

Safer Recruitment Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements of Community Foster Care's recruitment process that aims to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy has been designed to:
- obtain the best possible applicants to fill vacancies
 - deter prospective applicants who are unsuitable for work with children/young people/vulnerable adults
 - identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable for work with children/young people/vulnerable adults
 - ensure the Agency meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.
- 1.2 Managers involved in the recruitment and selection of staff will be provided with training in Safer Recruitment and will be responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy.

2. Applications

- 2.1 When advertising for posts, regardless of where it is advertised (Agency, online, newspaper, journal, etc.) the advert will include the statement:

“Community Foster Care is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service clearance at enhanced level. CVs will not be accepted, all applicants must complete an application form.”

- 2.2 Prospective applicants will be supplied with the following:
- Job description and person specification (including extent of relationships and contact with children/young people/vulnerable adults and degree of responsibility)
 - The Agency's statement on Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding
 - The selection procedure for the post
 - An overview of key information relating to terms and conditions/HR policies and procedures
 - An application form
 - An Equal Opportunities form.

3. Recruitment and Selection Procedure

3.1 Applications

All applicants will be required to complete an application form appropriate to the role for which they are applying, containing questions about their academic and employment history and their suitability for the role. There are specific areas that need to be addressed regarding the application form:

- Application forms must be completed thoroughly and contain no gaps in terms of dates supplied for employment history and education. Start and end month and years must be included for all employment.
- Where the deadline for submission of application forms has not passed, incomplete forms will be returned to the applicant.
- Where the deadline has passed the Manager will contact the applicant directly prior to making any decision regarding interview.
- Application forms must be signed and dated and the original returned. If the application is not signed, they must sign it at interview. Printed signatures on application forms will not be accepted.
- A curriculum vitae will not be accepted in place of the completed application form.

3.2 References

3.2.1 All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two satisfactory references, one of which must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer (always from the last role working with children).

3.2.2 If the current/most recent employment does/did not involve work with children but the applicant has worked with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in the past, then further references should be sought from the employer(s) with whom the applicant most recently worked with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.

3.2.3 References purely containing information regarding job title and employment dates will not be accepted.

3.2.4 Referees should not be relatives, someone known to the applicant solely as a friend or someone with whom the candidate is in a relationship.

3.2.5 All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the job for which they have applied and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

3.2.6 All referees will be sent a copy of the job description and person specification for the role for which the applicant has applied. If the referee is a current or previous employer, they will also be asked to confirm the following:

- The applicant's dates of employment, salary, job title/duties, reason for leaving, performance and disciplinary record.
- Whether the applicant has ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures involving issues related to the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults (including any in which the disciplinary sanction has expired)

- Whether any allegations or concerns have been raised about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults or behaviour towards children, young people and vulnerable adults
 - The candidate's suitability for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults
 - The candidate's suitability for this post.
- 3.2.8 The Agency will only accept references obtained directly from the referee on the official form with all sections completed. It will not rely on references or testimonials provided by the applicant or on open references or testimonials.
- 3.2.9 The Agency will compare all references with any information given on the application form. Any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the information will be taken up with the applicant before any appointment is confirmed.
- 3.2.10 The Recruitment Manager will contact each referee by email, seeking confirmation of their identity by receiving an authentic organisational response from a company email address confirming the role, employment and telephone number of the referee. The recruitment manager will then make contact by telephone to the referee to verify that the reference was prepared by them and the information is correct. A record of this verification check will be recorded and kept on the pre-recruitment checks file.

4. The Selection Process

- 4.1 Selection techniques will be determined by the nature and duties of the vacant post, but all vacancies will require a face-to face interview of short-listed candidates.
- 4.2 Candidates will always be required to:
- explain satisfactorily any outstanding gaps in employment and provide a signed document or amendment to the application form to evidence these.
 - explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to recruiters
 - declare any information that is likely to appear on a DBS
 - demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people.

5. Interviewing

- 5.1 The applicant may be invited to attend a formal interview at which their relevant skills and experience will be discussed in more detail.
- 5.2 At least one interviewer on the interview panel will have successfully received accredited training in Safe Recruitment procedures.

5.3 Although a telephone interview may be undertaken at the initial part of the selection process, the formal interview will always be face-to-face.

5.4 During the formal interview the following criteria will be met:

- A set of questions will be agreed and used consistently for each candidate
- Safeguarding questions will be asked and recorded
- Interview notes will be scored and kept on file.

6. Pre-employment checks:

6.1 The Agency carries out a number of pre-employment checks in respect of all prospective employees. These may include internet/social media checks (on material that is available to the public to view) for shortlisted candidates.

6.2 Due to the nature of the work, the Agency applies for DBS checks in respect of all prospective staff, carers, Panel Members and volunteers who have a direct link to working with children/young people and vulnerable adults.

