

# Catch22 policy

## *Recruitment Policy*

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Catch22 reserves the right to amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Policy Owner:	<i>People Team</i>
Queries to:	<i>peopleservices@catch-22.org.uk</i>
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Catch22 group, entity, hub:	<i>Catch22 group</i>
4Policies level (all staff or managers only)	<i>All staff</i>

## Document Version Control & Changes

Version	Last modified	By	Changes Made
1.0	January 2023	Recruitment Team	Created
2.0	March 2026	Recruitment Team	References section added

## 1. Summary

This policy sets out our approach to the recruitment and selection of all Catch22 staff.

## 2. Who is this policy for?

This policy covers the recruitment and selection of all employed staff, including sessional staff. Separate policies cover the engagement of sole traders, individuals working via third parties (e.g. agency personnel), self-employed workers and volunteers.

## 3. Policy statement

The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- Catch22 is able to function effectively and meet the needs of its partners and commissioners, by having staff with the necessary skills at the right time and place to meet its needs;
- those employed by Catch22 reflect our values, views, motivations and attitudes;
- appointments are made on the basis of objective and transparent criteria that are clearly relevant to an individual's ability to perform the role in question;
- our workforce is as diverse as the people and the communities we support;
- those making recruitment and selection decisions are appropriately trained and supported;
- current employees have the opportunity to access promotion opportunities and retain security of employment where they have the necessary skills and experience to carry out new job roles;
- the people and their communities we work with are safeguarded from contact with unsuitable people;
- Catch22 complies with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including statutory guidance published by the Department of Education (DFE), Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the Disclosure of Barring Service (DBS) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## 4. The role of the Hiring Manager and Hiring Panel

The Hiring Manager is responsible for recruitment and ensuring adherence to all relevant policies during the recruitment process.

The Hiring Manager will appoint a Hiring Panel to support in the assessment and selection of candidates. Where possible, the entire Hiring Panel will contribute to shortlisting and hiring decisions, in order to increase the objectivity of decision-making and reduce the potential impact of individual biases.

The Hiring Panel should offer a diverse range of views and expertise, and, where possible, include a panel member from outside of the team, service or hub being recruited to.

Hiring Managers are expected to complete Catch22's 'Safer Recruitment' training prior to overseeing a recruitment campaign.

## 5. Preparing to recruit

The need to recruitment may arise for a number of reasons:

- An employee resigns
- A new post is established
- An employee becomes temporarily absent from work
- A project needs to be undertaken

Hiring Managers should take time to plan their recruitment at the outset.

## 6. Authority to recruit

All vacancies must be authorised via Catch22's applicant tracking system, Smart Recruiters.

## 7. Job Description and Person Specification

All roles must have an up to date job description and person specification which has been evaluated in line with our job evaluation scheme. New job descriptions are evaluated by a panel every month. Job descriptions must be approved before roles can be advertised.

[Job descriptions](#) can be found on the People team's helpdesk on Catch Connect.

## 8. Advertising a vacancy

All vacancies should be advertised via Catch22's applicant tracking system, SmartRecruiters.

There are three ways to advertise roles via SmartRecruiters:

- **Public** – published on the Catch22 careers page and open to existing Catch22 staff and members of the public
- **Internal** – published on the internal jobs page and open only to existing Catch22 staff
- **Private** – only visible to individuals who are given the SmartRecruiters link, and only open to existing Catch22 staff.

All vacant posts should normally be advertised externally by default, and therefore open to applications from outside of Catch22. However, where there is a reasonable expectation that there are sufficient, suitably qualified internal candidates, or staff with relevant skills and experience who are at risk of redundancy, vacancies may be advertised internally. In these circumstances, the Hiring Panel may decide that certain parts of the recruitment process are being omitted but all candidates will be subject to a formal interview and satisfactory pre-employment checks.

Private adverts should only be used to support the redeployment of staff at risk of redundancy.

There are no strict requirements for the length of time that roles are advertised, but it is recommended that external roles are advertised for at least three calendar weeks in order to ensure equality of opportunity and encourage as wide a field of candidates as possible.

Internal roles should normally be advertised for at least a week and should be promoted through internal networks.

## 9. Information for candidates

All adverts for vacancies within Catch22 must provide the candidate with the following information:

- An outline of the duties of the post.
- The qualifications, skills, experience and behaviours required by a successful candidate.
- The salary on offer, pro-rata when applicable (see below).
- A link to the full job description and person specification.
- Confirmation of the planned assessment process, including the format of each assessment or interview, and likely location.
- A timetable, with, as a minimum, estimated dates of key assessment and interview stages which will involve candidate attendance.
- The level of DBS check where required, as well as any other specific requirements or limitations related to criminal offence history.

