

# Staff Recruitment and Retention



## Part 2: Stages in the recruitment and selection process

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## a. Human Resource Planning

A human resources plan need not be highly complicated. A straightforward plan will help you:

- Assess future recruitment needs
- Formulate training programmes
- Develop promotion and career development policies including risk management
- Anticipate and, where possible, avoid redundancies
- Develop a flexible workforce to meet changing requirements
- Control staff costs whilst ensuring salaries remain competitive
- Assess future requirements for capital equipment, technology and premises.

Producing a human resources plan involves:

- Forecasting staffing requirements against business objectives
- Assessing the available supply of people to meet those requirements
- Matching available supply against forecast demand.

Information on current employees, labour turnover and the labour market will help in the formulation of the plan. The Learning and Skills Council, [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk), will be able to provide general information on the local labour market in England and on the skills balance available, as will the local Jobcentres. Worcestershire County Council can assist with information on the numbers of school and college leavers.

### i. Risk Management (Succession Planning)

This is a form of risk management to assess the likelihood and damage to your organisation caused by the resignations of key members of staff in a department or the team.

Plans should be in place to deal with the eventuality either:

- Through multi-skilling, training or mentoring
- By offering favourable pay and terms and conditions to ensure the loyalty of certain key members of staff.

A progressive development and training programme will ensure there are sufficient staff within the organisation to fill the roles of other more senior staff when they leave or retire. In this way you can 'grow your own' staff, nurture and develop them and retain them in your employment.

For support on recruitment, selection and retention contact Worcestershire County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service: Childcare Development Team on **01905 790700** or the Recruitment Team on **01905 790576 / 790590**

### ii. Employer Branding

An organisation's culture, vision, values and mission statement should be reflective of the sort of people it wants to attract. Similarly when applying for jobs employees will look at the whole package the employer is offering including the business ethics they operate to see if they share the same principles. When a 'brand' is developed this needs to be reflected throughout the organisation's communications including job adverts and any dealings potential recruits might have with the organisation.

## When was the last time you stood back from your business and looked at it as a parent or potential employee?

Imagine you are visiting your child's setting to talk about a difficult issue. When you walk in:

- Do you know who works there?
- Who is a parent, student on work placement or committee member?
- How much confidence would it take you to ask an adult if they are a member of staff?

Imagine then that a potential employee wishes to visit your setting:

- What sort of a welcome would they get?
- Do all the staff smile and welcome the newcomer?
- Does somebody find out who they are and what they want?
- Are the staff wearing uniforms?
- Are there pictures of staff with their name, role and responsibilities displayed?
- What is your lasting impression of the setting and the people who work there?

When you advertise a vacancy ensure that:

- When a potential applicant rings up they get the same welcome
- The number given is always available or alternatively an answer machine is used at other times
- **All** the staff team are aware of the vacancy.

It is off-putting when ringing for job details to find a 'no-one tells me anything' attitude or a vague 'ring you back' type response! The answer to these questions will dictate whether or not your business is attractive to potential employees and customers.

## b. Job Analysis

A vacancy presents an opportunity to consider restructuring, or to reassess the requirements of the job. Answering the following questions will clarify the actual requirement of the job:

- Has the job role changed?
- Have work patterns, new technology or new services altered the job?
- Can the role be split/shared by other job roles and does a vacancy really exist?
- Are there any changes anticipated which will require other skills from the job role?
- Is there anyone within the organisation with the necessary skills and attitude who could do the job?

When advertising for staff remember:

- Being too prescriptive/too narrowly focused when recruiting will lead to a smaller pool of recruits to choose from
- It may not truly reflect the diversity of the community, which the organisation serves
- Jobs may need to be re-designed to appeal to a wider pool of recruits.

Factors to consider:

- People are motivated by factors other than pay
- People want to work in organisations that value their staff
- Offering working practices and opportunities for development, which enhance work-life balance and attracts more applicants
- Some will cost nothing, and others may mean an investment in your team.

Use work-life balance approaches:

- As a recruitment tool to attract the best applicants
- To employ a more diverse workforce
- To increase morale and commitment and reduce absenteeism, sickness and stress
- As a way of retaining good employees.

Consider offering:

- Flexible working opportunities - flexi-time, time off in lieu

- Term-time and part-time posts
- Compressed hours - working your total hours over a shorter number of working days
- Self-rostering - allows staff to put forward the hours they would like to work and shift patterns are matched as closely as possible, taking into account qualifications and experience to meet required staffing levels
- Shift-swapping (staff can negotiate hours to suit their needs and re-arrange shifts amongst themselves)
- Annual hours (contracted hours worked over a year rather than a week, usually to fit in with peak periods)
- Share unpopular working times across the staff team
- Job-sharing
- Special leave (career breaks, maternity, paternity, parental leave, time off for dependants).

## i. Job description

This should detail the purpose, tasks and responsibilities of the post. A good job description is useful for all roles. It can help with induction and training. It provides the basis of drawing up the person specification - a profile of skills and aptitudes considered essential and desirable for the jobholder.

It should include:

- Main purpose of the job - try to describe this in one sentence
- Main tasks of the job - use active verbs like 'writing', 'preparing', 'calculating' instead of 'dealing with' or 'in charge of'
- Scope of the job - expanding on the main tasks and the importance of the job. Giving information such as the number of people to be supervised, meetings they will need to attend and how often, the degree of precision required and the value of any materials or equipment used or budget managed can indicate job importance.

## Good Practice Tips

When you are preparing a job description, avoid jargon, abbreviations or acronyms, which can only be understood by 'people in the know'. Choose the wording carefully so that you do not discriminate against candidates unnecessarily. Remember discrimination can be direct or sometimes unintentional and more difficult to spot. Obtain specimen job descriptions from similar groups or samples from professional bodies to compare.

## ii. Person specification

Tips to follow when creating the person specification:

- Profile the ideal person to fill the job
- Skills, aptitudes and knowledge included in the specification are related precisely to the needs of the job
- If they are inflated beyond those necessary, the risk is that someone will be employed on the basis of false hopes and aspirations and both yourself and the employee will end up disappointed with each other
- Enables prospective candidates to assess themselves against the criteria
- Provides a benchmark for judging achievements
- It might not be necessary to ask for a certain number of years experience for a certain job, which may discriminate against a younger person without the required years' experience or vice versa
- Avoid over-specifying qualifications, unless needed for registration purposes. Be clear about whether you need a Level 2 or 3 qualified person to meet the National Standards/Welfare Requirements
- Pre-conceived and entrenched attitudes, prejudices and assumptions can lead consciously or unconsciously to requirements that may not be relevant.



You should end up with a specification that aims at getting the most appropriately qualified/skilled person for the job, which is measurable or capable of being evidenced and will allow the person to integrate into the team effectively. Person specifications are NOT a description of the last person to do the job, a wish list of random attributes or desired criteria that cannot be measured.

The writing of a job and person specification should help you adopt equality and diversity policies in your organisation particularly in relation to recruitment and selection. Factors to consider when drawing up the specification include:

- Skills, knowledge, aptitudes directly related to the job
- The type of experience necessary
- The competencies necessary
- Education and training but only as far as is necessary for satisfactory job performance so as not to discriminate against someone's age
- Any criteria relating to personal qualities or experience which must be essential and related to the job, and must be applied equally to all groups regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, nationality, creed, disability, membership or non-membership of a trade union.

The person specification together with a competency-based approach to selection should keep the process bias-free and as equitable as possible.

## Checklist

When you have completed the person specification use this checklist to make sure you are happy with it:

- Is it clearly related to the job description?
- Is the language clear, precise and jargon free?
- Does it cover all aspects of the job?
- Is everything absolutely essential for the job to be done well?
- Are there means of measuring or testing the criteria?
- Are the standards required realistic and appropriate?
- Does it take account of all aspects of Equality and Diversity?

Then read it through carefully to ensure you have avoided both direct and indirect discrimination.

### iii. Pay

Consideration should be given to pay. Factors such as scales, market rates and skills shortages will determine the wage or salary. However, other benefits can determine the full remuneration package, as people are not only motivated by money. Wages for staff need to reflect what the employer can actually afford.



## c. Attracting and Managing Applications

The first stage is to generate interest from candidates. The process of marketing needs to be undertaken carefully so as to ensure the best response at the most effective cost. The objective is to get a selection of good quality candidates and there is a range of ways for doing this, which can be split into two groups:

- Internal marketing:
  - To include internal recruitment from your own staff
  - Employee referral schemes or word of mouth
  - By using your own network to promote vacancies.
- External marketing:
  - To include traditional methods of advertising eg. local newspapers
  - Also developing new methods such as use of the internet.

