be stored securely and handled in line with the **Data Protection Policy**.
- The **safeguarding needs of the project and participants take precedence**, and Actcessible reserves the right to request further information or decline an engagement if references are unavailable or concerning.

3.4 Auditions, Interviews, and Applicant Review

Actcessible is committed to a safer recruitment process that balances legal safeguarding duties with our commitment to accessibility, creativity, and inclusion. We recognise that different roles require different approaches, and we have designed our procedures accordingly.

Freelance Creative Roles (e.g. Actors, Directors, Workshop Leaders)

Most freelance creative practitioners are recruited through a **submission-based process** rather than formal interviews. This approach reflects the nature of the creative sector and is designed to remove unnecessary barriers for disabled, Deaf, neurodivergent, and underrepresented applicants.

All submissions are reviewed by at least **two professionals**, typically:

- Robbie Scott Henry (Artistic Director)
- Liam Atton (Theatrical Advisor)

Applicants are invited to submit:

- A short **performance video, audition tape, or showreel**
- An **introduction** explaining their approach to inclusive practice, which may be submitted in a format that suits the applicant (e.g. BSL video, voice recording, subtitled video, or written statement)
- A brief **CV or summary of relevant experience**, if available

We assess:

- **Creative quality and communication style**
- **Ability to connect with children or inclusive audiences**
- **Understanding of safeguarding responsibilities**
- **Professionalism and alignment with Actcessible's values**

Applicants may **request a face-to-face or live video audition** if preferred. This is offered without penalty and may be especially useful for applicants with limited digital access or specific support needs.

Before any freelance engagement can begin, we will request:

- **Proof of identity and right to work in the UK**
- A valid **Enhanced DBS certificate** for roles involving children or adults at risk

Where the role includes **regulated activity** or unsupervised access to vulnerable people, Actcessible will also:

- Request at least **one reference**, ideally two
- Complete all required **safeguarding and eligibility checks**
- Ensure any creative work is carried out in **supervised and risk-assessed environments**

All submitted materials are treated as confidential, stored securely, and used solely for recruitment purposes, in line with Actcessible's **Data Protection Policy**.

Administrative, Governance, and Volunteer Roles

For all non-creative roles (e.g. trustees, administrators, safeguarding officers), Actcessible conducts a **structured interview** process that includes:

- A **face-to-face or online interview** with at least two panel members
- At least **one interviewer trained in Safer Recruitment**
- A review of the applicant's skills, values, safeguarding understanding, and willingness to work inclusively with vulnerable people

Applicants must bring:

- **Proof of identity and right to work in the UK**
- **Relevant qualifications or evidence of training**, where applicable

Interview questions are values-led and scenario-based, allowing applicants to demonstrate their approach to inclusion, professionalism, and safe working practices.

This two-pronged approach ensures that:

- Safer recruitment duties are consistently met
- Freelancers are not unfairly excluded by inflexible or inappropriate processes
- All candidates are treated equitably and respectfully, regardless of the role or format of their application

Actcessible maintains a commitment to ongoing improvement and welcomes feedback on its recruitment processes to ensure they remain fair, safe, and accessible to all.

3.5 Offer of Appointment and Pre-Engagement Checks

All offers of employment, freelance engagement, or voluntary appointment at Actcessible are **conditional** and subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-engagement checks. This procedure ensures compliance with safer recruitment best practice and relevant safeguarding legislation, including guidance from *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*.

Before an offer is confirmed, Actcessible will:

- **Verify the applicant's identity**, using original documentation. While **photo ID** (e.g. passport, driving licence) is preferred, Actcessible will accept a combination of **alternative official documents** where necessary, in line with DBS and Right to Work guidance. This may include:
 - Birth certificate
 - National Insurance letter
 - Benefits entitlement letter
 - Council tax or utility bill (dated within 3 months)
 - Marriage or civil partnership certificate
- Confirm the applicant's **right to work in the UK**, in accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- Ensure receipt of **at least two satisfactory references** for roles involving regulated activity or unsupervised access to vulnerable groups
- Conduct an **enhanced DBS check**, including a check of the Barred List where appropriate
- Review a completed **self-declaration form** disclosing any unspent criminal convictions
- Request **evidence of qualifications** where these are essential for the role
- Conduct appropriate **overseas criminal record checks** for any applicant who has lived or worked outside the UK for three months or more in the past five years

Finalising the Appointment

Once all checks have been completed and approved:

- A **mutually agreed start date** will be confirmed
- A **written contract or engagement agreement** will be issued and signed
- The individual will receive and confirm understanding of:
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Code of Conduct
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Whistleblowing Policy
 - Data Protection Policy

No individual may begin **unsupervised work, engage in regulated activity, or access confidential information** until all pre-appointment checks have been completed to the satisfaction of Actcessible.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

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

3.6 Dealing with Convictions

Actcessible is committed to safeguarding all children, young people, and adults at risk, while also promoting fairness and inclusion in recruitment. We do not automatically exclude

individuals with criminal records. Each disclosure is assessed on a case-by-case basis, in line with legal obligations and safeguarding best practice.

