



Norfolk Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Safer Recruitment Guidance

July 2021

Foreword

“For those agencies whose job it is to protect children and vulnerable people, 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” **Richard report, 2004, p12, para 79**

Safe Recruitment processes are needed not only to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from individuals who may present a risk of harm to them, but also to ensure that staff have the personal qualities and resilience needed for working in safeguarding.

Introduction by Chris Robson

Chair of Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

I am pleased to be able to introduce the revised Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Safe Recruitment guidance.

Safe Recruitment processes are vital to ensuring that organisations are taking appropriate steps to ensure that all individuals working for them, either on a paid or voluntary basis, have the necessary qualifications, skills and personal qualities to ensure that children and young people who the organisation works with are effectively safeguarded.

We hope that you will find this guidance useful.



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Section 1

Introduction

All agencies have a responsibility to ensure individuals working/volunteering with children and young people will provide positive experiences and interactions and to ensure they safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

All organisations that employ adults or volunteers to work with children and young people should adopt a consistent and thorough process of safer recruitment to ensure those recruited are the best candidate for the role and are suitable to work with children and young people.

This guidance sets out best practice and should be used to develop and embed a safer recruitment process for all organisations to ensure that people who are employed to work with children and young people are safe to do so.

This guidance has been produced by Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Partnership (NSCP) and has been endorsed at the highest level by the member agencies.

The NSCP has an expectation that these guidelines will be the basis for all recruitment policies no matter what sector you are in.

This guidance supports the principles and recommendations set out in Choosing with Care (Warner 1992), and the Bichard Inquiry (2004), Working Together (2018), Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) Part 3 and guidance from the NSPCC <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safer-recruitment>

Who is this for?

This is for anyone responsible or involved in a recruitment process at any time where the vacancy is for an employee or volunteers to work with children and/or young people.

It is aimed at all agencies no matter how big your organisation is OR how well established your recruitment processes are.

PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO READ THIS GUIDANCE

Safer recruitment is designed to:

- Deter applications from those who are unsuitable to work with children and young people.
- Reject applicants that are identified as unsuitable through the application and interview process.
- Attract the best possible applicants to vacant posts (paid staff and volunteers).

Safer recruitment aims to:

- Prevent unsuitable people working with and reducing risk to children and young people.
- Promote safe working practices and challenge those practices that are poor or unsafe.

Key elements of safer recruitment are:

- Robust recruitment and selection processes.
- Rigorous vetting and checking processes.
- Strong induction, probation, appraisal, safeguarding supervision and performance management systems.
- Ensuring robust processes are in place to manage concerns around employees/volunteers' suitability to work with children and young people.

All managers and those on the interview panel must ensure that they understand the importance of the safer recruitment process and at least one of the interviewers must have attended appropriate safer recruitment training.

Key points to remember:

- The importance of planning your recruitment process.
- The importance of having clear frameworks in place for making and recording robust decisions.
- Not to rely on the recruitment and selection processes alone to ensure your organisation is safe – safeguarding is an ongoing process.
- Never think you have done enough in terms of creating a safe culture.
- Always believe it could happen in your organisation.
- Keep safeguarding high on everyone's agenda. **Never** rely on any one process to keep children and young people safe.
- Ensure clear mechanisms are in place for reporting concerns i.e. Freedom to Speak up, whistle blowing.

Remember:

- No safer recruitment process can eliminate all risks.
- A DBS certificate is not sufficient to consider a person is safe
- Do ensure that new staff have a carefully planned induction and be proactive about ensuring staff make the most of the training opportunities on offer.
- Regular supervision and appraisal can help identify staff that may be under stress or struggling to meet the competencies required in their role and support systems can be put in place.

- Creating a culture in which staff can voice concerns or challenge unsafe practice contributes to safeguarding children and young people within organisations.

Useful contacts and information

- **The Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS)**

The DBS' role is to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Referrals are made to the DBS when an employer or an organisation, for example, a regulatory body, has concerns that a person has caused harm or poses a future risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

- Guidance from Disclosure & Barring Service states that:
A person who is barred from working with children, young people or vulnerable adults will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer with those groups.

An organisation which knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with those groups will also be breaking the law.

If your organisation works with children or vulnerable adults and you dismiss or remove a member of staff or a volunteer because they have harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or you would have done so if they had not left, you must make a referral to the Disclosure & Barring Service (as a legal requirement) and inform the LADO. For contact details of DBS and for more information and guidance please refer to their website www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview

The National DBS will consider whether the person will be 'barred' from working / volunteering with children. 'Barring' is not an automatic consequence of a referral to the National DBS.

However, the applicant needs to be aware that the details of an allegation and the outcome of a safeguarding process could be disclosed on an enhanced DBS certificate if there has been a s.47 strategy discussion, police involvement, child protection procedures and/ or if the local and/ or national DBS contact the LADO service to request information.

You may also need to refer to your professional body as appropriate.

- **The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Team:**

If you have concerns about an adult working/volunteering with or applying to work/volunteer with children and/or young people you must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) team.

The role of the LADO is set out in the HM Government guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021](#). The LADO works within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works or volunteers with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The LADO role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteer, casual, agency and self-employed workers. They capture concerns, allegations or offences emanating both at work and from outside of work; matters in a person's private life, therefore, will consider transferable risk. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case.

They will provide advice, guidance and help to determine whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. Please refer to the [full allegations procedures \(protocol 8.3\)](#) for more information about the role of the LADO and the process that will followed when an allegation is made against a person in a position of trust and responsibility who work/ volunteer with children.

