

THE HAVEN

Operated by the Autistic Girls Network charity — 1196655 (England and Wales), SC054837 (Scotland)

Medical Suitability of Staff Policy

Pre-employment health checks and ongoing fitness for role

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Owner	Head
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1. Purpose

This policy sets out The Haven's procedure for confirming the medical fitness of staff prior to taking up post, and for keeping that fitness under review during employment. It supports the safety of learners, the wellbeing of staff, and our compliance with safer recruitment expectations, the Equality Act 2010, and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The Haven is a specialist online education provider. The medical fitness considerations relevant to our work are framed around sustained online engagement, safeguarding responsiveness during sessions, and the reasonable adjustments needed by a neurodivergent workforce. This policy reflects that context.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all paid staff, volunteers, contractors and trustees taking up a role with The Haven where there is contact with learners, access to learner data, or responsibility for safeguarding or operational delivery. It applies regardless of whether the work is full-time, part-time, or sessional.

3. Principles

- Health conditions and disability are not, in themselves, barriers to employment at The Haven.
- Reasonable adjustments are a normal feature of how we work, not an exception.
- Our duty is to ensure the staff member can carry out the role safely and effectively, with adjustments where required.
- Medical information is held confidentially and accessed only by those with a legitimate need.
- The process operates within the Equality Act 2010 and the UK GDPR.
- Decisions are evidence-based and proportionate.

4. The procedure

4.1 Conditional offer

Every offer of employment, engagement or volunteering at The Haven is made subject to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks, including a medical suitability check as set out in this policy. The conditional offer letter states this explicitly.

4.2 Pre-employment health declaration

After conditional offer, the candidate is issued with a confidential health declaration form. The form is returned directly to the Head (or designated HR lead) and is held separately from the general personnel file. The form asks the candidate to confirm:

- That they consider themselves fit to undertake the duties of the role, with reasonable adjustments where applicable.
- Whether they have any health condition or disability for which reasonable adjustments are required to enable safe and effective performance of the role.
- Whether there is any medical reason why they cannot fulfil the safeguarding responsibilities of the role, including the ability to respond appropriately to a safeguarding incident during an online session.
- Whether they are taking any medication or undergoing any treatment that may affect their capacity in role. The form is signed and dated. False or knowingly incomplete declarations are treated as a serious matter under the Staff Conduct Policy.

4.3 Reasonable adjustments discussion

Where a candidate discloses a condition, disability, or need for adjustment, a confidential discussion is held with the Head or HR lead to identify and agree any reasonable adjustments. This discussion takes place before the start date wherever possible. The candidate is invited to bring a colleague, friend, advocate, or representative if they wish.

Agreed adjustments are documented in writing, copied to the staff member, and held confidentially. They form part of induction. Where the candidate is themselves neurodivergent (as is the case for the majority of our educators), the discussion includes adjustments relating to sensory load, demand sensitivity, communication preferences and other features of neuro-affirming working.

4.4 Occupational health referral

An occupational health referral is made, with the candidate's written consent, where:

- The health declaration raises a question about fitness for role.
- Reasonable adjustments are complex or significant and an independent view would inform the decision.
- The candidate themselves requests an occupational health assessment.
- There is a regulatory or safeguarding reason to do so. The Haven engages an independent occupational health provider for these assessments. The occupational health report is shared with the candidate and informs the final fitness decision. The Head makes the final decision on the offer, in consultation with the Proprietor where appropriate.

4.5 Decision and record

On receipt of a satisfactory health declaration (and, where required, occupational health report), the conditional offer is confirmed. The decision is recorded on the Single Central Register and in the staff member's confidential health file.

Where adjustments have been agreed, these are recorded and shared with the line manager on a need-to-know basis. The detail of the underlying condition is not shared without the staff member's consent.

5. Ongoing fitness for role

Medical fitness for role is not a single point-in-time check. It is revisited at:

- Annual appraisal and through ongoing reflective supervision.
- Any significant change in health disclosed by the staff member.
- Return from extended sickness absence (defined as more than four continuous weeks).
- Following any incident or concern that raises a question about fitness.
- Where the staff member, their line manager, or the DSL raises a concern. Adjustments are reviewed and updated at each of these points. Where ongoing fitness is in question, a further occupational health referral may be made.

6. Return-to-work after sickness absence

After any sickness absence of more than four continuous weeks, the staff member meets with the Head or line manager for a return-to-work conversation. The conversation covers:

- The staff member's own view of their fitness to return.
- Any phased return required.
- Adjustments needed on return, whether short-term or longer-term.
- Whether occupational health input would help.
- Safeguarding implications, if any. Return-to-work conversations are recorded and held in the staff member's confidential file.

7. Recording and retention of medical information

Medical information held by The Haven is:

- Held separately from general personnel records.
- Accessible only to the Head, the Proprietor, and the staff member themselves; other access is only on a clearly documented need-to-know basis with the staff member's knowledge.
- Subject to the Data Protection Policy and the Privacy Notice for Employees, with special-category data processed on the basis of substantial public interest and explicit consent where required.
- Retained in line with the Data Retention Policy: duration of employment plus six years. Medical information is not shared with commissioners, regulators or external parties without the staff member's consent, except where there is a legal duty or vital interest that requires disclosure.

8. Confidentiality and disclosure

All medical information is treated as confidential and is not shared beyond those with a legitimate need. Where information needs to be shared to enable an adjustment (for example, informing a line manager that a staff member needs flexible session timings), the specific information shared is agreed with the staff member in advance, and the underlying detail of the condition is not disclosed unless the staff member chooses to share it.

9. Equality Act 2010

This procedure operates within the Equality Act 2010. The Haven does not refuse, withdraw or modify an offer of employment because of disability or health condition; it considers what reasonable adjustments would enable the role to be performed safely and effectively, and proceeds on that basis. Where, exceptionally, an offer cannot be confirmed on health grounds, the decision is documented in writing with the evidence on which it rests and the reasons it is justified, and the candidate has a right to challenge the decision.

10. Roles and responsibilities

- The Head: Owns this procedure; receives health declarations; agrees adjustments; commissions occupational health referrals; makes fitness decisions.
- The Proprietor: Consulted on complex or contested decisions; provides escalation route.
- Line managers: Implement agreed adjustments; raise concerns where they arise; conduct return-to-work conversations under guidance.
- Staff members: Complete the health declaration honestly; disclose significant changes in health that affect fitness for role; engage with the adjustments process; raise concerns about their own fitness when they arise.
- Occupational health provider: Provides independent assessment when commissioned.

11. Related documents

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Conduct Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention Policy
- Privacy Notice for Employees
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- SEND Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

12. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head and approved by the Board of Governors. It will be reviewed sooner where statutory or regulatory guidance changes.

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