

SAFER RECRUITMENT

GOOD PRACTICE

GUIDE

“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....”

Sir Michael Bichard Inquiry Report 2005



Doncaster
Metropolitan Borough Council

1 BACKGROUND AND THE WIDER CONTEXT

Although the immediate impetus for the safer recruitment initiative about safer recruitment came from the Soham case, and Sir Michael Bichard's report, which highlighted flaws and shortcomings in the recruitment process that allowed Ian Huntley to be employed as a caretaker at Soham Community School, the principles and measures this Good Practice Guide recommends are not new.

Safer Recruitment is also one strand of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, a key part of the government's strategy for children and young people that was set out in *Every Child Matters (ECM)*. Staying safe is one of the five outcomes for children that underpin that strategy, and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key theme of the ECM programme and Children Act 2004.

Schools and Governors should share a commitment to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Schools and Governors should:

- have senior managers that are committed to children and young people's well-being and safety
- be clear about people's responsibilities to safeguard and promote children and young people's welfare
- have effective recruitment and human resources procedures, including checking all new staff and volunteers to make sure they are safe to work with children and young people
- have procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers
- make sure staff get training that helps them do their job well
- have procedures about how to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people

Finkelhor Model

This model helps to explain the process of child sexual abuse and has been developed by an American researcher (D Finkelhor *Child Sexual Abuse : New Theory and Research 1986*).

In summary Dr Finkelhor describes a four stage process culminating in acts of abuse as follows:

- 1 The abuser develops a motivation to abuse.
- 2 The abuser overcomes his or her internal inhibitors.
- 3 The abuser overcomes external inhibitors – essentially other people who might have prevented abuse and protected the child.
- 4 The abuser overcomes the resistance of their victim.

Applying the Finkelhor Model to the Stages of Recruitment

If we consider the steps of the recruitment process we can begin to apply our understanding of that offending process and build in activity that:

- deters applicants with inappropriate motivations, because they do not see the job context as a soft target or because they do not see the likelihood of opportunities to abuse.
- prevents opportunities for abuse in the work context, by managing the environment, assessing risk and creating clear expectations of standards of behaviour and involves the whole workforce in protection.
- detects inappropriate behaviour or abuse at the earliest opportunity and responds decisively by rejecting the applicant or challenging the member of staff/volunteer concerned.

Stages of Recruitment

Applying the model to the stages of recruitment:

- 1 Invite applications (DETER)
- 2 Interview applicants (REJECT)
- 3 Appoint and induct staff (PREVENT)
- 4 Develop and maintain safe school culture (PREVENT and DETECT)

Features of Safer Recruitment

- an open culture, no secrets
- a belief that it could happen here
- clear procedures for reporting concerns about the behaviour of staff and volunteers towards children
- support for children and adults who do raise concerns and commitment to take action on any concerns raised
- a code of conduct that makes clear what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
- policies, procedures and code of conduct that are not just documents but are used, with people made being accountable for following them
- training
- good induction and use of probationary periods
- a commitment from all who work there to safeguard and protect children and to maintain an ongoing culture of vigilance

2 A SAFER RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Stage 1 - Define the Role

- Produce a job description and person specification
- Include in these skills, abilities, experience, behaviours and attitude/motivation towards children and young people
- Make clear the boundaries and expectations in terms of relationships with children

Sample wording for job description:

To promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people

To ensure that the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures are promoted within the school and adhered to by all members of staff

Sample wording for person specification:

Evidence of working within a child protection culture

Evidence of promoting child welfare and safety

Understanding and commitment to child welfare and safety

Knowledge of child protection procedures

Stage 2 - Advertising

- Include a clear statement regarding the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and the need for an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure
- Include statements about the safeguarding responsibilities of the post in both the job description and the person specification
- Send information about the school's Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy to candidates as part of the application pack

Sample statement on advert:

The school 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 check.

