



SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

Description

Action for Children recognises that its staff are fundamental to its success. We therefore need to be able to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre and a strategic, professional approach to safer recruitment is essential to do this.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a sound framework for the recruitment and selection of staff based upon the core principles outlined below, which also meet the requirements of our Equality and Diversity Policy, the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant employment legislation.

Action for Children expect compliance with the policy at all times, it must be read and followed in conjunction with other relevant People Policies, including the Disclosure and Barring Policy, Pay Policy, Temporary Agency Worker Policy and the Equality and Diversity Policy.

The core principals of this policy apply equally to the recruitment of the various types of people who work on our behalf- e.g., Volunteers/Foster Carers/Temporary Agency Workers/Interims/Self-employed Contractors etc. However, the actual recruitment procedures detailed here only apply to recruitment of employed staff.

Please refer to the relevant Volunteer Policy/Foster Carer/Temporary Agency Worker/Contractor etc documents for specific recruitment procedures relating to these groups.

This policy is not contractual, does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Core Recruitment Principles

1. Action for Children actively promotes the principles of respect, dignity and inclusion and is committed to recruiting a diverse workforce.
2. All recruitment and selection appointment decisions must be objective and based on merit- i.e., measuring the ability of the candidate to meet the requirements of the job against their application and performance at interview/other selection methods.
3. Action for Children is committed to closing the Gender Pay Gap (GPG). We promote opportunity for both sexes and trans and non-binary staff and look to recruit any person based on capability and based on biased or gender traditional roles.
4. We are a Disability Confident Employer- we want to increase our representation of disabled staff and we will make reasonable adjustments to selection processes wherever possible to ensure we offer disabled candidates an inclusive experience. All applicants who have disclosed they have a disability who meet the minimum essential criteria for the post must automatically be shortlisted for interview and offered constructive feedback after the process.
5. We are a member of the Care Leavers Covenant-applicants who identify as care experienced on their application, who meet the minimum essential criteria for the role must be offered an interview and constructive feedback after the process.
6. We are committed to becoming an Anti-Racist Employer- we want to increase our representation through inclusive recruitment processes, improving our talent pipelines for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff.
7. We will ensure that the recruitment and selection of staff is conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current employment legislation and safeguarding practice.
6. Any member of a recruitment panel involved in the recruitment of roles should ensure they are appropriately trained in Safer Recruitment practices and comply with the requirements of this policy and procedure and other related policies and procedures



7. Our recruitment communications externally and with candidates should highlight our commitment to safer recruitment practices.
8. Action for Children is committed to internal progression, retaining talent and providing opportunities for staff to develop; therefore, all vacancies must be advertised on the internal career's portal.
9. Action for Children is committed to involving children/young people in the recruitment process wherever possible, including Board Members, ELT and Director appointments.
10. Recruitment and selection should enhance the reputation of Action for Children. We will treat all candidates fairly, equitably and efficiently, with respect and courtesy, aiming to ensure that the candidate experience is positive.
11. All sensitive documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the GDPR Regulations and Safeguarding legislation.

Recruiting Manager Responsibilities

The Recruiting manager will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the procedure as follows:

- Commit to protecting children, families and vulnerable adults through the provision of safe, robust recruitment practices with safeguarding considerations at the core of recruitment decisions.
- Ensure recruitment takes place in accordance with budget rules, agreed establishment plans and in line with the processes laid out in this policy.
- Ensure the timely completion and submission of all recruitment documents to the Recruitment Team.
- Ensure that no new starters commence work without all relevant pre-employment checks being completed unless agreed in line with the arrangements set out in the Disclosure and Barring Policy.
- Encouraged to ensure there is diversity on selection panels wherever possible, e.g., gender balance, race, age, disability etc.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to the recruitment of all employees and casual workers in all Action for Children Group Companies. Although the name 'Action for Children' has been used throughout this policy, you should interpret that as a reference to the particular Action for Children Group Action for Children that you work for.

