

Safeguarding interview and reference check questions

This note includes some suggested interview and reference questions that you can include as part of the recruitment process. The aim is to ensure that your organisation has checks and procedures in place to help screen out applicants who may be unsuitable to work with and serve to reinforce positive messages on safeguarding. In addition, it provides interviewers with indicators to look out for during the interview process. [Click here](#) for information on safe recruitment.

Why is it important to include safeguarding questions in interviews?

Interviews provide a great opportunity to assess the candidate's suitability in relation to the job as well as to safeguarding requirements. It can provide some insight into an applicant's behaviour particularly if it is a face-to-face interview. Having a diverse interview panel made up of at least two or three people is ideal. As one person asks questions, other panel members observe and record.

How should questions be structured?

Questions should be structured to understand the following about applicants:

- **Attitude and values** towards programme participants - vulnerable adults, women, children, and young people - as relevant to your organisation and programmes.
- **Motivation** to work for your organisation and in the relevant position.
- **Past behaviour** as this can provide an indication of future behaviour, accountability should be sought for the periods where the candidate was not working.

For jobs where staff will not work directly with programme participants, interview questions should be aimed at assessing the applicant's awareness, openness, and acceptance of your organisation's safeguarding commitments.

Suggested interview questions for all applicants

- [Briefly explain approach to safeguarding]. Are you happy to sign our safeguarding policy and code of conduct?
- What does safeguarding mean to you? OR What does a child safe organisation mean to you?

- Why do you think safeguarding is important for an organisation such as ours?
- Safeguarding is whose responsibility?
- Have you worked with an organisation previously that has had either strong or weak safeguarding procedures in place? What impact did this have on the way in which the organisation worked and how it kept people safe?
- Have you ever had to report a safeguarding-related matter concerning a colleague or supervisor? Was it managed in the manner you expected?

Interview questions for applicants working with programme participants

- Describe any jobs you have held working directly with [insert target group].
- What boundaries are important when working with [insert target group]?
- Explain your motivation for wanting to work in this role with [insert target group]?
- What do you believe are the core values that should guide your work with [insert target group]?
- What are some of the risks for the [target group] that you think the organisation's safeguarding approach should manage or consider?
- Tell us a situation where you have upheld your organisation's safeguarding policy and process.

Behaviours which may be a cause for concern

- Body language such as signs of anxiety, discomfort, and hesitancy in answering safeguarding questions.
- Evasion, contradiction, and discrepancies in answers given throughout the interview and discrepancies with information provided in CVs and applications.
- Lack of awareness about safeguarding for an applicant who has previously worked with children and vulnerable adults (e.g., lack of awareness of how and why to keep people safe in your context).
- A lack of sensitivity or dismissive approach towards safeguarding and related issues.

Why is it important to include safeguarding questions in reference checks?

References provide vital information from previous colleagues or supervisors about an applicant's job performance, behaviour, and conduct. Additionally, it serves to verify the accuracy of information provided by the applicant during the application and interview stages.

Reference check questions

- What is your relationship with the applicant?
- How long have you known the applicant?
- Have you managed/supervised this person directly?

- What is the reason(s) why the applicant is leaving (or left) the employment?
- [Explain the nature of the position to the referee and the work they will be doing. Explain that safeguarding is an organisational priority.]
 - What knowledge, skills and attitudes does the applicant have that makes them suitable for this role?
 - What areas might need to be improved?
 - Would you have any concerns in relation to the applicant performing this role, including the contact s/he would have with colleagues or communities, children, young people, or other vulnerable groups?
- Is the applicant currently being investigated regarding an allegation of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment (SEAH)?
 - Yes. If yes, please provide details.
 - No.
 - I am unable to answer.
- Based on organisational policies, was the applicant found to have committed misconduct (SEAH) during the period of employment?
 - Yes. If yes, please provide details.
 - No.
 - I am unable to specify if there was misconduct and the nature of the misconduct because of legal / regulatory requirements, please provide details.
- Has the applicant been subject to a substantiated disciplinary process relating to their work conduct? If yes, please provide details.
- Would you employ the applicant again and why?

References

The below documents were used to inform the content of this resource.

- Inter-agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, **Statement of Conduct**
- Save the Children (2002), Guidance on Child Protection Questions at Selection Interviews