The LADO helps co-ordinate information-sharing with the right people and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim to resolve it as quickly as possible.

Within the scope of Safer Recruitment, the LADO will be able to share relevant safeguarding information about a person who has previously been referred to the LADO service for the employer / organisation to consider as part of their own decision making and risk assessment process. The LADO also makes / receives enquiries with / from Norfolk Police DBS within the Information Sharing Protocol we have with the Police, to support and/ or inform safer recruitment decision-making. Relevant safeguarding related information is shared with and through the LADO service/ process. Please note: the LADO will not be responsible for decisions about whether a person is or is not employed / used as a volunteer, as those decisions will always remain with the employer / organisation.

The LADO service (along with other agencies) may identify situations where consideration is needed as to whether the Complex (organised or multiple) Abuse Protocol should be instigated. This protocol is

instigated and managed by Norfolk Children's Services with Multi-Agency participation. Complex (organised or multiple) abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abusers and a number of related or non-related abused children. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation or may be using an institutional framework or position of trust to recruit children for abuse. Such abuse occurs both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community and within institutions such as residential settings, in day care and in other provisions such as youth services, sports clubs and voluntary groups. Therefore, within the context of safer recruitment, it is important that employers consider background, motivation and personal links between individuals during the recruitment process. [Please refer to the protocol 5.9 for more information and consideration.](#)

If you are unsure or require advice, you can send an email to lado@norfolk.gov.uk and refer to the LADO guidance documents and the LADO referral /consultation form on the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership website (NSCP)
<https://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/how-to-raise-a-concern/local-authority-designated-officer-lado/>

Section 2

Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures

Summary

Safeguarding should be a key concern for all organisations working with children and young people, and this starts with recruitment. Every organisation / agency should have a clear policy on recruiting volunteers and staff, and a clear set of procedures that explain how this will be carried out. There should be no exceptions to this policy once it is agreed. A recruitment policy should cover all aspects of recruitment and meet all legislative requirements. This will include safeguarding, equalities and eligibility to work in the UK.

Principles

A safer recruitment policy should include guidance on:

- Recruitment and interview training
- Who should be involved at various stages of the process
- Writing job descriptions and person specifications, putting together candidate packs
- Advertising the role
- Checks that need to be done, including DBS checks, references, right to work in the UK, fitness and medical checks and qualification checks
- Shortlisting, interviewing (including possible use of value base questions), decision-making and making the offer
- Managing the process and paperwork, contracts and record keeping
- Probationary period and induction

Consider

- A policy needs to be short enough that people will read it and can find the relevant sections quickly, but with enough detail to help organisations make decisions in a safe way (e.g. act within the law and keep children and young people safe). See the 'Useful Information' section below for details on legislation and website links.
- The policy should be in plain English so that everyone can understand it. Consider how you will make it available in other languages and formats. This may include larger font or electronic / audio versions.
- Think about who needs to be involved in developing or agreeing the policy – this should include directors / trustees / governors where your organisation has them. You will also need to consult with any unions or other consultative groups that your staff belong to.

- Your safer recruitment policy needs to fit with, and not contradict your organisation's other policies e.g. safeguarding. It also may need to contain certain requirements from your key funders.
- Think about where you will keep the policy, how people will know that you have one, and how to access it. This is a positive aspect of your organisation, so think about how you want to communicate it. Also make sure you use it throughout the whole recruitment process.
- If you are working in partnership with other organisations / agencies (whether completely or just for specific projects), you will want to check that your safer recruitment policies are aligned. If there are any discrepancies, you need to clarify whose policy you are working to.
- There must be no exceptions to your safer recruitment policy and procedures once they are agreed. However well you think you know someone, organisations need to be completely fair and the same rules must be applied to all paid staff and volunteers.
- If you are using agency staff, your policy needs to reflect the need for the same standards to be applied by the agency.

Useful Information

Make sure your policy complies with the relevant legislation:

- Equal opportunities - Equality Act 2010
<https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance>
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-employers>
- Right to work in the UK - Asylum and Immigration Act 1996; Immigration and Nationality Act 2006 –
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationlaw/immigrationrules/>
www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk
<https://www.gov.uk/legal-right-to-work-in-the-uk/y/>
- Disclosure and barring checks - Rehabilitation of Offenders act 1974 (together with the Exemptions Order 1975); Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (amended by Protection of Freedom Act 2012) –
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/

You also need to make sure your policy meets

- Any relevant statutory standards and requirements [e.g. early years or education] – www.ofsted.gov.uk [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-education)
- Professional standards [e.g. for social workers – [Home - Social Work England](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/)]
- Health Organisations: Designated Safeguarding Children Team and contact details 01603 257164 / safeguardingchildren.norfolk@nhs.net

If you need assistance with drafting your policy, the following organisations may be able to help:

- **SafeNetwork** has online information on writing safeguarding policies
www.safenetwork.org.uk
- **'Safer'** is part of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership
www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/safer-programme
- **Momentum (Norfolk)** is a charity that supports groups and organisations working with children and young people www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk

Section 3

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Summary

The job description and person specification documents are key tools for your organisation to decide the best person(s) for the role in a consistent and fair manner. They identify the most important criteria for taking someone on and assist in determining the right person for the role. Also, once someone is in post, they provide a framework for their day to day activities and lay out the organisation's expectations.