Stage 3 - Application Forms

- Do not accept CVs as part of the application process, only fully completed application forms should be considered
- If you receive an e-mailed application form then ask the candidate to sign this if they are invited to interview

Stage 4 - Disclosure of Criminal Convictions (DCC) Form

- All shortlisted applicants should be sent a DCC form when they are invited to interview and asked to bring the completed form with them to interview

- If the candidate discloses any conviction or caution you can then explore these at interview with them
- You will still need to complete a full Enhanced CRB check for the successful candidate

Stage 5 - Agree Shortlisting Criteria and Process

- Shortlisting criteria must be based on the person specification and any relevant elements of the job description
- These criteria must be applied consistently to all candidates' applications
- Ensure these include the specific criteria relating to working with children
- Make sure the criteria (i.e. job description and person specification) are reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date

Stage 6 - Scrutinise Applications and Shortlist

- Ensure appropriate time is put aside for all members of the panel to shortlist together
- Should be more than one person
- Identify any gaps in the application or inconsistencies that you need to explore further with candidates at interview
- Apply the shortlisting criteria equally
- Document the process and decisions and keep this

Stage 7 - Request References

- At least one reference must be from current or most recent employer where the individual has previously been in paid work.
- If the individual does not have a previous or current employer then you should consider whether it is possible to get a reference from a current or previous educational establishment eg school, college or university. Where this is not possible then two personal references should be sought.
- If have previously worked in childcare organisation but these are not listed as a reference then should also consider requesting a reference from this organisation
- Use the Council's recommended Reference Request Form for either employer or personal references
- Ensure that any employer reference is sent to a work address and not a referee's home address
- If the reference is from a school, always send to Headteacher or Chair of Governors (c/o school address)
- If applicant asks that references are not sought until after interview then this can be agreed, provided that references are taken at that point

Stage 8 - Scrutinise References

- Scrutinise references prior to interviews
- Ensure you carefully read references and consider if there is anything you need to follow up at interview with the candidate
- Compare the information provided on the reference with what was provided on the application form and ensure that these match
- If you have any concerns or any information on the reference is missing, chase this up with the referee

- If you discuss a reference over the telephone with the referee, ensure you make a written note of the conversation and also ask the referee to confirm the discussion in writing to you

3 **MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS**

Good Practice

- Should consider using a range of selection tools and not just rely on an interview
- Ensure that during the selection process you explore candidates' motives and attitudes as well as skills and experiences
- Ensure all those involved have been fully trained and briefed on their role during the selection process
- Use selection tools that allow you to assess candidates' interaction with other adults and with children
- If you use children in the selection process then ensure this is appropriately supervised and structured
- If you employ agency staff or use volunteers, ensure you still maintain high standards during your selection

Stage 1 - Decide what Selection Tools you are going to use

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

- Role play with another adult e.g. dealing with a parental complaint, dealing with a member of staff
- Presentation, either prepared beforehand or to be produced on the day
- Group exercises to see how they work within a team
- Written exercises to test theory or technical knowledge
- Lesson observations
- Staff Council interviews or other interactions with children which can be observed

Stage 2 - Conducting Interviews

- Only those involved in shortlisting can be on the interview panel
- Should be at least two people
- Ensure you have structured questions that you have agreed beforehand and you know who is going to ask the questions and who is recording the answers
- Use supplementary questions to probe any gaps or vagueness in answers (these will be different for each candidate)
- Ensure questions ask candidates about their own experience rather than asking hypothetical questions, questioning experience is more likely to highlight any possible child safeguarding concerns
- Ask about attitudes towards children and child protection and motives for working with children
- Ensure you provide candidates with information about the school and the role as well as listening to them
- Clearly record answers and document decisions and keep these

Sample Interview Questions:

Have you ever felt uncomfortable about a colleague's behaviour towards children in a previous job? What were your concerns, what did you do, and how was the issue resolved?

Safeguarding children is an important part of our work. Can you give me some examples of how you would contribute to making the organisation a safer environment for children?

Tell me about a time when a child or young person behaved in a way that caused you concern. How did you deal with that? Who else did you involve?

Why do you want to work with children? What do you think you have to offer? Give an example of how children have benefited from contact with you.

Bullying is often a serious issue that has to be dealt with in all areas of work with children. In your experience what is the best way to deal with it? How did your previous organisation tackle the problem?

