

# Safer Recruitment Procedure

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## Introduction

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 PACT
- To ensure that our recruitment procedures are fair, consistent, and transparent
- To deter those who seek to harm children and vulnerable adults from applying to work for PACT

This document outlines our Safer Recruitment procedures which should be adhered to all times and through all stages of our recruitment and selection process for employees, self-employed contractors, volunteers (including Trustees), panel members and agency staff. In addition, the HR team provides professional advice and guidance within the recruitment and selection stages that is aligned to statutory requirements, PACT policy and process and best practice.

This document defines the responsibilities of both line managers and HR.

It is critically important that no manager engages into any verbal or written communication or correspondence which could be construed as representing offers of employment or agreements for the provision of services.

All personal data obtained during the recruitment process will be collected, retained, disclosed and deleted in a fair and proper way and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), underpinned by the Data Protection Act 2018.

This procedure relates directly to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, ensuring that safeguarding considerations reinforces all stages of the recruitment process.

## Procedure

### 1. Establishment Control

#### Justification to Recruit

When a role becomes vacant and requires changes to the established role or a new role is created within the organisational structure (including roles that are additional to headcount and budget, for example, to provide long term leave cover), the first step in the recruitment process is for the hiring manager to submit

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a request to recruit using the Justification to Recruit Form. In all cases an up to date and finalised job description should be provided with the form.

When a vacancy arises because the current postholder leaves, and there are no significant changes to the job role or a proposed increase to the hours of work (i.e., replacing like with like) then there is no requirement to complete a Justification to Recruit form.

The hiring manager should submit the Justification to Recruit form to their Head/Director of Service for review, further comment, and signature approval. The form should then be submitted to the HR Manager to take forward for further review and approval by Head of Finance and Head of HR and Operations, before being submitted to the CEO for final review and approval outcome.

If the role is a new role or there are significant changes to the job description, the role must be job evaluated by the job evaluation panel to determine the appropriate pay grade and salary range for the role. This must be done in advance of the Justification to Recruitment being submitted to HR and Finance.

Once approved, HR will contact the hiring manager to agree the advertisement, the recruitment campaign arrangements, and timelines.

## **Job Description**

The job description must summarise the key purpose of the role, set out the main responsibilities and activities carried out and identify the essential (and any desirable) knowledge, skills and experiences required within the person specification.

The person specification is used to assess candidate competency in both the shortlisting and interview selection stages.

All job descriptions must include the responsibility to *“Safeguard and protect vulnerable adults and children, in accordance with PACT’s policies and procedures at all times”*.

A template job description and/or examples can be made available to hiring managers and the HR team guide and support the creation of or adjustments to all Job Descriptions.

The job description will state whether a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check is required.

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This process is mirrored in the recruitment and selection process for volunteers.

## 2. Advertising vacancies

All job advertisements include the statement:

*“PACT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Anyone joining our team is subject to PACT’s Safer Recruitment pre-appointment enquiries. These include the provision of documentation of the right to work in the UK, Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check, overseas police check where applicable and references covering a minimum 5 year period.”*

This statement also features in prominent areas of PACT’s external website careers page and on PACT’s application forms for employees, contractors and volunteers. Links to PACT’s Safeguarding policy, Safer Recruitment Policy and Code of Conduct are also provided.

All vacancies (internal or external) are advertised on PACT’s intranet, PACT Connect. As a minimum, all external vacancies are advertised on the careers page of PACT’s website and PACT’s social media channels.

Other advertising methods are used as appropriate, including Charity Jobs, Reading Voluntary Action, CVAA, Direct Gov and Guardian Online. HR also encourage hiring managers and their teams to share opportunities amongst their networks.

### Agency Use

If 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.

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### 3. Application Forms

All prospective candidates must submit PACT's standard application form (different versions for employee, volunteer, and contractor posts) to a centralised email [PACT\\_HR@pactcharity.org](mailto:PACT_HR@pactcharity.org)

Candidates are asked to provide a full education and employment history.

Where advertisements are placed on job boards such as Reed or Total Jobs, candidates are requested to complete and submit an application form prior to any interview arrangements being confirmed as part of the selection process.

HR checks application forms for education or employment gaps for shortlisted candidates prior to interview. Further information is then requested in writing by email from the candidate to explore any gaps. The HR representative on the interview panel is also provided with information so that further queries or information required can be raised with the candidate at interview.