The following details are also required for all adverts, but will automatically be added as footers, so Hiring Managers are not required to add:

- Catch22's equal opportunities statement.
- A link to the 'Benefits of working at Catch22' page of our website.

Roles which are subject to KCSIE are also required to provide the following information:

- The school's or college's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and make clear that safeguarding checks will be undertaken.
- The safeguarding responsibilities of the post as per the job description and personal specification.
- Whether the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974. The amendments to the ROA 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975, (2013 and 2020)) provide that when applying for certain jobs and activities, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed to employers, and if they are disclosed, employers cannot take them into account. The MOJ's guidance on the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975](#), provides information about which convictions must be declared during job applications and related exceptions and further information about filtering offences can be found in the [DBS filtering guide](#).
- A link to school's or college's child protection policy and practices and policy on employment of ex-offenders.
- Where applicable, confirmation that an 'Online Search' will be conducted on shortlisted candidates, to ensure accuracy of information provided and protect the school or college against potential reputational damage (see below).

## **10. Advertised salary**

Jobs should normally be advertised on a spot salary depending on:

- the salary band (the advertised salary should normally be equal to or above the bottom of the salary band as determined by Catch22's job evaluation scheme)
- the salaries of existing team members performing a similar role
- affordability
- market conditions

## **11. External job boards**

Many roles which are open to external applicants will require the use of external job boards in order to provide sufficient promotion to attract the volume and quality of applicants needed. All jobs posted on SmartRecruiters are automatically sent to a number of job boards, where basic job adverts are published, and are searchable by its users.

Additional paid advertising on job boards is recommended to boost the reach and impact of advertising. Information on the advertising options available, their specialisms or when they should be used, and costs, is available on the [Recruitment](#) page on Catch Connect.

All requests for external advertising made to the Recruitment team are administered by the Recruitment team, with costs recovered from the cost code linked to the vacancy. It is the responsibility of the Hiring Manager to ensure that the necessary budget is available for external advertising.

## **12. Using recruitment agencies**

If a vacancy requires specialist skills that are hard to recruit, or where a role has previously proved hard to fill, a Hiring Manager may consider using an external recruitment agent to supply candidates.

Recruitment agency services can be expensive, as they typically charge 10%-20% of the role's annual salary, so they should only be used as a last resort.

Before agreeing to receive candidates via a recruitment agent, Hiring Managers must ensure that they fully understand all associated costs, and that they have the required budget.

## **13. Temporary posts**

Temporary post of more than 6 months (e.g. 12-month maternity cover) should normally be advertised internally on SmartRecruiters and follow our usual recruitment procedures.

## **14. Redeploying existing staff**

In accordance with our Security of Employment (Redundancy) policy, we will aim, wherever possible, to find the employee suitable alternative employment.

## **15. Diversity and Equal Opportunity in recruitment**

We will ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, trade union membership, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction.

Many of our roles are 'exempt' from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, this means we can ask about an applicant's criminal history – including details of convictions and cautions – that are not protected. We undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Catch22 are signed up to the Ban the Box initiative. As a Ban the Box employer, we have committed to fairly assessing criminal convictions; so candidates are not asked about offence history during the application process and are assessed first and foremost on the basis of their skills and suitability for a role, rather than their past mistakes. The only exception to this is within our schools and colleges, where KCSIE requires us to ask candidates to declare criminal convictions at shortlist stage, prior to interview.

Catch22 is a 'Disability Confident Committed' employer, which means that we have agreed to five commitments: inclusive and accessible recruitment, communicating vacancies, offering an interview to disabled people, providing reasonable adjustments, and supporting existing employees. Full details on these commitments and their practical application are covered in the 'Recruitment and Selection Skills' training. Hiring Managers should contact the recruitment team if they have any questions about adapting their recruitment process to support applicants with disabilities.

It is our policy that all recruitment advertisements carry our equal opportunities statement and candidates who apply for roles declaring that they have a disability on their application, should be automatically shortlisted if they meet the minimum essential criteria for the role.

Where minority sections of the community are under-represented in the relevant part of our workforce, a Positive Action Statement may be used to encourage applicants from certain sectors of the community. The advice of the Recruitment team must always be sought prior to using a Positive Action Statement as where used incorrectly, it may breach discrimination law.

