



2.4 Guidance note: Safer recruitment

The range and quality of football programmes for children would not exist without the time, skills and commitment of staff and volunteers.

Ensuring that the right people are working for football organisations is a key part of creating an environment where child safeguarding is taken seriously, and children can have fun. Just as we would only recruit a coach with the necessary qualifications, so we should make sure that those working with, and for, the organisation are suitable to work with children.

It has been recognised that child abusers sometimes target organisations where they can gain access to children. However, even if a person is not looking for a way to deliberately harm children, they may still be unsuitable to work with them due to not having the right temperament and necessary patience.

Taking steps to ensure that recruitment – both of paid staff and volunteers – is safe sends out an important message about the commitment to child safeguarding. As well as screening out people who may be unsuitable to work with children, it also signals to those who may be looking for the opportunity to abuse children that the organisation is aware of this risk and it may dissuade them from applying for a position.

It should be noted that recruitment will never be totally safe, despite our best efforts.



The aim of safer recruitment is to take measures that, together, aim to reduce the chances of employing the wrong person.

Introducing safer recruitment procedures can sometimes cause anxiety, and some people may be offended that the organisation wants to carry out checks. It is best explained as a procedure that everyone involved with the organisation is required to comply with, and that it is not personal. Most reasonable people will understand that a reputable organisation needs to be assured that those working with/for them are safe to work with children and they may also be reassured to know that the safeguarding of children is taken seriously.

The table below contains ideas on how to include safer recruitment in the appointment of staff and volunteers. In some countries it may be difficult to fully comply with all the suggested measures – for example, obtaining references may not be feasible, or police checks may be easily forged. Similarly, obtaining copies of qualifications may be impossible, especially if applicants have moved several times or had to leave their country, e.g. in the case of refugees. Most important is to do everything that is reasonable and feasible, and to have a range of different approaches in place, rather than relying on just one.

All recruitment and employment practices required by law must be followed. For example, in some countries recruitment practices for those working with children may be stipulated in domestic legislation. Particular background checks or qualifications may be required, or there may be limitations on what information may be sought.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES	
Candidate profile	Decide what skills and knowledge are needed to safely work with children and include these in the profile. This will depend on the position – clearly a coach will have more contact and need better skills working with children than someone in an administrative role.
Advertisement	Include a clear statement about the organisation’s commitment to safeguarding children in any advertisement about the position.
Interview questions	Include at least one question that relates to child safeguarding. <i>See Annex I for sample questions.</i>



PRE-APPOINTMENT PHASE	
Self-declaration	Applicants should complete and sign a declaration of good character, including a section confirming they are safe to work with children and giving permission for checks to be made. See <i>Annex II for the self-declaration form template</i> .
Reference checks	<p>Two professional references should be provided. Depending on the position applied for, references may include a previous employer.</p> <p>References should always be sought and obtained directly from the referee using an email address, postal address or phone number. Open references (i.e. a written reference provided by the candidate) are generally not sufficient. See <i>Annex I for sample questions</i>.</p>
Proof of identification	Candidates' identities must be verified, e.g. by checking their passport or national ID card, as predatory offenders may provide false information, and even a false identity, to secure a position.
Qualification and registration checks	Any qualifications or professional registrations claimed in the application should be verified by asking to see original certificates.
Police checks	<p>The decision to request a police check needs to be made with regard to whether the post requires access to children, as well as the validity, reliability and availability of such checks.</p> <p>Where a police check is required, it should be sought from the country where the person is living and, if the person has worked overseas, from those countries too. Some countries have a database of offenders/people who are unsuitable to work with children. If this exists, it should be checked.</p> <p>Having a conviction does not necessarily mean that the person cannot be appointed – it depends on the offence, although any conviction for mistreatment/abuse of a child should generally be sufficient reason not to appoint them.</p>

POST-APPOINTMENT MEASURES	
Code of conduct	All staff and volunteers (including managers, coaches, officials) and all those involved in football programmes or activities should sign a code of conduct. This should be explained to them so that they fully understand expected behaviours. <i>See Child Safeguarding Toolkit for sample codes of conduct.</i>
Induction	As soon as possible after starting with the organisation, staff should be briefed on the child safeguarding policy. The name and contact details of the child safeguarding focal point must be provided.
Probation period	A probation period can be used to actively assess suitability for the position. Terms and conditions will depend on the employment laws of the country, but the probation period should ideally last at least three months.

Annex I. Sample questions

Sample child safeguarding questions for interviews

At least one question on child safeguarding should be asked in interviews. The questions below are examples. Remember that if the applicant is not familiar with the organisation's child safeguarding policy and code of conduct, they may not answer the question 'correctly'. This is not important; it is their attitude towards keeping children safe that is being tested.

- Have you worked for an organisation that had a code of conduct before? If yes, what difference did it make to the way you viewed yourself and your work and that of teams you were in?
- Can you give me some examples of unsafe or unacceptable behaviours with children during football activities?
- During your work you might encounter children. How do you feel about that? Are there any age groups you feel more or less comfortable being in contact with? Asking follow-up questions about why an applicant has a strong preference can help you determine if there is a cause for concern.
- Have you worked/volunteered in a similar position before where you had contact with children? What did you like about it? What did you find difficult?



- If you were concerned about the actions or behaviour of another adult towards children, how would you respond?
- What have you done when a colleague or friend has broken a rule, procedure or code of conduct?
- If you saw a parent or a member of the coaching team shouting at a child, what would you do?
- What qualities have you observed in others that you have admired, particularly regarding their work with or care of children?
- What do you think makes a good role model in football for children and teenagers?
- Imagine you hear that a group of children have been taking photographs of another child in the changing room while they were undressing and posting them on the internet. How would you react? What would you do?

Sample questions to ask during reference checks

It may be difficult to ask straightforward questions and get straightforward answers from a referee, as in many countries it is illegal to discuss disciplinary matters with people external to an organisation and to provide details that reflect negatively on an employee. Attention should therefore be paid to the way questions are answered (i.e. hesitation, reluctance to answer).

It is important to explain that the role may bring the applicant into contact with children.

Suggested questions

- Do you know of any reason why we should be concerned about this applicant's conduct with children?
- How would you describe the applicant's character?
- In the time you have known the applicant, is there anything that has led you to believe that they are unsuitable to be in contact with children?
- Would you be happy to have the applicant working with your organisation again/ with children?

Annex II. Self-declaration template

All applicants working directly with children must complete this form.

[Name of organisation]

Name of applicant

Position applied for

1. Have you ever been the subject of criminal or other legal proceedings regarding the safety and well-being of children? This includes conviction by the courts and cautions, reprimands or warnings by the police? YES / NO

If yes, provide details:

2. Have you ever been asked to leave an organisation or had your employment terminated because of your behaviour or attitude towards children? This includes being subject to disciplinary proceedings, being disqualified from work with children or any other sanctions. YES / NO

If yes, provide details:

3. Are you aware of any reasons that might give rise to concerns about your suitability to work with children? YES / NO

If yes, provide details:

Declaration:

I confirm that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete. I am of good character and know of no reason why I would be considered unsuitable to work with children (under 18 years old).

I confirm that I give my consent for [organisation name] to carry out the relevant background checks and seek references as may be necessary to ensure I am suitable to work with children.

Signature..... Date.....