



**Good Practice
Guidance for
Safeguarding
Children in the
Recruitment and
Selection Process**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Experience over recent years shows that it is important for organisations that provide services to children to incorporate into their recruitment and selection procedures measures that help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children, or who are otherwise unsuited to work with them.
- 1.2 Making safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children an integral part of human resources (HR) management in organisations that work with children is an essential part of creating safe environments.
- 1.3 The need for this was highlighted by the Soham case and the findings and recommendations contained in Sir Michael Bichard's report into that case (2004). However, the principles are not new; similar messages appeared from Sir Norman Warner's 1992 report *Choosing with Care*, which examined recruitment and selection in residential children's homes.
- 1.4 In particular the Bichard Report made 2 specific recommendations which are mandatory requirements for schools as of Jan 2010: -
 - 'Head Teachers and school Governors should receive training on how to ensure that interviews to appoint staff reflect the importance of safeguarding children' Rec 16
 - 'From a date to be agreed, no interview panel to appoint staff working in schools should be convened without at least one member being properly trained' Rec 17
- 1.5 Thameside Safeguarding Children Board have developed these Good Practice Guidelines derived from the statutory guidance for schools 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' DCS&F 2006 (now Department for Education). TSCB envisage that all agencies use these good practice guidelines to embed the necessary safeguards into their own existing selection and recruitment policies.
- 1.6 This document is intended to be used by all agencies who deliver services to children and young people in Thameside. The same principles apply whether staff are paid or volunteers.
- 1.7 Where organisations contract agency / temporary staff it is the contracting agency's responsibility to ensure that the agency they use employs the same standards and checks as recommended in this document.

- 1.8 Although this document is aimed at agencies delivering services to children and young people in Tameside its principles are applicable to those delivering services to vulnerable adults.
- 1.9 Staff involved in the selection and recruitment of staff (paid / unpaid) to work with children and young people across Tameside should attend TSCB training on Safer Recruitment details of which can be found at www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk
- 1.10 This training is accredited training developed by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL www.ncsl.org.uk) as a key recommendation from the Bichard Report 2004.
- 1.11 This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following TSCB documents available at www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk :-

TSCB Guidance for Safe Working Practice for Adults who work with children and young people.

TSCB Procedure for Managing Allegations against Adults who work with Children and Young people.

2. Features of a Safer Recruitment Process

2.1 The following points set out generally accepted features of a Safe Recruitment process.

- Set time aside for planning and structuring the process – the estimated time needed to appoint someone is approximately 10-12 weeks.
- Have a clear job role and person specification, setting down the boundaries and expectations of the role including a statement of responsibility and requirements for safeguarding.
- Clear messages about safeguarding should be sent to candidates from the outset
- A statement about commitment to safeguarding should be incorporated in any job advert
- Use application forms not CVs
- Obtain references before interview whenever possible; include specific enquires about the applicant's background in relation to safeguarding and ensure references are given proper weight and consideration in the selection process
- As a minimum, the selection process should involve a face to face interview and wherever possible another method (e.g. role play, presentation, teaching a lesson, participating in activities with children under observation etc).
- Use probing questions at interview into motives, attitudes and behaviours, not just skills and experience. Ask questions that cover safeguarding issues as well as other role related areas.
- Seek information about criminal history and use it appropriately.
- Don't place too much emphasis on vetting checks
- Ensure that it is an ongoing culture of vigilance in the organisation.

3 Safeguarding from the outset – deterring unsuitable applicants

- 3.1 It is important for agencies to have a well planned and structured recruitment process to enable the best opportunity of finding the right person for the role. Adopting a safe recruitment process is essential in terms of maximising opportunities to deter unsuitable people from applying are not missed.
- 3.2 Adopting the key features of a safer recruitment process takes time; typically around 10-12 weeks, from one person leaving the post to the appointment of the successful candidate. Having the right safeguards in place may take more time but this is compensated by the fact that not only are we effectively doing everything we can to safeguard the children we support but also minimising the possibility of recruiting people unsuitable to carry out the role.
- 3.3 Right from the outset of the recruitment process agencies need to be ensuring a very clear commitment to safeguarding is being given; from designing the job description, producing an advertisement through to sending out an application pack there are opportunities to deter unsuitable people from applying.

