

Resource: Tips on Child Safe Recruitment and Selection

Child safety should be incorporated into all aspects of the recruitment and selection process. The following are some tips designed to help you plan the process.

Review the Position Description

Before beginning the recruitment and selection process, it is recommended that the position description is carefully reviewed through a child safety lens. This process should include:

- Considering the extent to which the role has contact with children and young people;
- Any potential higher risk activities, e.g. services provided directly to children and young people, personal care, transporting, supervision of others which child-focused responsibilities.
- Arrangements for supervision and management, and whether these are adequate;
- The knowledge, skills and experience required for the role.

Developing the Job Advert

A statement of commitment to child safety should be included in the job advert to make it clear to anyone considering an application that the organisation prioritises child safety. It should be made clear in the advert, that the recruitment process will include a focus on child safeguarding. A bold, unequivocal commitment to child safety will help to attract candidates whose values and practice are aligned to those of the organisation, and may help to discourage potentially unsuitable candidates from applying.

Interviews

Interviews should be conducted by suitably trained organisational representatives and include at least one person with an understanding of the dynamics of child abuse and the typical behaviours of offenders who perpetrate child abuse. They should include a range of behavioural and values-based questions designed to elicit information that will help determine the candidate's suitability for the position and uncover any potential risks to children. Each interview should include exploration of the candidate's:

- Motivation to work with children and young people;
- Understanding of child abuse in organisational settings, e.g. how it occurs, prevention strategies; and
- Work history, including prior positions held, responsibilities, any gaps, and reasons for leaving (especially where previous roles involved work with children or young people).

Particular attention is paid to:

- Answers that indicate a lack of professional boundaries in relation to working with children and young people;
- Answers that are incomplete or concerning; and
- Any unusual context for the candidate to be seeking employment with children and young people.



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Behavioural interviewing

The theory underpinning behavioural based interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. The questions do more than simply determine what a candidate says they will do (i.e. job activities), they give the candidate an opportunity to give concrete examples of what they have done in their past work history that helped them to be effective in their job. Behavioural questions prompt the candidate to recall real actions and results they have experienced and describe them in detail. They direct the candidate to include

Context – what was the situation?

Action – what did you do?

Result – what was the outcome?

For example

Give an example of a time where you had to speak up about concerns regarding a colleague. How did you approach it? What was the outcome?

Values-based interviewing

Interviewers ask values-based interview questions to identify candidates who share the same child-focused values as the organisation. *Example values-based interview questions include:*

1. **Relationships with Children and Young People:** Can you describe a positive relationship between adults and young people/children and the essential ingredients in the relationship?
2. **Boundaries:** What are some of the ways you have ensured that professional boundaries are maintained?
3. **Self-awareness** and motivation: In considering past mistakes you have made, what patterns can you identify in your behaviour or character?
4. **Teamwork:** As a team member what are your strengths and weaknesses? Give me an example of each.
5. **Accountability:** Can you tell me about a negative experience of being managed or/ and supervised?
6. **Ethical Dilemma:** Give me an example of what you have done when a colleague/friend has broken a rule, procedure or code of conduct?



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Reference Checks

Pre-employment checks with a candidate's referees are a vital part of child-safe recruitment. The following are some tips on conducting effective, child safety focused reference checks:

- Organisational representatives undertaking the referee checks should have participated child safety training;
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- Where possible, referee checks should involve a direct conversation (telephone, video-conference) with referees. This allows for more in depth examination of candidate suitability, and provides an opportunity to follow up on certain responses;
- Specific questions pertaining to child safeguarding should be included;
- Multiple referee checks should be undertaken for each candidate, and one should be the candidate's most recent employer.
- Referee checks should be recorded on a standard organisational template.

Working with Children Checks (WWCC)

Persons wishing to engage in child-related work must comply with the Working with Children laws operating in their relevant State(s) or Territory(ies). These schemes are designed to help organisations screen out potential candidates who may pose a risk to children and young people. As highlighted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse however, Working with Children schemes alone cannot assess someone's suitability to work with children and young people, and must be utilised alongside broader safeguarding strategies.

Each State and Territory has their own Working with Children Check scheme. For more detail on WWCC schemes in each State/Territory, visit: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/pre-employment-screening-working-children-checks-and-police-checks/part-b-state-and>

National Criminal History Check

In addition to a Working with Children Check, it is recommended that a National Criminal History Check is undertaken for all candidates being considered for a role in a child-focused organisation. This is because, depending on the jurisdiction, National Criminal History Checks may include a broader range of criminal history that may be relevant to the recruitment and selection process.

