

Guide - Safer Recruitment for Managers

v2.0

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Definitions

Definition of a ‘child’ or ‘young person’

Under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 respectively, a child or young person is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in prison or young offenders institute does not change his or her status or entitlement to services of protection under the Children Act 1989.

Definition of a ‘vulnerable adult’

The term ‘vulnerable adult’ has been amended as it was felt to be inappropriate to label an adult as vulnerable solely due to their circumstances, age or disability. In general terms, an adult (a person aged 18 or over) is classed as vulnerable when they are receiving one of the following services:

- Health care;
- Relevant personal care;
- Social care work;
- Assistance in relation to general household matters by reason of age, illness or disability;
- Relevant assistance in the conduct of their own affairs; or
- Conveying (due to age, illness or disability in prescribed circumstances)

This document refers to vulnerable adults as vulnerable people.

Definition of a ‘volunteer’

The Disclosure and Barring Service define a volunteer as:

“A person who is engaged in any activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travelling and other approved out of pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives.”

Definition of ‘staff’

Employment context:

A person working under the control or direction of another, under a contract of employment in return for a wage of salary.

Background to guidance

- All organisations and individuals who work with children and/or vulnerable people or are involved in providing services for them, have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- Whatever the background, making sure that we do everything we can to prevent appointing people who may pose a risk to children and a vulnerable person is an essential part of safeguarding.
- As Sir Michael Bichard stated in his report into the Soham murders: “The harsh reality is that if a sufficiently devious person is determined to seek out opportunities to work their evil, no one can guarantee that they will be stopped. Our task is to make it as difficult as possible for them to succeed...”

12 step approach to safer recruitment

Regardless of the size or nature of the organisation, a consistently applied and robust process is always needed to ensure the safest levels of staff recruitment. The following 12 steps to safer recruitment provide a brief overview of the steps that should be taken when recruiting staff.

Before you release your post . . .

1. Ensure that you have read an up to date version of the recruitment and selection policy that describes the process and roles before you begin.
2. Ensure that you have read an up to date version of the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) policy and that a statement about the commitment to safeguarding is included in all recruitment and selection materials.
3. Ensure that you have an up to date job description and person specification for the role(s) you wish to recruit to.
4. Ensure that you have an appropriate advertisement prepared that contains all necessary information about the role, timetable for recruitment and your commitment to safeguarding.
5. Ensure that you have compiled a suitable candidate information pack containing all the required information about the organisation, role, recruitment timetable, safeguarding statement and application form (applicable to schools only).

Before you interview...

6. Ensure that each application received is scrutinised in a systematic way by the shortlisting panel in order to agree your shortlist before sending invitations to interview. Candidates who have ticked the Guaranteed Interview 'Two ticks' Scheme section on the application form must be shortlisted if they meet all of the essential criteria.
7. Decide on what selection tools are going to be used in addition to an interview.
8. Ensure that all shortlisted candidates receive the same letter of invitation to interview, supplying them with all necessary information, including the offer to make any reasonable adjustments.

Before you select your preferred candidate...

9. Ensure that a face-to-face interview is conducted for ALL shortlisted candidates based on an objective assessment of the candidate's ability to meet the person specification and job description.

10. Ensure that all specific questions designed to gain required information about each candidate's suitability have been asked, including those needed to address any gaps in information supplied in the application form.

Before you formally appoint ...

11. Ensure that you are able to make a confident selection of a preferred candidate based upon their demonstration of suitability for the role.
12. Ensure that your preferred candidate is informed that the offer of employment (including volunteer positions) is conditional on receiving satisfactory information from all necessary pre-employment checks.

Planning, advertising and shortlisting

Produce a job description and person specification

Include skills, abilities, experience, behaviours and attitude/motivation towards children and vulnerable people. Make clear the boundaries and expectations in terms of relationships with children/vulnerable people.

Sample wording for job description:

- To promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and vulnerable people.
- To ensure that the organisations child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures are promoted within the organisation and adhered to by all members of staff.

