



# Safer recruitment policy and procedures

Last review: May 2021

Next review: May 2022

Mud Pie Explorers is committed to the safeguarding and welfare of the children that attend our sessions.

Safeguarding is defined as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of health or development; ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Mud Pie Explorers acknowledges that safeguarding issues can arise anywhere and have a 'it could happen here' attitude. All team members are aware of the increased vulnerability of children with disabilities and that the needs of all children are always paramount. We have primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the children in our sessions. Our planned and structured approach to recruitment is vital to our safeguarding role because it...

- Reduces the risk of an inappropriate appointment
- Ensures all relevant steps are taken
- Creates a record of the recruitment process for future reference
- Ensures better appointments
- Ensures we have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

All potential team members follow the same rigorous recruitment process which is outlined below. These procedures apply to paid team members, sessional staff, volunteers and Directors as well as both internal and external candidates. We do not use agency workers or recruit through 3<sup>rd</sup> parties.

## Responsibilities

The Managing Director has operational responsibility for the recruitment and selection of team members-paid and unpaid. Current Directors will be involved in the recruitment and selection of new Directors. The Managing Director retains responsibility for recruitment checks for Directors. The Managing Director reports directly to the Board of Directors and has access to a named supervising Director in relation to recruitment and selection. The Managing Director will have training on safer recruitment and selection every 3 years.

## Planning the recruitment process

There is a planning phase for each round of recruitment. This includes decisions about:

- timeframes
- the method of selection
- the selection panel
- advertising
- reviewing the person spec and job descriptions/ role profiles

## The recruitment and selection panel

A selection panel of at least 2 people makes decisions about the recruitment and selection of new term members. This applies to paid and unpaid roles. These same 2 people will shortlist and conduct interviews. Panel members should not stand to gain from the appointment or have a personal relationship with any of the applicants.

At least one member of the interview panel must have experience and an understanding of working with children and one (who can be the same person) must have had specific training in safe recruitment and selection methods.

## Advertising positions

Considerations when advertising:

- Where to advertise?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the cost?
- What is the timescale

All advertisements will avoid blanket requirements will be avoided as these may unreasonably exclude people with protected characteristics. Adverts will include the following:

- Post/ role title
- Salary details or statement that it is an unpaid role
- Commitment required:  
Directors- 12 months, 4 meetings a year and 2 sessions with children a year  
Volunteers- 12 months, 2 hours a week  
Paid roles – permanent/ temporary/ full time/ part time/ sessional
- Post location
- Brief description of MPE
- Closing date for the application
- Contact details to request an application pack or further information
- The following statement: “CV's will not be accepted under any circumstances.”
- The following safeguarding statement: “We have a strong commitment to the organisation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in our care. All team members must undergo vetting procedures, complete a DBS check and have 2 adequate references. All team members must be at least 16 years of age”.
- A statement of equal opportunity.

## Application pack

Application packs for all prospective team members include the following:

Document	Includes
Overview of the position	Details of the application/ selection process including timeframes and the contents of the application pack. Contact details to raise queries. A brief history and background of the company
Application form	Work experience history, education and training. A copy of our privacy statement for applicants/ applicants, a self-disclosure section and a signed declaration that the person has a right to work in the UK. An equal opportunity monitoring form.
Person specification	Skills and experience; abilities (and specifies the ability to work in a way that safeguards and promotes the wellbeing of children), behaviours, attitudes and values (and specifies the applicant’s responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children); the qualifications and experience needed for the role; the competencies and qualities that the applicant must be able to demonstrate. It will detail how these will be tested and assessed during the selection process.
Job description or role profile for volunteers	A statement fact that they are responsible for safeguarding and child welfare; an accurate reflection of the role a person is expected to do; clearly set out the extent of the relationship with, and the degree of responsibility for children with whom the post-holder will have contact.
Policies and procedures	Safeguarding policy and procedure Inclusion, equality and diversity policy

Reference request permission form	This is a copy of the reference form for them to sign to give permission to ask for the personal information if they are shortlisted. This is included in the application form.
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## Shortlisting

The 2 members of the selection panel will each check each application form to answer the following questions:

- Are all questions answered?
- Are there any discrepancies on the form?
- Are there any unexplained gaps in chronology?
- Are there any questions we need to ask of the applicant?
- Have 2 references been provided? Is one referee the most recent employer? Is one referee relevant to working with children?

