

Recruitment and selection in a social setting

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INTRODUCTION

People form an integral part of an organization. Indeed, there is no organization that can run without its human resources. Recruitment and selection has thus far reaching implications for the proper functioning of the organization. Most organizations are known to eagerly have their posts filled in order to ensure continuity of services. It is however important to ensure that the staff to be recruited are properly screened prior to their appointment, especially in a social setting. The welfare of the children and vulnerable adults must be put first, as opposed to just filling vacancies.

Staff must therefore be properly screened prior to their appointment so as to deter, reject and identify those who might cause harm or abuse to the children and vulnerable adults. Only after a rigorous and satisfactory recruitment and selection process that appointments are made. This robust recruitment and selection process contributes to a safer workforce, whose duties should reflect on their commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults.

Where there allegations or suspicion of abuse especially to vulnerable adults, the stages outlined below may be followed in resolving the issue.

Alerting: – this concerns theresponsibilityof recognizing abusive situations and reporting them to the line manager. Alerting plays a major role in safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults, and any concerns of possible abuse, however trivial, must be reported (SSD 2006).

Referral: – Referrals are then made to an appropriate designated officer.

Contact can be made via telephone; however, this must be confirmed in

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writing within 2 working days. When deciding on the level of urgency of the referral, the degree and extent to which the risk poses harm to the vulnerable adult must be the deciding factor (SSD 2006). Some cases such as life threatening situations will require a rapid response.

Screening: – At this stage the substance of the alleged abuse is screened by the designated officer alongside other professionals (SSD 2006). In determining whether there is need for further investigation, certain factors must be taken account of including nature and extent of abuse, vulnerability of the individual, impact, length of time and the risk of repeated acts on other vulnerable adults (SSD 2006)

Planning the investigation: – upon confirming receipt of the referral and after carefully screening and determining the need for further investigation, the designated officer may then convene a strategy discussion and appoint an investigating officer (SSD 2006). The strategy decision will ensure that there is an early exchange of information in order to clarify the actions to be taken and to determine the method of investigation which can either be a single agency, joint investigations or joint investigations with the police (SSD 2006).

Investigation: – the investigation strategy agreed at the strategy discussion is then implemented. The investigating officer conducts the investigation while keeping the designated officer fully informed. A primary consideration to be made at this stage is to involve vulnerable adult in the investigation. The investigation will establish facts about the circumstances, decide whether there are grounds of concern, identify the level of risk and the sources, determine the person responsible and recommend what action to

be taken against them (SSD 2006).

Making decisions: Upon receipt of the investigating officer's report, a case discussion may be conducted to formulate an agreed care and protection plan for the individual. The objectives of the meeting shall be to share and evaluate the gathered information, assess the risk level, agree on an inter-agency care and protection plan, make appointments of persons who will oversee the implementation of the care and protection plan, and identify any therapeutic interventions to the vulnerable individual who has been abused (SSD 2006). This will include conducting an appropriate follow up.

Monitoring and reviewing: this stage concerns the aspect of overseeing and ensuring that the care protection plan has effectively been implemented (SSD 2006). Where there are still risks to the vulnerable adult, the case can be kept under review and further actions that are necessary to safeguard them taken.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Underpinning all the aspects of recruitment and selection are the legislative requirements that I, as the HR manager, must adhere to prior to making any appointments, especially in a children and vulnerable adult setting. These include:

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT 1999

This act provides for the protection of the developmental needs and welfare of children, including the need to be protected from harm (DCSF 2010).

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COURT SERVICES ACT 2000

This act covers issues of disclosure and child protection (DCSF 2010). It contains a list of convictions that bar offenders from working in a children and young people setting (DCSF 2010).

THE CARE STANDARDS ACT 2000

This act provides for the establishment of certain protocols and procedures that bars certain individuals from working with children and vulnerable adults in England and Wales (DCSF 2010).

THE MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

This Act safeguards provisions with regard to people that lack capacity and provides protection from deprivation of liberty. According to the statute, all the staff working in a social setting, be it with vulnerable adults or children, must be aware of what constitutes deprivation and restriction of liberty (DCSF 2010).

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS ACT 2006

This act introduces a vetting and barring scheme for the staff working with children and vulnerable adults (DCSF 2010). This act which came into force in November 2006 heralds' significant changes to the way vetting is done for people working with vulnerable adults and children. The act contains provisions relating to organizations or individuals involved in the recruitment and selection of people for regulated activities such as teaching, healthcare, social work, guidance and counseling among others (DCSF 2010).