Principles

Job descriptions should:

- Be written in a way that is non-discriminatory, using plain English and avoiding jargon or unexplained acronyms
- Give the date the document was last updated
- State the job title and location
- Explain the job purpose (an overview of the reason why the job exists) and context (the environment of the organisation and role)
- State who the person will report to, and who and what resources they are responsible for (if relevant)
- Cover the main requirements of the job briefly – giving the key duties and responsibilities (usually around 8 criteria), but leaving room for flexibility, and clearly stating the expectations of the role in a measurable way. In addition to the job responsibilities this should include:
 - information explaining what the responsibilities are regarding safeguarding, including the need to update training as relevant
 - the extent of the relationships and contact with children or young people, and the degree of responsibility that the person will have
 - any legislative or statutory responsibilities of the role
 - reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
 - reference to the need for confidentiality and information sharing within the role
- Fit with (but not contradict) other job descriptions within the organisation
- Include any special factors or constraints involved with the role e.g. evening work, specific physical demands

Person specifications should:

- Clearly state the essential attitudes, values and behaviours required (to assess suitability to work with children and young people)
- Commonly include qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge, key competencies and suitability to work with children and young people.
- Give the criteria for the role in a way that is clear, precise and measurable
- Clarify which criteria are essential and which are desirable, ideally giving an indication of the level required to do the job to the standard needed
Consider carefully if a criteria is really essential or merely desirable in order to do the job effectively
- Detail the competencies which reflect the values of the organisation. These set out the behaviours that are needed to apply skills and knowledge in a positive and relevant way
- Reflect the needs of the role, not of anybody currently doing it
- Include a criteria that reflects a commitment to safeguarding in a way that is relevant to the role and the organisation
- Make reference to relevant attitudes and behaviours to assess suitability to work with children and young people.

Consider

- Job descriptions and person specifications can be one document (particularly relevant for smaller organisations).
- Job description statements should start with an 'action' word e.g. organise, supervise, communicate, manage.
- Requiring a qualification to be essential can potentially be discriminatory where relevant experience may make that qualification unnecessary
However, some roles are regulated, and therefore do require specific qualifications.
- Where qualifications are listed in the person specification, the type and duration of the experience required connected with it should also be given.
- Consider how you will assess the various criteria – this could be through the application form, interview, presentation, in-tray exercise, role-play etc. For example, suitability to work with children and young people is likely to be best assessed during an interview using value based questions. Be clear with candidates which elements of the person specification will be assessed via each selection method
- See the section on Interviews for more information on this.

Useful Information

See Section 3a Job Description and Person Specification Framework for an example of job description and person specification.

Section 3a

Job Description and Person Specification Framework

Job Description

Job title

Department / section

Location

Job purpose - (what is done to what or whom with what result – eg what the postholder is responsible for)

Context - (how the role relates/contributes to the work within the section/organisation)

Reports to

Responsible for (people) managerial responsibilities

Responsible for (resources/equipment, money etc.)

Other job information eg specific working conditions

Main duties/responsibilities

Person Specification

Qualifications (consider essential and desirable)

Experience (consider essential and desirable)

Skills/knowledge (consider essential and desirable)

Competencies

Suitability – attitudes, values. behaviours

Section 4

Advertising a Role

Summary

The success of an organisation depends on having the right number of staff, with the right skills and abilities. This is the same for each organisation no matter how big or small. Therefore, the aim of any recruitment process is to find the best possible candidate for each role. Safer recruitment means not only recruiting the person with the skills and experience you need but also the person with the appropriate motivation, values, attitudes and behaviours for wanting to work with either children and/or young people.

Principles

- Every organisation should have clear guidelines on how to format a recruitment advert.
- The advert should be clear and concise containing all relevant information and avoid the use of jargon or abbreviations.
- The pitch should reflect the culture of your organisation and the type of candidate you wish to apply and use this as an opportunity to promote your setting.
- It should contain a statement about safeguarding e.g.

‘This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment’

- The advert should include a statement detailing whether the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 e.g.

‘This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and you will be required to undergo an Enhanced DBS check or Enhanced DBS check with barred list. If you have information to declare it may be protected under the Exceptions Orders and you may not be required to declare it. You will be asked to make a criminal conviction declaration if you are shortlisted for the post. Guidance about whether a conviction or caution should be disclosed can be found on the Ministry of Justice website.’

- The advert should, also, make a clear statement for the need to undertake other pre-employment checks such as Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations check where applicable.
- If you plan to conduct Warner/Safe Care interviews as part of the selection process you must make this clear in the advert and the invite to interview

- Your agency/organisation should have a clear statement on where job adverts will be advertised and this should be followed.
- It is NEVER appropriate to recruit either staff or volunteers by only using methods such as 'word of mouth'.
- You must not either directly discriminate or imply that you will discriminate with the wording of the advert.
- However, it is legally acceptable to ask for certain candidates when it is a requirement of a job (called 'Genuine Occupational Requirements') e.g. a female worker for a women only hostel.

Consider

- Are you restricting some good potential employees or volunteers by the method or language you are using in the recruitment process?
- Have you detailed all relevant information in the job advert – summary of the main duties/skills/qualities required, the location, rate of pay, number of hours, closing date, interview date, where to apply?
- Have you included your safeguarding statement?
- Have you made clear the pre-employment checks needed?
- Have you advertised in a place that does not discriminate against certain groups?
- Have you followed your organisational guidelines?