### Choosing Where to Advertise

Where you decide to advertise depends on balancing a number of factors:

- How difficult do you expect it to be to find suitable staff?
- How widely will you need to advertise?
- What is your budget?
- Are you trying to increase the diversity of your workforce?
- What did you do last time and was it successful?
- Did it bring you enough suitable candidates?
- Are you missing potential applicants because they are not part of your usual networks?

Advertising can be very expensive so it is wise to think of alternative ways that you can advertise your vacancies to find your ideal candidate and make full use of all the networks you are involved in.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are applicants likely to come from the immediate neighbourhood, or from further afield?
- Are you in an area that may attract people with relevant skills and experience to move from elsewhere?
- Is there a growth of industry and commerce in the vicinity? Could this be attracting a workforce who may have families who have relocated, and partners available for work?
- Look at the timing of your advertisement, if you can. When do most people you know change jobs?

## i. Internal and External Methods of Attracting Applicants

### Internal recruitment

- It is important not to forget the internal pool of talent when recruiting.
- Builds on existing staff's skills and training, and provides opportunities for development and promotion.
- Good way to retain valuable employees whose skills can be further enhanced and should be a part of your succession planning.
- Other advantages include the opportunity for staff to extend their competencies and skills developing themselves, which is a great motivator and brings benefits to your business.
- You will need to introduce a consistent, clear, procedure, agreed jointly between yourselves and your staff to avoid suspicion of favouritism and which extends opportunities to all.

### Employee referral scheme

- Some organisations operate an employee referral scheme.
- These schemes usually offer an incentive to existing employees to assist in the recruitment of family or friends and they have been growing in popularity.
- Whilst these schemes can recruit good employees it is likely to lead to a much smaller pool of suitable applicants and does not usually satisfy equal opportunities requirements because any imbalance in the workforce may be perpetuated.

### **At your setting**

It may seem obvious, but do you advertise your jobs within the setting? Members of staff might be looking for something else, but remember too that each day, parents and carers pass through your doors. One of those parents or carers might be your next team member. Also, don't overlook those who volunteer their time to work at your setting.

**Ask them** if they would like to work for you. Volunteers sometimes think they are not worthy of a post, but love working in the childcare sector, which is why they volunteer in the first place!

### **Your Personal Network**

Many people first hear about job opportunities through word of mouth. Think about whom you know, whom you come into contact with and spread the word. Your list might include: staff, parents and carers who use your service, friends and relatives and business contacts. The obvious advantages are that this bears little or no cost to you and often attracts people who already know the setting, however it excludes applicants from outside your existing network.

### **External Recruitment**

There are many options available for generating interest from individuals outside your business. These include placing traditional advertisements in trade press, local and national newspapers or by making use of technology through your company's website or by using an external job site.

The purpose of both is to fill a vacant position with the best candidate, cost-effectively and on time. The method chosen should be appropriate to the vacancy to be filled.

Ways to advertise your vacancies outside of your setting include:

#### **1: Early Years and Childcare Service**

The **Childcare Recruitment Service (CRS)** is a joint working partnership with **Jobcentre Plus** to offer a free, one-stop method for advertising your vacancies.

Many childcare providers across the county have used the CRS at some point, however not all. For those that have never used the CRS the benefits we offer are:

- It's a free service.
- Job adverts can be written on your behalf
- Advertise within Playcare
- Advertise on two websites - ChildcareLink and JobCentre Plus
- Adverts are viewable within 24 hours on both websites
- Access to Job Seeker profiles
- Reach a wider and targeted audience
- Links with local colleges/training providers
- Links with childcare agencies within the county
- Vacancy lists are sent/given out regularly to those who:
  - Do not have access to the Internet.
  - Register as a Job Seeker
  - Attend the final session of the Choices Programme.

#### **2: Connexions**

Is a support service ensuring that all 13-19 year-olds receive the information, guidance and practical help they need in preparing for adult and working life. The Early Years and Childcare Service are currently working with Connexions to develop a strategy for encouraging more young people to consider working with children, young people and their families. We will be looking at the availability of work-based training for young people as a focus area. Connexions can:

- Display vacancies in their offices and circulate them to schools and colleges
- Shortlist suitable candidates from their computer database
- Issue application forms and arrange interviews
- Provide interview facilities, if required
- Arrange for the candidate to go onto an Apprenticeship programme, if suitable.

### **Good Practice Tip**

If you feel daunted by contacting Connexions, you can contact the Worcestershire County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service Recruitment Team on 01905 790576/590. Many contacts have already been established for these organisations and it may save you a few unnecessary phone calls!

### **3: Local Colleges and Schools**

- This is a good way of reaching students who have just completed their childcare training, who will have been on placement and may even be familiar with your setting.
- Colleges may be willing to place your vacancy on notice boards in their childcare department, but do not overlook the Students' Union board as well.
- Offering to take students on work placement will also stand you in good stead for the future. This method of advertising is free, but bear in mind it may exclude people with experience who are unqualified and also older age groups.
- It can be particularly useful to offer students the opportunity to spend some time at your setting, on work experience, or 'shadowing'.

Further information can be obtained through the Worcestershire Education Business Partnership on 01905 763763.

### **4: Your local community**

- Local schools, clubs, shops, larger supermarkets, hospitals, doctors' surgeries and clinics all have public notice boards.
- Community and church newsletters are another good way of promoting your setting, as well as advertising the need for staff.

### **5: Voluntary, community and other Organisations**

Making links with local voluntary organisations can serve several purposes:

- A way to make contact with potential workers
- A source of volunteers
- A means of accessing under-represented groups

Linking up with organisations that work with specific focus groups can be a good way to promote working in early years, childcare and playwork.

### **6: Newspaper advertisements**

Advertising in the newspaper is expensive, but can have the advantage of attracting a wider range of candidates from the local area. There are other ways in which you can use the local press to your advantage. Some have a regular feature on childcare. By selling shared advertising space, newspapers will often allow free editorials, which can be used to promote activities, events or your business in general. Shared advertising space is a cost-effective way of targeting potential applicants.

### **Good Practice Tip**

If your provision is expanding, consider approaching your local newspaper for a free editorial feature and invite a press photographer. This kind of story generates local interest and people will often link the feature to a subsequent job advertisement. You may even be able to imply you are looking for staff, if your wording is clever!

### **7: Local radio**

Advertising on the radio is very expensive, although local radio stations will often be willing to give an event free airtime. Ask for the 'Community Action' or 'What's On' desks, particularly if you are fundraising. Anything you can be seen to be doing for the community can indirectly affect subsequent recruitment advertising.

### **8: Agencies**

For more senior or specialist staff in your organisation you may consider the use of the following:

- Commercial recruitment agencies - often specialise in particular types of work.
- Executive search organisations - usually working in the higher management/specialist fields, will seek out suitable candidates working in other companies by direct approach, or via specialist advertising.



## 9: Where else can you look for staff?

- University students undertaking teacher training may be interested in holiday work
- Sport clubs and leisure centres advertising for 'sports co-ordinators' may attract more men into childcare
- Holding open days/recruitment days or attending **recruitment fairs** can help recruit future employees and raise company profile locally.

### ii. Online recruitment

Websites have become one of the most common methods of attracting candidates. Online recruitment, also known as e-recruitment, is the use of technology to attract candidates and aid the recruitment process. Technology can be used:

- To advertise vacancies - on company website or on job sites
- To deal with the applications - email enquiries, emailed application forms/CVs
- Online completion of application forms
- To select candidates - online testing.

Advantages of online recruitment:

- Has the potential to speed up the recruitment cycle and streamline administration thereby reducing the costs
- Allows organisations to make use of IT systems to manage vacancies more effectively and co-ordinate the recruitment processes
- Reaches a wide pool of applicants
- Makes internal vacancies widely known across multiple sites
- Provides the image of an up-to-date organisation, reinforcing employer branding and giving an indication of organisation culture
- Offers access to vacancies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week reaching a global audience
- Is a cost effective way to build a talent bank for future vacancies
- Helps handle job applications in a consistent way
- Provides more tailored information to the post and organisation.

### iii. Job Advert

Recruitment advertising is big business and there are often pages and pages of advertisements.

Take a look at any of the jobs advertised in the local paper and ask yourself:

- What looks eye-catching?
- Does too much text seem off-putting?
- What appeals to you? What would appeal to those you want to attract?

Often the temptation is to fit as many words into the available space as possible, but you should try to make yours stand out. It should catch the reader's attention and give a positive image of your organisation. It should also reflect your existing image. If you have a style that you use on other publications, make sure you use it in your advertisement. If you have won any awards or quality standards make sure these are included. If the job is appropriate for flexible working then this should also be stated in the advert.

Job adverts should:

- Be non-discriminatory
- Avoid any age, gender or culturally specific language
- Include a statement of commitment to equal opportunities
- Welcome applications from all sectors of the community.