When a DBS Certificate Contains Convictions, Cautions, or Warnings:

If a returned DBS certificate includes any convictions, cautions, reprimands, or warnings (spent or unspent), the following procedure will be followed:

1. Initial Review

- The Artistic Director (**Robbie Scott Henry**) and Designated Safeguarding Lead (**Joanne Mary Henry**) will confidentially review the disclosure.
- They will assess whether the information requires further consideration before confirming or declining the appointment.

2. Confidential Discussion with the Applicant

- The applicant will be invited to a private, confidential meeting to discuss the content of the DBS disclosure.
- They will be given the opportunity to explain:
 - The **nature and circumstances** of the offence
 - The **date** of the offence
 - Any **rehabilitation** or restorative actions undertaken
 - Whether they believe the information is **relevant or not** to the role
- Notes will be taken and stored confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

3. Risk Assessment

- A written risk assessment will be completed by the **DSL (Joanne Mary Henry)** or, if unavailable, the Chair of Trustees.
- The DSL may consult with another trustee or seek external advice where appropriate.
- The risk assessment will consider:
 - Whether the conviction is relevant to the responsibilities of the role
 - Whether there is a potential or ongoing **risk to children or adults at risk**
 - The context, seriousness, and time elapsed since the offence

4. Decision and Outcome

- A final decision will be made jointly by the **Artistic Director (Robbie Scott Henry)** and the **DSL (Joanne Mary Henry)**, or escalated to the Chair of Trustees if required.
- The decision will fall into one of three categories:
 - Proceed without restriction
 - Proceed with supervision or role adjustments
 - Withdraw offer due to safeguarding concerns
- The applicant will be informed **in writing**, and the reasons for the decision will be explained unless this poses a safeguarding risk.

5. Applicant Disputes

- If the applicant **believes the information on the certificate is incorrect**, they should:
 - Notify Actcessible within **5 working days**
 - Contact the **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** via the official dispute process:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-application-form-guidance/disputing-a-dbs-certificate>

- Actcessible will pause the recruitment decision while the dispute is investigated, unless the nature of the offence presents an immediate safeguarding risk.

Key Principles:

- Having a criminal record will **not automatically prevent** someone from working or volunteering with Actcessible.
- The charity complies with the **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, DBS filtering rules, and the Data Protection Act 2018.**
- All disclosure information is handled with the **strictest confidentiality**, in line with our safeguarding and data protection policies.

Proof of identity and Verification of Qualifications and or professional status

All applicants invited to attend an interview at Actcessible will be required to bring their identification documentation such as passport, birth certificate, driving license etc. with them as proof of identity/eligibility to work in UK in accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and DBS identity checking guidelines. Actcessible does not discriminate on the grounds of age.

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

In addition, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have actually obtained any academic or vocational qualification legally required for the position and claimed in their application form.

Overseas Checks

Applicants who have lived/travelled abroad for more than 3 months 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 Actcessible.

3.8 Leaving Employment or Engagement

When a staff member, trustee, volunteer, or freelance practitioner leaves Actcessible, the charity will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are appropriately addressed and recorded.

General Procedure:

- Individuals are encouraged to provide **appropriate notice** where possible.
- On leaving, all personnel must:
 - Return any confidential materials or equipment

- Remove access to data or digital platforms
 - Complete an **exit discussion**, where appropriate, to support reflection and organisational learning
- Where relevant, Actcessible will review the individual's conduct, safeguarding record, and engagement outcomes to identify any actions needed.

4. Duty to Refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):

Actcessible has a **legal duty** to refer any individual (paid or unpaid) to the **Disclosure and Barring Service** where the following conditions are met:

- The individual has **harmed**, or poses a **risk of harm** to a child or vulnerable adult
AND
- The individual has been:
 - **Removed from regulated activity** (including roles involving access to children or vulnerable people)
 - Or **would have been removed** had they not resigned or left voluntarily
AND
- The person is believed to be **unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable groups**

This duty applies even if:

- No criminal conviction has been pursued
- The disciplinary or investigative process is incomplete due to resignation

The referral will be made by the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (Joanne Mary Henry)** or, where necessary, the **Chair of Trustees**, using the DBS referral form and in accordance with statutory guidance. Trustees will be briefed on all such referrals and appropriate records retained.