Useful Information

- If you are a relatively small or new organisation and need some guidance either go to your governing or infrastructure body, or alternatively Acas and government services websites contain lots of useful information. (www.acas.org.uk and www.gov.uk)
- Advertising does not have to be expensive to be extensive – use agencies with wide distribution lists e.g. Momentum (Norfolk), Social Media to get the information out to as many people as possible.

Section 5

Application Form

Summary

An application form enables you to collect a common set of key information from all applicants. A CV should not be accepted instead of an application form as it may not contain all the relevant details needed, and it makes it difficult to compare candidates. Application forms can be designed to make sure you have all the information you need for safeguarding and legal purposes, and should be used for all volunteers and staff. Application forms should be part of the Candidate Information Pack for the role.

Principles

Application forms should require the applicant to provide:

- Full identification details, including current and former names, date of birth, current address and national insurance number
- Contact details, email address and mobile/telephone number
- Details of their education, training and qualifications and grades achieved (depending on role) (including the name of school, college/university, training provider or awarding body and dates of attendance/awards)
- Details of any professional memberships/registrations which are a requirement of the role
- Details of driving licence (for jobs requiring travel)
- Details of all employment (including self-employment, voluntary and paid roles) undertaken since leaving school or in the last 3 years (if just leaving school). This should include start and end dates, name and address of organisations, job titles, reasons for leaving, salary, notice requirements and job purpose for current role
- Information on gaps in employment. This should include dates from and to, as well as the reason
- The name of any existing employees/employer/trustees who is a family member or who they are in a close relationship with
- Details of referees including contact information (at least 2 – one of whom should be the applicant's current or most recent employer). Where an applicant is not currently working with children or young people, but has done so in the past, a reference should also be obtained from the most recent relevant employer
- Details of how they meet the job requirements/person specification, i.e. a personal statement
- Confirmation of whether they need a visa to work in the UK

- Details of any previous cautions/convictions where the post is working with children and young people
- Details of any previous police investigations in respect of them (even when the police took no further action) where the post is for work / volunteering with children and/or young people
 - [Please note that in relation to the above two bullet points Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSE) 2021 advises this is no longer asked at application stage and should be asked for at shortlisting stage. Additionally, where a criminal conviction declaration is submitted electronically KCSE 2021 asks that the candidate then signs a hard copy at interview].
- Details of any previous safeguarding investigations or processes in respect of them (whether whilst working/ volunteering and/or in their private life) where the post is for work / volunteering with children and/or young people
- Confirmation that the individual is not disqualified from work with children and young people or subject to sanctions imposed by a regulatory or professional body and that the information in the application form is complete and accurate.

Consider

- The format of the application details required. The form length and questions need to be proportionate and relevant to the role and level of responsibility. This means you may not have one standard form for all staff and volunteers, but will need a couple of alternatives.
- You will need to make application forms accessible where this is requested and this can either be by providing an alternative format e.g. larger font, or offering a reasonable adjustment to the process, for example allowing an individual to complete the form over the phone.

Section 6

Information Pack for Applicants

Summary

The candidate application pack is the set of information that you will send out /make available electronically to prospective applicants. The presentation of the pack is as important as the careful wording of the advertisement as both need to demonstrate the professionalism of the setting and the commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

Principles

A good application pack should contain all the information a prospective applicant will need, to enable them to provide an application that is of the quality to be shortlisted for interview.

Your application pack should include:

- An introductory letter that will contain much of the information in the job advertisement i.e. the purpose of the post, terms and conditions, hours, location, closing and interview dates, information on how to complete the application form
- Job description and person specification
- Application form including procedures for obtaining references
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application, as relevant. Please see DBS guidance
- The organisation's safeguarding policy
- Statement about commitment to safeguarding in the advert and the info pack What to bring if the applicant is called for interview i.e. original qualification certificates, proof of identity/right to work in the UK, completed enhanced DBS application form and relating documents (where required)
- Relevant information about the organisation, the recruitment process and statements of relevant policies such as child protection policy, equal opportunities and the recruitment of ex-offenders
- The process for confirming that the post applied for will not impact on the candidate's health or their health impact on the job. (Note this cannot be explored prior to an offer of employment being made)
- Details of who to contact if they need the application form in an alternative format, or are invited to interview and require support to attend an interview
- A statement about Warner/Safe Care interviews if these are being conducted

- You could also give a telephone number or email address for the applicant to contact if they have any queries about the application.

Consider

- Is all the information included in the pack up to date?
- Does the pack include information about your organisation's safeguarding policy and procedures?
- Does the pack clearly set out the extent of the relationships and contact with children and young people, and the degree of responsibility for children and young people that the person will have in the position to be filled?

Useful Information

- For information on preventing illegal working in the UK see guidance document which contains acceptable documents for proving the right to work
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

Section 7

Interview Preparation and Process

Summary

The key purpose of an interview, alongside other selection methods you may also be using, is to identify the most suitable candidate for a post. Also the recruitment process is time consuming and therefore making the right decision in the first place is very important.

Interviews are the most commonly used selection tool, but it is important not to rely on an unstructured or unplanned interview. Questions should be identified prior to interview to provide consistency of information across the candidates, ensure you obtain all the relevant information you need to make a decision and allow you time to consider the wording of questions to ensure these are non discriminatory. You will need to decide your scoring framework which must be based on the job requirements/person specification prior to the interview and other selection activities.