#### Good Practice Tip

Although the primary purpose is to recruit staff for your provision, you are also contributing to the bigger task of raising the profile of early years education, childcare and playwork as a profession.

Wherever you advertise, the advertisement should include the essential information about the job and the type of person you are looking for. Be succinct. You will need to include:

- Your name, logo (if you have one) and location
- A headline - something to catch the reader's attention
- Job title
- Essential qualifications (state whether unqualified or working towards a qualification is acceptable)
- An outline of what the job involves, main purpose, tasks and responsibilities (from the Job Specification)
- Main features of the Person Specification
- Hours, pay and other benefits (remember some desirable employer features)
- Action - how to apply, who to contact, invitation to informal visit
- Closing and interview dates.

Next consider the design of the advertisement. Look for examples of different layouts:

- Lineage - a block of text
- Semi-display - centred headings, paragraphs, part-highlighted text
- Full display - a whole page and will be more expensive
- Creative - includes artwork, design elements
- Go for bold, attractive headings and borders and try using different fonts
- Use terms such as fun, flexible, enjoyable, challenging and rewarding
- Emphasise those benefits that you offer.

### **Main principles**

- Attract attention
- Remember the target
- Create and motivate interest
- Stimulate action.

### **Essentials**

- Keep it simple
- Keep it positive
- Make it attractive.

### **Do**

- Try new approaches
- Think about cost
- Seek advice
- Think about your media.

### **Don't**

- Repeat an old advertisement unless it worked
- Assume who is right for the job
- Discriminate
- Copy similar organisations - be different!
- Be afraid to ask for advice.

### **Good Practice Tip**

Many of the features you will want to put across may not be possible in your initial advertisement. Consider inviting applicants to apply for a 'recruitment pack', in which you can include the job description, person specification, promotional material/ newsletter about your provision, features and benefits of you as an employer and, of course, the application form. Not only does this look more professional, but it may also answer some of the questions a prospective employee will have.

## **iv. Applications**

There are two main formats in which applications are likely to be received: the curriculum vitae (CV) or application form. These could be submitted on paper or electronically and the use of e-applications (internet, intranet and email) is now part of mainstream practice. Consider the following in deciding which to use:

- Application forms allow information to be presented in a consistent format, and therefore make it easier to collect information from job applicants in a systematic way and assess objectively the candidate's suitability for the job
- Application forms can help the recruitment process by providing necessary and relevant information about the applicant and their skills

- They provide the basis for an initial sift and then for the interview
- CVs can be time-consuming to analyse and may not provide the information required
- They provide a record of qualifications, abilities and experience as stated by the applicant.

Application forms should:

- Be realistic and appropriate to the level of the job
- Use clear language
- Be piloted for readability and ease of completion
- Not request detailed personal information unless relevant to the job
- State the procedure for taking up references, how these will be used and at what stage in the recruitment process they will be taken
- Enable you to draw up a short list of candidates
- Provide a source of information to draw on in the interview
- Help track how applicants found out about the position - to enable a review of the effectiveness of recruitment methods used
- Provide a store of information about good but unsuccessful candidates that can be filed (either in hard copy or electronically) for future use.

Any information such as title (marital status), ethnic origin or date of birth requested for monitoring purposes (eg. for compliance with the legal requirements and codes of practice on race, sex, disability and age discrimination) should be clearly shown to be for this purpose only, and should be on a separate sheet or tear-off section. Such information need only be provided on a voluntary basis. Medical information should also be obtained separately and kept separate from the application form.

### **Essential information to send to applicants:**

Everyone who expresses an interest in the job should be given:

- The job description
- The person specification

- An indication of the timing of the recruitment process
- An application form, if you are using one
- Details of who the application should go to and in what format.

You can also include information about your workplace, in a similar way to the information you would give to your customers.

Remember that this is a good marketing tool. A recruitment/application pack looks professional and should always reflect your existing image.

### **All applications should be promptly acknowledged.**

It is useful to give the candidate some guidelines on how to complete your application form and explain the recruitment process that you will use to select the most suitable applicant. Suggestions include:

- Think carefully about why you want this job and what experience and skills you have to offer. They may be from previous employment, periods of study, general interests or life experience
- It is critical that you address the person specification and show how you are able to meet each of the stated criteria
- You must show how you meet each requirement
- The information you provide will be the only basis on which a decision can be made
- After the closing date, more than one person reads all application forms and people who best meet the requirements of the person specification will be invited to attend an interview
- You will be notified by post if you are selected.

Make sure that your Equality and Diversity Policy is reflected in your recruitment and employment of staff. You should state that you offer equality to all in your recruitment and selection procedures and that you aim to select the right person for the job based on their skills and abilities to do the job.

Your equality and diversity monitoring form should clearly state that all applicants are requested to provide the information for monitoring purposes and that it will not be used in decisions regarding short listing, interviewing or offers of employment. By keeping all personal information separate you are less likely to discriminate against any sector of society. Following this procedure is not only fair, but is evidence of non-discriminatory practice, which gives equality to all sectors of society.



## d. Selecting Candidates

Selecting candidates involves two main processes: short listing and assessing applicants to decide who should be made a job offer.

There are a variety of methods available to help in the selection process - including interviews, tests (practical or psychometric), role-plays, trial days and team exercises. Sometimes a range of methods will be used by the organisation depending on the type of job to be filled, the skills of the recruiter and the budget for recruitment.

### i. Short-listing applicants

Short-listing is a very important part of the recruitment process and it is where all your hard work on the job description and person specification will prove to be invaluable. Although it can be time consuming, it is really worthwhile conducting this part with great care and consideration. You won't want to let an excellent candidate slip through the net and equally you don't want to waste your time on someone who doesn't meet your requirements.

If you have only a few applicants, you may decide to follow up all of them. However, if you have received a large number of candidates, you will most definitely need to draw up a short-list of those candidates you wish to invite for interview. Either way, you need to ensure that all those you select for interview meet your essential criteria. It is useful to involve others in this process and good practice to work with a 'short-listing panel'.

A date for short listing should be set well in advance and those who take part in the short listing process should have copies of all application forms prior to this date.

**Ensure that all applications are treated confidentially and circulated only to those individuals involved in the recruitment process.**

Everyone should have equal status in making decisions, don't leave interviewing and selection to one person.

#### Steps to short listing

1. Using the job description and person specification, list all the requirements of the job on a short listing grid. It may be helpful to use headings relating to qualifications and training, experience, skills, knowledge and personal qualities. Remember to make two separate sections for essential and desirable criteria.
2. Design a 'points system' to measure how candidates meet your criteria.  
For example, 3 = exceeds criteria;  
2 = meets criteria; 1 = partly meets criteria;  
0 = doesn't meet criteria.
3. Using a separate grid for each candidate, go through all of the application forms (remember that this works better with application forms than CVs or letters) and score them against the requirements of the job and criteria. Remember to differentiate between essential and desirable. You will then be able to clearly identify which applicants have the relevant experience and qualities and those that don't.
4. Discard all applicants who do not meet the essential criteria in the person specification otherwise the criteria wouldn't have been essential in the first place.
5. Consider how well the remaining candidates meet the desirable criteria. You can attach greater weight to some criteria than others, if you require.
6. Rank the candidates in priority order highest score first. This is useful if you still have a high number of suitable candidates. Usually, if you have only one job to fill, interviewing more than six candidates isn't likely to improve your chances of finding someone suitable.
7. Arrive at your list of candidates to invite for interview, no more than six makes the exercise manageable. You may telephone short-listed candidates to invite them to interview, but always follow this up with a letter confirming the invitation and outlining clearly the date, time, length, venue, who to ask for and any special arrangements, including any documents they need to bring with them. You will need to explain to them the selection method you will be using and ask them if they have any special requirements in relation to attending the interview. Finally, don't forget to include a map!
8. You may also consider inviting short-listed candidates to visit your setting prior to interview, whilst the children are around. Make it clear when you invite them that it is a good opportunity for both of you to see how well they fit in with your setting, including the team they will be working with, and that all interviewees are being invited.
9. All unsuccessful applicants should be contacted by letter or phone informing them. Be prepared to give feedback, as some applicants may ask why they were unsuccessful. A robust scoring system will provide evidence of capabilities and suitability for the job, should anyone challenge your decision on grounds of discrimination. Always give constructive comments, outline positive aspects and suggest areas for development - never make this a negative experience. You may also ask if you can retain their details for possible future vacancies. Remember, you need to ensure that your reputation as a local employer retains a positive image, you never know when you may come across a candidate again in the future.

## ii. Interviewing

### a: Before the Interview

Interviews are a standard part of the selection process and by far the most popular selection method, but they can also be unreliable.



