

SAFER RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT

What is 'safer recruitment'?

Safer recruitment practice aims to minimise the risk of appointing someone unsuitable to a post where they will be in contact with children or vulnerable adults and could cause them harm.

What is the Safer Recruitment Toolkit?

The toolkit outlines a safer recruitment process. It is available as a download from the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board (BSVAB) website <http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/partnership/sva/bsvab.page>

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is intended for use by all organisations with responsibility for recruitment of employees who will work with children, young people or vulnerable adults and has been developed by a multi-agency working group.

Who does the guidance cover?

Anyone who works regularly and becomes a familiar face is likely to be seen as safe and trustworthy adult by a child or vulnerable adult regardless of their role or hours of work so you must use the same good practice when recruiting all those who have regular contact with vulnerable groups.

Safe Culture

To support safe recruitment processes, organisations also need to build a safe culture of continual vigilance:

- Open discussion of safeguarding issues
- Clear guidance on appropriate behaviour
- Ongoing supervision
- Clear procedure for raising concerns

Discourage unsuitable applicants

Make the safeguarding message clear in all of your advertisements, recruitment campaigns and application packs:

- Talk about the safe and secure environment you provide for children or vulnerable adults
- State your commitment to the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults
- Welcome volunteers, but explain why safeguarding controls are in place
- Invite people to visit but ask them to make an appointment
- When talking to interested groups, always mention safeguarding

Wider responsibility for Safeguarding

If you commission or have contracts with other organisations to deliver services on your behalf, you must ensure that contractors or subcontractors comply with safeguarding good practice. You should have a clear, written agreement in place and monitor compliance.

For multi-use sites, such as extended schools, written agreements should be in place between all organisations using the site and the site manager setting out the responsibilities of both sides for health and safety, recruitment and vetting checks and insurance arrangements.

Recruitment Policy

You should have a written recruitment policy which links to your child or vulnerable adult protection policy. Your recruitment policy should contain a statement to be used in all advertisements and application forms, for example:

This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all employees and volunteers to share this commitment. The suitability of all prospective employees or volunteers will be assessed during the recruitment process in line with this commitment.

Advertisement

Include your policy statement confirming your commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups. Confirm that a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check is required. Clearly state any essential requirements of the post likely to disqualify some candidates from applying.

Application form

Use an application form to obtain the same information from all applicants and to help identify any gaps or anomalies. Do not accept a letter of application and CV because these will only contain the information the applicant wishes to present. Do not accept incomplete application forms.

Application forms add consistency and fairness to the recruitment process by comparing standard information on candidates. Ensure you support disabled candidates who may need help to complete an application form or flexibility to provide all the required information in an alternative format.

Application forms should include:

- Current and former names
- Current address
- Date of birth
- NI number
- Qualifications with awarding body and date obtained
- Full employment history since school with no gaps and reasons for leaving
- Declaration of any relationship to existing employees
- Two referees, including most recent post working with vulnerable groups
- A statement that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- Declaration of all convictions, cautions and bind-over's
- A signed statement that the applicant is not barred from working with vulnerable groups or subject to sanctions of a regulatory body
- Confirmation that the application form must be completed in full
- A statement that a criminal records bureau check will be required
- Confirmation that any previous employer may be asked for a reference and that referees will be asked about disciplinary offences relating to vulnerable groups and whether the applicant has been the subject of any safeguarding concerns.

Job Outline and Employee Specification

All applicants should be given a job outline and employee specification. The job outline must clearly state the main duties and responsibilities of the post and explain the post holder's individual responsibility for safeguarding children and/or vulnerable adults as part of their duties.

The employee specification must detail:

- qualifications and experience needed to do the job
- skills and qualities the successful candidate must be able to demonstrate

Include personal qualities someone with a responsible attitude towards safeguarding would hold and assess the candidate against these at interview. Use essential criteria that are specific enough to produce a shortlist of candidates able to perform the duties of the post and provide objective reasons for disqualifying those not meeting them. Only use desirable criteria to reduce your shortlist to manageable numbers.

Short listing

More than one person should carry out short listing. Check all application forms for declarations around criminal convictions. Ensure that dates line up and there are no unexplained gaps in employment history. If there are gaps, contact the applicant to explain, or take this up at interview. Also ask for reasons where there are repeated changes of employment without any clear career or salary progression or a mid career move from permanent to temporary work.

All parts of the application form should be used to assess whether the applicant meets the requirements on the employee specification. Score each applicant against every essential requirement, where it is possible to make an assessment from a written form. Criteria which it is more suitable to assess at interview should be disregarded at this stage.

Only candidates meeting all essential criteria must be short-listed.