Principles

- Only shortlist candidates for interview where their application form demonstrates they meet the job requirements/person specification
- Interviewers should be the same people who have shortlisted the candidates.
- The selection process should usually include a face-to-face interview, however this may be held virtually.
- If holding virtual interviews consideration should be given to the impact this may have on your interaction with the candidate and also if there may be others present.
- In addition to interviews, a range of selection tools can be used to allow you the best opportunity to assess how suitable a candidate is for the role, how well they meet the person specification and allow the candidate a number of opportunities to demonstrate their skills and qualities. You will need to decide how you will score these activities in a fair and transparent way in relation to the person specification.

The following are examples of different selection tools that could be used alongside interviews. Consideration should be given to the skills and competencies they will measure and the relevance of the exercise to the post:

- Role play

- Presentation
- Group exercises
- Written exercises
- Aptitude/ability tests
- Personality questionnaire

You need to let candidates know which selection activities will be assessing which elements of the job description/person specification.

- Questions should explore an individual's attitudes and motives to work with children and young people as well as their previous experience of working with children and young people (if any) or their relevant qualifications or skills.
- Specific questions must be asked about previous police investigations and/ or safeguarding investigations that a person had been subject to (whether founded to be true or not and what happened as a result).
- Interviews should not be on a 1:1 basis and should be conducted by an interview panel of at least two people.
- Interviewers should be well briefed and trained. You may wish to consider including a service user.
- The job description and person specification should be used for shortlisting candidates and deciding on interview questions.
- It is vital to make notes during an interview, to provide a written factual record to refer to when deciding which candidate should be offered a post.
- Involvement of children and young people in selection processes can be really powerful and useful but must be well planned and relevant.
- Whilst it is not permitted to ask questions about the candidates' health at interview stage, it is ok to ask if the candidate if any reasonable adjustments are needed to enable them to perform the role.

Consider

- How will the interview panel plan the interview and the questions?
- Is the interview panel clear on what they are required to do and what they are looking for in the applicant's responses including following up any unexplained gaps in employment?
- Have you allowed sufficient time for the interview and to record answers and scores?
- Do the questions test the candidate's motivation to work with children and young people and provide opportunities to demonstrate their suitability for the role?
- Have you provided a recording format for the interview panel to use? Does this format help the interviewer to show whether the candidate meets the selection criteria and whether there are any concerns about a candidate?
- Are arrangements in place for someone to take copies of documents provided by applicants e.g. qualification certificates?
- Ensure that all notes made by interviewers are factual and fair and relate to your framework for assessing candidates, who can ask to see notes

made. You also need clear notes to be able to feedback to unsuccessful candidates who ask for it.

Be aware of unconscious bias and confirmation bias tells that this heavily influences recruitment decisions. [What is Unconscious Bias? - YouTube Unconscious bias \(enei.org.uk\)](#)

Interviewing volunteers

The same principles apply when interviewing volunteers, but it is important to make interviews more informal than for paid staff. They should be very much a two-way process about selling the volunteer role to them. However, the interview should still probe into the candidate's attitudes and motives and their suitability for work with children and young people. This is even more important for candidates who perhaps have no previous experience of work with children and young people.

Useful Information

Voluntary Norfolk:

<https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/voluntary-sector-support/volunteermanagement/>

Section 8

Developing a framework for Warner (Preliminary) Interviews and Warner Questions

Summary

A 'Warner interview' is part of a Safer Recruitment Process and aims to minimise the possibility of appointing individuals who may pose a risk to children / young people and keep them safe from emotional and physical harm. The purpose of the Warner interview is to identify whether or not the candidate is suitable to work with children and/or young people. Also, if potentially unsuitable candidates are aware that they are required to attend a Warner Interview, they may be deterred from applying.

The Warner interview assists the employer to appoint staff whose values, attitudes and behaviours are consistent with safeguarding children. The skill of conducting an effective Warner interview lies in the competence of staff to probe beyond the candidate's initial answer and to effectively interpret and analyse the candidate's responses to questions.

Principles

- 'Employers should use preliminary personal interviews as a standard part of establishing a fuller picture of the character and attitudes of short listed candidates for all posts in children's homes' (Warner 1992).
- Warner interviews will explore the candidate's motives for working with children and young people, their values and behaviours, emotional resilience, ability to cope with stress, how they deal with anger, and how they form appropriate professional relationships and maintain boundaries. The interview will also address attitudes to the control and punishment of children and young people, issues of power, sexuality, diversity, and probe candidates willingness to protect children and young people from those who may abuse.

- The outcome of the Warner interview must be made available to the individuals who will be the main interview panel before this part of the selection process commences. The main interview panel must be free to explore any areas of doubt about the person suitability to work with children and young people raised by the Warner interview.
- Training in these interviewing techniques is essential for individuals with responsibility for recruiting who undertake Warner interviews. 'No person should be allowed to take part in interviews without having received thorough training in interviewing techniques'. Warner 1992
- Individuals with responsibility for conducting Warner interviews also need to have undertaken training in recruitment, have a sound knowledge and commitment to safeguarding children, have a good understanding of Norfolk's Safeguarding Procedures and have an awareness of how sex offenders target and groom children and/or young people and manipulate staff in organisations.
- The letter of invite to interview should make it clear that the selection process will involve a Warner interview and who will be conducting the interview.
- Warner interviews are not essential for all individuals working with children and young people outside of the residential sector but it is strongly recommended that Warner style questions be included in interviews for relevant roles eg professional posts, as well as questions about the applicant's qualifications, previous work experience, competencies etc.
- It is unsafe to undertake Warner questioning in an interview unless the individuals with responsibility for recruiting are competent to interpret and analyse the candidate's answers, probe beyond the candidates initial responses to form a judgement about the person's suitability to work with children and young people together with being able to support the candidate to deal with the impact of sharing their experience with the interview panel.
- Organisations should determine the posts for which full Warner interviews will be undertaken and clarify this in their Recruitment Policy. Organisations may wish to consider the nature and degree of contact with vulnerable children and young people .e.g. Looked after Children, disabled children, sick children, children and young people at risk of significant harm, individuals who work on their own with a child or young person.

