HO 4.4 Addressing Safeguarding in Interviews (CAFOD)

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| **Title**:  | **Addressing Safeguarding in Interviews** |
| **Key contact** | HR Services Officer  |
| **Audience** | All staff |
| **Variations** | All national offices should check local employment law to confirm requirements. |

Addressing Safeguarding in Interviews

According to good practice, the interview should be seen as an opportunity to assess candidates’ suitability in relation to safeguarding. The HR Advisor will remind the interview panel of some basics about child abuse, e.g. that abusers look completely “normal”, are often very skilled at deception, salesmanship and “grooming” (of organisations as well as individual children).

Bearing in mind the principles of dignity, diversity and equality (everyone should be asked the same questions without discrimination) the interview panel should pay attention to the following.

* Gaps in employment history (if the candidate has had a career working in safeguarding issues).
* Frequent changes of employment or address (if the candidate has had a career working in safeguarding issues).
* Reasons for leaving employment (especially if this appears sudden).
* It is also good practice to get clarification on any duties or accomplishments that appear vague in a CV in relation to work with children and vulnerable adults.
* Watch out for body language and evasion, contradiction and discrepancies in answers given (although this must be interpreted in context and in a spirit of common sense).

**The End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) network list some w**arning signs. These include, but are not limited to:

* Overly smooth presentation or keenness to please
* Poor listening or rapport or communication skills
* Strange or inappropriate questions or statements about children
* Expressions of interest in spending time alone with children or in working with children of a particular age or gender
* Excessive interest in child photography
* Background of regular overseas travel to destinations where child sex tourism is prevalent.

However it may be none of these. Signs might not be clear. ECPAT Australia warns: “The skilled paedophile may not be detected by gut feelings or obvious warning signs. They may simulate the very person you had in mind for this job.” But don’t give up – remain alert: “Remember, listen to your gut reaction but harness it with good practice!” [From ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*].

It is important in the interview that the issue of Safeguarding against harm is openly discussed and that the interview panel reinforces that the organisation has a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place. Transparency is an important part of abuse prevention: an abuser may decide that there are not enough opportunities to offend in an open and aware culture.

All applicants (regardless of the post they have applied for) should have read the policy before the interview. The interview panel could use this as an opportunity to see if the candidate has read the policy properly and understood it. The interview panel can ask candidates for their opinion of it, or ask specific questions about it. This reminds candidates that the organisation takes the policy seriously.

 Safeguarding Questions for Interviews

Direct and challenging questions encourage self-selection, that is, candidates withdrawing themselves from the process. The suggested direct questions listed below have been adapted from ECPAT Australia’s *Choose with Care*. And some of these questions have been taken from CHS Alliance’s guidance on Safe Recruitment. The precise questions should be adapted to suit the level of seniority of the position applied for:

**For posts which are not Safeguarding-Vetted Posts:**

Applicants for posts which are not Safeguarding-Vetted posts should still demonstrate some understanding and awareness of Safeguarding. Here is an example of a Safeguarding question that can be asked for these interviews:

* Are you aware of our Safeguarding policies and procedures? How would you compare it to other safeguarding polices you have come across?

**Role Specific:**

* In the context in which you will be working, who do you think the different types of groups will be that you may have to interact with? What could make them vulnerable?
* What are some of the approaches you will need to adapt to work effectively with such groups?
* What minimum standards would you expect to be in place to ensure the protection of individuals/groups by our organization? What do you see as your responsibility?
* Have you had experience of having to respond to concerns about how another individual has been interacting with the vulnerability of groups/individuals? If so, what did you do?

**Generic:**

* What is your understanding of what a Code of Conduct, Child safeguarding policy or Protection of Vulnerable Adults policy should contain?
* Have you ever worked anywhere where a colleague abused a child? What happened and how was it handled? What did you think of the way it was handled? Would you have handled it differently yourself?
* When might it be appropriate and inappropriate to be alone with a child or vulnerable adult, e.g. on an overseas project visit?
* How and when might it be appropriate to comfort a child?
* What sort of things might make a photograph of a child inappropriate for publication in our organisation’s annual report? [The interview panel should be looking for things like: inappropriate clothing; if the photo depicts prostituted children or children in conflict with the law their faces should be blurred and their names changed; was the photo taken and – in an ideal world – used with the child or parent’s permission? etc.]
* Is there anything that we might find out about during reference checks that you’d like to talk about?
* You will be working in countries where vulnerable children and adults may be suffering abuse and exploitation in various ways. What steps would be important for you to take to ensure children and vulnerable adults are not put at risk by CAFOD staff or partners?
* How would you create a work environment that would minimise the opportunity for child abuse? (attitudinal question)
* Could you tell me about a time when you were working with a child whom you took a dislike to? How did you handle the situation so that you could still do your job? (behavioural question)
* Could you describe how you handled a situation in which a child took a strong liking to you? (behavioural question)
* Do you think that children and young people need special friends and mentors at times? How might you be a mentor for a young person without getting too close? (deterrence question)
* When do you think it might be appropriate and/or inappropriate to be alone with a child? (deterrence question)
* What would you do if you if you are not comfortable about something you have witnessed or overheard?
* If you are recruiting a staff member who will be required to work with communities or vulnerable groups, how would you ensure that you have done everything you can to minimize appointing the wrong person? What would you tell them at induction?

Despite these questions, the interview should be sure to end on a positive note.

As a final reminder under CAFOD’s Dignity in the Work Place Policy , we do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, belief, colour, race, ethnic origin or disability.