Details for two referees are requested on the application form and additional referees are requested if this does not cover a 5 year minimum period. Referees are not contacted until after a conditional offer of employment has been made and the applicant has confirmed that PACT may take up references.

Application forms are held on the recruitment campaign folder in the HR electronic document file. Application forms are received, acknowledged, and retained by HR and held securely in the recruitment campaign folder in the HR X: Drive (Protected permissions).

After the close date of the vacancy, hiring managers and shortlisting/interview panel members are provided with candidate application forms, job description and other relevant selection process documentation, for example; scoring matrix sheet, interview questions and exercise activity.

PACT is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and collects data on the profile of applicants so that we can advance diversity, proactively identify any inequalities and ensure that all recruitment is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. Applicants are invited to provide this data separately to their application via an online survey.

### 4. Shortlisting

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Each application is assessed against the shortlisting criteria for the role, as detailed on the person specification section of the job description.

Shortlisting is undertaken by the agreed shortlisting panel and recorded on the shortlisting form. Candidates who are not shortlisted for interview will be notified by HR and feedback is provided on request. Feedback will be factual and relate only to the shortlisting criteria.

It is the responsibility of the shortlisting panel to review all applications, provide informed contributions to shortlisting discussion and agree a score for each candidate against the scoring matrix.

It is the responsibility of HR to encourage a process that is fair, consistent, and transparent and aligned to policy and best practice, providing advice and guidance where appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the Hiring Manager to confirm the shortlisted candidates for interview for their role, in consideration of panel inputs and outcome scores.

## **5. Interview Process**

### **Arrangements**

HR will invite all short-listed candidates for interview, providing interview date, time, and venue location and format of interview with information on any assessment exercise or activity. In addition, visitor location map and visitor guidance requirements are provided. Candidates are asked to confirm their attendance and if they require any requested adjustments to support any disability or health condition.

Shortlisted candidates who have made a disclosure will be asked further questions about this by the interview panel, as appropriate.

### **Documentation**

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

- proof of right to live and work in the UK, as detailed by Gov.uk and under the requirements of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- personal identity documentation, as detailed in the DBS guidance

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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

Only original documents will be accepted.

Documentation is verified and copied by an HR and Operations team representative. Photo identification is verified as a true likeness of the candidate.

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 (electronic or paper), in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), underpinned by the Data Protection Act 2018.

Further details on document checking are included here

[Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/right-to-work-checks-an-employer-s-guide)

Further information and advice can also be obtained from HR.

## **Training and Guidance**

At least one member of any recruitment selection panel will have undertaken Safer Recruitment training (face to face or online) and all those involved in interviewing candidates will have received adequate support in conducting interviews and have been adequately briefed about the job and its requirements. In addition, HR are available to provide advice and guidance to avoid the risk of discrimination within the process and encourage a fair, consistent, and transparent process throughout the recruitment campaign. All employees receive Unconscious Bias training (face to face or online) as a mandatory training requirement.

## **Interview Questions**

Interview questions will be prepared in advance by HR using a standard format and shared with the Hiring Manager. The Hiring Manager will be requested to include Delivery Specific focused questions that are relevant to the more technical and professional requirements of the role. Interview questions will be based on the competency requirements for the role as detailed in the person specification of the job description. All interviews must include a question concerning safeguarding. The Hiring Manager will agree the finalised

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interview questions. The prepared and agreed interview questions will be used for each candidate interview to ensure fairness and consistency in selection.

The HR representative on the interview panel is provided with information on any outstanding gaps or queries in education or employment history, so that further information can be explored and obtained with the candidate at interview. Where appropriate, and if unclear, reasons for leaving employment will also be discussed.

### **Interview Documentation**

Before the interview takes place, HR will provide the following documentation to the interview panel:

- interview schedule
- job description and job advertisement
- candidate application forms
- interview question sheets for each candidate and panel member
- details of assessment exercise or activity
- For HR representative: information on education and employment history gaps

### **Interview Aims**

For the candidate, the interview is an opportunity to:

- ask questions about the job and PACT
- decide if they would like to accept the job if successful

For PACT, the interview is an opportunity to:

- advocate PACT and provide more information on our services, and our culture
- describe the job and responsibilities for the role in more detail
- assess candidate competency levels to perform in the role
- explore candidate training and support requirements to perform in the role
- assess candidate understanding of safeguarding and highlight the importance of safeguarding within the role
- discuss availability, notice periods and upcoming leave plans with the candidate
- explore in more detail any education and employment gaps
- advise the candidate of the timescale of next steps following interview

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## Post Interview

At the end of the interview, the panel will assess the candidate's competency level to perform the role from their responses to the competency-based interview questions and any completion of any assessment methods. Scoring criteria are used.