Sample wording for person specification:

- Evidence of working within a child protection culture
- Evidence of promoting welfare and safety
- Understanding and commitment to welfare and safety
- Knowledge of protection procedures
- Include a clear statement regarding the organisations commitment to safeguarding and the need for an Enhanced DBS check where relevant.
- Include statements about the safeguarding responsibilities of the post in both the job description and the person specification

Shortlisting

- Only fully completed application forms should be considered. CV's alone will not be accepted. The corporate Denbighshire County Council application form must be completed for all job applications.
- Ensure appropriate time is put aside for all members of the panel to shortlist together.
- Shortlisting must take place as soon as possible after the closing date and involve more than one person.
- Consider whether candidates who have ticked the Guaranteed Interview Scheme meet the essential criteria and ensure that they are shortlisted.
- Identify any gaps in the application or inconsistencies that you need to explore further with candidates at interview.
- Apply the shortlisting criteria equally using the criteria outlined on the person specification.
- Only those candidates who meet the essential criteria should be shortlisted for interview. Where the majority of the candidates meet all of the essential criteria, the panel will need to shortlist using the desirable criteria to reduce the number of candidates if required.

- Keep the process objective and consistent.
- Take into consideration all relevant qualifications, training, work experience, knowledge and skills required, level of responsibility and competencies.
- Record and document the shortlisting process which will outline the justification for shortlisting/not shortlisting.
- The shortlisting panel should not take the following protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) into consideration:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Marriage or civil partnership
 - Caste

or

Have bias on an application form which contains grammar or spelling errors where this is not a requirement of the role. Errors could be due to a disability, for example, dyslexia.

Selection tools and invites

You may want to consider other methods of selection in addition to an interview, this could include:

- Role play with another adult e.g. dealing with a complaint, dealing with a member of staff
- Presentation, either prepared beforehand or to be produced on the day
- Group exercises to see how they work within a team
- Written exercises to test theory or technical knowledge
- Lesson observations (applicable to schools)
- Interviews or other interactions with children/vulnerable people which can be observed. These must be structured and appropriately supervised

Model group exercise

Group the candidates into sets of three or four and attach a facilitator or assessor to each group.

Give each set the same topic for discussion and ask them to present back to the panel. Make the scenario as realistic as possible and avoid theoretical topics.

Example - "A child has complained of sexual abuse by one of your colleagues workers to you whilst you are on a late evening duty. Outline what steps you would take to deal with the complaint and why. Explain how you would respond to the child and your colleagues and who else you would alert to this serious matter."

Allow one hour for the group to discuss and formulate the presentation back to the panel. Ask each candidate to play a role in preparation and presentation, and ask the group to describe who took what role and how.

Observe and record the individual dynamics and how the group arrive at their decision. Remember that the exercise is less concerned with a 'correct' response than with the way the response was reached.

Mark the observations for each candidate against the relevant job criteria. Look for supportive skills that demonstrate a comprehensive sense of responsibility towards children/vulnerable people and colleagues.

Individual exercises

Individual presentation to the whole group which are then discussed and debated to the whole group. Topics could include:

“How should staff control young people in children’s homes?”

“What are the differences between boys and girls behaviour at certain ages?”

Each individual presentation and interaction can then be assessed by the panel.

Structured role plays

Structured role plays which depict a practical scenario involving one or more candidates which are observed and critically appraised by the rest of the group or panel.

Group discussion on key topic

These help identify interactive skills and the attitudes which underlie them. Consider those that dominate the conversation and stifle others.

Assessing the outcomes

A structured method of assessing the outcomes of the group exercises is required. Identify from the person specification which are the main criteria you wish to test against using feedback from the assessors and rate each candidates on a scale.

Model written exercise

Ask each candidate to follow the instructions. This test is linked to a home visit but the test may be used independently.

“If you are employed in the position you will be required to write reports based on clear, factual events in logs and reports. You will be able to demonstrate your ability to do so in this written exercise. A visit to home has been arranged along with other candidates on

Please observe the events of your visit carefully. After the visit you will be asked to write one paragraph on each of the following situations:

- an interaction between a young person and member of staff
- an interaction between two young people

- an activity which took place.
- The description should be objective and factual. The events may be routine.

They do not have to be dramatic or exciting. The report should be clearly written with attention to grammar and punctuation. The exercise should take no more than 40 minutes.”

Invitation to interview

Invitations to interview will be sent out from via HR (not applicable to schools) and must include the options to make reasonable adjustments if required. Invites must also specify any assessment centre details and any pre-interview assessments.

Interviews and assessment centres

Preparation for the interview

- Only those involved in shortlisting should be on the interview panel and the panel should consist of at least two people with a gender balance where possible.
- Ensure you have structured questions that you have agreed beforehand and you know who is going to ask the questions and who is recording the answers. Use supplementary questions to probe any gaps or vagueness in answers (these will be different for each candidate).
- Ensure questions ask candidates about their own experience rather than asking hypothetical questions, questioning experience is more likely to highlight any possible child safeguarding concerns.
- Ask about attitudes towards children/vulnerable people and child protection and motives for working with children/vulnerable people.
- A scoring mechanism is recommended.