Drawing up a short-list will be based on a point system scoring information on the application form against the person specification. Information will be recorded on a proforma specifically designed for this purpose. This ensures a systematic and consistent approach. There will be no exceptions or variations. The criteria for personal qualities and skills must be used as well as those in relation to qualifications and experience. If greater emphasis is placed on one or more important skill and competency for the job, this will be clear to all from the outset.

Information provided in application forms will be cross checked with other sources of information- such as references and interview question answers.

## Reference requests

References will be sought once an applicant is shortlisted; this will be made clear in the application pack. The timeframe for recruitment will allow for references to be received prior to interview, for all applicants to ensure that information of comparable weight is obtained for all applicants. This will allow any discrepancies/ concerns raised by the reference to be discussed with the applicant at interview.

Referees will be required to complete a form (see appendix). References not using the form will not be accepted. The use of a form maintains consistency and ensures we get all of the information we need.

Referees must include the applicants current or previous employer and someone who can comment on any work with children. Students can ask a senior member of staff at their educational setting for a reference. If the applicant has not been previously employed one character reference is permissible. References from a relative or partner are not permitted.

As well as seeking references from the person's current or most recent employer, additional references may be sought where appropriate, for example, where the applicant is not currently working with children but has done so in the past. A reference from that employer should be requested in addition to the current or most recent employer if this is different. Careful consideration needs to be given where the applicant has been working as a locum or on a series of temporary contracts. The need to request an additional reference from the last permanent employer should be considered.

## Reference checks

Upon receipt of references the selection panel will consider each individually and consider the following:

- Are all the questions answered fully?
- Are there any vague or ambiguous statements that require clarification?
- Are there any discrepancies between the application form and the reference information?
- Is the information reliable and comprehensive - e.g. accurate dates of employment, any periods of sick leave;
- Is it based upon an accurate assessment of the applicants specific qualities and competencies?

- Does it outline any disciplinary action, known convictions and other grounds for disquiet or concern, including allegations against him/her or concerns raised relating either to the safety and welfare of children or about the applicants behaviour towards children? Do we need more information?
- Does it focus on the key criteria for effective performance in the specified post and include the referees perception of the individuals suitability to work with children;
- Offers a full and frank disclosure of applicants reason for planning to or actually leaving her/his post, the existence of any previous or current concerns or disciplinary action in relation to allegations of a child protection nature or in relation to an Adult at Risk (including allegations which were not substantiated).

If there are any discrepancies/ concerns the referee will be called by a member of the selection panel that has been trained in safer recruitment. The conversation will be recorded in writing and emailed to the referee for to them to sign as verification of the verbal addition to their reference. The matter will be discussed with the applicant if appropriate and necessary.

## **DBS checks**

All team members that work with children will be subject to an enhanced DBS check. If they are not on the update service a new check will be completed. On production of a DBS certificate the following checks will be made:

- Top left of the certificate must say DBS FEE PAID if it is for a paid role
- Top left must say CHILD WORKFORCE or CHILD AND ADULT WORKFORCE. If it says ADULT WORKFORCE or OTHER then it is not sufficient
- Bottom half of front page Children's Barred List: it must say NONE RECORDED; if it says NOT REQUESTED then it is not sufficient
- Check if anything is disclosed on the Certificate which might have relevance for the applicant's work/ role
- The role for which the check was done should be similar to the applicant's work for you
- If any of the above checks have a negative answer then the person will need to do a new DBS check.

Where the person is on the update service their status will be checked online once their approval has been sought. The result of this search will tell us if anything has been added to the person's police record since the Certificate was issued. We would need to see the actual Certificate.

While waiting for a new DBS check to arrive it may be possible for new team members to begin working with groups if they have an existing, appropriate DBS that meets all the bullet pointed criteria above and is not less than 2 years old.

## **Practical assessments**

In order, to fully assess applicants for Forest School Leader and support staff positions will be invited to a practical assessment. It will involve taking part in a session with children and existing team members. This will enable the selection panel to assess their performance against their application and see how they work with children and other adults. These assessments will take place before interviews. Applicants will not be left alone with the children. Children will have the opportunity to provide feedback to the selection panel.