Often interviews are poorly planned, rushed and unstructured. When they rely on bias, personal preference and gut feeling, interviews may be little better than picking staff at random. The interview process does work and will help you select the best person. All you need to know is how to get the best return for your time.

Consider first the aims of an interview, which is, after all, a two way process. From the employer's point of view, the interview is an opportunity for you to:

- Explore the statements the candidate made in their application form
- Find out more about their experience
- Assess how they will fit into your team
- Give information to candidates, so that they can decide if the job is for them
- Ensure all candidates feel you have conducted the selection process fairly
- Leave all candidates with a good first impression - you never know when you may have another vacancy.

Candidates have the opportunity to:

- Sell themselves to you
- Find out more about your setting and the job itself
- Assess whether the job is right for them.

Planning is the key to a good interview. Think about:

- What you already know about the candidate
- What else you need to find out
- Are there any unexplained gaps in the candidate's work history?
- Who else needs to be involved in the interview?

Other points to consider:

- It is good practice for at least two people to conduct all interviews preferably including someone trained in interview techniques.
- One person should chair the interview
- At least one other person should be available to make notes and record all details of the interview.
- Check that those conducting the interview do not know any of the candidates
- If internal applicants apply try to choose someone else to interview, to ensure an unbiased decision.

Plan a set of key questions in advance, which must be the same for each candidate. Using standard questions ensures equality of opportunity, enables you to treat all candidates fairly, and means that you can compare responses using a scoring system, similar to the short-listing process.

For example:

- 0 = no answer
- 1 = incorrect answer or inadequate
- 2 = adequate answer
- 3 = good answer
- 4 = excellent answer

Agree which of the planned questions bears most importance and attach greater weight to the answers to these questions. Ensure that each person conducting the interview has an individual copy for each candidate.

Think about how you will open the interview and what will help put the candidate at ease, and finally how you will close the interview so that the candidate is not left wondering 'what happens next?'

Always ensure you have left enough time between interviews to cover all of the points you have planned, plus some consolidation time once the candidate has left.

## **b: Preparation**

There are a few things you can do before your candidates arrive to ensure things go smoothly and calmly:

- Check the reception arrangements and ensure someone is there to meet the candidates
- If the candidate is likely to have a short wait, have something to read available, preferably one of your newsletters or a brochure
- Ensure the interview room is private and free from distractions or interruptions
- Make sure the room is tidy
- Have all documents to hand
- Ensure that drinks are readily available - nerves can lead to a dry mouth or tickly cough!
- Arrange the seating to avoid barriers - try not to sit behind a desk, and avoid making candidates sit on child-sized chairs!

- Study each application form and discuss any areas for investigation with other panel members
- Make sure your interviewing panel works as a team. Discuss before hand who is going to chair, who will cover what and agree some of the model answers you are looking for

Finally, imagine that you are attending an interview at your own setting:

- Who greets you?
- Do they make you feel at home?
- Do you have the chance to settle your nerves before the interview starts?
- Is the size of the interview panel daunting?
- Are children running past the door and distracting everyone?
- Are you sitting on the same size chair as the person interviewing you?
- What is your lasting impression of the setting and the people who work there?

### **c: Conducting the interview**

An interview can be daunting so try to put candidates at ease. Welcome them with a smile and a brief enquiry about something other than the interview, usually a reference to their journey will suffice! Be professional but friendly.

- Begin the interview by introducing the panel and explaining the process clearly. This will check that you both understand and agree what the applicant is being interviewed for and how they are going to be assessed. Remember that you need to tell a candidate if you will be making notes, as there will be little eye contact, which can be off-putting.
- Follow your interview plan. Cover one subject at a time, discuss only relevant points, be thorough but concise.
- Ensure that all questions are directly relevant to the job description and person specification and that all areas of essential criteria are covered.

- Use open questions that encourage the candidate to provide information. Continue to use open questions, which are usually prefaced with 'what, why, where, when, who or how?' as they will give you informative answers.
- Keep closed questions, which only call for a yes or no answer, to a minimum. Questions such as "Do you like working as part of a team?" only need a one-word answer, yes or no. Better to use, "Which do you prefer, working on your own or as part of a team?" Then follow up with "Why?" Only use closed questions when seeking a fact or clarification.
- Ask indirect questions to get closer to the truth in the areas that interest you. "Did you like your last job?" will probably not be as useful as "What type of organisation do you like to work for?" followed again by "Why?"
- Include a hypothetical question, such as 'What would you do if one child bit another?' or "How would you deal with a member of staff who made a racist remark?" Suitable candidates will give you a clear definitive answer, better still backed up by evidence of how they dealt with a similar situation.
- Try to test the candidate's claims by asking for evidence. If they tell you that they are flexible, adaptable and show initiative, get them to give you some examples. Don't take what they tell you at face value, probe until you are satisfied that they can back up their claims.
- Give candidates the opportunity to highlight what they feel they can bring to the job. An open question such as "What aspects of your previous job(s)/experience do you expect to be most relevant to this job?" will give them the opportunity to talk in depth about their experience.

### Some ground rules:

- Remember the 80:20 rule; the candidate should be speaking for 80% of the time
- Allow the candidate time to answer and remember to actively listen
- End by inviting the candidate to ask questions about the job and your organisation
- Conclude the interview by explaining to the candidate what the next step in the selection process will be and when he or she can expect a response. Ensure you have a telephone number where the candidate is going to be at the expected response time.

### d: Pre-conceptions

If people from under-represented groups apply, they should be considered in exactly the same way as all other applicants and not automatically dismissed as unsuitable because they don't fit the profile of your current staff. Avoid subconsciously stereotyping and making assumptions in terms of sex, age, race, disability or religious beliefs. Keep an open mind and be aware that for most people, there is a danger of making up your mind in the first few minutes of the interview.

If you stereotype candidates, the judgements you make about their ability to do the job may be flawed and this may mean that candidates may be treated unfairly. Similarly, you should not ask general questions about marriage plans, domestic arrangements or plans to raise a family, as these could be regarded as discriminatory.

### e: Recording the Interview

During the interview:

- Each interviewer should independently give each candidate a score against each of the questions on the grid
  - The approach is exactly the same as for the shortlisting process
  - Always be objective and base your score on facts and evidence
  - Complete individual interview reports straight after each interview, and before the next one
  - Ensure that any notes taken are clear, objective, relevant to the questions and are non discriminatory
- Ensure that you have built this time in to the process; otherwise you will end up confused and exhausted
  - You are individually assessing each candidate against the requirements for the job and ensuring equality of opportunity.

After the interview:

- Interview panel members should compare reports at the end of all the interviews and come to a decision
- If the process has been well structured and the scoring completed accurately and objectively, it is quite common for this decision to be unanimous
- If there is any debate, the chair should ensure that in selecting or rejecting a candidate, only those factors that are relevant to the job are taken into account
- **Interview record sheets should be kept for a minimum of 12 months and no longer than necessary.** These may be used as feedback to an unsuccessful candidate
- **Bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 will enable the candidate to ask to see interview notes where they form part of a set of information about the candidate**
- Be aware also that your reasons for appointing or not appointing a particular candidate may be challenged under discrimination legislation.

### If none of the candidates are suitable, do not appoint!

- It may be tempting to accept the person with the highest score, but they do not meet the essential criteria, you will need to re-advertise
- It is better to start again than to waste resources if you have any doubts about a candidate's suitability
- In this event, go back to your marketing and advertising, revisit the content, presentation and where you advertised and conduct a thorough review.

### Good Practice Tip

When selecting candidates you should try, where possible, to choose a 'reserve' candidate. A reserve candidate is someone that is your second choice. This can be useful if your first choice decides not to accept the job, or if their references or CRB checks are unsatisfactory. A reserve candidate will save you from having to go through the process again, and may, in some cases, provide you with a possible candidate for another post.

### iii. Assessment

Some interviews can be supported by further assessments where appropriate.

#### a: Practical tests

If the job involves practical skills, it may be appropriate to test for ability before or at the time of interview. Any tests must, however, be free of bias and related to the necessary requirements of the job. Consider:

- The objectives of such a test
- The efficiency of the method selected
- The costs and benefits of such a method.

#### b: Psychometric and psychological tests

- There are numerous tests commercially available which can assist in measuring aspects of personality and intelligence such as reasoning, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal skills and confidence.
- Although many large organisations have used them for a number of years, they are not widely used
- Some tests are considered controversial for instance, those that assess personality.
- Any organisation considering the use of psychometric or psychological tests should make sure they have the need, skills and resources necessary.

Points to consider:

- Tests should never be used in isolation, or as the sole selection technique
- Think carefully before using any test is it actually necessary for the requirements of the job?

- Is the test relevant to the person/job specification?
- What is the company policy about using tests, storing results and giving feedback to the candidate?
- Marking criteria must be objective, and the record sheets should be retained in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.