Stage 3 - Areas of Potential Concern

During your selection activities you may hear things that would cause you concern and which you would then need to explore further with the candidate. These may include:

- Lack or no understanding or appreciation of children's needs or expectations
- They appear to want the role in order to meet their own needs rather than the needs of children
- Using inappropriate language when talking about children
- Vagueness about experiences and/or gaps on the application form or unable to provide examples to support their answers
- A maverick – unwilling to follow rules, procedures or work with others

Stage 4 - Making Decisions

- Decisions should be based on the selection criteria within the person specification and job description
- You may want to compare answers to a 'model answer' i.e. what are the key things you would have expected the answer to include
- You may need to justify your decision at a later point so you must be able to clearly link your decision to the selection criteria

Stage 5 – Pre-Appointment Checks

The following pre-appointment checks must be carried out:

- Identity check: ID must be brought to interview and checked
- Documentation proving eligibility to work in UK brought to interview
- Disclosure of Criminal Convictions form brought to interview
- Original qualification certificates brought to interview

- Confirmation of any status e.g. Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), brought to interview
- Health Questionnaire provided to successful candidate to complete and return
- List 99 check undertaken by the Authority on successful candidate
- Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Check undertaken for successful candidate
- All documents brought to interview must be originals and should be photocopied for all candidates
- Until all these checks have been carried out only a conditional offer of employment can be made. The offer should clearly state which satisfactory checks the appointment is subject to
- All the above checks should also be undertaken for overseas applicants, however, greater time should be given to receive any information requested from abroad

Stage 6 - Criminal Records Bureau

- All positions in schools are subject to Enhanced CRB checks
- This is only carried out for the person you wish to appoint
- CRB only provides information regarding the criminal records of UK residents
- Criminal record information for overseas applicants can be sought via the CRB's overseas information service
- Candidate must complete and sign the CRB form
- The school must then verify the identify and address information
- The form is then sent to the Council who will sign it off and forward it to CRB
- If an individual changes employer, they must have a new CRB check
- If an individual changes job with the same employer but has a break in their service, then they must have a new CRB check
- If an individual changes job with the same employer but their last CRB check is over three years old, they must have a new CRB check

Stage 7 - Persons Banned from Working with Children

- The CRB will include whether the individual is on either List 99 or the Protection of Children's Act List. If they are on either of these lists, they are banned from working with children
- Any individual who is on one of these lists who applies to work with children is committing an offence and it should be reported to the Police

Stage 8 - Information on the CRB Check

When assessing applicants' criminal records you should consider the offence in terms of the following before deciding whether to continue with the employment:

- The nature, seriousness and relevance of the offence
- How long ago the offence was committed
- Was it a one off offence or part of a history of offences
- What were the circumstances in which the offence was committed

- Has there been changes in the applicant's personal circumstances since the offence that make it less likely that they will re-offend
- Which country was the offence committed in
- Has the offence since been decriminalised
- Has the applicant demonstrated remorse

4 **INCREASING SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS**

Your school can raise awareness of safeguarding by:

- Making safeguarding core to what your organisation does and stands for, not an add-on.
- Ensuring all members of staff have a basic awareness of safeguarding and abuse.
- Publicising your commitment to safeguarding and protecting children, for example, by having posters in the building and meetings with families and children.
- Giving someone in your organisation responsibility for child protection.
- Discussing safeguarding and child protection openly. Establish the belief that it can happen here.

5 **HAVING APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES IN PLACE**

You should have at least a child protection policy, a whistle-blowing policy and ensure that children know how to report concerns to staff. The purpose of these is to:

- protect children and young people
- protect staff
- ensure people know what to do if they have any concerns
- be clear on how concerns will be dealt with.

They should have the following features:

- Be clear and easily understood.
- Include the names of people who can be contacted: allow for process outside of line management structure.
- Include a detailed process for how issues will be dealt with.
- Include timescales.
- Perhaps offer anonymity.

6 TAKING CONCERNS SERIOUSLY

- Offer support to the person raising the concern and also the person whom the concern is about.
- Consider whether the child is in any immediate danger.
- Investigate the concern.
- Liaise with other agencies.
- Do not ignore it and hope it will go away.

7 REMAINING VIGILANT

- Never think you have done enough in terms of creating a safer culture.
- Always believe it could happen in your school.
- Keep safeguarding high on everyone's agenda.
- Never rely on any one process to keep children safe.

8 WHY SETTING STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR IS IMPORTANT

- It sets down boundaries and expectations of roles, including for the protection and safeguarding of children.
- It prevents the assumption that people know what the expected behaviour is.
- It avoids the risk of interpretation without clear standards.
- It protects adults so they are clear what they can and cannot do.
- It protects children so they will know when an adult's behaviour is not acceptable.