## **Interviews**

Interviews will take place that is accessible to people with a range of physical abilities, this may be online. No one will be invited to join the team unless there has been a face-to-face meeting.

Each member of the selection panel will be prepared for each interview, aware of the questions and what constitutes a good / concerning response. Interviewees will be allocated questions to ask.

The following paperwork will be at hand:

- Interview questions and response proforma
- Pre- agreed positive and negative indicators
- Notes from any practical assessment
- Application form for each applicant- if it was submitted online the applicant will be asked to sign it at the interview
- References for each applicant
- Any additional questions to give clarity to a reference, information on the application form such as unexplained gaps in employment history or from the practical assessment

General considerations about interview questions:

- Interviewers will only ask the pre-determined questions, focussed on the role and the applicants ability to meet it's requirements.
- Each applicant will be asked the same questions.
- Any additional questions must be related to the role. These questions and the responses will be recorded on the interview question response proforma.
- Applicants will be asked to answer open ended questions and give examples of situations they have experienced to enable the assessment of their personal values, motivation and attitude. They will be thanked for sharing personal experiences.
- Hypothetical questions will be avoided. Instead real life scenarios around the role will be used.
- Personal questions will be avoided. Questions will relate to the role.
- When asking questions panel members will be aware of both their tone and body language.
- If an applicant is unable to answer a question it can be rephrased, or the panel member can move onto the next question
- Panel members will avoid expressing their own values or judgements.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 we will ensure that:

- questions on forms and in interviews will be relevant to the post
- the same topics and issues covered with each applicant
- probing questions will be related to role/ job criteria and not asked in a discriminatory way
- we avoid prejudices and don't ever assume
- marking criteria for selection will be consistently applied, new criteria will not be added later

Questions specific to safeguarding. Each applicant will be asked a relevant safeguarding question and will also be assessed for their:

- Level of resilience in relation to working with children
- Commitment to seeking to help children rather than help themselves through children
- Level of self-awareness and their ability to see how their behaviour impacts upon children
- Ability to be open to information sharing and not to work in isolation
- Courage to take action to protect children from harm

The applicants' attitude towards children and commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should also be tested. The following areas should be explored with the applicants in the interview:

- Their motivation and reasons for working with children;
- Their attitudes and behaviour about control and punishment;
- Their personal belief systems and perceptions about the boundaries of acceptable behaviour towards children;
- Their ability to form and maintain professional relationships;
- Their understanding of safeguarding children and their responsibility to do so.

After the interview, panel members should separately score the applicants on the proforma provided. They should then share their scores and discuss their reasons for reaching the scores. This discussion should result in a joint agreed score for each applicant.

## The selection process

Throughout the process the selection panel will collate information for each applicant against the person specification for the role. Details from the application form, interview and references, as well as any feedback from the team and children from any practical assessment will be included. This information will be used to decide which applicant to select. Conditional offers will be made based on a person's experience, ability and suitability to perform the role rather than on the urgency of the need or the availability of the applicant.

## Making a conditional offer and pre-appointment vetting checks

The successful applicant(s) will be made a conditional offer over the phone and informed that the offer is subject to satisfactory references (if these were not obtained prior to interview), vetting checks and DBS checks. This phone call will be followed up by letter.

This written conditional offer will include a DBS form with instructions for completion, a self disclosure form (see appendix) and a request for the following:

- Documentary evidence of their identity, including their date of birth (e.g. a full birth certificate, passport, photo driving licence or some form of photograph identification)
- Where appropriate, change of name documentation
- Evidence of eligibility to work in the UK
- Original copies of certificates for educational and vocational qualifications as well as training courses. If the applicant cannot produce original documents or certified copies, written confirmation of relevant qualifications can be obtained from the awarding body.
- Proof of name and address (e.g. a Council Tax bill, a bank, credit card or tax letter not more than 3 months old)

We provide a 'regulated activity' therefore ALL team members that come into contact with children must complete a satisfactory enhanced DBS check.