For some posts there may be a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) and/or policy objective that dictates that appointees must be of a certain gender, nationality etc and that this requirement must be set out in advertisement/person specification etc. Genuine GORs/policy objectives are quite rare and must be objectively justified to ensure they do not amount to unlawful discrimination. For this reason the use of a GOR/legitimate policy objective must be agreed in advance with a member of the Recruitment team.

## **16. Reasonable adjustments**

It is a legal requirement to offer adjustments to your recruitment process, should these be requested by a candidate, which will help reduce or remove disadvantages faced by disabled candidates. These may include accessible documentation, extra time to complete assessments, or advanced notification of interview questions.

All requests for adjustments in the recruitment process must be taken seriously, and Hiring Managers should not ask for details or proof of the candidate's disability.

If a candidate makes a request which you feel you cannot deliver, or which puts them at an unfair advantage against other candidates, you should contact the Recruitment team.

## **17. Shortlisting**

The Hiring Panel will use the criteria laid out in the person specification to make a decision on which candidates to shortlist for the vacancy. Shortlisting decisions should be made on the content of the application against these criteria alone, free of any bias or pre-judgement, and applied equally to all applicants.

Where possible, Hiring Managers should publish a closing date for applications, and make a shortlisting decision once all applications are received.

In order to proceed at pace through the recruitment process, particularly where there is urgency to fill the vacancy, Hiring Managers can adopt a flexible approach to shortlisting, reviewing applications while the advert is still live. When taking this approach, it is important to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly, and all unsuccessful applications are rejected prior to any offer is made to successful candidates.

It is essential that hiring managers review and score all applications on SmartRecruiters. Please see the [Recruitment](#) pages on Catch Connect for further guidance on shortlisting.

If the field of applicants is felt to be weak the post may be re-advertised, but it is recommended that the Hiring Manager speak with a member of the Recruitment team prior to re-advertisement so that alternative approaches can be explored.

## **18. KCSIE process for shortlisted candidates**

For roles subject to KCSIE, additional steps must be taken to gather further information on candidates invited to interview.

- Candidates should be asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children.
- Two professional references should be collected for each candidate, one should be from their most recent employer / one should be from their last employer where the candidate worked with children (if the candidate is not working with children in their current role).
- The school or college should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school or college might want to explore with the applicant at interview.

Where any of the above steps are taken, they should be completed prior to the candidate's interview, so that any issues raised in these steps can be discussed with the candidate.

## **19. Selection process**

The format and style of the selection process are matters for the Hiring Manager to decide

and will depend on role. It is recommended that a range of selection methods are used as this will support and enhance objective decision making, which can be difficult through interview alone.

The selection process may include:

- Presentations
- Service user panels
- Case studies
- In-tray exercises
- Tests
- Work samples
- Group discussions

The selection process should always include a panel interview.

## **20. Panel interviews**

Before the interviews the Hiring Panel will agree on the interview format. The questions asked will be aimed at obtaining evidence of how each candidate meets the requirement of the job description and the person specification and each candidate will be assessed against all of the criteria for the post. The same areas of questioning will be covered for each applicant and no questions which would discriminate directly or indirectly on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 will be asked.

Questions will include:

- Finding out what attracted the candidate to the post, and why they want to work for Catch22.
- Exploring their skills and experience and asking for examples of experience which are relevant to the role.
- The candidate's understanding of and alignment to Catch22's values.
- Where applicable, questions to test and explore the candidate's knowledge of safeguarding procedure.
- At the end of each interview, the Hiring Panel should allow the candidate the opportunity to ask questions that they may have and inform the candidate of the estimated timeline for feedback.

## **21. Safeguarding and recruitment**

The interview stage is an important opportunity to take steps to screen out individuals who might pose a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Hiring Panel should take the widest possible view of those who may be in a position to abuse a position of trust and therefore not limit safeguarding questions to frontline workers, but all those who have access to children, young people and vulnerable adults. For this reason:

- Questions must be included directed at understanding the motivation for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults in particular and personal values which

- candidates believe make their appropriate persons for this type of work.
- All gaps in an individual's career history must be identified and explored.
- Reasons for leaving previous employment must be established where the application form is unclear.
- Any anomalies in the candidate's CV, application or supporting statement should be drawn out and explored.

Please see the [Recruitment](#) pages on Catch Connect for further guidance and example interview questions.