Consider

- How you will decide which posts require a full Warner interview?
- How you will decide which posts will require Warner style questions to be incorporated in the interview?

- How will you ensure that staff conducting Warner Interviews are well trained?
- How will your Warner interviewers record the interview?
- How and where you will store the interview records and who will have access to them?
- How your organisation will feedback the outcome of the Warner interview to the candidate if they request this?
- What procedure you will follow if the Warner interview suggests the candidate is unsuitable to work with children and young people?
- How you will ensure individuals undertaking recruitment will receive training in Warner interviewing?
- How you will monitor the competence of individuals who conduct Warner interviews?

Useful Information

Your staff can access safeguarding children training from the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership. They have a course on sexual abuse which cover the behaviour of sex offenders.

<http://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/nscb-training/>

- Check with your agency training provider for Safer Recruitment training.

Section 9

Value-Based Interview

Summary

Values based interviewing (VBI) is part of the safer recruitment process. In common with Warner interviews, the value-based interview is conducted separately to the standard competency panel interview by interviewers trained in value-based recruitment. Interviewers will design interview questions which reflect the organisation's values and behaviours to explore the candidate's motivations, attitudes, and behaviours in order to assess their suitability to work with children and young people. VBI enables the interviewers to get to know the real person, taking into account experiences from all areas of their life, not just previous paid employment

The value-based recruitment approach is recommended by the NSPCC. There are resources and guidance on VBI on the NSPCC Website [Safer recruitment - it's a win-win situation | NSPCC Learning](#) A number of serious case reviews e.g. the review into the nursery worker Vanessa George, who sexually abused children in her care, have considered that the use of VBI may well have alerted organisations to the abuser's lack of suitability to work with children and young people. VBI is employed widely across the NHS with the intended outcome of recruiting people to work with patients who share the NHS values and who will deliver safe patient care with compassion and integrity.

What are values?

Values are a set of enduring beliefs which a person holds about what is right or wrong, what is good or desirable. Values influence behaviour and are relatively stable.

The first step in Values Based Recruitment is to identify the values of the organisation. These describe a positive work culture and identify how staff should behave towards their service users and to each other. For organisations working with children and young people these also need to describe a positive safeguarding culture.

Organisational values are best identified by leaders, staff and service users working together. The values are then made explicit in the organisation's communication with service users, through communication with staff,

induction, training, supervision and appraisal. The values are embedded in recruitment processes and are clear in the job advert, person specification and job description. Candidates invited for interview are made aware of the values and informed that a VBI will be part of the selection process.

Some examples of workplace values identified by organisations working with children and young people are;

Compassion, Integrity, respect, dignity, collaboration, service user focused.

The NSPCC have identified four values for organisations working with children and young people and for embedding in the safer recruitment process

- establishing and maintaining professional boundaries and professional integrity
- establishing and maintaining relationships with children
- taking action to protect a child
- demonstrating resilience and ability to cope with pressure.

Once values have been agreed, organisations identify the positive behaviours they need to see from staff and the behaviours which are not consistent with each value and would be of concern. The value-based interviewers will ask questions to obtain behavioural examples of how the candidates has demonstrated this value in their past. They will listen very carefully and follow up with probes/ supplementary questions to explore in more depth and acquire further evidence that the person's behaviour is consistent with the values. Follow up questions will explore learning and reflection.

Value based interviewing involves a great deal of preparation and employs advanced interviewing techniques. It is important that only people trained in this approach conduct these interviews

Section 10

Invite to Interview

Summary

The letter inviting candidates to interview should be clear, concise and provide all the relevant information so that they are able to attend on time, be clear about the interview expectations and have had an opportunity to fully prepare.

Principles

The letter should include:

- The date, start and finish time, venue, information about available parking, who to ask for on arrival and the names and job titles of the interviewers.
- The candidate should know both the format of the interview (e.g. competency based) and whether this will include any additional tests or presentations together with length of tests, presentation title, equipment available etc.
- Candidates should be made aware if a preliminary personal interview (Warner interview) is to take place or whether the interview will include Warner type questions - see Section 8.
- If an online interview – guidance on how this will be run and what would happen if there are problems on either side with connection.
- Contact details of the person candidates need to notify of any support they will need in order to attend the interview e.g. they may need someone to interpret with sign language.
- Notification that candidates are required to bring all original qualification certificates which are essential requirements of the job.
- The requirement to bring to the interview verification of registration with the relevant professional body or the registration number (where this is stated as a requirement of the role on the job description or person specification).
- The requirement for the organisation to establish both proof of identity and proof that the candidate is eligible to work in the UK and ask the candidate to bring the relevant documents with them. (You may wish to provide a list of acceptable documents with the letter).
- Notification of the procedures to be followed in relation to checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Consider

- What information the candidate has already provided as part of the application process?
- What information you have already provided in the advert and job pack?