## e. Making the Appointment

Now that you have selected a suitable candidate and checked their eligibility to work for you, the next stage is to make a formal offer of employment, apply for CRB disclosure and police checks, which are a legal requirement of your Ofsted Registration, and inform the unsuccessful applicants. Take care not to do the latter until your selected candidate has accepted your job offer

### i. References and checking

Checks should be made regarding the following:

- Eligibility to work in the UK
- Previous employment and character references
- Criminal Records Bureau checks
- Health screening/questionnaire
- Qualifications.

You should always:

- Take up references both verbal and written to check on a candidate's identity, employment history, qualifications and experience
- Check references before or after an interview it is entirely up to you
- Ask the candidate's permission if you intend to do checks before making a job offer.

The real importance of references is that they help you to spot the very small number of job applicants who give misleading information about their past, or are giving false information.

You will have first established the candidate's eligibility to work in line with the following:

## **Prevention of illegal working: Legislation to be aware of:**

### **Asylum and Immigration Act 1996**

This Act makes it a criminal offence for an employer to employ those who do not have permission to live or to work in the United Kingdom. This applies only in relation to employees who started work for the employer on or after 27 January 1997. For further information visit the Home Office website at [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).

### **Police Act 1997**

This Act provides a statutory basis for certain criminal record checks which employers may use. These checks can be made via the Criminal Records Bureau. They are intended to provide information on applicants for jobs, which are exceptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. In most cases employers in these areas are required to register with the Criminal Records Agency and to follow a code of practice.

### **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974**

This Act applies to anyone who has been convicted of a criminal offence and received a sentence of no more than two and a half years and is not convicted again during a specified period of time known as a 'rehabilitation period'. The two main exceptions relate to working with children or working with the elderly or sick people. If a person wants to apply for a position that involves working with children or working with the elderly or sick people they are required to reveal all convictions, both spent and unspent.

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**

- From October 2008 employers and employees working with children will have to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) as well as have a current CRB check. The ISA will have a partnership with the CRB.
- The ISA's role will replace checks made against the current POCA and List 99.
- Employers will be informed of any of their workforce or people applying to work with them, who are on the barred list.

- The scheme will have a continuous checking system and employers will be informed of any new relevant information about an employee who may then be deemed to be unsuitable to continue to work with children.

Informative fact sheets can be downloaded from [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/independentsafeguardingauthority](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/independentsafeguardingauthority) then scroll down to 'recent documents' and download the relevant fact sheets. There are 5 fact sheets in the series.

### **1: Eligibility**

When you offer someone a job, you are legally required to make sure they have the right to work in the UK, to prevent employers hiring illegal immigrants. You should make basic checks at the interview, by asking to see one of the following documents:

- P45 or P60 from a former employer
- A document showing their national insurance number
- A passport confirming that they are a British citizen
- A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen
- A passport or ID card confirming they are a citizen of the European Economic Area
- A birth certificate issued in the UK or Republic of Ireland
- Evidence from the Home Office confirming their right to live in the UK and take up employment.

References and eligibility to work checks are always in addition to CRB disclosure and police checks.

### **Good Practice Tip**

Remember! Since enhanced disclosure checks are essential for those working in the sector, you should make it clear to potential candidates before they apply that any job offer is subject to the checks producing no evidence that they are unsuitable to work with children. When making an offer of employment ensure you have evidence of rigorous vetting procedures.



## 2: References

Points to consider:

- Job candidates must agree before any referees are contacted particularly their current employer
- Checks should be carried out as soon as possible most employees won't wish to hand in their notice until they've had a firm offer of employment
- Always take up references both verbal and written, if done properly they can be very useful
- A referee can only offer their opinion on how a candidate performed in the past and some employers will only give confirmation that a person has worked for them at a particular time and not comment on performance
- You will often get a more useful response if you ask the referee questions about the candidate's abilities, character and suitability for the job in relation to the selection criteria
- If you have any doubts about a candidate from written references, you may wish to speak to the referee
- Sometimes references are bland, say very little and may be of no help in selecting the right candidate.

The easiest way to obtain the information you need is to provide a pro-forma form or letter, including some of the following questions:

- When did this person work for you?
- What was their job title?
- What were the candidate's main duties?
- How many days of sick leave did they take?
- Whether suitable to carry out the duties in the job description
- Were they subject to disciplinary action, and if so, why?
- Would you re-employ this person?
- Are there any reasons why they should not be employed?

You could combine and phrase some of these questions, as follows:

- We would be grateful if you could confirm details of his/her employment dates and supply a reference as to his/her suitability to carry out the duties in the enclosed job description

- We would be obliged if you could confirm his/her sickness absence record over the past 12 months, providing details of the number of days of absence and the number of occasions
- Please confirm in your experience, the honesty of ..... whilst in your employment, whether there is a live disciplinary warning on file and whether you would re-employ.....

When requesting a reference, you will need to include the job description and person specification.

Remember that completing a reference takes time and proper consideration; so do not make your request over-complicated. If you don't receive a swift response, you should contact the referee by telephone.

### Obtaining telephone references

It is perfectly acceptable to obtain telephone references, providing you adhere to good practice guidelines. It is not good practice to telephone a referee without having previously written to them. This allows them to have:

- Information about the job
- Enough time to prepare before the telephone call.

Extra detail can be revealed on the telephone through the speaker's tone and manner. If you have any doubts about whether a telephone reference is genuine, ring back to check the referee's identity.

### 3: Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks

For people working with children, and all committee members if voluntary management runs the provision, additional checks are required for their protection. It does not matter whether the person is paid or voluntary, part-time, full-time, or helping out on a regular basis they still need to be checked.

OFSTED has registered with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) as an 'umbrella body' and will carry out criminal record checks with them on behalf of the person registered as legally in charge of the provision as well as the day-to-day manager.

To gain CRB checks for other members of staff and prospective employees OFSTED has advised that childcare providers must register with 'a body', TMG CRB, Capita Education Resourcing or Nestor Primecare Services Ltd. This change within OFSTED means that the employer takes more responsibility regarding the suitability of someone to work with children.

Under the Protection of Children Act 1999, employers have a duty to check that an employee's name does not appear on any government lists of people who are unsuitable for work with children, whether or not they have a criminal conviction or caution. CRB checks need to be undertaken appropriately, if in doubt contact your Childcare Development Officer at the Early Years and Childcare Service on 01905 790700.

The CRB has also produced its own guidance, which you may obtain from its website at [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk).

#### Good Practice Tip

CRB checks can sometimes take a long time. It is also your responsibility to follow up outstanding CRB form requests. Not having a CRB check does not stop you appointing someone but remember that whilst their check is being processed they must not have unsupervised access to children. Furthermore, if their CRB check is unacceptable, their appointment will not be confirmed and they will be expected to leave immediately.

#### What to do if someone has a criminal record

If you find someone has a criminal record it doesn't automatically mean they will be unsuitable. Many applicants and existing staff will have criminal records of some kind. You will need to consider:

- The nature of the offence
- How long ago it took place
- Its relevance to the job
- The risk to children if it were to be repeated

For example, motoring offences need not be a bar unless the job involves driving children.

#### Good Practice Tip

As a general rule, a candidate will be regarded as unsuitable if they have any convictions for:

- Violence
- Offences against children
- Substance misuse.

#### Remember

Even if the checks come back clear, you still have to be vigilant and use your own judgement about a person's suitability. Checks can only reveal evidence of previous behaviour that is known to the authorities.

#### 4: Health checks

You may choose to include a health questionnaire as part of your recruitment process, covering individual and family history, which may be useful in identifying a potential problem. A medical report may also be required. It is usual to include a health-related question on the application form, ie. frequency and nature of previous sickness absence.

#### 5: Qualifications

Checking the qualifications of your applicant can be done at any stage of the recruitment process, however sooner is better than later. Where the qualification is listed as **essential criteria** you can request that the candidate brings certificates/evidence to the interview. If they are not available for some reason, it should be possible to contact the relevant awarding body, by providing relevant dates of training.

#### Data Protection

There are a few rules that you should keep in mind in relation to pre-employment checks:

- Only carry out checks that are necessary
- Think carefully about the best time in the recruitment process in which to carry out the checks

- Where possible only check the successful applicant
- Let applicants know what checks will be made and how they will be carried out
- Make sure checks are carried out for a specific purpose
- Only use sources which will reveal relevant information
- Don't rely on information that may come from sources you do not trust
- If a check reveals adverse information about an applicant, give them the chance to explain it.

Further details of the 'Employment Practices Data Protection Code' are available from the Direct Gov website, [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk), which gives advice to employers on the way in which information about employees should be both used and kept. It also gives advice on what to do if an employee asks to see their reference.