## **22. Conditional offer of employment**

As soon as a hiring decision is made, the Hiring Manager should verbally offer the role to the preferred candidate and make clear that this is a conditional offer. Should the preferred candidate not accept the role, the Hiring Manager can offer the role to any other shortlisted candidate deemed to be appointable at interview.

Formal offers must be submitted via SmartRecruiters so that they can be reviewed and processed by the People Services team.

Once a conditional offer has been accepted, the Hiring Manager should ensure that all unsuccessful candidates are informed of the outcome of their interview. Candidates who attended an interview should be offered the opportunity to discuss their feedback with a member of the Hiring Panel.

## **23. Starting salary**

Pay on appointment will normally depend on:

- the knowledge, skills and experience the new employee brings in comparison to existing team members performing a similar role
- affordability
- equal pay considerations

## **24. Pre-employment checks**

An offer of employment at Catch22 is subject to the following pre-employment checks:

- Verification of identity
- Verification of right to work in the UK
- Two satisfactory professional references – one of which must be the candidate's most recent employer
- Evidence of qualifications where detailed in the person specification
- Confirmation of mental and physical fitness to carry out work responsibilities
- Evidence of driving licence, MOT certificate and insurance where detailed in the person specification
- Satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at the appropriate level where detailed in the person specification

- Other any other vetting (e.g. Police) where detailed in the person specification

In addition, offers of employment within our schools and colleagues are also subject to the following pre-employment checks:

- Any additional check needed for time spent living or working overseas
- Verification of professional qualifications. The Teaching Regulation Agency's (TRA) Employer Access Service should be used to verify any award of qualified teacher status (QTS), and the completion of teacher induction or probation
- Section 128 check (management posts only)
- Probation from teaching check (where the post involves teaching work)
- Childcare disqualification check (where the post holder will be working with children aged 5 and under, including reception classes, or in wraparound care for children up to the age of 8, such as breakfast clubs and after school care).

Under KCSIE schools and colleges must maintain a single central record of pre-appointment checks, referred to in the Regulations<sup>8</sup> as “the register” and more commonly known as “the single central record”.

All pre-employment checks must be completed before the employee starts work. Exceptions will only be made in circumstances where a risk assessment has been undertaken.

## **25. Obtaining satisfactory references**

As part of the Recruitment process, two references are required for prospective employees, and these are provided by the applicant on the application form. Suggested referees should be reviewed in accordance with the requirements of this policy and where appropriate applicants should be asked to provide further information, or alternative referees at the interview stage as it is important that references are provided from reliable sources that give a full recent picture of employment history and performance.

It is expected that the reference will be provided on company headed paper or with the official company stamp received from a relevant organisational e-mail address that matches the details provided by the applicant. E-mails from a Hotmail account (or similar) are not acceptable as they cannot be verified. The reference must be signed. The expectation is that the references will cover at least the last three years of employment and will be from one current and one previous employer, or the existing employer and one professional referee. Personal references will not be accepted as all references need to come from a reliable source qualified to comment on the applicant's suitability.

Occasionally it may not be possible for an applicant to provide referees as required by this policy. This will normally be because:

- It is their first paid role (e.g. following full time education);
- There has been an extended period of unemployment or a career gap (eg taking time off work to raise a family or travel overseas);
- The business of a previous long-term employer has closed (this should be verified via Companies House).

In these circumstances alternative references can be accepted from:

- An independent professional who knows the applicant e.g. a GP or college tutor (in line with the list of professionals acceptable for a passport application);
- An organisation for whom the individual has volunteered over a sustained period;
- Previous/retired line managers giving the reference in a personal capacity.

These however are exceptions, and the normal requirements are employment references that are current and cover a reasonable period that enables an effective judgement to be made.

Where there is difficulty in identifying suitable referees in accordance with this policy eg as the applicant has neither been in employment or training, then the employing Service Manager should agree the correct approach with their Assistant Director/Director. A risk assessment will need to be completed and signed off by the Director, Head of Safeguarding and People Partner.

Where applicants have had a range of short-term employment/gaps in employment then HR advice should be sought as to the number and identity of referees that would be acceptable to Catch22.

Where an individual has been self-employed, evidence should be obtained (e.g. from HM Revenue and Customs, bankers, accountants, solicitors, client references) to confirm that the individual's business was properly conducted, the standard that services were performed to, and the applicant's involvement in the business was terminated satisfactorily. Client referees should have worked with the individual over a sustained period of time (as a guide over 6 months to a year, rather than a short project assignment).