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.

The assessment of candidates' suitability for the role is recorded in a standard format on the interview question form. All notes are collated by HR and scan copied to the relevant recruitment campaign folder and to the personnel file (electronic or paper) of the successful candidate.

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. Candidate Selection

It is the responsibility of the interview panel to provide informed contributions to interview outcome discussion and to make individual notes on each candidate. All panel members should ensure that they have objective and evidence based information to substantiate their decision outcomes, using the defined criteria and the structured interview questions and assessment methods.

It is the responsibility of the interview panel to discuss and agree a score for each interview question competency area for each candidate, to provide a total overall score for each candidate.

It is the responsibility of HR to encourage a process that is fair, consistent, and transparent and aligned to policy and best practice, providing advice and guidance where appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the Hiring Manager to make the final decision for candidate hire offer, in consideration of panel inputs and outcome scores.

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## 7. Conditional offers of Employment

Please note that offers of employment can only be made by HR and will be subject to the following satisfactory pre-appointment enquiries made by PACT:

- confirmation of right to live and work in the UK
- Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check at appropriate level for role (see DBS checks procedure)
- overseas police check for candidates who have spent three months or more overseas within the last five years
- minimum of two written references covering a minimum period of 5 years, (using a standard format) and telephone verification
- original evidence of qualifications relevant to the role
- evidence of registration as a Social Worker, if relevant or membership of any other relevant professional body

A conditional offer of employment will be made by HR, which remains conditional on the satisfactory completion of all pre-appointment enquiries.

### 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 references

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 of the role the successful candidate has been offered.

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 a five-year period.

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

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employer has ceased trading. In such cases, references should be requested from their last known employer or additional character or personal references to validate the required five-year period.

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 professional acquaintances who are not related to the candidate.

On receipt of written references, HR will contact referees by telephone to verify the reference. Information obtained will be recorded on the telephone reference form and retained on the individual's personnel file (electronic or paper). The written references and relevant notes of the telephone verification will be sent to the hiring manager to confirm in writing that they consider the references to be 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 adults 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 charity.

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
- Whether at the point of leaving, was the individual subject to investigation or suspended pending conclusion of any investigation
- Attendance
- The reason for leaving employment, training or study

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- 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.

A start date cannot be confirmed until all pre-appointment enquiries 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 assessment form for consideration by the Chief Executive.

Prior to commencement of employment all new employees will be sent the Safeguarding, Confidentiality, Data Protection, Health and Safety policies and asked to provide signature acceptance that they have received, read, acknowledged, and understood these.

HR will maintain a 'Single Central Record' of all employees, volunteers (including Trustees), panel members, 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 data protection, safeguarding and health and safety (and child sexual exploitation and prevent/channel awareness training where necessary for the role) within the first three months of their employment.

New employees will also be invited to attend training on Unconscious Bias (face to face or online) and if a manager, invited to attend training on Safer Recruitment (online).

All new employees are subject to completion of a satisfactory probation period as outlined in the terms and conditions of their employment.

HR will send a template manager induction checklist to the hiring manager prior to the agreed start date.

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During their first week, all new employees receive an HR induction, IT induction and Facilities induction. Volunteer inductees are provided with a separate induction plan and receive an HR induction from the Volunteer Coordinator.

As part of induction, new joiners are made aware of the Whistleblowing policy.

## 9. Personnel files

A personnel file (electronic or paper) is set up by HR for every new joiner and includes:

- New starter checklist
- Application form, interview notes and confirmation of any education or employment gaps
- Job description
- Contract of employment
- Identify verification of right to live and work in the UK, and other relevant visa or identification documents
- Training certificates
- Evidence of professional qualification/s and professional membership/s (as appropriate to role)
- Minimum of 2 references covering a 5 year period and telephone verification
- DBS disclosure number, level, workforce and date issued
- Signed policy acknowledgement for Safeguarding, Confidentiality, Data Protection and Health and Safety policies
- Personal details information and emergency contact details
- Photo

## 10. Related Documents and Regulations

Safeguarding Policy

DBS Checks procedure

DBS Positive disclosure procedure

An employer's guide to Right to Work Checks – Gov.uk

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