

Safer Recruitment Procedure



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Introduction

1. PACT is committed to the principles of Safer Recruitment. Safer recruitment is central to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The purpose of this procedure is:
 - To take all reasonable steps to prevent persons unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults from joining the charity
 - To ensure that our recruitment procedures are consistent and transparent
 - To deter those who seek to harm children and vulnerable adults from applying to work for PACT
2. This document provides practical guidance for all those involved in the recruitment process in order that safer recruitment procedures are always followed at all stages of the recruitment process, whether for employees, volunteers, agency staff or self-employed contractors. The Human Resources team (HR) also provides professional support with recruitment.
3. This policy defines the responsibilities of both line managers and HR.
4. It is critically important that line managers at all levels should not enter into correspondence which could be construed as representing offers of employment or agreements for the provision of services.
5. All personal data obtained during the recruitment process will be collected, stored, disclosed and deleted in a fair and proper way and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
6. This procedure relates directly to safeguarding, children and vulnerable adults and requires that issues of safeguarding are considered at all stages of the recruitment process.

Procedure

1. Request to recruit staff

When a vacancy occurs (either as a result of the current postholder leaving or a new post being created), the first step in the recruitment process is for the hiring manager to submit a request to recruit.

using the [Recruitment Authorisation Form](#). In all cases the relevant job description should be attached to the form.

The job description sets out clearly the main duties and responsibilities of the post and all roles include a responsibility to safeguard and protect vulnerable adults and children in accordance with PACT's policies and procedures at all times. A [template for job descriptions](#) is made available to hiring managers if needed.

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The job description also includes a person specification, which explains the essential and desirable attributes (including qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities) required to undertake the role. The person specification will state whether a DBS check is necessary as an essential requirement and the level of check needed. The personal specification is used for shortlisting purposes. This process is mirrored in the recruitment process for volunteers using role descriptions.

The Recruitment Authorisation Form is authorised by the hiring manager's Head of Service, Head of Finance (for budgetary purposes), and the Head of HR with final approval from the CEO.

If the role is a new role or there are significant changes to the job requirements, the role will be job evaluated by the job evaluation panel in order to determine the appropriate pay range for the role.

Once approved, HR will contact the hiring manager to agree the advertisement, the recruitment campaign (including interview questions and any other assessment methods) and timetable.

2. Advertising and Recruiting

All job advertisements include the statement that "PACT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults therefore please note our recruitment procedure includes DBS checks and overseas checks (where applicable). Please note prospective employees will need to evidence they have the relevant permission to work in the UK." This statement also appears on the careers page of PACT's website and application form. PACT's safeguarding policy is on PACT's website too.

In the event that agencies are used as part of the recruitment campaign, it is the responsibility of HR to instruct agencies with a view to appointments being made without unnecessary delay and at the minimum cost. This action is normally taken in consultation with hiring managers. HR will ensure that the agency can evidence that the necessary recruitment checks (including a DBS check where relevant, two references which have been verified, evidence of relevant safeguarding training, an explanation of any employment/training gaps, evidence of qualifications relevant to the role and permission to work in the UK) have been undertaken.

All vacancies are advertised on PACT's website and PACT's social media channels as a minimum and all staff are notified by email of current job vacancies.

In addition to PACT's website, other job boards are used as appropriate, including www.jobsgopublic.co.uk, www.charityjob.co.uk and Guardian on line. We also encourage existing staff to recommend PACT as a potential future employer to relevant individuals.

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3. Application Forms

All job applications are made using the [standard application for employment form](#).
A full employment history should be provided.

HR checks application forms for shortlisted candidates prior to interview and notifies the interview panel so that these are discussed with the candidate at interview. Details for two referees are requested on the application form but not contacted until after a conditional offer of employment has been made and the applicant has confirmed that PACT may take up references.

In the interest of confidentiality, all original application forms are held by HR. HR acknowledges receipt of the application and separates the equal opportunities monitoring form from the application on receipt. Equal opportunities monitoring forms are filed separately from the application form.

When the closing date is reached, all application forms are forwarded to the shortlisting panel, together with the copy of the job description and advertisement and a shortlisting form.

4. Shortlisting

Each application is assessed against the shortlisting criteria for the position. Shortlisting is undertaken by the agreed shortlisting panel and recorded on the shortlisting form. Candidates not shortlisted will be informed by HR and feedback provided on request. Feedback will be factual and relate only to the person specification and job description.