Other legislations that regulate the protection of vulnerable adults from harm include the Sexual offences Act 2003, Fraud Act 2006, and Domestic Violence, Crimes and Victims Act 2004 (DCSF 2010). These acts tend to criminalize certain actions hence deterring individuals who are unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults and children.

Besides the legal and regulatory requirements outlined above, I will also observe certain professional codes. For example, the Code of Practice for recruitment, this is an important element for achieving excellence in the recruitment and selection of workers in a social care setting (DOH 2004). This code contains a list of standards of professional conduct and practices that must be strongly adhered to by all the employers in the recruitment and selection process (DOH 2004).

It is widely acknowledged that the credibility of the recruitment process is greatly influenced by the collective conduct of individual recruiters. In order to maintain the credibility and reputation of my organization, I will endeavor to recruit while complying with the relevant professional codes including the Code of Practice, and Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct among others. The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is intended to instill confidence into the process of recruitment and selection. Embracing these professional codes among others will eliminate discrimination, improve on the recruitment process and help maintain best practices.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

In any recruitment and selection process, the candidates must be assessed for their suitability for the position. The selection criteria may be based on structured interviews, PowerPoint presentations, assessment centers and psychometric testing (Wood 1998). Due to the nature of work contained in a social setting, a structured interview will be more suitable as the selection criteria.

The use of interviewing as the selection method is important as it not only enables the candidate to demonstrate transferable skills and previous experience that might be useful in undertaking the role, but also evaluates the candidate's suitability for the post by exploring on other issues related to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults (Wood 1998).

Hence, as the HR manager, I will first consult with the other specialists in the recruitment industry so as to determine the selection criteria and method best suitable for recruitment and selection in a social care setting. Upon agreeing on a suitable method, say an interview, I will then proceed with the recruitment and selection process which following steps:

i) PLANNING

Planning is vital to successful recruitment. As an initial stage, the planning phase will take account of

The amount of time needed to make the adverts

A clear and precise definition of the role

Applications closing date

Time needed for the short-listing to be undertaken

Appointment of the interview panel

Determining the nature and relevance of interview questions and tasks.

ii) RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

As providers of social care services, it is obvious that the staff of the organization will have contact with this vulnerable group on a day to day basis. Hence, the recruitment and selection process should not only hire staff of the highest caliber in the performance, but also of positive influence to children and vulnerable adults. The recruitment policy and accompanying procedures must therefore be designed to safeguard and promote this vulnerable group.

As the HR manager, I will ensure that an explicit recruitment and selection policy statement that shows the organizations commitment to safeguarding and protecting the interests of vulnerable individuals is included in the various aspects of the recruitment process. This will include incorporating the policy in recruitment websites, publicity materials, advertisements, person specifications, candidate information packs, competency framework, in the job descriptions and induction training as well.

iii) ADVERTISING

Having developed a proper plan and an explicit written recruitment and selection policy, the next step will be to advertise. At this stage, I will ensure that the advert goes in accordance to the time schedule and that the organization's commitment to safeguarding the needs of children and vulnerable adults are clearly articulated in the advert.

For instance, I will include a commitment statement such as below:

Everyone in this organization has the obligation and commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, and ensure their protection from harm.

iv) APPLICATIONS AND SHORT-LISTING

For any recruitment and selection process, a selection panel is needed to assess the applicants in terms of how well they meet the job specification. However, it is not up to the panel to wade through the resumes and cover letters trying to locate relevant information that meets the selection criterion. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that the relevant information is presented in a form that is easily accessible. This will assist in rating the application against the selection criteria as well as against other applicants, and thereafter identifying those candidates shortlisted for the interview.

An easy way of doing this is to draft an application form, which is to be filled in by the applicants. The application form provides the opportunity to emphasize on the organizational commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable individuals. It will be my responsibility to ensure that the forms are available for free downloads via the organizational website. Besides sending an application form to the Prospective applicants, I will also ensure that they receive a copy of

The aims and objectives of the organization information about the job description, salary grade, person specification and lines of accountability.

the time schedule for the interview process

and the guiding principles that ensure that the organization is committed to safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults.