Full DBS referral guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-referrals-guidance>

4.1 All Roles

- Applicants must provide identification and disclose any unspent criminal convictions.
- All roles involving contact with children or adults at risk require an *up-to-date enhanced DBS check* before work begins.
- References will be requested and verified before confirming any engagement.
- A probationary or trial period may be applied where appropriate.

4.2 Freelance Creative Roles (Actors, Directors, Workshop Leaders)

Freelance creative professionals are essential to Actcessible's work in schools, hospitals, and community settings. While the recruitment process is designed to be accessible and flexible, **the same safeguarding checks required for Actcessible employees will also apply to freelance creatives, contractors, and agency staff.** These checks must be **fully completed and confirmed prior to any engagement or work beginning.**

Applicants will be invited to:

- Submit a **short video introduction or audition** in a format that suits them (e.g. BSL, recording, subtitled video), to demonstrate communication style, creative approach, and presence
- Provide further material or participate in a **follow-up audition** where appropriate, especially to accommodate access needs or assess suitability for a specific audience

Before any engagement begins, the following are mandatory:

- A valid, up-to-date **Enhanced DBS certificate**
- **Verification of identity and right to work in the UK**
- At least one (and where required, two) **professional references**, particularly for roles involving regulated activity or unsupervised access to children or adults at risk
- Confirmation of any **essential qualifications**, where applicable

Audition materials will be **securely stored** in accordance with Actcessible's Data Protection Policy and used strictly for recruitment purposes.

No freelance creative, contractor, or agency worker may begin any activity on behalf of Actcessible until these checks have been **verified and approved** by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Artistic Director.

4.3 Administrative and Governance Roles

- Applicants will be asked to submit a CV and cover letter.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview (in person or online).
- Trustees must also complete a Declaration of Eligibility and a Declaration of Interests form.

5. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- All individuals working in regulated activity must hold an **up-to-date enhanced DBS certificate** and a check of the Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity.
- No one may begin unsupervised work with children or adults at risk without this clearance.
- DBS certificates will be renewed at least every three years and in addition any employee who takes leave for more than three months (i.e. Maternity leave, career break, etc.) must be re-checked before they return back to work.
- Where appropriate, Actcessible staff may use the DBS Update Service for portability and real-time verification.
- Members of staff at Actcessible are aware of their obligation to inform the Board of Trustees of any cautions or convictions that arise between these checks taking place.
- DBS checks will still be requested for applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence.

5. Induction and Training

All new appointees must:

- Read and sign the Safeguarding, Whistleblowing, Confidentiality, Code of Conduct, and Data Protection policies.
- Complete a safeguarding induction session before starting their role.
- Undertake additional role-specific training as needed — such as disability awareness, Mental Health First Aid, BSL/Braille introduction, or inclusive communication strategies.

6. Monitoring and Supervision

- All staff, trustees, volunteers, and freelancers will be appropriately supervised and observed throughout their engagement.
- Any concerns regarding conduct, capability, or suitability will be addressed through safeguarding and complaints procedures.
- All contracts include clauses that permit immediate suspension or termination where safeguarding concerns arise.
- **Feedback will be actively sought from beneficiaries, audiences, partner settings, and other stakeholders** to evaluate performance and ensure a safe and meaningful experience for all.
- Performance assessments may include anonymised data such as attendance figures, feedback forms, and summary reports (e.g. “300 participants attended, 125 gave top ratings, 1 said they slept through it”).

7. Commitment to Equality and Accessibility

- Actcessible warmly encourages applications from individuals who are disabled, Deaf, neurodivergent, from global majority backgrounds, or otherwise underrepresented in theatre.
- We make **reasonable adjustments** throughout recruitment and induction processes to ensure fair access.
- Application and audition formats are adaptable to support access needs.

8. Data Protection

- All recruitment information, including video submissions and references, will be handled in accordance with Actcessible’s Data Protection Policy.
- Data is stored securely, with access restricted to authorised personnel only, and retained only for as long as necessary.

9. Review and Oversight

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees or earlier if there are changes to legal guidance, safeguarding frameworks, or operational practice.

This document was adopted by the Actcessible Board of Trustees on: 28/07/2025
To be reviewed annually or as needed.

Signed (Trustee):  _____
Name: James Michael Dean
Date: 28/07/2025