## ii. Job offer

### 1: Making a provisional offer

Job offers are sometimes made 'subject to satisfactory references being received', but if so, care needs to be taken and rigorous vetting procedures followed. The referee may simply fail to provide any kind of reference and there is no legal requirement to do so. Also, some employers may have a general policy of not giving references, and they may simply confirm a person's start and finish date.

If you make a conditional offer of employment and then subsequently withdraw the offer, you risk a claim for breach of contract. Although you may have an arguable defence, it is far better to have a policy regarding what to do in circumstances such as the non-supply of a reference; an initial, agreed probationary period may be acceptable. The length of the period will vary, depending on how much time is needed to gain or demonstrate skills and experience. If you decide to withdraw the offer at the end of the period, you will need to give the employee notice as specified in their written statement. An alternative would be to extend the probationary period if the

contract allows and to provide appropriate training. Ensure that the training is offered as if it is not, and you withdraw your offer during or at the completion of the probationary period, the employee may be able to claim unfair dismissal.

### 2: The successful applicant

You may wish to contact the successful applicant initially by telephone. You can then discuss the terms of employment and establish if the offer is accepted. Remember to always give them the option to reply at a later time don't put anyone on the spot. After this, you should send them a formal offer letter, including enough information to help them decide if they want to accept the job. Remember that the employment contract is a legal one, and exists even before the candidate has commenced employment.

The offer letter forms the basis of the terms and conditions of employment and should set out the following points:

- The job title
- Start date
- Hours of work
- Where the job is based
- Any conditions applying to the job offer, eg. references, CRB, medical checks
- Whether the job is subject to a probationary period
- The terms of the offer - salary, hours, benefits, pension arrangements, holiday entitlement, place of employment
- What action the candidate needs to take, eg. returning a signed acceptance of the offer, agreement to references, any date constraints on acceptance.

Ask the candidate to return a signed copy of the offer letter, confirming their agreement of the terms on which the offer was made.

**Note - In addition to the offer letter, you will have to give the candidate a Written Statement of Employment Terms within two months of the start of their employment with you.**

It is often a good idea to wait for the successful candidate to accept the offer before you contact the other candidates. For this reason, it is best to not to tell candidates that you will let them know the same day as they will be awaiting the outcome while you are still waiting for your chosen person to make a decision. Ensure that you let everyone know if this decision is delayed. Once the successful applicant has accepted, you should contact the other candidates: you may choose to ring them. You should be prepared to give feedback if any of them ask for it.

### 3: Contract of Employment

Remember that statutory employment rights are minimum terms. The employer and employee are free to agree better terms between themselves in a contract of employment and it is hoped that as part of your retention strategy you would implement higher than minimum standards, where possible, to show true appreciation and for your staff.

A contract of employment exists when an employer and employee agree the terms and conditions of employment. It need not be in writing, and may be verbal. An oral contract is as binding as a written one, although its terms may be more difficult to prove.

In other words, a contract exists even before the employee has received a written statement. This has implications for some employers who take staff on a probationary basis and tell them that their contract will be confirmed when they have successfully completed the agreed period. Remember that the contract already exists and if you wish to dismiss someone at the end of their probationary period you will need to have met all the usual criteria for dismissal. For further information on Fair Dismissal see the ACAS website, [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk), 'Employing People' pages or call the helpline on **08457 47 47 47**.

The terms of a contract of employment can be found in a variety of places:

- The original job advertisement
- Letters
- Written Statement of Employment Terms
- Agreements
- Staff handbook.

### 4: Written Statement of Employment Terms

Even if you do not issue a written contract, you are under a legal duty to provide the employee with a **Written Statement of Employment Terms** within **two months** of the start of their employment with you. The written statement is not itself the contract but it can provide evidence of the terms and conditions of employment between you and the employee. Some people choose to include it in the offer of employment letter, but this is not obligatory.

The written statement can be a single document, in which case all of the information listed must be included. Alternatively, you may choose to provide the information in separate parts, provided they receive all parts within two months. If you do this, certain details must be included in a 'principal statement'.

The principal statement must include:

- The **legal and trading names** of the employer and the **name** of the employee
- The **address** of the employee's place of work
- **Job title** or a brief description of the work
- The **date** when the employment began
- **Remuneration** and the intervals at which it is to be paid
- **Hours** of work
- **Holiday** entitlement, including public holidays and holiday pay

The rest of the information must be provided within two months:

- Entitlement to **sick leave**, including any entitlement to sick pay
- **Pensions** and pension schemes
- The entitlement of employer and employee to **notice** of termination
- Where it is not permanent, the **period for which the employment is expected to continue** or, if it is for a fixed term, **the date when it is to end**
- Details of the existence of any relevant **collective agreements**, eg with trade unions, which directly affect the terms and conditions of the employment
- A **grievance procedure**, or the name of the person the employee should contact.

You may be able to refer to another document, usually a staff handbook, for details of pension arrangements, sickness entitlement, disciplinary rules and grievance procedure, but these documents must be readily available. If you cannot give details under a heading, you must say so.

### **5: Preparing for the new employee**

Once the candidate has accepted the job, you must then prepare for the new employee's arrival and induction. Failure to attend to this can create a poor impression and undo much of the positive view the candidate has gained throughout the recruitment and selection process. Think back to your initial advertising and remember that each stage of the recruitment process can be a marketing opportunity. A good induction programme reinforces first impressions and makes new employees feel welcome and ready to contribute fully.

## **If they turn you down ...ask why?**

### **Time to Review**

Many of us have been in that frustrating position of finding the perfect candidate, offering them the job, and then have them turn it down. Have you ever tried to find out why?

- What did they think when they visited the setting or had their interview?
- Did you inadvertently leave them with a poor impression?
- Did something happen to leave them with doubts about working with the team?
- Perhaps their experience or practice is quite different and it may be useful to revisit your advert or job description to ensure that your message about who you are and what you want is clear
- Were the pay or terms and conditions not quite right?
- What else could you do to encourage them to take the job?
- Do they know that you offer family-

friendly, flexible working conditions, or that you can offer subsidised childcare?

- Remember it isn't just a job that people are looking for - they want to know what benefits they will get.

## **f. Joining the Organisation**

### **i. Induction**

By planning an induction programme, you can quickly build on the positive attitude of the successful candidate. However keen your new employees are, they may still have anxieties about how well they will get on with their new co-workers, make a good impression, be able to do the job and understand the rules and standards of their new employer.

Induction should also be seen as the first stage of a training programme, which can:

- Help workers become effective more quickly
- Improve motivation and performance
- Extend the range of skills of employees
- Allow managers and supervisors to delegate
- Work towards continuing professional development.

People transferring from one part of the organisation to another need induction into their new area. Don't assume that they will know the relevant people or the skills they will need in the new job. However, they may need a more individually tailored induction programme to meet their particular needs.

The induction programme may be spread over several days or weeks, and may incorporate specific job training, but the following points should be kept in mind:

- All employees need to be able to work in a safe and healthy manner. Recruitment procedures should ensure that employees have the necessary physical and mental abilities to do their jobs, or can acquire them through training and experience



- It is important that health and safety is introduced in a structured way
- If there are special health and safety requirements, make sure the new starter fully understands their importance otherwise there is the risk of being exposed to unnecessary danger or endangering their co-workers. All employees must know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency
- Setting out the plan of the induction at the beginning avoids the problems that can arise
- Don't forget inductions need to be flexible within opening hours
- Even if the induction period covers job training, try to let new starters do some practical work, as this will assist their learning and enable them to relate what they are being taught to what they will be doing.

The outcome of all this is that the new starter should have a good feel for the organisation, and should continue to feel that they made the right decision in joining the organisation.

New Induction Standards are currently being developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) guidance will be issued later in the year.

### **The induction timetable**

- Often begins before the employee has actually started work, in the form of the recruitment pack which may include policies and procedures and offer of employment.
- This information may need to be repeated, as it is easy to assume that a new employee knows more than they do, especially if they have already been employed in a similar setting.
- The formal induction procedure should begin on the first day of employment and may be spread over several days or weeks.
- Setting out the induction plan at the beginning of employment avoids the problems that can arise in trying to arrange time in the future, i.e. when the employee is established in the job.
- Make sure that you follow a thorough and comprehensive induction programme for all new employees, including volunteers.

- Do not underestimate the time that this can take better that you spend time with your new member of staff than having to spend time having to recruit a new person.
- Employees need to know where they stand what they can and cannot do, what to expect from their employer and what their employer can expect from them.

### **First impressions count**

- A good reception is vital on the first day.
- Make new recruits feel welcome and ensure that arrangements have been made for their arrival.
- Starting work, or changing jobs, is an anxious time and everyone, regardless of the level of work, will need settling in time
- Be prepared to make allowances for people returning to work after a long period or for those entering employment for the first time.
- The manager or supervisor should be prepared to spend time with the new employee on their first day.
- There may be documentation to complete, but your priority for day one is to put your new staff member at ease, show them round and introduce them to their co-workers.