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Safer Recruitment Processes

1. Preparing for a recruitment campaign

- 1.1 The Recruiting Manager must ensure they have approval to commence recruitment with the relevant service/department budget holder. This will normally involve discussions with the relevant Finance Business Partner to confirm that the budget is available to fill the vacancy and any changes to the previously agreed establishment for the business area is approved.
- 1.2 The roles that are authorised for recruitment are listed on the Approved Jobs Framework, this can be accessed along with the relevant job descriptions and person specification on the People Hub.
- 1.3 Where a brand-new job role is being developed, or changes are required to an existing job description for an already approved role, the Recruiting Manager must follow the job evaluation steps detailed in the Pay Policy. Any new roles being developed will require the Manager to develop a relevant Job Description and Person Specification

2. Commencing a New Permanent Recruitment Campaign

2.1 To ensure inclusive and transparent access to career development opportunities for all staff we expect all vacancies to be advertised on the internal career's platform, this is initiated by the Recruiting Manager following the standard recruitment process on MyRecruit.

2.2 Recruiting Managers will start a recruitment activity via MyRecruit and selecting which type of recruitment activity they wish to progress:

- **Standard Recruitment** –where the full recruitment process from advertising to pre-employment and onboarding is required. Please also use this route for internal only vacancies and for all roles that you want to release to recruitment agencies on our PSL
- **Pre-identified Recruitment** – In very limited circumstances you may have a candidate who you wish to appoint that has not come from a Standard Recruitment process. E.g., moving an existing temporary agency worker/volunteer onto our payroll or processing an Apprentice/ Community Jobs Scotland candidate. The pre-identified service will complete the onboarding checks for the new starter and add them to Itrent.

Managers must ensure that they follow the Safer Recruitment process for all pre-identified recruitment including inclusive selection methods, all normal compliance checks (disclosure, references, right to work etc.) will also be required.

2.3 Managers will complete the vacancy core details required for the setup process on MyRecruit ensuring the relevant Level 4 approval is given.

2.4 If Level 4 approval is required, at the approving manager will receive an email prompting them to log in and review the details of the vacancy on MyRecruit. The approving manager can then approve or reject as needed; it will then pass onto the Recruitment Team.

2.5 The Recruitment Team will be in touch with the Recruiting Manager to arrange a vacancy briefing call. The vacancy briefing call will be an opportunity for the Recruitment Team to understand more detail about the vacancy requirements, confirm the core details shared on the setup form and any other details to support them in fulfilling your vacancy alongside interview availability and the selection process.



2.6 The Recruitment Team will arrange your advert to be placed on the advertising channels agreed (internal/external/agency) for the role. The Recruitment Team will also review the reserve candidate pool to see if there are any suitable applicants that have previously been identified to contact for future positions.

2.7 Please note PAT will process system changes for existing staff where the career link scheme is applied (see Pay Policy Appendices for more information) or for internal transfer that are not actually defined as recruitment (i.e., that fall within the Vacancy Scenario Spreadsheet, you can find this on the People Advice Team page on People Hub)

3. Shortlisting

3.1 The Recruiting Manager can access all completed applications on MyRecruit as soon as the candidate submits them.

3.2 Not every criteria on the person specification needs to be used for shortlisting; whilst the same criteria must be applied to each applicant, some criteria may be weighted and given higher consideration than others, but this must be applied consistently to all.

3.3 The shortlisting panel should contain at least two of the interview panel members (ideally all interview panel members should be involved in shortlisting where possible), who should complete the shortlisting task separately before meeting together to discuss their choices prior to the Chair making the final decision about who to select for interview. The panel should be representative of the diversity of our workforce and the communities we operate in- further guidance about Shortlisting is available [here](#)- please note panel members should access applications directly from MyRecruit to reduce data protection risks- the Recruitment Team can arrange for access to be given to internal panel members.

3.4 The shortlisting panel should ensure information provided on the application is consistent, any gaps in employment are identified so that there are no discrepancies on the application information e.g. missing dates etc. Any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment identified should be taken into account when considering whether to shortlist the applicant.