4. Defining the role

- 4.1 The role should be defined in the job description to include the following information:
- Each job description and person specification / volunteer role profile should be specific to the role. Even if you have recruited to the same post before it is important to review the person specification and job description before advertising as getting this bit wrong has implications throughout the recruitment and selection process.
 - Include qualifications, skills, abilities & experiences – be clear about essential and desirable criteria of which at least one essential criteria must include safeguarding responsibility.
 - Have a clear statement which highlights the responsibility for and contact with children in the role.

- Include the behaviours and attitudes, motivation and values which your organisation would expect to see demonstrated as a commitment to safeguarding and promoting welfare of children
- Be explicit about the boundaries and expectations of the role
- Always review and amend the person specification and selection criteria prior to each new appointment

5. Sending out the right message – advertisement

5.1

- State the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- State the need for CRB disclosure and registration with Vetting & Barring Scheme in advert*. The post will be exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; this means applicants will be required to disclose details of any criminal convictions, cautions or bind-overs they may have incurred. Successful applicants will be required to obtain an enhanced CRB check.
- Include statements about the safeguarding responsibilities of the post in the job description and person specification
- Send information about the organisation's safeguarding policy and practices to candidates.

Example message (DCSF Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education Statutory Guidance).

This authority / agency / school / college is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

This post is subject to an enhanced CRB disclosure.

*To date (Aug 2010) Registration with Vetting & Barring Scheme is under review by new Coalition Government

6. DCSF minimum standards for the application form

6.1 DCSF recommend the following minimum standards to be included on an application form: -

1. **Personal details which must include date of birth –**
 - Use original personal identification documents (such as birth certificate / passport) to check personal details entered on application form.
 - Personal information such as date of birth should not be used to discriminate against a candidate on grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin etc.
2. **Present employment and reason for leaving**
 - This should be confirmed by current employer's reference and any discrepancies fully explored (see section on references).
3. **Full history since leaving school (education and employment or voluntary work)**
 - All gaps / inconsistencies in employment history must be checked out
4. **Qualifications**
 - Original certificates and / or proof of professional status (e.g. registration number) must be produced at interview. Given growing technology it is becoming easier to obtain false documents, employers should ask for original copies.
5. **References**
 - See separate section on references
6. **Personal statement to meet person specification**
 - Safeguarding responsibilities should be included as at least one essential criteria, the interview process will be important in testing out someone's attitudes and motives to working with children (see section on interview).
7. **Signed declaration about criminal record**
 - Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 criminal convictions normally become spent after a period of time which is related to the sentence imposed for the offence. However there are exceptions to this such as when someone is

applying for work with children (paid or unpaid). Home Office and DCS&F policy requires employers to explain the effect of exceptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to applicants and give them an opportunity to declare any criminal record they have.

- All applicants must sign a signed statement that their declaration is accurate and complete
- Information about a criminal record should be provided in a separate envelope marked 'Confidential – Disclosure' and should not be used for short listing purposes. If the candidate is short listed the information disclosed can be discussed with them at interview and taken into account in the selection of the preferred candidate at that stage.
- A self disclosure of any criminal convictions provides the applicant with an opportunity to disclose and discuss any convictions at or prior to interview.
- This self disclosure should not be used as a replacement for a CRB check. It is not unknown for abusers to disclose a trivial criminal offence to persuade the employer they are honest and credible in order to persuade an employer that a formal CRB check is not necessary.
- Having a signed statement that the declaration is true and accurate means that if a CRB disclosure reveals the successful candidate has deliberately lied about his / her criminal background, it is easier for the employer, Police and the regulating agency to take action about the person.

8. Signed declaration that all information is true.

- Having a signed statement that information provided on the application form is true and accurate means that if the successful candidate has deliberately lied about any information given (or deliberately omitted), it is easier for the employer, Police and the regulating agency to take action about the person.
- All declarations must be signed prior to interview. If the application is an electronic application then the interview panel should ensure they have received the original (not photocopied) version of the application form which the candidate must sign prior to interview.

CV's are not acceptable; applicants can hide information in CVs and omit information they do not want you to know about. All applications must be on an application form including the above sections (1-8) as a minimum).

