

# Practice guide



I want to recruit  
workers safely

# Practice Guide

## I want to recruit workers safely

Most people working with children and young people are dedicated individuals who want the very best for those in their care. Many places of worship, faith groups and other organisations also now recognise the importance of Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all workers.

Whilst this is encouraging, some mistakenly believe that carrying out a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is all that is needed when recruiting a worker.

It is also tempting for places of worship, in particular, to take short cuts when a person is willing to help out and is a familiar face.

Those who have responsibility in this area need to understand that a disclosure check is only part (albeit an essential one) of a safer recruitment process. Such a process is crucial in preventing unsuitable or dangerous individuals gaining access to children and young

people. It includes the development of a job description (or role profile for volunteers), completion of an application form, an interview, taking up references and a Disclosure check as well as the applicant's agreement to abide by the organisation's safeguarding policy.

No-one has an automatic right to work with children and young people. Operating a safer recruitment policy sends a powerful message to parents, children, visitors, as well as those intent on harm, that safeguarding children and young people is taken seriously within the organisation.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (England & Wales), Disclosure Scotland (Scotland) and AccessNI (Northern Ireland) all emphasise that a DBS check should be the last stage of the recruitment process.

The same care needs to be taken for other vulnerable groups, such as adults who may be at risk of harm due to their disability and/or special needs.

Before an organisation seeks to fill a position, paid or voluntary, it is important to have decided on the following:

- The role and responsibilities (job description or role profile)
- Skills and qualities needed (person specification)
- Where and how the position will be advertised (e.g. church notices/news bulletin, local paper etc.)

## Advertisement

The position should be advertised – see example below. As well as a brief description of the role, it should also state the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and the need to complete Disclosure checks. It is also helpful to state the closing date for applications and the dates agreed for shortlisting and/ or interview wherever this is appropriate. (required), as well as details of the support and training that will be provided, should be given to every applicant. This is because the role of a crèche worker is going to be different from a youth worker or that of a trustee.

## St Morag's News Sheet

Part-time Paid Youth Worker required... To lead groups for young people aged between 11 and 17  
15 hours per week.

Relevant NVQ qualification essential.

Further information from the church office. Closing Date: 17th March

Interviews: 26th March

BCC operates a safeguarding policy including safer recruitment. The successful candidate will be required to have a DBS check.

## St Morag's News Sheet

Crèche Worker needed...

2 Sundays per month for 2 hours

Experience with under 5s is desirable

See Val Smith (Children's Coordinator)

for further details by 23rd June.

St. Morag's is committed to safeguarding children and young people.

The successful candidate will be required to undertake a DBS check.

# Application Forms

## The job/role

A clear and up to date job description or role profile (duties, role and responsibilities), a person specification (experience, knowledge and /or qualifications required), as well as details of the support and training that will be provided, should be given to every applicant. This is because the role of a crèche worker is going to be different from a youth worker or that of a trustee.

## Application form

A standard application form should always be used because it ensures everybody provides the same information and it is more difficult to hide relevant details. It also assists with the shortlisting (if undertaken) and the recruitment decision.

The form should require the following:

- the applicant's full name, previous names or aliases
- date of birth
- current address
- full employment history
- contact details of two referees
- a statement containing the reason for applying for the position, personal qualities and experience relevant
- to the post (which should normally reflect the criteria in the job description/
- role profile and person specification).

In addition there should be a declaration that all the information provided by the applicant is true and they agree to a Disclosure check should the organisation wish to appoint them. It should be signed and dated by the applicant.

The form is a good source of information about previous work experience and gaps in employment that may be significant.

## Self-declaration form

A self declaration form, which includes agreement to a Disclosure check, should also be completed and signed by the applicant. It should request details of any police warnings, reprimands, cautions, convictions, bind-overs or other causes for concern such as investigations made by the Police, Children's Social Care or relevant regulatory bodies. This information is likely to be revealed in a Disclosure check anyway later on, so the applicant's willingness to declare it beforehand gives an indication of their honesty (this may be particularly important if the decision to appoint is a borderline one). It also means the process can be halted at an early stage if they are unsuitable. A statement detailing how the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act applies to this information should also be included (i.e. that roles working with children and young people are exempt and all criminal information must be declared). In order to retain confidentiality, the form should be returned in a separate envelope to the person in the organisation making the recruitment decision and should not be opened before the decision to interview has taken place.