All photographed ID and stored in a password protected folder on the company OneDrive until it is printed to be sent off with the applicants DBS form. Details recorded in the recruitment record database then deleted. *MPE completes enhanced checks for all team members, this includes our volunteers, employees and sub-contractors and Directors. DBS checks may not show up convictions from other countries, where an applicant has spent time abroad criminal record checks need to take this into account.*

A member of the selection panel that has completed safer recruitment training will:

- Lead the process of criminal record checks and barred list checks
- Check professional status by checking the applicant is registered with the relevant professional body
- If the applicant is a teacher- check they are not subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order
- If the applicant claims to have specific qualifications or experience relevant to working with children which may not be verified by a reference/certificates, the facts must be verified by contacting the relevant body or previous employer and any discrepancy explored during interview.

## Where information is disclosed on the self-disclosure form.

If it determined that the disclosure is not relevant to the recruitment process it can be ignored. If it is determined it is relevant more information may need to be ascertained. This may be from the applicant, a previous employer or the police. If the applicant disclosed a recent and serious offence regarding children, it is our duty to communicate the criminal checking agency and ascertain whether they desire to include them on a barred list.

If the disclosed offence is of a nature that we may still consider an appointment to the role an assessment of risk will be conducted by the 2 selection panel members. The following will be considered:

1. Relevance, nature and seriousness
2. Timescale- how long ago was it and how old were they?
3. Repetition- is it a one off? Is it a repeated pattern?

4. Mitigating circumstances
5. Changes and remorse
6. Country of conviction- something may not be an offence here but is elsewhere. Find out more if needed.
7. Decriminalisation- is the offence still illegal today?

If necessary, we will contact the Access and Response for advice/ guidance on decision making.

### **Passing on concerns**

If a barred person applies for a role it must be reported to the Police. If we are concerned that a that someone is a risk to children and young people we will share details with the Access and Response team. If they belong to a professional body and we have reason to believe that they are in breach of standards we will report the matter to the DBS.

### **Making an unconditional offer**

If nothing of concern has come to light during the safer recruitment process upon the completion of vetting checks, the receipt of 2 satisfactory references and the return of an adequate DBS check the applicant will be offered and the offer will become unconditional. If the applicant accepts the offer they will begin the process of induction. Please refer to the induction policy and procedure.

### **Recording the recruitment process**

All documentation relating to the recruitment process must be retained on file. Any vetting check completed must be confirmed in writing and retained on the applicants personnel file together with:

- Their completed application form
- DBS number and date of issue NOT the certificate
- Evidence of right to work in UK
- Copies of original certificates and details of any related checks
- Evidence of membership of professional organisation
- Person spec, JD and job advert
- References

Interview notes will be retained for as long as they are needed for the recruitment process and in line with the Data Protection Act and GDPR guidelines 2018.

### **Recruiting under 18's**

When recruiting young people- age 16 to 18 we will consider both that they are the right fit for a role and whether our company is right for them. We may need to adapt our usual volunteer recruitment processes to meet the needs of young people, for example, we may choose to hold a less formal interview. Parents of volunteers who are under 18 will sign a consent form giving permission for them to volunteer with us. The parent/ carer will be given a copy of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

We will tailor our induction process so that it is accessible for young people and covers any additional requirements or questions they may have. We will make sure that the young person knows what they should do if they have a concern either about themselves or someone else. They will also need to know how to promote positive behaviour within the group and what to do if behaviour issues arise.

### **Duke of Edinburgh students**

During the recruitment process we will find out what is expected of Duke of Edinburgh during their time with us. We will need to know what is required from us and them. For example, do they require regular updates or will the young volunteer need to carry out certain activities?

Date	Details of Change
Dec 18	Changed Nickie to Managing Director. Added photos stored on OneDrive.
Feb 19	Added that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse
May 2020	Added that the application pack will include a copy of our privacy statement for team members. Added minimum age for being a team member is 16.
June 2020	Combined volunteer, director, paid staff and safer recruitment procedures to create 1 document out of all 4. Updated in line with safer recruitment training (NSPCC).
May 2021	Make more succinct

#### References

- Working Together 2015 - *Department for Education*;
- Supervision, Policy, Standards and Criteria - *Department of Health and Social Care, Social Services and Public Safety, February 2008*;
- Providing Effective Supervision - *Children's Workforce Development Council, 2007*
- Staff Supervision in Social Care - *Tony Morrison (2005)*;
- NSPCC Principles and Standards for Case Management and Supervision.