### **The induction process**

- Induction needs to be properly managed.
- You may decide to carry it out by the new employee's manager or supervisor on a day-to-day, weekly or monthly basis.
- It should ideally be used as a record for both the staff member and supervisor and should be signed and dated as information is given.
- It is best to put down on paper as many things as possible that the new employee needs to know.
- It is useful to include some, or all, of the information in a Staff Handbook or somewhere that is readily accessible to all employees.

The information to be covered may repeat much of this information and should always include:

- **Health and safety**
  - Is classed as most important and should be given initially.
  - All employers have a duty to provide 'such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, the health and safety at work of employees'.
  - You should be aware that if a new employee were injured at work, failure to provide suitable training before setting them to work would be an important factor in any potential claims against you for damages.
  - Ensure that you have systems in place to identify health and safety training needs
  - That you provide sufficient training to every new employee, particularly where inexperience or lack of instruction could lead to injury.
- **Fire prevention and safety**
  - That new members of staff are familiarised with the fire procedure and that this is recorded on the form.
- **First Aid facilities**
- **No smoking policy**
  - That new members of staff are aware that this establishment is a smoke free environment which includes rooms or outdoor play areas when children are present or about to be present
- **Hygiene standards**
- **Recording of accidents**
- **Terms and Conditions of Employment**
  - It is acceptable to refer to previous documentation, but ensure that new staff members are comfortable with the following:
    - Confidentiality
    - Sickness procedure
    - Holiday entitlement
    - Hours, time sheets and time off
    - Grievance and disciplinary procedures.

### **Good Practice Tip**

Ensure that you have a detailed grievance and disciplinary procedure in place. If you find yourself in the unfortunate position of having to dismiss a member of staff on disciplinary grounds, your case will be considerably strengthened by demonstrating that you have followed these rules and procedures. Employment Tribunal cases are more likely to be lost through breaches of procedure than they are on the merits of the case.

### **You should also aim to familiarise new staff members with:**

- **Information about your setting**
  - Your objectives, work ethos and values
  - How they fit into the organisation as a whole
  - The management/supervisory structure
  - Their job and the work environment
  - The people they will be working with and their duties
  - Essential information regarding policy and procedures
  - Information about their customers (parents and carers) and the children they will be working with
  - Your daily routines, timetables, meals, observing and record keeping.
- **Your expectations of staff**
  - Punctuality
  - Dress code
  - Expected attendance at meetings, including any outside of normal hours
  - Required level of performance.
- **Career development**
  - Staff appraisals/review and development schemes
  - Training opportunities, both short and long term
  - Continuing professional development.

### **Good Practice Tip**

It is a good idea to tailor your induction to the needs of each individual. Someone who has worked as a volunteer, for example, or who has been working in a similar setting, will need a different sort of induction to someone who is new to childcare. In the first few weeks it may be useful to identify a mentor or 'buddy', who can be used to support, advise, motivate and encourage the new staff member. The mentor will provide the new staff member with the opportunity to shadow an existing employee, space to ask questions, think out loud, and make mistakes without feeling embarrassed. A good mentor will view the staff member objectively and give constructive feedback along with general guidance.

### **Employees who may need extra attention**

Points to consider:

#### **School and college leavers:**

- May be nervous but excited at their first job
- It is important for the employer to allay any fears they may have
- They need to be sure of their position in the setting
- They need to be sure of the opportunities they will have to develop their skills
- Health and safety is a particularly important area, as young, inexperienced people may be unaware of potential dangers, even though their training will have covered safety
- Employers are required to assess risks to people under 18 before they start work
- People must be over 17 to count in staffing ratios and competent to do the job.

#### **Returning to work/change of career:**

- May feel apprehensive about work, even though their absence may, in many cases, have been to look after young children
- They may feel out of touch with the work environment, and in need of re-establishing themselves as an employee

- They may also be unfamiliar with changes in recent years, such as Ofsted inspections and registrations, funding for Early Years Education and Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.
- A person who is changing career will need induction that focuses on the work culture in an early years education, childcare or playwork setting
- Always take these factors into account and offer extra help and training to enable them to become valuable members of your setting.

#### **Disabilities:**

- As the range of disabilities is so diverse, each case should be treated on an individual basis, in consultation with the new employee
- There are certain things that should be checked well before the situation arises
- You could conduct an audit of your premises to check whether they are safe in terms of access and equipment and all staff should be fully committed to inclusive work practices
- Specialist advice and help is available from many sources
- Ensure though that the focus remains on the person's ability to do the job, which is why you employed them in the first instance.

#### **Minority groups:**

- Should have the same induction programme as any other new employee
- Attention should be paid to any sensitivity
- Be aware and take account of any particular cultural or religious customs so that misunderstandings do not occur
- Consult and involve your new employee.

#### **Men:**

- Sometimes focussing on the sexist attitudes and pre-judgements that currently exist in some areas of society can actually reinforce them
- It is a fact that some existing staff and parents still question the motives of males expressing a desire to work with children
- Be aware that men may feel intimidated or isolated in a predominantly female environment.

- All practitioners should be encouraged and trained to respect and value the complementary role of a male employee and not regard the work as a female domain
- The best approach is slowly slowly with constant reassurance to parents/carers to gain their confidence.

## ii. Reviews

Induction:

- You will need to check that a new employee fully understands the information they have been given and so it is good practice to review progress after the first few weeks
- A more formal review and development procedure should be put in place after around three months.

If induction training is unsatisfactory, this can lead to:

- Poor performance and low job satisfaction
- Absenteeism, high staff turnover, resignations or dismissals
- High demands on managers and supervisors
- Accidents leading to injuries and/or prosecution
- Mistakes which can be costly.

Formal review:

- It is useful to have a formal probationary or trial period to see how well a new employee can actually do their job
- Three months is a typical period
- It gives enough time for someone to settle down and it is also long enough for you to find out if there are any potential problems
- Be aware of the implications if the employee's work is felt to be unsatisfactory after this period.

Recruitment Process:

- If **any** stage failed to produce a successful employee, you will need to examine what happened and why, in order to make it more efficient in the future
- There are many reasons why your chosen applicant may choose not to accept the job, which is probably the most frustrating aspect of the recruitment process

- There may be a genuine reason like another job offer or a change of circumstances, but it may be that they didn't feel comfortable with your setting
- Receiving this type of feedback can be difficult but may help you reassess your practice
- Revisit your:
  - Job description and person specification
  - Advertising and marketing methods
  - Short listing, interviewing and selection process
  - Offer of employment, written statement and terms and conditions of employment, and the
  - Induction process.

## iii. And Finally...Back to Staff Retention!

You need to ensure that after appointing the correct person for the job you hold onto them!

Staff retention will only happen when you have all your management policies right. The most successful businesses don't have recruitment or retention issues. People want to work for them and stay with them. After the time, effort and cost of recruiting you want to retain good staff within your business.

You should consider the following:

- Give prospective employees a realistic job preview at recruitment stage, taking care not to raise expectations falsely only to dash them later
- Offer them a chance for a trial or 'taster' before they decide to join the organisation particularly if it is a change of career
- Ensure employees are listened to through appraisals, surveys and grievance systems
- Provide as much job security as possible, security and stability are highly valued by employees
- Put in place a supportive and well-managed induction procedure
- Provide support for personal development and enable people to see how they contribute to your business

- Offer flexible working practices and adopt work-life balance policies
- Offer an attractive employee benefits package
- Gain and act on the opinions and ideas of your staff
- Adopt a 'continuous improvement' attitude
- Never discriminate: any unfairness whether direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation and religious beliefs or on perceived unfairness to do with pay structures and grading of staff will lead to discontent amongst employees leading to feelings of being under-valued.

Other factors to consider in looking after your staff are:

1. Motivation
2. Communication
3. Mentoring and support
4. Staff involvement
5. Staff meetings
6. Staff questionnaires
7. Job rotation
8. Training and Development
9. Staff review and development
10. Work-life balance

### **1: Motivation**

- People who are positively motivated at work are likely to be happier and more effective in their role.
- This should have a positive effect on staff retention.
- As a manager you can do things, provide things, and say things that make a person act in a particular way.
- It is important to remember that people can be positively motivated and also negatively motivated or de-motivated.
- It is key to understand which factors motivate in which way.
- Try not to assume that everyone is motivated or de-motivated by the same things.
- Being given added supervisory responsibility may terrify one member of staff yet may positively motivate another.
- Remember that changing the straightforward things may not motivate people, but preventing de-motivation can be just as important.