During the interview

- Clearly record answers and document decisions and keep these.
- Leave any scoring and judgements until the end of the day.

Data Protection Act (1998)

Please be aware that the DPA gives people certain rights in respect of the processing of personal information about them that takes place during the recruitment process. Applicants are able to ask for a copy of their interview notes.

Personal Suitability Interviews (PSI)

Warner interviews are a result of 'Choosing with care' (The Warner Report, 1992) which was established to review selection, development and management of staff in children's homes. This highlighted recruitment as a particular concern. Warner has since been developed for use within all settings working with children and young people. It can also be extended to use within vulnerable people settings.

The four keys areas are:

- Motivation to work with children and vulnerable people.
- Ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with children and vulnerable people.
- Emotional resilience in working with challenging behaviours.
- Attitudes towards the use of authority and maintaining discipline.

The interview

Depending on the structure of the interviews/assessment centre, the personal interview can be incorporated in the following ways:

- a) If a number of candidates are being interviewed then the personal interview should be incorporated for all candidates as part of the range of selection tests and preferably separate from and prior to the skills interview.
- b) Where it would be impractical to conduct a personal interview separate from the skills interview, a joint process can be followed. This however can become a very lengthy process.
- c) The personal interview is an intrinsic part of the appointment process but where there are a large number of candidates attending an assessment centre, the panel may decide to only conduct personal interviews for only those who are appointable after the earlier parts of the process.

The setting for the interview should ideally be comfortable and relaxed, with the interviewer and the interviewee seated as equals rather than in a formal position; a conversational style is probably most effective. The preamble should tell the candidates that the object of this part of the process is to find out about their feelings and attitudes to a variety of issues that are important to the post.

Recording the personal interview

Written notes should be recorded by each panel member and stored confidentially with all other recruitment documentation. At the end of the recruitment process the notes for the successful candidate will need to be kept on their personnel file and stored confidentially. The notes for the unsuccessful candidates must be kept with the recruitment file within HR for a period of

6 months. After this period of 6 months all notes will be destroyed. Candidates may request in writing to see the information relating to their application within that 6 month period.

Involving young people in the recruitment process

It is good practice (where appropriate) to involve children and vulnerable people in the recruitment process in order to involve key stakeholders in the recruitment process and give those involved a part in the decision making process.

Managing candidates' expectations

Candidates will need to be reminded that their appointment will be based on all the evidence presented throughout the whole recruitment process.

Organisations should be reminded that even though the candidate has the required skills, knowledge and experience, if the personal interview leads to concerns about the ability to safeguard the welfare of the child/vulnerable person then they should not be offered the post.

All offers of employment will be subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.

Feedback to candidates

When providing feedback, recruiting managers should comment on the candidate's suitability for the post in relation to the requirements of the person specification, the parts of the assessment centre process and not just deal with the personal interview in isolation.

Feedback should be verbal and not written. Feedback should be constructive, honest and relate to the person specification. Feedback must not involve discussions around other candidates or include criteria which are new, as the comments must relate to the person specification.

Clarification of detail arising from application form

1. Previous employment (pay special attention to small private organisations not in the mainstream network).
2. Reasons for leaving previous employment (be concerned over anxiety to get the job and lack of interest in pay and conditions).

For suggestions of lines of questioning or sample Warner questions, please contact HR.

The selection process

Person specification

The person specification depicts the ideal person that a recruiting manager would want to fill the position and must accurately reflect the skills, knowledge and experience which are essential and desirable to the post. Candidates must meet all of the essential criteria in order to be invited for interview.

Personal qualities

The personal interview is the panel's opportunity to try and assess whether the candidates personal qualities and values make them suitable to work with vulnerable groups.

Assessments

In addition to the interview, it is advisable to use different forms of candidate assessment which could be in the form of an assessment centre. The assessments used could help to predict a candidate's performance within a role and help the panel to make a more informed choice.

Please see the HR pages on the Intranet for information on Assessment Centres.

Pre-employment checks

Conditions of employment

All offers of employment are subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.

DBS checks

HR will apply for the necessary DBS checks as soon as the verbal offer of appointment has been made. The potential start date **must** accommodate the return of the DBS check.

In exceptional circumstances, where the date of commencement cannot accommodate the return of the DBS check then a risk assessment **must** be completed and relevant authorisation must be approved before the person commences. The recruiting manager must ensure that the individual is appropriately supervised.

