

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 3 January, 2023
Enquiries to: Safeguarding Team
Tel: 03456 066173
Email: Transportsafeguarding@suffolk.gov.uk



All schools

Dear sir/madam,

DBS checks of transport staff

The purpose of this letter is to give schools an overview of the work carried out within Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) to safeguard children on home to school transport. This information is also available online, together with guidance leaflets that are provided to transport staff www.suffolkonboard.com/workingwithsuffolkonboard

What steps do Suffolk County Council take to ensure that transport providers meet the requirements of schools in respect to safeguarding?

The PTU firstly requires that any company seeking to tender for work must apply to be on a list of approved suppliers. This is the first stage in assuring SCC that the company is reputable and covered by all necessary legislation and insurances. Only companies on this list may tender for contracts issued by the PTU. All contracts issued by the PTU are bound by the Terms and Conditions of Contract.

These contain requirements in respect of DBS clearance and other conditions relating to staff employed on the contract. It is the Employers responsibility to ensure that their staff have the necessary checks in place before allowing them to work on SCC routes in accordance with the terms of their contract. Currently all contracts where children or vulnerable adults are transported (or where they may potentially be carried) are subject to this condition which is also specified on all tender documents.

How is this monitored?

The contractor is required to provide the PTU with a list of all drivers and passenger assistants who may potentially assist in delivering the contract. Depending on the type of transport different processes are in place to ensure that all these staff have cleared the necessary checks.

What are these different processes?

In the case of taxi drivers the PTU must be assured that the driver is properly licensed by the district authority. In order to be licensed they must have cleared the DBS process. In the case of bus drivers, passenger assistants and community transport drivers, the check is carried out by the PTU. In all of the above cases no person is allowed to deliver the contract until such times as all the checks have been completed. A secure database of all approved drivers and passenger assistants is maintained by the PTU.

Does this mean that all staff have no convictions?

No, some DBS disclosures may have criminal convictions disclosed.

What happens in these cases?

There is a strict procedure in place to examine any criminal convictions to determine if there is any risk arising from them. In these cases the applicant may be asked to provide further details of the convictions in writing, at an interview, or both. This evidence is then assessed by a panel of at least three senior officers in the PTU and a decision reached on the suitability of the applicant.

In cases where there is doubt the matter is referred to the Safeguarding team for advice and guidance. What happens after this? In some cases the applicant may be advised that they are unsuitable and may be given a time period after which they can re-apply and be considered again. This time period will be dependant on the nature of the offence disclosed. In other cases it may be decided that the nature of the offence precludes the applicant from working on contracts.

In both cases the applicant will be advised of this in writing and (if different) the employer will also be advised of the decision.

Is anything else done after this?

Monitoring checks are carried out at schools to ensure that employees are on the database. As a contract condition Passenger assistants must also attend training days where safeguarding matters will be on the agenda.

Should the PTU be advised by the police of subsequent convictions that are related to the employment the case would be reopened and further evidence requested to establish if the employee is still suitable. Depending on the severity of the offence the employee may be temporarily suspended from the contract pending the outcome.

In all cases the Contract terms reserve the right of the PTU to remove a person from the work and failure to comply with this may result in the termination of the contract.

I hope that this information is useful in respect of your safeguarding records.

Yours faithfully,

The Safeguarding Team