### **25.1 Validity of information received**

In cases where references appear to contradict details provided by the applicant then any concerns should be addressed, sensitively, direct with the applicant. There may be a reasonable explanation for apparent inconsistencies. Any queries may also be followed up with referees.

### **25.2 Review of references**

The successful appointment is conditional upon receipt of references which are satisfactory to the Hiring Manager (or equivalent level), Catch22 and to partners with whom we work in the service in question. The hiring manager will also be required to sign off the references as satisfactory prior to the applicant commencing employment.

The line manager should consult People Advice concerning the way forward in the following events:

- one or both of the references is negative or adverse to the applicant, or
- the information received appears to contradict information given by the candidate at interview, or
- raises other matters relevant to employment, or
- insufficient information is obtained from previous employers; or
- there are concerns as to the acceptability of the applicant.

## **26. Providing a reference**

The People Services Team provides a reference for a former or current employee. Where forms are supplied for completion, managers should send this to People Services to be completed. Any reference that is provided must not be misleading or unfair to the employee. All references must contain only factual information and not include any opinions, information, or comments that cannot be objectively justified.

## **27. Start of employment**

Induction is the final stage of the recruitment process. Once the successful candidate has accepted the offer of employment and a start date has been agreed the Hiring Manager is responsible for preparing a comprehensive induction programme for the new employee.

## **28. Related policies**

- DBS Checks Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Induction Policy
- DBS Barring & Referral Policy
- Probation Policy
- Redundancy and Security of Employment Policy
- Reward & Remuneration Policy

## Annex 1: Equality Impact Assessment

### 1. Summary

<b>This EIA is for:</b>	Recruitment & Selection Policy
<b>EIA completed by:</b>	Mario Alphonso, Talent Management Partner
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	February 2026
<b>Assessment approved by:</b>	Christina Duru, Chief People Officer

Catch22 is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion always: avoiding the potential for unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and, foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool for identifying whether or not strategies, projects, services, guidance, practices or policies have an adverse or positive impact on a particular group of people or equality group. Whilst currently only public bodies are legally required to complete EIA's under the Equality Act 2010, Catch22 has adopted the process in line with its commitment to continually improve our equality performance.

Policy owners are required to complete or review the assessment indicating whether the policy has a positive, neutral or negative impact for people who it applies to and who share one or more of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Definitions are based on the Equality & Human Rights (EHRC) guidance.

#### Objectives and intended outcomes

This EIA has been completed in order to ensure that the implications and potential impact, positive and negative, of this policy have been fully considered and addressed, whether or not people share a protected characteristic.

### 2. Potential Impacts, positive and negative

Equality Area	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Please give details including any mitigation for negative impacts
<b>Age</b> Does this policy impact on any particular age groups or people of a certain age?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy applies equally to all members of staff regardless of age. It is recognised that there may be actions taken to encourage applicants from an underrepresented group in the organisation.
<b>Disability</b> Does this policy impact on people who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy enables hiring managers to ensure all staff listed with a disability have the right to be shortlisted for the role. This positive action promotes our commitment to providing reasonable adjustments and equal opportunities for all employees.

<p><b>Gender reassignment (transsexual, transgender, trans)</b> Does this policy impact on people who are transitioning from one gender to another (at any stage)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy applies equally to all members of staff regardless of their gender at any given time. It's not considered that the policy includes any guidance or rules that may impact either positively or negatively on any member of staff because of gender.
<p><b>Marriage and civil partnership</b> Does this policy impact on people who are legally married or in a civil partnership?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy applies equally to all members of staff regardless of their sexual orientation. It's not considered that the policy includes any guidance or rules that may impact either positively or negatively on any member of staff because their sexual orientation.
<p><b>Pregnancy and maternity (in work this is linked to maternity leave, non-work this is for 26 weeks after giving birth)</b> Does this policy impact on people who are pregnant or in their maternity period following the birth of their child?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It's not considered that the policy positive or negatively impacts on pregnant women or on staff on maternity or paternity leave,.
<p><b>Race</b> Does this policy impact on people as defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy sets out that positive action may be required on the basis of race, origin, colour or nationality.
<p><b>Religion and belief</b> Does this policy impact on people who practice a particular religion or none, or who hold particular religious or philosophical belief or none?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy sets out that positive action may be required on the basis of religion and belief for specific occupational reasons.
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b> Does this policy impact on people who are sexually attracted towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy sets out that positive action may be required on the basis of sexual orientation.

### 3. More information/notes

Please add any links to key documents or websites to evidence or give further detail on any impacts identified.