Invitation to Interview

- Remind candidates that safeguarding issues will be explored at interview and that identity checks will be made
- Ask them to bring suitable evidence of identity

References

- Take up two references before interview wherever possible
- Request references directly from the referees, using a pro forma and enclosing job details
- Obtain a reference from the current or most recent employer
- Request a reference from the most recent work with vulnerable groups if the applicant has more recently been working outside this field
- Ask if the referee is completely satisfied the candidate is suitable to work with vulnerable groups and if not, to provide specific details of concerns and reasons why
- Follow up any unanswered questions or vague responses with the referee
- Check reference information against application forms and discuss any issues at interview

Interview

The selection process should always include a face-to-face interview. Interview panels should consist of a minimum of two members with no family or close relationship to any applicant.

Prepare in advance a list of "core questions" for all candidates based on the job outline and employee specification. Answers given will lead to further questions that will be specific to each candidate. Other prepared questions, which may differ for each candidate, will relate to details on individual application forms, but must still, be relevant to post requirements.

Ask open questions which invite a longer response, e.g. 'Tell me about.', 'Give an example of.', 'How do you go about...:

- Ask follow up questions to check that they have actually done what they say.
- Avoid hypothetical questions.
- Confirm that the candidate understands the requirement for a CRB check and the kind of information that will be disclosed and ask the candidate if they wish to declare anything in light of the requirement for a CRB check.

Interview questions should be asked to assess:

- the personal attributes of the candidate relating to safeguarding
- knowledge and understanding of safeguarding
- motivations for working with children or vulnerable adults
- emotional maturity and resilience
- values and ethics

If the evidence and concerns gathered in references and at interview are strong, reject the candidate even if they are the only option. Do not appoint 'the best of a bad lot' or 'because there was no-one else'.

Pre-employment Checks

An offer of employment should not be made until the following are received:

- Two satisfactory references
- Verification of the applicant's identity via photographic identity documents wherever possible
- Verification of the right to work in the UK
- Satisfactory CRB Disclosure including an ISA Children's Barred List check for work with children or an ISA Adults Barred List check for work with vulnerable adults
- Verification of applicant's medical fitness to undertake post
- Verification of original qualifications
- Verification of professional status where required e.g. GTC or social worker registration

It is good practice to ensure all checks made are:

- Confirmed in writing
- Documented and retained on a personnel file (in compliance with the Data Protection Act)
- Followed up where they are unsatisfactory or there are discrepancies in the information provided

Criminal Records Bureau Checks

A CRB disclosure can be obtained for any post which is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Standard CRB checks contain the following convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held in England and Wales on the Police National Computer. Standard checks no longer include a check of the old or new barred lists from 12 October 2009 and, therefore, if you are working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adults, you may be required to apply for an Enhanced CRB check

Enhanced checks are for posts involving work in a regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults. In general, the type of work will involve regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of such people. Enhanced checks contain the same information as Standard checks but with the addition of a check of one, or both, of the new barred lists, if requested, and any locally held police force information considered relevant to the job role, by Chief Police Officer(s)

Enhanced CRB checks can only be accessed through organisations registered with the CRB and generally take around 4 weeks to complete. The Criminal Records Bureau Code of Practice, available from <http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.aspx>, requires that disclosure information is used fairly, and handled and stored securely. It is good practice to wait for the result of CRB checks to ensure the candidate is suitable before offering the post.

Organisations must have a procedure in place making clear who is responsible for suitability decisions where disclosure information is revealed and to deal with any appeals against decisions. A risk assessment must be made using all the relevant knowledge of the applicant to determine whether they **pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults** if appointed.

It is not good practice to accept disclosure certificates produced by the applicant and requested by another organisation as additional information not shown on the applicant's certificate may have been disclosed to this employer by the police. CRB disclosures are a 'snapshot in time' on the day issued and are not updated with any new offences committed after this date so organizations also need to decide on how long they will regard disclosures as valid and when they will need renewing. CRB checks do not include overseas information so applicants from abroad should be asked for a 'certificate of good conduct' from their home country or embassy.

Induction

All new employees should have an induction which includes the organisation's policies and procedures relating to child protection and safeguarding.

Code of Conduct

A formalised 'Code of Conduct' will support and protect both service users and staff by setting out the boundaries and guidelines as to what is appropriate behaviour. It is good practice to get staff to sign to confirm they understand and accept the code.

Help and Advice

Safeguarding Team (Buckinghamshire County Council)

Tel : 01296 382178 Careline : 0800 137915 Email : safeguardingadults@buckscc.gov.uk

Safeguarding in Employment Team (Buckinghamshire County Council)

We can provide general advice about the above information but you should contact your HR provider for more specific advice.

Tel : 01296 382222 Email: hrrservicedesk@buckscc.gov.uk

BSVAB (Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board)

Tel : 01296 383288 Email : bsvab@buckscc.gov.uk