3.5 The panel should keep a record of the scoring for each application (a sample Shortlisting Record Template is available in the Recruitment & Induction Hub), in case of any queries and uploaded into the MyRecruit against each candidate that has been shortlisted.

4. Interviews and Selection Testing

4.1 Selection tools should be directly related to the requirements of the job and properly applied to ensure that the selection process increases our representation of diverse groups through inclusive recruitment processes.

4.2 Panel Interviews are the normal selection method used in Action for Children and must be used for all roles as a minimum alongside any other selection tool required). Other types of selection tools can include including giving candidates essay type questions to be completed prior to interview, asking candidates to do a prepared or unprepared presentation at interview and typing tests, in-tray exercises or assessment centres, psychometric testing etc. A transparent and objective scoring process must be used for all selection methods. Further advice is available on our Recruitment Toolkit guide found in the Recruitment & Induction Hub.



4.3 The Recruiting Manager should complete the Interview Confirmation Form (found on the Recruitment & Induction Hub or MyRecruit) with details of candidates they wish to progress to interview with details on times, panel members, location and interview type. This should be uploaded directly to MyRecruit via Internal Notes and the relevant status changes made to applicants.

Interviews

4.4 Within their invite to interview correspondence, candidates will be asked to bring to the interview their original qualification certificates/professional registration/ID etc. that is set out as essential for the role on the person specification together with evidence of their Right to Work in the UK.

4.5 The Recruiting Manager must inspect the originals and copy evidence of their Right to Work ID, Disclosure ID, relevant qualification and registration documents. Further information on ID and Right to Work requirements can be found [here](#). A delay in providing these documents to the Recruitment Service will delay the completion of the compliance checks and therefore the start date of the new hire.

4.6 Interview panels must comprise of an Action for Children manager and a minimum of one other person, although best practice would recommend a panel of three, with a mix wherever possible of age/gender/ethnicity/religion (NI) etc. The Chair of the panel is normally the Action for Children Recruiting Manager.

4.7 The core questions to be asked by the Panel at the interview should be agreed beforehand and reflect the criteria in the person specification and also any technical aspects of the vacant post. Panel members should ask supplementary questions wherever possible in order to enable the candidate to provide as full an answer as possible and to check suitability comprehensively. Before any interview takes place, the panel should clearly identify and understand the objective criteria to be used to select candidates for the position. The chair of the panel should ensure the panel is clear about their responsibility to identify the strongest candidate against the agreed criteria, the panel should be reflective and aware of their own unconscious biases. Further guidance about interview and other selection methods can be found in the Safer Recruitment Toolkit – Recruitment Selection Guidance (via the Recruitment & Induction Hub)

4.8 The responsibilities of the panel are to:

- Ensure that an interview (ideally face to face) is conducted for all shortlisted candidates based on an objective assessment of the applicant's ability to meet the person specification and job description (an interview via Teams or other webinar means may be appropriate for a candidate living abroad, in these circumstances a face-to-face interview should follow if the candidate is to be progressed.)
- Probe responses as necessary so that they are satisfied with the information given.
- Explore the candidate's full employment history in all cases at interview, ensuring any gaps in employment are satisfactorily explained.
- Probe any inconsistencies in their application.
- Make appointment selection decision- based on responses to questions and explanations about application form details using a fair scoring system.
- The decision to appoint a candidate must be made by the panel members. Where the panel is unable to agree which candidate should be appointed, the Chair of the Panel has the final decision

4.9 Interviews for all posts working directly with children in any capacity should have at least one question focusing on the motivational and attitudinal aspects. Panel members should score each



candidate based solely on the evidence provided and ideally not discuss the candidates or their decision-making with each other, until the concluding session, to avoid influencing each other's thinking.