7. Short Listing and References

- 7.1 Have at least two people involved in the process of scrutinising applications and short listing candidates. It is less likely that something will be missed if two people are scrutinising.
- 7.2 Return all forms not fully or properly completed, identify any gaps in the person's history or any discrepancies or inconsistencies.
- 7.3 Use the application form to highlight any information which you would like to explore further at the interview. This could include gaps / inconsistencies in employment history and / or information they have included in their personal statement.
- 7.4 Information provided by referees should also be explored at interview stage.
- 7.5 Short listing decisions should be made objectively using only the job description and person spec designed specifically for the role. The short listing criteria should be applied consistently across all candidates.

References - seeking

- 7.6 A person's past behaviour is the most reliable way of predicting future behaviour. Consequently the information you obtain from references can be very important.
- 7.7 With this in mind, obtain references on short listed candidates prior to interview, wherever possible. This is so that any concerns or issues are identified and can be explored with the candidate at interview, before a final decision is made.
- 7.8 The Bichard Inquiry highlighted that if the school had been aware of information about Ian Huntley's past behaviour he would probably not have been employed.
- 7.9 Ask specific questions in your reference request including: -
Behaviour which might give rise to concern

Allegations about their behaviour towards children
Disciplinary action

Seek verifiable and objective evidence.

- 7.11 Always ask for a reference from the most recent employer
- 7.12 Seek specific confirmation of details and responsibilities of previous post given by applicant and reason for leaving.
- 7.13 If the candidate's referees do not include roles with access to children a third reference will be required, if their employment history includes working with children.
- 7.14 Do not accept 'open references' which often start 'to whom it may concern'; these can often be part of a compromise agreement and do not provide the specific information you are requesting.
- 7.15 Only accept employer references on Headed paper, if in doubt as to the authenticity of the reference it is good practice to contact the referee for confirmation.
- 7.16 Organisations involved in recruiting staff to work with children should recognise the safeguarding value of providing accurate and informative references. However if an employer says it is not their policy to provide references then ask the applicant to nominate another referee.
- 7.17 Careful consideration should be given to any safeguarding benefits to the organisation where a candidate has requested you do not contact their present employer.

References – scrutinising

- 7.18 When reading references it is important to give them active consideration. Has the referee answered your questions? Are there vague or ambiguous statements? Does it read like an agreed reference? If so it probably will not answer the specific questions asked in the request.
- 7.19 Compare the information given by the referee with the information provided by the applicant in his / her application. Are there discrepancies? (It is not unusual for candidates to try and gain an advantage by exaggerating their previous experience, achievements or qualifications).

7.20 If the references reveal any inconsistencies or doubts about the person's suitability, the issue should be followed up and explored with the referee. Keep a written record of telephone conversation and if the issues are significant confirm your understanding in writing to the referee. This is particularly important if the information is such that you decide not to consider the person further or that you need to explore the issues with the applicant

Do not give or accept oral references.

Making the right decision – from interview to selecting the right person.

7.21 It is very important to make the right recruitment decisions so that those who are not suitable to work with children, which may be because they do not have the skills or the right attitude, or at worst because their motives for working are a cause for concern, do not get the opportunity to gain access to children.

7.22 Bichard (2004) said 'it is our job to make it as difficult as possible for devious people to succeed'; the decisions we make at the recruitment stage are key in this.

7.23 There are also huge resource and time implications both in recruiting staff and volunteers, and also in dealing with those who turn out not to be suitable once they have been recruited. It will therefore make the time spent at interview more worthwhile, and save time managing difficult or unsuitable people if we make the right decision in the first place.

7.24 **Features of a safer selection process include: -**

- A range of selection tools – not just an interview
- A selection process which explores motives & attitudes as well as skills and experience
- A selection process which observes interaction with others – role plays, group exercises, debating exercises, supervised interaction with children.
- An interview panel who have been well trained and briefed
- Appropriate involvement from children.

8. Interviews

8.1 Interviews are the most commonly used selection tool, but it is important not to rely on this tool alone. All interviews should be planned and structured, asking probing questions to get relevant information.

8.2 Recommendation 16 & 17 of the Bichard Inquiry state: -

'Head Teachers and school Governors should receive training on how to ensure that interviews to appoint staff reflect the importance of

safeguarding children' Rec 16 (became a mandatory requirement Jan 2010).