Please remember that a person is not DBS cleared until confirmation has been sent by the registered body.

Please see Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) policy for further information.

References

The purpose of a reference is to gain factual and objective information to support an appointment decision.

For external candidates – Two references are required. References must be obtained from a current or last employer (if unemployed) and the two references must cover a period of three years. If the references do not cover a period of three years then references must be sought for the whole period. For Social Worker roles, references from all previous employers will be sought.

For internal candidates – one reference is required from the candidate's current line manager.

All references must be received in writing (on headed paper or from the organisations emails address) and scrutinised in line with the application form.

Character references are not permitted unless the person has not been employed in any capacity. Where possible the start date must accommodate the return of the necessary references.

Previous employment history checks

Employers should always ask for information about previous employment and obtain satisfactory explanations for any gaps in employment. This information contained with the application form will need to be scrutinised against the references also. If a candidate for a post is not currently employed in work with children and/or vulnerable people, it is also advisable to check and confirm with the previous employer the details of their employment and reasons for leaving. References must be from the last 2 employers, and must cover a three year period. More references will be required for Social Workers, and those without the three year period covered by just 2 employers.

Qualification and registration checks

Employers must always verify that the candidate has actually obtained any qualifications or professional registrations claimed in their application, which are legally required for the job or the employer regards as essential. Photocopies of 'original' certificates **must** be taken at interview and kept on file.

HR will perform any required registration checks and keep a copy on file.

Eligibility to work in the UK checks

Employers must confirm the right of those they employ to work in the UK. Entitlement to work in the UK must be verified by checking one of the following:

- A valid passport showing that the holder is a British citizen, or a citizen of the UK and colonies, having the right to abode in the UK.
- A valid passport or national ID card showing that the holder is a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland.
- A permanent resident card issued by the home office to a national or the family member of a national from an EEA or Switzerland.
- A valid passport or other travel documents endorsed to show that the holder can stay indefinitely in the UK. Has the right to abode in the UK or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.
- Original, long birth certificate (issued within 6 months of the birth) accompanied by the official documentation showing NI number.
- NI cards beginning with TN or ending in E-Z inclusive are temporary numbers and are not acceptable.

All candidates are asked to bring this documentation with them to interview. The recruiting panel is required to check the documentation, take a photocopy (preferable in colour) then sign and date the photocopies. These copies must be sent to HR for the successful candidate and placed on their personnel file.

Further information and details on permission to work in the UK is available from the UK Border Agency website or can be found on the intranet under HR.

Medical fitness and suitability for the role

Successful applicants will be required to complete a Job Analysis & New Starter Health Assessment Form. Occupational Health will then assess whether any reasonable adjustments are needed in order to carry out the role. This form is to be completed before the successful applicant commences work and is purely for the purpose of making reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Post-employment checks

vulnerable people, there should be an induction for all new staff and volunteers.

The content of the induction will vary according to the role and previous experience of the new member of staff or volunteer, but should always include information relevant to safeguarding, including policies, procedures, codes of conduct and how to identify and raise concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable people. The induction period should be used to set clear expectations and boundaries of the role to ensure that the individual is clear on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Probationary periods will only apply to all staff, including non-teaching schools based staff who are new to local government and or those who have not had a break in service between jobs. This does not apply to teachers.

Monitoring and maintaining awareness

- It is important that all staff have appropriate training, induction, probation and appraisal (where applicable) so that they understand their roles and responsibilities and are confident about carrying them out. Everyone needs to feel confident that they can raise issues or concerns about the safety or welfare of children/vulnerable people and that they will be listened to and taken seriously.
- Keep safeguarding high on everyone's agenda. Establish the belief that it 'can' happen here.
- Never rely on any one process to keep children or vulnerable people safe.
- Monitoring of the recruitment process, induction and probationary arrangements will allow for future recruitment practices to be better informed. Feedback from new appointees and other employees may assist in understanding how improvements can be achieved.

Reporting safeguarding concerns

If an employee has any concerns relating to safeguarding, they must contact the relevant person immediately and advise them of this. All employees have a duty towards safeguarding.

- Each service has a safeguarding officer appointed and your Head of Service will be able to tell you who this is if you are not currently aware.
- Concerns relating to children should be reported to the Children and Families Support Gateway team on 01824 712200
- Concerns relating to vulnerable people should be reported to the Single Point of Contact team on 0300 456 1000
- Concerns relating to Right to Work in the UK, references, or other employment related matters should be reported to HR on 01824 706200