5. Interview Process

HR will ensure rooms are booked for interviews/assessments and confirm the arrangements for greeting candidates. HR will invite all short-listed candidates to an interview, with the date, time and venue, including a location map with details of access for cars and pedestrians, parking and public transport. They will be advised of length of the interview and the format for the day; any additional assessment methods they need to know about and be asked to confirm their intention to attend the interview at the stated time and place. Also, candidates will be asked if they need any additional assistance to attend for interview or for any assessment methods.

HR will also review the confidential equal opportunities monitoring forms and will contact candidates to discuss their requirements further as necessary. Shortlisted candidates who have made a disclosure are contacted for information and advised that the panel may ask further appropriate questions about this at the interview.

All shortlisted candidates will be asked to bring the following documentation with them to interview:-

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- original evidence of qualifications relevant to the role (as specified in the person specification)
- proof of Registration as a social worker, if relevant or membership of any other relevant professional body
- three pieces of evidence of identity, as detailed in the DBS guidance, which must be verified as a true likeness by a member of HR
- Proof of Right to Work in the UK.

Only original documents will be accepted.

All the above documentation for unsuccessful candidates is destroyed. Copies of documentation for the successful candidate will be held on the individual's personnel file, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 requires that organisations ensure applicants for employment possess documentary evidence of their eligibility to live and work in the U.K.

Further details on document checking are included in the [Home Office guidance](#) "Full guide for employers on preventing illegal working in the UK", a copy of which is available from HR.

At least one member of any recruitment panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training (face to face or on-line) and all those involved in interviewing candidates will have received adequate support in conducting interviews and been adequately briefed about the job and its requirements. They will be made aware of the danger of discrimination in the process – which has both legal implications and consequences for the diversity of the organisation.

Interview questions will be prepared in advance by HR using a standard format and include a question concerning safeguarding. All candidates will be asked the same pre-set questions and members of the interview panel can make their own notes. All notes are collated by HR and kept on the personnel file for the successful candidate. Interview questions will include indicators of what the panel would expect to hear from a candidate in response.

HR will examine each shortlisted applicant's application form in advance of the interview and highlight to the panel gaps in employment/training so that these can be explored further at interview. Reasons for leaving employment will also be discussed where these have not been explained sufficiently on the application form

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Before the interview takes place the following documentation will be forwarded to the interview panel members:

- interview schedule
- job description and person specification and job advert
- question sheets for each candidate (each question is the same for each candidate and will be scored)
- details of assessment methods sent to candidates
- copy of application form(s)
- Details of gaps in employment/training history

For the candidate, the interview is an opportunity to:

- ask questions about the job and the organisation;
- decide if they would like to take the job if successful.

For the organisation, the interview is an opportunity to:

- describe the job and responsibilities in more detail;
- explore in more detail any employment, education or training gaps
- assess the candidates' ability to perform in the role;
- discuss with the candidate details such as start dates, training provisions and terms and conditions such as employee benefits;
- give a positive impression to the candidate of PACT as a 'great employer' where they would like to work should they be offered the position;
- assess the candidate's understanding of safeguarding;
- highlight the importance of safeguarding;
- advise the candidate of the timescale for informing them of the outcome of the interview.

At the end of the interviews, the panel will assess the candidates' ability to perform the role, based on the questions and any assessment methods. The assessment of candidates' suitability for the role is recorded in a standard format.

Wherever practical, HR will endeavor to ensure all candidates are advised of the outcomes within three working days of the interview and unsuccessful candidates are provided with constructive feedback.

Following interviews, all paperwork (packs, interview notes, assessments, scoring and decision sheets) should be returned to HR for confidential shredding or filing or to action.

6. Choice of Candidate

The responsibility for the final choice of the candidate rests with the interviewing panel. The interviewing panel should ensure that they have objective data to

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substantiate their decision, using the defined criteria and the structured interview questions and assessment methods.

7. Conditional offers of Employment

Offers of employment can only be made by HR and will be subject to the following:

- a satisfactory Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check (see DBS checks procedure) where relevant.
- a satisfactory overseas police check for candidates who have spent three months or more within the last five years
- A minimum of two written references (using a standard format) and telephone verification. evidence the individual is entitled to work in the UK
- original evidence of qualifications relevant to the role
- proof of registration as a social worker, if relevant or membership of any other relevant professional body

A conditional offer of employment will be issued by HR, which is conditional upon the requirements above being met satisfactorily.