'From a date to be agreed, no interview panel to appoint staff working in schools should be convened without at least one member being properly trained' Rec 17 (Became a mandatory requirement Jan 2010)

There should be at least 2 people on the interview panel who should also have been involved in the short listing process.

The structure for each short listed candidate should include some agreed set questions asked of all candidates and also some probing individual questions to gain relevant information about that individual. This may be led by information you have previously highlighted from the candidate's application form, areas of vagueness, frequent changes in employment, information obtained from referees and / or information given in the person specification. This type of interview is called a semi structured interview.

The set questions should reflect the areas covered in the person specification and job description. For example an essential criteria in the person specification could be 'commitment to safeguarding children' a suitable question might be 'tell us about an instance when you have taken action to safeguard a child'.

The selection process should always include a face to face interview; however the selection process should also include at least one alternative selection tool to allow interviewees the best opportunity to assess how suitable a candidate is for the role.

The relevance of selection tools will depend on the nature of the role and each specific organisation, some examples include: -

- Role plays
- Presentation
- Group exercises
- Written exercises
- Aptitude / ability tests
- Personality tests
- Job trials
- Observation of supervised interaction with children

As well as assessing previous experience, skills and qualifications an interview should explore each candidate's attitudes and motives to work with children.

This style of interviewing is often referred to as 'Warner style questions' following the Warner report (1992) which looked at the recruitment and

selection process in looked after children's homes. Warner style questions would ask about: -

- Why someone wants to work with children
- How they deal with difficult issues in relation to work with children
- How individuals ensure they maintain a professional working relationship with children and do not overstep the boundaries of their role

Hypothetical questions should not be asked as candidates will only provide a hypothetical answer in return. This does not show their attitudes or motives to work with children.

For example 'tell me what you would do if a pupil was aggressive?' is a hypothetical question with which the candidate could provide a 'text book' answer. A Warner style question would be 'tell me about a time when you have had to manage a child's difficult behaviour?' – this question draws on the candidate's experiences, their attitudes, values and motives to work with children.

Involvement of children in the selection process can be very powerful and useful but must be well planned.

It is vital to take notes during the interview; it ensures there is a written and factual record to refer to when deciding which candidate should be offered the appointment.

It can be useful to agree 'indicators' to the questions you have agreed. Indicators are what you would / would not expect a candidate to say in response to your questions. Indicators should be used as a guide but not as a scoring / tick list.

Verify qualifications, professional registration and personal identification documents at interview if not already checked.

- Ensure original application form is signed.
- Ensure signed statement of criminal records disclosures is signed
- Ensure self declaration is signed to say all information on application for is accurate and true.

8.3 Interviewing volunteers

The same principles should apply when interviewing volunteers; the interview itself is likely to feel less formal than that of a paid job however this does not mean the interview should not probe into candidate's attitudes, motives and suitability to work with children. This

is even more important for candidates with no experiences of working with children. Examples and advice about interviewing volunteers can be found at

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/recruitment/index.htm

Selecting the right person for the job

- 8.4 Any decision to appoint a suitable candidate must be based on the person specification and the essential & desirable criteria. It should be used to decide whether a candidate is suitable or unsuitable for appointment. It is essential that this is therefore bespoke to the position and regularly reviewed.
- 8.5 Indicators can be used to make decisions and help justify why somebody is suitable / unsuitable that appointment
- 8.6 All decisions should be open to scrutiny and not be biased or discriminatory.
- 8.7 You should keep notes on all interviewed candidates for 6 months in addition to the successful candidate's notes being placed on their personnel file.

Pre Appointment Checks

- 8.9 It is essential that the offer of an appointment to a successful candidate should be made **conditional on 'satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-appointment check'**.
- 8.10 In terms of safeguarding these pre-appointment checks should be made prior to the successful candidate starts in post.
- 8.11 Each organisation will have pre-appointment checks specific to their organisation and / or the specific post. It is important that each employer is clear about which pre-appointment checks are necessary to complete – HR departments will offer support and advice in this area.
- 8.12 Agencies should keep a single central record collating when checks were made on staff and by whom, including identity, qualification requirements, List 99 / PoCA checks (will become

checks with ISA vetting and barring scheme see section 8.15) and CRB check.