4.10 Document must be kept for each stage of the recruitment process, so that Action for Children has an audit trail and can check that decisions have been made using due process. For example, keeping the scoring sheets and notes taken by each panel member to support the shortlisting and interview process (a sample Interview Notes Template is available in the Recruitment & Induction Hub). These must then be uploaded into the MyRecruit platform against each candidate by the Recruiting Manager whether they are appointable, unsuccessful or a reserve candidate.

4.11 The Recruiting Manager will update the status of all interviewed candidates accordingly and those that are unsuccessful will be notified via email in the first instance with the details of the Recruiting Manager, should they request additional feedback. If candidate requests verbal feedback from the Recruiting Manager, it should be made available wherever possible. We do not normally provide written feedback.

4.12 Action for Children does not normally reimburse interview expenses incurred by candidates.

4.13 Selection for Residential posts will have robust selection processes in line with the Choosing with Care Report to test personal beliefs/values/motivation and reasons for working with Children and Young People. Further info and sample selection methods can be found in the Recruitment Hub in this document:

Safer Recruitment Toolkit – Recruitment Selection Guidance (via the Recruitment & Induction Hub)

4.14 Reserve candidates – When candidates apply for a role they will be asked if they give consent for their details to be held the MyRecruit database.

Following interview where more than one candidate is appointable, the Panel may decide to list second and third choice reserve candidates. So, where the first-choice candidate declines the offer of employment, the second candidate may be offered the position and so on.

Reserve candidate will remain in the reserve candidate pool for 9 months and may be contacted should a suitable vacancy arises in the timeframe (i.e., same generic job title in the same service/department or other local services- where they meet essential criteria for the new role.

The Recruiting Manager can arrange a meeting with the reserve candidate to discuss the new vacancy and carry out any assessment process that is required.

5 Pre-employment Checks (External Appointment)

5.1 Action for Children requires certain mandatory pre-employment checks to be completed as a minimum by the Recruitment Team once a conditional offer has been made to a successful candidate, these are:

- References (minimum of 2 for all roles- one from current/most recent employer)
- Medical Declaration
- Right to Work Check
- Relevant level of Disclosure Check (all roles)
- International Police Check (where applicable)
- Regulatory/Professional Registration Check (where applicable)



Any additional pre-employment checks required outside of these should be agreed with the Recruitment Team at the start of any recruitment campaign.

5.2 References

All requests for references should seek objective verifiable information as far as possible and not purely subjective opinion. All references should be sought on the Action for Children agreed reference request template to ensure that relevant information is requested and must be stored securely and treated as confidential.

Requirements:

- 2 references are required for all roles.
- As a minimum, one reference must be from the current or most recent employer.
- Where the current/most recent employer has/had been the employer for 6 months or less, a reference from the previous employer will also be required.
- The recruiting manager must satisfy themselves that the reference from the current or most recent employer is from an appropriately senior manager and it is not a reference from a former peer operating at the same grade. References from former employers should always state the reason for the candidate leaving the previous post.
- Some candidates might not have recent or any previous work experience. In these cases, formal verifiable references must be obtained from educational establishments or other formal organisations (e.g., prison/probation services) and from a person able to comment on character and suitability (Note: a character reference alone will not usually be acceptable and can only be agreed by the relevant Director).
- Where a candidate for employment has recently been released from custody or psychiatric detention, then a reference from the establishment concerned will be obtained.
- Agreement to proceed with recruitment will only be provided by the relevant Director where every reasonable effort has been expended to obtain two references, there is no history of criminal conviction or caution or other information about behaviour likely to make the individual unsuitable for work in the role described and in a children's charity.

Recruiting Managers must ensure the authenticity of the referee. This might be done simply through checking that the reference is provided on a formal headed document sent from a bona fide public sector body e-mail address (employment references sent without use of headed documentation or paper are not acceptable and employment references are never acceptable from personal e-mail address such as Hotmail, google mail, yahoo, etc).

Where the identity or role of the referee is not clear or in all circumstances where the reference does not provide all requested information or raises questions about previous performance in a post or suitability for the job on offer, then separate telephone verification must be obtained by calling the referee. A formal written note of the information provided by telephone must always be recorded in the recruitment file of the candidate.