References

Reference checks are undertaken to verify information provided by an individual as part of their application and to ascertain a person's suitability for any given role.

In all cases PACT will seek the applicant's permission before obtaining a reference from their current employer as they may not have informed them of their intentions to leave the organisation.

To ensure that information from referees is of high quality they should be as specific and structured as possible. Therefore, PACT uses a standard template to obtain references and this can also help referees to more easily identify what information they need to provide. The referee will be provided with a copy of the job description and person specification for the post for which the candidate has applied.

PACT's policy is to request at least 2 written references, one of which should be from the current or most recent employer and must cover a minimum of five years.

There may be occasions when an applicant cannot provide a referee from a previous employer. For example, because the individual has never worked before, or they have not worked for some considerable time, or their previous employer has ceased trading. In such cases, references should be requested from their last known employer or additional character or personal references in order to validate the required five-year period.

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. Where an applicant is not currently working with children or vulnerable adults, but has done so in the past, a reference should be obtained from the last employer for whom the person was engaged in work with children or vulnerable adults.

Personal references will only be accepted if it is not possible to obtain 2 employment references and should be sought from personal acquaintances that are not related to the applicant.

After receiving the written references HR will contact referees by telephone to verify the reference and information gathered will be recorded on the reference cover sheet held in the individual's personnel file. The references and relevant notes of the telephone verification will be sent to the hiring manager to confirm in writing that the references are satisfactory.

Any information obtained from references should be used with caution and be considered against data gathered from other parts of the selection process (for instance, interviews, presentations, written exercises, job specific tests). Occasionally a member of the interview panel may receive unsolicited information about an applicant. This should not be considered when making an appointment decision unless it is indicated that children or vulnerable adultse may be at risk or placed at risk as a result of the appointment.

If a previous employer is unwilling to provide a sufficiently detailed reference (due to their own policies), PACT will consider the situation and aim to ensure that the candidate is not unfairly disadvantaged whilst considering the needs of the organisation.

As a minimum, references should aim to provide details of:

- Where the individual has been employed/volunteered, or has studied
- The dates of employment/volunteering, or duration of study
- The position held, or course undertaken
- Any recent or ongoing disciplinary action
- Attendance
- The reason for leaving employment, training or study
- Any safeguarding concerns

Where negative issues or contradictory information are included in a reference, information should be carefully considered and weighed up against the wider range of evidence gathered as part of the recruitment process. Any discrepancies or negative issues should be raised sensitively with the candidate, giving them the opportunity to explain the situation in more detail.

Start date cannot be confirmed until these checks have been completed. Where PACT is awaiting the outcome of a DBS check and the line manager wishes the person to join before this is received, the manager will complete a DBS risk

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assessment form accompanied by a Barred List check (where relevant) for consideration by the Chief Executive.

Prior to commencement of employment all new employees will be sent the Confidentiality, Data Protection and Safeguarding policies to read and to confirm in writing that they have read these.

HR will maintain a single central record of all employees, volunteers, agency staff and self-employed contractors.

8. Induction

An induction plan will be arranged for each new joiner which will include the requirement to complete mandatory training on equality and diversity, data protection, safeguarding and health and safety (and child sexual exploitation and prevent/channel awareness training for social workers) within the first three months of their employment. In addition, all appointments are subject to completion of a satisfactory probation period. HR will send a template induction plan to the hiring manager before then new person joins.

Whistleblowing reference – mentioned in induction

9. Personnel files

A personnel file is set up for every new joiner and includes:

- Safer recruitment checklist
- Application form and interview notes
- Job description/person specification
- DBS disclosure number, level, workforce and date issued
- A minimum of two references and confirmation of verification
- A record of ID documents
- Copy of passport or other evidence of permission to work in the UK
- Relevant qualifications
- Induction plan
- Signed confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding agreement forms
- Emergency contact details

10. Related Documents and Regulations

Safeguarding Policy

DBS Checks procedure

Equal Opportunities (Recruitment)

Data Protection Policy

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The Equality Act 2010

The Data Protection Act 2018

General Data Protection Regulation

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 – Home Office guidance on Preventing Illegal Working

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