- Have you made it clear what the candidate will be expected to do and allowed them time to prepare accordingly (either prior to the day or on the day)?
- What documents you expect to see on the day of interview?
- Have you followed your agency guidelines?

Useful Information

- If in doubt, ensure you either contact your HR department **OR** alternatively, a governing or infrastructure body.
- Acceptable identity documents for DBS checks
<https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/documents-the-applicant-must-provide->
- Acceptable documents for checking entitlement to work in the UK (see relevant section of the current guidance)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

Section 11

Offer of employment

Summary

Offers of employment should always be subject to receipt of satisfactory pre-employment checks, as detailed in earlier sections. Often this is carried out in two stages - the conditional (verbal) offer and written confirmation. Please note that a verbal offer of employment constitutes a contract in employment law in the same way as a written offer. Once the successful candidate has been offered and accepted the appointment, it is good practice to then tell unsuccessful candidates the outcome of their interview and provide meaningful feedback if they request it.

Principles

- Offers should always be conditional until all pre-employment check have been returned and determined as satisfactory.
- Offers put in writing must be consistent with any verbal offers made.
- Offers should include the following:
 - Job Title and the offer of that role
 - Any conditions that apply both pre and post employment
 - The terms of the offer
 - The start date and the probationary period
 - Any action the candidate needs to take e.g. written acceptance of the offer
- For unsuccessful candidates, it is good practice to send written confirmation of your decision and to offer feedback should it be required. Ensure you include a named person for this.
- Remember it is preferable to not recruit at all rather than recruiting someone not quite right for the role.
- The offer of employment should be followed up with the full written statement of the terms and conditions of employment (Contract of Employment) used by your organisation and again this should detail that it is subject to satisfactory pre- employment checks together with a probationary period. The Contract of Employment should be issued before the successful candidate commences work and by law should be issued at the latest by day one of employment. If it is not possible to complete pre-employment checks before the candidate commences employment then a risk assessment should be completed.

Consider

- Do you have all the information you need to make an informed decision?

- Are you clear about the terms you will be offering the candidate?
- Are you satisfied that the person you have chosen meets your criteria, bear in mind this can be challenged?
- Have you followed your agency guidelines?
- Who will make arrangements for the individual's induction into the organisation so they are effective in their role as soon as possible and also feel part of the team at an early stage?
- Who will have responsibility for reviewing the individual during the probationary period to ensure their suitability for undertaking the duties of the role and working with children and young people is established and that the candidate is aware of who this person is?
- Who will have responsibility for ensuring all pre-employment checks are completed, including ensuring references have been received and are satisfactory, the relevant Disclosure and Barring check is taken up (where required by the role) and that the potential impact of a job on a candidate's health and their health on the job is established? For a full list of pre-employment checks required for your sector please ask your HR department or alternatively, a governing or infrastructure body.
- Safeguarding training should take place during induction so that new recruits know how to recognise harm to children and young people and who to speak to if they have concerns. More detailed safeguarding training should take place as soon as possible. New starters need to receive access to the organisation's safeguarding policy.

Useful Information

- Information to include in written statement of terms and conditions of employment <https://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions/written-statement-of-employment-particulars>

Section 12

Guidance on Requesting a Reference and Reference Content

Summary

Obtaining references is a key stage in safer recruitment as it is an opportunity to gain outside verification of the suitability of the candidate. When carried out thoroughly, it should be a useful tool in making the final decision as to whether to employ or not. However, references are not foolproof but by following the principles below, possible issues can be minimised.

Principles

- Where possible take up two references prior to interview (please note you are not able to ask questions in relation to health in references taken up before an offer of employment is made).
- If references cannot be taken up until after the interview do not appoint until satisfactory references have been received.
- Do not accept pre-written references or 'open references' e.g. those addressed 'to whom it may concern' and follow up any references where you are concerned about their authenticity.
- Ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source.
- References are most useful when you ask referees to comment on the candidate's performance in relation to the job description and specification, so ensure you supply a copy of this.
- A reference request will usually contain questions to confirm:
 - the name and position of the person providing the reference and how they know the candidate
 - the applicant's post with the organisation, their employment dates, salary, key duties, reason for leaving and date of birth
 - the applicant's suitability to meet the job description and person specification of the job they have applied for
 - whether they have been subject to or connected with a disciplinary investigation
- For posts working with children and young people it is also acceptable to ask for information regarding the following:
 - if they are satisfied that the applicant is suitable to work with children and young people (and if not what the concerns are and the reasons why the applicant is considered unsuitable)
 - the candidate's commitment to safeguarding