Managers of fostering, adoption services and children's residential homes (England only) MUST ALWAYS obtain telephone verification of all references provided.

Where telephone verification is sought but proves impossible to obtain or where the referee is unwilling or unable to provide further information, the recruiting manager must consider with their responsible Director whether to proceed with employment. If there are any grounds to be concerned about possible poor practice or safeguarding considerations, then advice from the Safeguarding Service must be sought and the issue escalated to the Managing Director responsible for the service area.

For social care roles where a reference provides very limited information such as simply confirmation of dates of employment, the manager must in all cases seek further information. If this is not achieved, the manager needs to consider obtaining a further reference and should also consult their line manager about



whether or not to proceed with the job offer. Advice can also be provided by the People Advice Team and Safeguarding Team.

For regulated services managers must ensure that they comply with the requirements of regulations related to reference checks.

Completed references will be forwarded to the recruiting managers by the Recruitment Team for them to determine suitability of appointment. Confirmation that all references are acceptable should be forwarded by return email to the Recruitment Team as quickly as possible to avoid delays to recruitment. It is the responsibility of the Recruiting Manager to check and approve and/or verify references within 3 working days, this should not normally be delegated to another member of staff unless the Recruiting Manager is on leave, any such delegation should be to a comparable level of manager or the Recruiting Managers line manager.

International Check

5.6 Where successful applicants for employment have lived outside the UK as an adult (i.e., from age 18 onwards) for a continuous period of more than 6 months in the last 5 years, AFC will require confirmation of a satisfactory international police check, the Recruitment Team can process these checks during the onboarding process.

Alternatively, where the candidate can produce a valid certificate of good conduct/criminal records check from the relevant country authority (alongside a clear disclosure check and good quality references that meet the requirements of this policy), a Level 3 Manager may decide to accept this and progress with the start date confirmation. The Level 3 Manager will be required to check, validate, and return the Certificate of Good Conduct documentation to the Recruitment Service for inclusion in the HR file for the new starter.

Previous Names and Full Name

5.7 A candidate who has changed their name through deed poll, or on marriage, or has switched to using their middle name instead of their first name, will need to show documentation to prove when the changes were made, such as a deed poll certificate, marriage certificate or decree nisi.

Medical Declaration

5.8 Successful candidates will be asked to complete a medical declaration as part of the pre-employment check process. Where a candidate states they have a medical condition that may impact their ability to undertake the responsibilities of the position, it may be necessary to carry out more detailed medical checks via Occupational Health. The Recruitment Team will work with Occupational Health and the Recruiting Manager to progress these.

Disclosure Check

5.9 Disclosure checks will be undertaken for all candidates appointed; the level of check required will depend on the role. It is the responsibility of the Recruiting Manager to confirm the level of check required and provide clear evidence (where requested) on the need for the level of check. Full guidance about eligibility and the procedure can be found in the Disclosure and Barring Checks Policy and Procedure and for NI there is information also within Appendix 1-Policy Statement Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.

5.10 All staff, consultants, interims, agency workers and contractors must have a disclosure check prior to commencing work for or on behalf of Action for Children. This is not dependent on role. The role will simply determine the level of the check as laid out in legislation – Action for Children will predominantly use enhanced level with barring checks for any staff in contact with children and families and young people and basic level checks for those who do not have this contact. Further information about disclosure checks can be found in the Disclosure & Barring Policy.

Right to Work Check



5.11 The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 requires Managers to ensure that all new employees are eligible to work in the UK by seeing, checking and verifying an original copy of relevant Right to Work documentation. Failure to do this prior to employing an individual is a criminal offence and can lead to AFC receiving a civil penalty. This must be inspected, verified and uploaded to the MyRecruit system for the Recruitment Team to process prior to the issue of contract of employment.