- Once you have done your best to eliminate de-motivating factors, remember you may never eliminate them all, it's a good time to think about what motivates.
- Talk openly about motivational issues and learn from your team.
- Motivation is not always about money, making people feel needed and valued can be more important.

### **2: Communication**

- Poor communication is blamed for all sorts of problems in organisations.
- It can be easy to get it right but not so easy to put right if things go wrong.
- Consider the following:
  - An open, honest workplace culture
  - Supportive leadership as well as fair and consistent management is crucial.
  - Employees want to enjoy themselves and to have their skills and abilities put to best use.
  - Employees want to be able to develop themselves and to progress their careers where appropriate.
  - Employees want to know they are doing a good job (and to have successes celebrated), and to be supported in a blame-free way when necessary.

There are many things you could consider introducing to really listen to your staff, make them feel appreciated and to communicate with them such as:

- Staff suggestion box
- Buddy/mentor system
- Staff recognition/awards system
- Staff newsletters, notice boards
- Regular 1-1s with staff.

### **3: Mentoring and support**

Many of us, without really thinking about it, have a mentor, someone who we look to for support or advice; it is often a parent or a friend and on occasions it can be someone who motivates us from a distance, people who we aspire to be like. At work it is more often a manager or a colleague who is more experienced than we are in the role, someone from whom we can learn how to do our job. It is usually unstructured and informal.



Most of us now recognise that our people and their skills and knowledge are our business' most valuable asset. Employees are attracted and retained most often by those organisations that can offer them opportunities to enhance their skills.

'Mentoring':

- Is a structured approach to developing an employee by pairing an experienced member of the team (mentor) with a less experienced member of the team (mentee).
- It is about providing supportive relationships in which knowledge and skills are effectively shared
- Complements other methods of training, not replace it
- Provides a means of developing your team, employees feel valued
- It can be a cost effective way to consolidate training or to deal with work-life balance issues that may escalate into larger problems.

What does a mentor do?

- 'Shadowing', mentee spends time watching mentor at work
- Helps mentee to learn 'on the job'
- Answers every day questions
- Introduces other people
- Provides guidance and constructive criticism
- Agrees daily objectives
- Reviews progress
- Feeds back to manager on progress, useful for staff review time
- Identifies further training needs
- Provides a friendly and supportive face/ear.

#### **4: Staff involvement**

- Listening to your staff will empower them
- Make them feel as though they have a stake in your business.
- Most important ways of improving your staff's performance and commitment
- It is the manager's responsibility to provide staff with accurate information, instruction and guidance, otherwise information may be spread which is incomplete or inaccurate
- If you tell staff what is happening, they are more likely to understand what you are doing, and why.

- You should also be willing to listen and exchange ideas and views, especially about changes.
- You therefore need to have a system for clear channels of communication with an emphasis on developing team working.

#### **5: Staff meetings**

- Staff meetings can take three formats:
  - Full staff meetings
  - Team meetings
  - One to ones
- All form an essential part of your organisation's communication strategy
- All staff should be expected to attend
- Can be used not only for disseminating day-to-day information, but also for planning, problem solving and in some cases, training.
- The timing of meetings can be a problem as:
  - It is difficult to hold meetings when children are around
  - Holding them out of hours extends an already long day for staff
  - Sessional and part-time workers may have to come back to work for the meeting
- It is essential that any meetings have a specific purpose and function and that all staff recognise their importance.
- It is usual practice for staff meetings to be treated as working time and therefore should be paid.
- Staff who are not paid for attending meetings naturally tend to object and since any discontent could potentially lead to a person leaving, any money that you save through non-payment is unlikely to represent a saving.
- Staff meetings:
  - Should be held regularly at least once a term, ideally though every half-term.
  - Should have an agenda
  - Ensure that minutes or notes are recorded and readily available for staff to refer back to
  - Encourage staff to share best practice and knowledge and contribute ideas or develop proposals for change within the setting
  - Try to keep these meetings separate from any curriculum planning time.

## 6: Staff Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a useful way of gaining the opinion of your staff and provide an opportunity to make their views known. If you have a staff review process in place, this will be one forum to raise individual needs and concerns, but a questionnaire can help you find out about the general aspects of how you, as an employer, operate on a day-to-day basis.

You should try to find out:

- If your staff generally understand the ethos, values, aim and objectives of the setting
- If they feel involved in the strategic direction of the setting
- If they understand how communication channels work, and how effectively you are communicating with them
- How they feel about the training and development opportunities available to them.

In addition, you may want to find out:

- If the current staff rota system is working
- What difficulties, if any, employees have with balancing their work and family needs
- What they believe you could offer to give them more support
- What suggestions they have to make the business more profitable or more effective.

You should bear in mind, however, that this exercise:

- may be time consuming
- may raise expectations
- should not be controversial
- should be confidential
- is an evaluation tool.

Be prepared then, that if you ask for your employees' opinions, you should be prepared to act upon them.

## 7: Job Rotation

Some people find that once their role is very familiar to them they need some variety and enjoy involvement in new areas. It is sometimes referred to as part of 'multi skilling'; a multi skilled workforce is most cost effective.

Job rotation:

- Is when people are given the opportunity to experience other roles

- This can be a great way for staff to learn new skills
- Can prove invaluable to management if at anytime you need someone to step in when a member of another team is away
- Adds variety to people's roles, and therefore keeping them happier, and, to retain them in your setting
- Within the sector, care must be taken to ensure continuity for children.

## 8: Training and development

Staff training is vitally important in some areas such as First Aid and Safeguarding. Although some employees may be content in their current role most of them welcome the chance to improve their skills and equip themselves for jobs with more responsibility. Training repays you with motivated staff that have the tools to be thorough and professional in their job. Training is not always attending courses it can also include; on-the-job, mentoring, work shadowing. All go to form an employee's CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and Personal Development Plan.

### • CPD (Continuing Professional Development)

- Is a continuing process of personal growth to improve an individual's performance
- Realises their full potential as a professional.
- Is achieved by obtaining and developing a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience, which are not normally acquired during initial training or routine work.

### • Personal development plans

- Ideally each staff member should have a personal development plan.
- Should include training and personal development goals and how these relate to the aims of the business.
- It is good practice for staff to have a minimum of four days training a year.
- Setting objectives can be an effective way to ensure that people understand and achieve within their role.

- **Getting the best out of training courses**

To ensure staff get the most out of a course it is important that they understand why they are attending and what will be expected of them afterwards.

- Ascertain why training is needed, this will help to ensure commitment to the course. Be clear on what the course offers and determine what is required from it.
- Brief them on the course content and how it should fulfil the agreed needs.

Compare course objectives with personal objectives, and discuss any differences.

- Following the course, debrief them to ensure learning has taken place and agree an action plan for implementation of appropriate new knowledge and skills in the workplace.
- Appreciate that it may take time for a course to improve job performance, and that help and understanding may be necessary.
- When sending one or two staff members on a course, then there must be an opportunity for them to share what they have learned with others, possibly in a staff meeting.

## **9: Staff review and development**

- Staff review and development, provides shared opportunities for:
  - Converting the settings objectives into individual ones:
  - Employees and manager to jointly review progress and address future requirements
  - Generating and monitoring personal development plans.
- The process should be designed to help everyone focus on their performance and encourage good working practices.
- It is not intended to be a substitute for day to day discussions between managers and their staff
- It is not a forum for raising matters relating to personality or to initiate action connected with personal conduct or grievances, which should be addressed under the appropriate procedure.

## **10: Work-life balance**

- Dissatisfaction with hours is a common reason why people leave.
- If you can offer staff flexibility over hours and rota patterns, it may help with retention, provided it can be done whilst maintaining staff ratios.
- If you use a staff rota, try to give at least two weeks notice of future rotas so that staff can organise their own lives, particularly where there are care commitments.
- If you do so, you are more likely to get their co-operation when you have a need for emergency staff cover.
- It may be worth considering whether you can arrange your shifts and rotas so that all staff can meet parents at some time.
- If you can only offer short working hours because you operate on a sessional basis, you could try contacting a provider who needs staff at a different time of day to discuss the possibility of sharing staff, eg. a pre-school group and an after-school club. This may be attractive to staff who need longer hours, but are otherwise happy in your setting.

By finding out what can really make a difference to your employees' working life, you can often offer incentives for them to stay with you. Better work-life balance increases motivation, morale and loyalty. Consider what might make a person apply for your vacancy as opposed to someone else and what might make them want to stay?

## **iv. Summary**

The way to ensure your provision's good reputation is to employ the best people, develop an open leadership style and actively encourage teamwork and communication.

It starts with the welcome letter in an induction pack and continues with objective setting, regular reviews and opportunities for training and career development. Employees if given the right tasks and reward will develop employer loyalty and contribute well to your organisation. Taking a genuine interest, recognising and valuing your staff is the key to your provision's success!

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