## Shortlisting

Once the closing date has passed and all the applications and self declaration forms have been received, a shortlisting process that scrutinises all application forms against the same criteria should be undertaken. Using the person specification, each application should be assessed and the suitable candidates invited to interview.

## References

This is an essential part of the safer recruitment process and is an important part of gathering information about the applicant, which can provide useful insights into their experience, attitudes, motivation and character. It is best practice to take up references for all your shortlisted candidates - before interview - so that the information supplied can be addressed and, if necessary, form part of the recruitment decision.

For a paid position, ideally, at least one reference should be from the applicant's current or previous employer (if he or she is not currently working). The reference should be requested on a standard template where possible so that the same information is gathered about each

CCPAS is an umbrella body appointed by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and AccessNI to process Disclosure checks. Where there is a blemished disclosure (ie. convictions, cautions etc.) it is important to seek advice on whether to appoint.

CCPAS offers this service (including in Scotland). Also known as a 'disclosure'

candidate being interviewed. The job description/role profile and person specification should also accompany the reference request. The referee should also be asked if they are aware of anything that might give rise to concern. For roles working with vulnerable people (including children and young people), they should also be asked about the applicant's attitude towards safeguarding. Any information given can be compared with information provided by the applicant.

For a crèche volunteer, it may be more relevant to ask questions about their attitudes and behaviour as a parent or in any other caring role of which the referee is aware.

Where a reference is sought from an employer, it should be completed by a manager or personnel officer rather than a colleague, and followed with a telephone call to confirm the referee's identity and content of the reference supplied. A telephone conversation with the referee can also clarify any discrepancies or queries and provide an opportunity to thank them for their time. At least two references should be obtained in most cases.

In many cases organisations will still need to carry out a Disclosure check in addition to checking a person's status on the ISA scheme. Up to date information on this can be found on the CCPAS website:  
[www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk) or speak to our Disclosure team.

It is also important to state on your application form that you reserve the right to make any character enquiries considered necessary, for example from a previous place of worship or employer.

## The interview

The interview should generally be conducted by at least two people with leadership or supervisory responsibilities within the organisation, one of whom will directly supervise the person who is appointed. There may, however, be some circumstances where a single interviewer might be appropriate. The application form is a good place to start at an interview. The applicant may well be feeling nervous and it will benefit everyone if the interviewers can help them relax. In this environment the applicant is far more likely to give their best and share any concerns they may have. Your questions at interview should relate specifically to the tasks of the position and be broadly reflected in the criteria from the person specification. You may, however, ask additional questions about a candidate; his/her experience, details that they have given on the application form, or information provided by a referee, provided it is relevant to the position applied for. It is important to remember that the interview is an opportunity to get the best from people rather than to catch them out or be overly complicated. It is also a good opportunity to ask specific questions about the candidate's attitudes towards and understanding of safeguarding.

## Deciding whether to appoint

A decision as to whether or not to appoint should be based on all the information gathered (i.e. their experiences, ability, suitability and their motives for wanting to work with children and young people). It should not be based on external factors such as the urgency of need or the immediate availability of the applicant. An assessment of each candidate interviewed may then be made, enabling the organisation to arrive at a decision to appoint the candidate who gave greatest confidence in their ability.

If there are legitimate concerns about an applicant, it is best not to appoint. This minimises the risk of placing children and young people at risk of significant harm. Some posts may require that an individual is registered with a professional body or holds certain qualifications. So when appointing a teacher, for example, it is necessary to ensure that they are registered with the General Teaching Council (or equivalent body in the UK). This must be verified prior to any offer of appointment. A person's entitlement to work in the UK may also need to be checked.

When the decision has been made about offering the position, any offer made should be conditional upon

receipt of satisfactory checks and references (if not already obtained). The candidate may also be required to have satisfactorily completed a specified probationary period before confirmation of a permanent job offer (see detail below).

## Disclosure checks

Once a decision has been made, a Disclosure check must be carried out on the successful applicant. The check will reveal any information held on central police databases such as cautions and convictions and their inclusion on government lists that bar an individual from working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. A check at enhanced level includes non-conviction data that will be disclosed where it is relevant to the role for which the person has applied.