Regulatory/Professional Registration Check & Qualification Check

5.12 Where a position requires certain a specific qualification and/or registration with a regulatory or professional body (e.g., Social Work England, NISCC, SSSC, CCW, CIPD) the Recruiting Manager must ensure that they check the qualification certificates/registration certificates at interview to confirm it is the correct level and type required for the role.

Copies of these documents must be uploaded into MyRecruit for inclusion in the digital HR file.

Recruiting Managers must check with the regulatory body that there are no live sanctions held against the candidate's registration that which would impact the candidate's suitability for appointment.

The Recruiting Manager should ensure the new employee informs the regulatory/registration body that they have changed their employer to AFC.

Checks required for Internal Appointments

5.13 An internal reference will be required from the candidate's current line manager. Where the incumbent line manager is the same for the newly appointed role the reference will require approval by email from the next line manager up, i.e., the line managers manager.

In addition, the manager must satisfy themselves that the internal employee has the correct level of disclosure check for the role and that there has been no change to the information previously provided on this check.

6. Further Points of Support

6.1 If you require further support, guidance or clarification on any aspects of this policy and procedure please contact your line manager in the first instance or refer to the Recruitment & Induction area on Thomas.

You may also contact the Action for Children Recruitment Team via recruitmentservice@actionforchildren.org.uk

Trade Unions: Contact details: Thomas - Our Trade Union Partners or contact National Helplines: UNISON 0800 0857 857, UNITE 0800 1691 102

Employee Assistance Provider:

Health Assured is Action for Children's Employee Assistance Provider. 24-hour helpline 0800 030 5182. Health Assured also offer a structured, confidential telephone counselling service, for a maximum of six sessions. You can call the helpline to request it.

In England, Scotland, Wales and Guernsey you may contact ACAS (Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service) by phoning 0300 123 1100 or refer to their website www.acas.org.uk

In Northern Ireland you may contact the Labour Relations Agency by phoning 028 9032 1442 or refer to their website <https://www.lra.org.uk/>



ACTION FOR CHILDREN POLICY STATEMENT ON THE RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

POLICY STATEMENT

1. We undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not to discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
2. This policy statement is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.
3. Action for Children complies fully with the Code of Practice, issued by the Northern Ireland Office, in connection with the use of information provided to registered persons, their nominees and other recipients of information by AccessNI under Part V of the Police Act 1997, for the purposes of assessing Applicant's suitability for employment purposes, voluntary positions, licensing and other relevant purposes.
4. Action for Children is committed to equality of opportunity, see Safer Recruitment Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy for information on our practices, and to providing a service which is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. We ensure that no applicant or member of staff is subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital status, race colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, age, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, physical or mental disability political opinion or offending background, or is disadvantaged by any condition which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.
5. Action for Children actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. The selection of candidates for interview will be based on those who meet the required standard of skills, qualifications and experience as outlined in the essential and desirable criteria.
6. Relevant posts in front line delivery and management of our children services will be required to undergo an Enhanced level disclosure check. All applicants will be made aware at the initial recruitment stage that the position will be subject to a Disclosure and that Action for Children will request the individual being offered the position to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure check.
7. In line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, Action for Children will only ask about convictions which are defined as "unspent" within the terms of that Order, unless the nature of the position is such that we are entitled to ask questions about an individual's entire criminal record.
8. We undertake to ensure an open and measured and recorded discussion on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be considered relevant for the position concerned e.g., the individual is applying for a driving job but has a criminal history of driving offences. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of the conditional offer of employment.
9. Action for Children may consider discussing any matter revealed in a Disclosure Certificate with the subject of that Disclosure before considering withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.



10. We ensure that all those in Action for Children who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of Disclosure information. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to employment of ex-offenders (e.g., the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978).
11. We undertake to make every subject of an Access NI Disclosure aware of the existence of the Code of Practice, and to make a copy available on request.
12. Having a criminal record will not necessarily debar you from working with Action for Children. This will depend on the nature of the position, together with the circumstances and background of your offences or other information contained on a disclosure certificate or provided directly to us by the police.