Pre Appointment checks include (but not exclusively): -

- Identity
- List 99, POCA, POVA – soon to be Vetting & Barring Scheme
- Independent Safeguarding Board (ISA) registration (under review)
- Criminal Background checks and disclosures
- Qualifications
- Professional status e.g. General Teaching Council (GTC), General Social Work Council (GSWC).
- Eligibility to work in UK
- Health & sickness record
- Overseas application

Identity

8.13 It is essential to verify the successful candidate's identity by referencing to original documents such as birth certificate, passport. Candidates should be invited to bring these along to interview to verify their identity to the satisfaction of the requirements for a CRB disclosure

CRB Disclosure / enhanced CRB disclosure

8.14 Successful applicants will be required to complete a CRB disclosure application requiring the supporting identity documentation. Everyone seeking work with children will require an enhanced CRB disclosure

Independent Safeguarding Board / Vetting and Barring Registration & Checking

Please note as of July 2010 the registration element of the ISA is under review by the New Coalition Government; please register for updates at www.isa-gov.org.uk

8.15 From Nov 2010, when appointing someone new to work with children or vulnerable adults employees will need to check their ISA status. This will determine whether or not you can employ them (or take them on as volunteers), and may affect what activities they can undertake. *(Employees are still required to make checks with necessary lists).*

- 8.16 From Nov 2010 all new appointments (paid / unpaid) for regulated & / or controlled posts working with children and / or vulnerable adults will legally require registration with the ISA. (New appointments can begin registering with the ISA from 25th July 2010) – *under review as of July 2010.*
- 8.17 From Nov 2010 it will be a criminal offence for an employer to allow a barred person, or a person who is not yet registered with the ISA, to work for any length of time in any regulated activity. *It is still an offence to knowingly employ a barred person.*
- 8.18 It will be a criminal offence for an employer to take on a person in a regulated activity if they fail to check that person's status.
- 8.19 For existing staff, registration will be phased in over a five year period (*under review*).
- 8.20 For further information about the Independent Safeguarding Authority Vetting & Barring Scheme visit www.isa.gov.org.uk or TEL: 0300 123 1111
- 8.21 For further information about regulated and controlled activities www.isa.gov.org.uk/PDF/283896_ISA_A4_FactSheetNo3.pdf

Qualifications

- 8.22 The successful applicant should be required to supply original certificates or diplomas for all academic and vocational qualifications required for the post, plus any that are relevant to the post. The documents should be checked to ensure that they refer to the applicant and, because of developing IT and software, to check authenticity with awarding body.

Status

- 8.23 It is a requirement of some posts that the applicant is licensed or registered with a professional body. It is important that professional status and registration is verified.

Eligibility to work in UK

8.24 It is an offence to employ someone who is not eligible to work in the UK so proof of eligibility must be checked before the offer of employment is confirmed. More detailed information can be found at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Health and Sickness record

8.25 This is normally checked in part at least in the request for a reference that is sent to the person's current or most recent employer. However many employers may require additional health checks.

8.26 Finally the appointment should be made conditional to the person satisfactory completing a probationary period (some professions are exempt from probationary periods).

Applicants from overseas

8.27 All elements of the recruitment process and pre-appointment checks should be applied to applicants from overseas in the same way as residents of the UK, but extra time will need to be allocated to obtaining references, checking qualifications and possible criminal records.

8.28 The CRB can only provide information that is held by police forces in the UK, this can include offences committed overseas by UK residents but is unlikely to include offences committed abroad by foreign nationals who have never lived or worked in the UK.

8.29 In all cases where an applicant has worked or been resident overseas in the previous five years, the employer should, where possible, obtain a check of the applicant's criminal record from the relevant authority in that country.

8.30 Not all countries provide that service but the CRB website now includes a list of countries that do and details of how information can be obtained

www.crb.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2243 Some countries will supply a 'certificate of good conduct'.

- 8.31 In cases where a criminal record check is not possible, particular care must be taken with other required checks especially those of identity and qualifications, and to obtain satisfactory references.
- 8.32 Overseas applicants and foreign nationals will be subject to the same requirements as UK nationals in respect of registration with ISA (*ISA registration under review as of July 2010*).