It is important the organisation operates a procedure for dealing with concerns resulting from information revealed by the check (a blemished disclosure). CCPAS provides a comprehensive support service in such circumstances for all its members, including assistance with completing risk assessments for applicants with blemished disclosures where the offences do not automatically bar them from working with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

See: [www.ccpas.co.uk/disclosure](http://www.ccpas.co.uk/disclosure)

## Equal Opportunities policy

To comply with DBS\* regulations, any organisation applying for Disclosure and Barring Service checks must have an equal opportunities policy (a model is available from CCPAS). It is important not to discriminate unfairly against someone on the basis of what a disclosure reveals. For example, a conviction for minor theft several years ago does not mean the applicant is unsuitable to work with children or young people now. However, if someone's offending behaviour suggests they might be a risk to children, the organisation has the right to make an informed judgement on the applicant's suitability for the position.

## Written Contract

It is important that paid workers have a formal employment contract that includes the support, supervision and resources they can expect from their employer. Volunteers should be given information about their role in writing and the tasks they are expected to undertake.

## Probationary period

When a worker is appointed it is beneficial for both worker and organisation to implement a six month probationary period. During this time the organisation should provide relevant training (for example in safeguarding) and arrange support

for the worker, including regular meetings with a supervisor to discuss how the job is going and to make any adjustments. The probationary period also allows the organisation to assess the worker's performance.

At the end of this period the organisation should confirm the worker's position in writing unless he or she has proved unsuitable, in which case this must also be stated in writing.

## 'They are only volunteers'

Every parent, carer or family member has the right to expect the same standards of recruitment and professionalism irrespective of whether an individual is paid or works voluntarily. A potential volunteer's willingness to complete any necessary forms, undertake interviews etc. shows that he or she takes safeguarding seriously. It also enables the church/organisation to show that they are valued both as a person and for the role for which they are volunteering. Generally people will not be put off by paperwork where its importance can be shown. However, a major benefit of robust safer recruitment practices is

England and Wales – Disclosure & Barring Service,

Scotland - Disclosure Scotland,

Northern Ireland - Access NI



that they will deter and prevent many who are unsuitable from applying in the first place.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate, when recruiting volunteers, to operate a more streamlined process. Churches and organisations working in this way must satisfy themselves that all appropriate checks have been made and that they are still able to deter and prevent unsuitable candidates from applying and working with vulnerable people. It is recommended that, at the very least, a role profile, informal interview, minimum of one reference and DBS checks are used.

## Catch up

Some places of worship may already have workers in place before they have addressed safeguarding and safer recruitment issues. It is important that the safer recruitment process is then applied retrospectively. The application form could be amended and re-titled 'Information Form'. In any event, a Disclosure check should be carried out and, in the case of a paid worker, they should be provided with a written contract.

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## Other important considerations

The Charity Commission requires that everyone working with vulnerable beneficiaries who are entitled to have a Disclosure does so. Failure to address safeguarding could be regarded as a "serious incident". Also, when charities make their annual CC returns they have to certify that DBS checks are carried out.

Places of worship and organisations also need to be aware that, if they do not follow correct safeguarding procedures, they may well be legally liable for the acts or omissions of their staff or volunteers. This may lead to them facing expensive lawsuits and the resulting, often very damaging media coverage. Such acts and omissions may also result in their insurance policies being invalidated, too.

Remember CCPAS offer a number of services to guide you through the complicated recruitment process, So do not hesitate to get in touch with us

# Check list for safer recruitment

- There is a written job description/role profile and person specification for the position
- The position is advertised
- Those applying have completed an standard application form and a self declaration form
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- Short-listed candidates have been interviewed, Safeguarding has been discussed at interview and Qualifications have been verified
- A Disclosure and Barring Service application form has been completed
- A suitable induction training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.
- The applicant has completed a probationary period

Applicants should not start work until the recruitment process has been fully completed. This will prevent children being exposed to potential risk as well as the embarrassment. It also means the church or organisation will reduce the risk of unwittingly employing anyone who is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults.

## Advice and further help on safer recruitment

Safer recruitment is one of the 10 Standards contained in CCPAS' comprehensive safeguarding manual, 'Safe and Secure'. The manual is web-based and covers every area of safeguarding and good working practice. It includes model policies and forms, including the job application and self declaration form referred to in this booklet, as well as a great deal of other useful information concerning recruitment procedures.

Further information on the manual and all CCPAS' resources and services can be found on the CCPAS website: [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk).

If you are unclear on any elements of safer recruitment you can get in touch with our disclosures department.

Call our Disclosures department:

0845 120 4550

Or use our alternative number:

01322 517 817

Or See: [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)

This is one of an expanding series of **Practice Guides** published by CCPAS, many of which are particularly relevant to workers.

See CCPAS website for more details [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)



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