6.3 The Agency will request checks in line with the DBS guidelines:

- Details of all convictions on record including current and spent convictions (including those which are defined as "spent" under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) together with details of any cautions, reprimands or warnings held on the Police National Computer.
- It may also contain non-conviction information from local police records which a chief police officer thinks may be relevant in connection with the matter in question.
- Enhanced checks will also reveal whether the applicant is barred from working with children by virtue of their inclusion on the lists of those considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Applicants who have lived outside the United Kingdom for more than three months in the last 15 years will be asked to apply for the equivalent of a disclosure, if one is available in the relevant jurisdiction(s).

Where the Agency uses staff from supply agencies, contractors, etc then the Agency expects those agencies to have registered these staff with the DBS as appropriate, following their own policy or their own comparable policy. Where the role involves working on a one to one basis with children, the Agency will always carry out their own DBS check.

7. Verification of identity and address

All applicants who are invited to an interview will be required to bring the following evidence of identity, address and qualifications:

- Passport (wherever available) or full birth certificate
- Two utility bills or statements (from different sources and less than three months old) showing their name and home address
- documentation confirming their National Insurance Number (P45, P60 or National Insurance Card)
- documents confirming any educational and professional qualifications referred to in their application form.
- driving licence (where applicants are applying for a post that requires the ability to drive)

Where an applicant advises that they have changed their name by deed poll or any other mechanism (eg marriage, adoption, statutory declaration) they will be required to provide documentary evidence of the change.

As a regulated fostering service, Community Foster Care has a duty to ensure it maintains records of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for foster carers and those working (including as volunteers and Panel Members) for the fostering service which includes:

- a. identity checks;
- b. DBS Disclosures, including the level of the Disclosure, and the unique reference number (in line with eligibility to obtain such checks);
- c. checks to confirm qualifications which are a requirement and those that are considered by the fostering service to be relevant;
- d. at least two references, preferably one from a current employer and where possible a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children;
- e. checks to confirm the right to work in the UK;

As a result, staff and carers should be made aware at application that these records including a record of their identification will be kept by Community Foster Care.

8. Offer

If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the formal interview, any such offer will be conditional on the following:

- receipt of a minimum of two professional references which the Agency considers satisfactory.
- receipt of a satisfactory DBS check (as relevant for the post) where a DBS disclosure has been carried out, the applicant must show the original copy to the Recruitment Manager within seven days of receiving it.
- proof of identity/evidence of ID (a Passport must be provided as ID unless one is not held, in which case a birth certificate, along with another form of photo ID must be provided).
- provision of actual certificates of qualifications for training/achievements required for the post offered (copies will not be accepted without seeing the originals).
- proof of eligibility to live and work in the UK.
- agreement of a mutually acceptable start date.

If these conditions are satisfied and the offer is accepted then the applicant will be issued with a contract of employment with a letter of confirmation of the offer of employment.

9. Induction

- 9.1 All staff who are new to the Agency will receive an induction/training programme that will include the Agency's Safeguarding policies and guidance on safe working practices.
- 9.2 Regular meetings will be held during the first three months of employment between the new employee(s) and the appropriate manager.

10. Probationary period

- 10.1 The first six months of employment is deemed to be a probationary period for all posts. During this period, the Line Manager will provide regular updates/arrange regular supervision sessions with an employee to discuss how things are progressing.
- 10.2 During the probationary period the notice period to terminate the employment for whatever reason, by either the employee or the Agency is four weeks. The Agency also reserves the right to extend this probationary period should it be deemed necessary.
- 10.3 The Line Manager will arrange a mid-probation meeting at around three months. If at this point there is a belief that an employee may not be performing at the required standard, the Line Manager will provide guidance and support to assist them in achieving the correct standards.
- 10.4 If at six months, an employee has met all of the expected criteria they will successfully pass their probationary period. If they have not met criteria, they may either have their probationary period extended (where there is a belief that they would achieve it given more time), or they may be dismissed with one week's notice. The latter is only ever executed in extreme circumstances. Community Foster Care operates a culture of supporting employees to achieve standards wherever possible.

11. Retention of records and security of disclosure information

11.1 Information received via DBS

Community Foster Care's policy is to observe the guidance issued or supported by the DBS on the use of disclosure information. The Agency will:

- ask all applicants to show the original copy of a DBS to the Recruitment Manager (or a Community Foster Care Manager).
- prohibit the photocopying or scanning of any disclosure information.
- keep a record of the date of a disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of disclosure, the position in question, the unique number issued by the DBS and the recruitment decision taken.
- The Recruitment Manager will inform the CEO or the Registered Manager of any cautions, convictions or reprimands disclosed on a DBS. No other employee except the CEO or Registered Manager can make a risk assessment/decision on a positive disclosure.

The Agency complies with the provisions of the DBS code of practice, a copy of which is available on request.

11.2 Retention of application form

If an applicant is appointed, the Agency will retain any relevant information provided on their application form (together with any attachments) on their personnel file. If the application is unsuccessful, all documentation relating to the application will normally be confidentially destroyed after six months unless the applicant specifically requests the Agency to keep their details on file.

12. Review of Policy:

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as needed to reflect any relevant changes in legislation and guidance.