9 A CODE OF CONDUCT

- Sets out what is good and appropriate behaviour between adults and children.
- Is not exhaustive.
- Covers key behaviours in relation to children, young people and their families.

(Please refer to the Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings - Appendix 1).

10 INDUCTION, PROBATIONARY PERIODS AND SUPERVISION

- Induction should be used to set clear expectations and boundaries of the role and ensure that the individual is clear on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It should also cover their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children, and other key policies such as the school's child protection policy, whistle-blowing policy and any reporting procedures if they have concerns.
- Newly qualified teacher induction periods should be used to monitor closely new recruits and where there are issues, these should be quickly picked up and dealt with. For paid employees, it is much easier to dismiss them during this period than after a year in post, and it is important that where there are concerns about unacceptable behaviour with children these are dealt with as early as possible.
- Ongoing supervision and management of individuals are key to ensuring that you know what people are doing and can pick up on issues, such as if someone is becoming too familiar or attached to a particular child or is displaying inappropriate behaviour with a child. If people are closely supervised and monitored, they will have less opportunity to groom children.

11 SAFER CULTURE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ACTION PLAN

You might want to reflect on your school and the safeguarding practices that are in place.

The questionnaire attached at Appendix 2 will provide the basis for an action plan.

12 USEFUL WEBSITES

National College for School Leadership, Safer Recruitment:
www.ncsl.org.uk/saferrecruitment

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: www.cipd.co.uk

Criminal Records Bureau: www.crb.gov.uk and www.disclosure.gov.uk

Department for Education and Skills

- Child protection website: www.teachernet.gov.uk/childprotection
- School governors website www.governornet.co.uk

Every Child Matters: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Investigation and Referral Support Co-ordinators, 'Guidance on Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings':
www.teachernet.gov.uk/irsc

Local Government Employers: www.lge.gov.uk General Teaching Council for England: www.gtce.org.uk

Office for Standards in Education: www.ofsted.gov.uk

National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, 'Recruiting ex-offenders: The employers' perspective':
www.nacro.org.uk/publications/prisreset.htm#exoffenders

SCHOOL'S RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST

At Shortlisting:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | Check for any gaps within applicants employment or education history | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Check for any unexplained changes or inconsistencies in employment or circumstances | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Following Shortlisting:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | <p>Invite to interview sent including the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date, time and location of interview; ▪ Who will be on the interview panel; ▪ What will the format be for the interview e.g. tests or presentations required; ▪ That the post will be subject to satisfactory appointment checks including an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure; ▪ That references will be sought prior to interview; ▪ That the interview will also assess suitability to work with children and will include questions on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; ▪ That the applicant must bring original copies of all qualifications, identity verification and GTC Registration (teachers only); ▪ Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Form to be completed and returned at interview. <i>(See DCC Form - pages 4-5)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | <p>Agree generic interview questions including questions on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in order to assess the individual's views and opinions on this.
<i>(Sample questions on page 7)</i></p> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | <p>Agree any specific questions to individuals relating to information on their application forms e.g. gaps in employment history, inconsistencies in dates, reasons for leaving previous employment.
<i>(See Stage 6 – Scrutinise applications – page 5)</i></p> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | <p>Send for both references (ensuring that one reference is the last employer and is addressed to the school and not a home address) asking for responses by the interview date.
<i>(See Stage 7 – Request References – page 5)</i></p> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

At Interview:

Check and take copies of originals of:
(see Stage 5 – Pre Appointment Checks – page 7)

- All qualifications
- Proof of identity/Asylum and Immigration documents
- Proof of GTC registration (teachers only)
- If application form was completed on-line, ask the candidate to sign and date the form

Following Interview:

- 1 Confirm that you are offering appointment subject to:
 - Satisfactory references (if still outstanding);
 - Satisfactory CRB clearance;
 - Satisfactory Medical Clearance.

- 2 Send copies of all recruitment information to Pay and Employment Direct for the successful candidate, including salary information and start date:
 - Application form;
 - References;
 - Copies of qualifications;
 - Copy of proof of identity;
 - Confirmation of start date, post title, salary;
 - Completed Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Form;
 - Completed CRB Form.

3. Agree what feedback is going to be given to unsuccessful candidates and who is going to contact these and provide this feedback. Please note that it is the responsibility of all the Panel to agree what feedback is going to be given.