Upon receiving the applications, I will scrutinize them and undertake the relevant checks relating to qualification, character, suitability, skills and identity. This will include working together with the panel in evaluating the candidates' application by:

the extent to which the requirements of the person specification are met by the applicant.

the demonstration of transferable skills and experience to the job in question

Where there are discrepancies noted, I will conduct a follow up to confirm and determine the suitability of the candidate for the position.

v) REFERENCES

After wading through the applications presented by the applicants, the information submitted is then scrutinized and tested by contacting their referees. Contacting their previous employers is important in order to determine the legitimacy of their information and their suitability for the position by checking whether there have been any concerns, allegations or disciplinary investigations on their conduct, performance and behaviour towards children. Where there are ambiguities, anomalies or conflicting information, I will conduct a follow up alongside with the referee.

Ideally, references need to be taken prior to the interview. However, where they are not taken prior to the interview, the decision to select the applicant

for posting shall be conditional upon receiving suitable references and checks.

vi) INTERVIEW

I will then make arrangements for the interview process, which is the most crucial stage of the selection process as it allows the panel to test the requirements of the person specification. Prior to the interview, I will delegate the necessary authority to the panel to make informed decisions about the appointments; and ensure that the interview panel is well-trained in procedures of interviewing and selecting applicants. This will include the exceptional ability to recognize responses which may question suitability for the post.

I will also organize for the Panel to meet prior to the interview in order to reach a consensus on:

the standards accepted for appointment in this job,
issues to be explored with each applicant,
and the agreed assessment criteria.

Aligning with the above, I will ensure that the interview questions are relevant and explore on suitability issues. That is, the questions should be linked specifically to the aspects of the job description. The purpose of interview questions is to enable the candidate to demonstrate transferable skills and previous experience that might be useful in undertaking the role (Warner 1992).

SCOPE OF THE INTERVIEW

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In addition to assessing and evaluating the candidate's suitability for the post, I will instruct the panel to explore on other issues related to safeguarding the welfare of Children and vulnerable adults. These will include exploring on factors:

the attitude of the candidate towards children and vulnerable adults

What motivates the applicant to want to work in a social setting

The candidate's ability to support the agenda of safeguarding and protecting the welfare of the vulnerable individuals

Emotional resilience in working with challenging behaviours.

Gaps in employment history

Any discrepancies and concerns that may arise from the information provided by the applicant

vii) PRE-APPOINTMENT CHECKS

Before making any offer to potential applicants, I will ensure that they have provided satisfactory evidence of:

Identity/permission to work:- the applicant must provide proof of identity including the name, address, date of birth and a valid national ID.

Qualifications: - this includes original copies of all the relevant qualifications and recommendations from previous employers. These qualifications will be assessed based on the Health and Social Care National Occupation Standards and must confirm competence working within health and social care setting, especially with children and vulnerable adults (AMA 2010).

CRB clearance - I will check for any criminal record via the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB). Any offer of appointment in a social setting must be

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conditional upon a satisfactory CRB disclosure (Bowles 1995).

Barring list clearance – Upon determining that the applicant is appropriate for the post, I will conduct checks with the relevant professional bodies including the General Social Care Council.

viii) INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Where deemed suitable for the post, I will conduct a formal induction for the candidate which will include consideration of safeguarding and safe practice. This will also include a basic child protection training which will equip the new staff to recognize and respond to child welfare concerns. It is vital to have all the staff trained prior to their appointment so that those that lack the designated lead responsibility for child protection are subjected to refresher courses at three yearly intervals that will keep their skills and knowledge up to date. While those with designated lead responsibility who have taken up the role, may be given training on inter-agency procedures.

As the HR manager, part of my duties in the induction and training will include:

Explaining to the candidate about the safeguarding policy of the organization

Issuing a practice guidance and explaining conduct requirements to the candidate

Making known the name and contact details of the Designated Child Protection Officer.

Making known to the candidate the health and safety requirements.

Assessing the induction and training needs of the candidate.

TASK FORCE TO RECOMMEND CHANGES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Upon completion of recruitment and selection, I will set up a task force that will examine the frontline social work practice and provide their recommendations on how improvements can be made, especially to the induction and training, recruitment and leadership.

CONCLUSION

The process of recruitment and selection of staff is certainly no easy task, especially in a children and vulnerable adult setting. While working with this vulnerable group may bring great rewards, it places a great responsibility for the HR managers to ensure that the staff employed to provide these vital services are well suited to the task.

Therefore, there is need for HR managers in a social care setting to appropriately screen all the staff and volunteers prior to their appointment. Only after a rigorous and satisfactory recruitment and selection process that appointments are made. This robust recruitment and selection process contributes to a safer workforce, whose duties should reflect on their commitment to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

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