- details of any disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to involving issues related to the safety and welfare of children or young people (including any which the disciplinary sanction has expired, and the outcome of those). *[In KCSE 2021 where information is given in respect of disciplinary investigations this should be verified as accurate by the headteacher, where the referee is not the headteacher (School/College applicable)]*
- details of any allegations or concerns that have been raised about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children or young people or behaviour towards children or young people, and the outcome of those concerns e.g. whether the allegations or concerns were investigated, the conclusion reached and how the matter was resolved
- knowledge of any criminal convictions or cautions the applicant may have (where the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974). The reference should state that the post is exempt from the provisions
 - whether the employer would re-employ the candidate
- It is acceptable to ask for references from any previous employer not just the ones identified by the candidate but you will need to obtain permission from the candidate to do this.
- Best Practice is that references should be given by Managers who knew the candidate well - not just a colleague or individuals with little awareness of the candidate's performance. *[In KCSE 2021 references should be given by a senior person with appropriate authority].*
- Be alert to what is not said - it is acceptable to telephone referees and ask for clarification - just ensure that the date and time of the conversation is written down together with the details provided.
- Accepting telephone references alone is not recommended.
- Compare the information provided on the reference to the details provided by the candidate on the application form and investigate any discrepancies.
- Referees must be reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure the information they provide is accurate and that the applicant may have access to the reference under the Data Protection Act 2018. It is advisable to include a statement to this effect on your reference request.
- In certain circumstances e.g. college leavers or those returning from a career break, it may not be possible to get a work-based reference. Due consideration must be given as to alternative referees who can comment on the candidate's character and suitability for the post.
- There is no legal obligation to provide a reference if the referee is unhappy about providing one, however they may be prepared to confirm the work history of the candidate.
- Relevant references are just as necessary for people undertaking voluntary roles.
- Small, local organisations should not use local knowledge of that person, or 'personal friends or family' as a reference.

Consider

- What is it you need to know to determine their suitability for the post?
- Does your pro-forma ask the right questions of the referee?
- Has the reference raised any concerns?
- Do you need to contact other previous employers? – If so, obtain the candidates permission, if the candidate refuses you may be in the situation where you are unable to proceed with the employment.
- Are there any gaps in employment that need investigating?
- What to do if you are having difficulties obtaining a reference?
- Have you followed your agency guidelines?

Useful Information

- Use your agency safeguarding leads to discuss what you require from a reference and then if you have any concerns about information provided (or not).
- The Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) can listen to any concerns you may have and talk through the options available to you.
- For more information on references and data protection go to www.ico.org.uk and find 'The employment practices code', in addition [Quick guide to the employment practices code \(ico.org.uk\)](#)
- Questions about health or disability
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance>
- Posts exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/dbs-checking-service-guidance/eligibility-guidance?view=Binary>

Section 13

Guidance on the Use of Volunteers

Summary

Volunteers and students can make up a large part of your workforce and are seen by children and young people as safe and trustworthy adults. However, assumptions cannot be made as to their suitability to work with children and young people. Organisations should carry out a risk assessment of each volunteer or student working with children and/or young people. This is good practice and ensures that these adults are not allowed inappropriate access to children and young people.

Principles

- The same kind of process should apply when an organisation is recruiting volunteers to work with children and young people as for employed staff (including obtaining references).
- Volunteers fill a very wide variety of roles, the recruitment process needs to be applied with common sense and the process may need to be adapted to cater for particular roles and sensitivities.
- The more responsibility the volunteer has, the more detailed and in-depth the selection process should be.
- Use the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) information to guide your process and assess whether a DBS check is required.
- The principle safeguards and features of the recruitment and selection process should be the same regardless of how the recruitment is undertaken.
- It is important to consider the volunteer's motives and attitudes for wishing to do this activity, just as you would a paid member of staff.
- The volunteer's roles and responsibilities should be clearly stated but this should not be a full job description.

Consider

- Does a parent volunteer who is one of a group helping out on a one-off occasion such as a day trip, a fete, a sports day or a school disco have to go through the same rigorous process as a volunteer who will have an ongoing role that involves regular contact with children and/or young people?
- If you have applied a more informal process how are you going to ensure children and young people are safeguarded whilst that person is volunteering e.g. not allowing unsupervised contact at any time?
- Should the role be subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service Check?
- Have you stated what you expect the volunteer to do when volunteering?

Useful Information

- If you need more information there are several agencies that could help:
 - Momentum (Norfolk) 01603 819135
 - Voluntary Norfolk 01603 614474
 - WNVCA 01553 760568
- The NCVO website has a useful information on recruiting volunteers:
[NCVO Finding and recruiting volunteers](#)
- For information on the Disclosure and Barring Service see
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/dbs-checks-organisations1/>

Section 14

Guidance on the Use of Agency Workers and Contracted Out Services

Summary

In many cases an organisation's arrangements for covering short-term vacancies will rely on workers provided by employment agencies or businesses (where services have been contracted out). In addition, many organisations will use contractors that mean staff employed by the contractor will work with or provide services for children and young people for whom the organisation is responsible. When you initially set up these arrangements with the provider organisations you should check that their recruitment practice is to the same standard as your organisation

Principles

- All staff employed through agencies or contractors should have been through the same best practice processes, as highlighted in this guidance, in line with directly employed staff .e.g. completed an application form (and anomalies explored), attended an interview, right to work in the UK checked, 2 satisfactory references obtained, evidence provided of qualifications, and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check completed (where relevant). Only candidates with satisfactory DBS checks should be provided. [KCSE 2021 (para 269) states that where there are matters disclosed on a DBS cert the school/college must obtain a copy of the certificate from the agency].
- In addition, you will need to check that any relevant training has been undertaken e.g. safeguarding training, moving and handling training.
- It is your responsibility to seek the appropriate assurances/confirmation that best practice is being followed.
- Organisations should do on-going monitoring/sample checks for compliance with safer recruitment.

Consider

- When you engage the services of agency workers/contractors or outsource services, how you will establish the provider's safer recruitment processes?
- How will you check that safer recruitment is being adhered to?
- How will you undertake the on-going monitoring needed?

Useful information

- Members of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation
<http://www.rec.uk.com/member-directory/details-rec-members>

Appendix 1

