

Safer staff and volunteers – recruitment, induction and supervision

Ideas for interview questions and tasks

This is a selection of questions around keeping children and young people safe. You should only use some of these alongside your own questions and tests to help you find the right person for your job.

Remember that using a question and answer format may not be the best way to test a particular requirement or competency. You may want to use other methods such as:

- presenting candidates with a typical work situation involving child protection or safety issues. Ask them to demonstrate their competence by talking through or writing down how they would deal with it
- asking them to talk about a situation they have dealt with in the past (preferably through their work) that has required them to intervene in order to keep children safe
- asking them how they would respond to a letter submitted to a newspaper, which complains that child protection and safety arrangements in organisations are “over the top and an infringement of civil liberty”
- asking candidates to present a piece of information to a panel.

Sample questions are grouped under competencies that people working with children and young people should demonstrate. Each set of sample questions comes with indications as to whether your candidate is or is not the right person for the job.

The list is not exhaustive but aims to demonstrate how you could question some key areas of work.

1. Knowledge and understanding about keeping children safe

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
Takes a proactive approach.	What do you think an organisation like ours should have in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children we work with?	Shies away from personal responsibility for keeping children safe, seeing it as someone else's job.

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Has experience and knowledge about dealing effectively with child protection and safety concerns. Is realistic about the feelings and dilemmas it can create.</p> <p>Shows courage and a commitment to keeping children and young people safe.</p> <p>Is prepared to challenge someone if necessary, even if this could be uncomfortable.</p> <p>Knows when to ask for help and does not try to deal with situations single-handedly.</p> <p>Is clear about what should be done, and is realistic and appropriate in the choice of action.</p> <p>Is someone you feel you could trust on safety issues.</p> <p>Is not so worried about accidents that she/he is not prepared to allow children any independence, but, equally, doesn't take unnecessary risks.</p> <p>Recognises the harm that is done to children through abuse, neglect and bullying behaviour.</p>	<p>Have you ever been in a situation where you have been concerned that a child may be at risk of being abused? If so, what did you do? With hindsight, do you think you should have done anything different? How did you feel about it?</p> <p>What sorts of behaviour in your colleagues would cause you to be concerned about children's safety?</p> <p>What could we do in our organisation to prevent bullying among children who use our services?</p> <p>What kind of safety arrangements would you make if you were organising a children's outing to a local theme park?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you were organising an event involving children. What safety arrangements did you put in place?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you questioned information you received in relation to children's safety. Why did you question it? What was the outcome?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when a child told you something in confidence and asked you not to tell anyone. What did you do? How did you balance the need for confidentiality against sharing information with other professionals?</p> <p>Tell me how you have developed your knowledge and practice over the last 12 months in relation to your work with children. How have you used it to be more effective in your work with children?</p>	<p>Has no experience of acting in any situation in order to protect a child and only limited knowledge on how to deal with such a situation; provides evidence of an inappropriate response to a safeguarding concern and has not learnt from it.</p> <p>Struggles to take children seriously or to believe them if they say that they are being abused or bullied.</p> <p>Shows naivety.</p> <p>Has little knowledge of child protection or safety issues.</p> <p>Lacks courage or a commitment to children's safety.</p> <p>Is careless and inclined to leave too much to chance.</p> <p>Is someone you don't feel confident with in this area.</p> <p>Thinks that child protection/health and safety arrangements are a lot of fuss about nothing.</p> <p>Is over-cautious and would worry to the point of preventing children from being able to explore and learn independence skills.</p>

2. Motivation for working with children and young people

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Shows maturity and self-awareness.</p> <p>Provides a believable account of the personal journey involved in making the decision to work with children.</p> <p>Recognises some of the challenges involved in the work, as well as its rewards.</p> <p>Has listened and responded to feedback and encouragement from others.</p> <p>Has made a positive choice to do the work.</p>	<p>What has led you to want to work with children?</p> <p>In what ways does working with children teach us about ourselves? What is your experience of this?</p> <p>What qualities do you think are needed in order to work effectively with children? What impact does your approach have on children? What do they get out of it?</p> <p>What do you enjoy about working with children? What do you find most challenging?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you had to refer to someone else to decide on a course of action when working with a child.</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you did not feel motivated by the work you were doing with children.</p>	<p>Lacks self-awareness and understanding of their motivation or how they may come across to others.</p> <p>Is not someone you can imagine a child feeling comfortable with.</p> <p>Wants to use work with children and young people purely for their own needs rather than theirs.</p> <p>Has an unrealistic perception of what the work is like.</p> <p>Is overly sentimental about children and the nature of the work.</p> <p>Is doing the work because they can't think of anything else to do or because someone else thinks they should.</p>

3. Emotional maturity and resilience

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Describes difficult situations realistically and in a way that demonstrates honesty.</p> <p>Is able to handle stress effectively.</p> <p>Seeks help appropriately.</p>	<p>Please tell us about a time when you felt under a lot of pressure and how you managed it.</p> <p>What is pressure for you?</p> <p>Please describe a situation in which your authority was challenged by the children you were working with. How did you respond?</p>	<p>Responses suggest that candidate struggles to deal with stress.</p> <p>Uses own authority inappropriately, eg by bullying or humiliating either children or adults.</p> <p>Shies away from showing authority and is unable to set appropriate boundaries.</p>

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Is able to manage his/her own professional and personal needs in a way that is not detrimental to others.</p> <p>Is comfortable with own authority. Uses it wisely and with compassion.</p> <p>Is able to manage own responses to children and adults appropriately.</p> <p>Understands the power dynamics involved in working with children and other colleagues.</p> <p>Maintains appropriate boundaries in working with children.</p> <p>Deals with office politics positively.</p>	<p>Please describe an occasion when you found it hard to like or engage with a child you were working with. How did you deal with this?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when there was tension between colleagues. How did you deal with the situation? What was the impact on you?</p>	<p>Denies ever experiencing stress.</p> <p>Claims to love every child he/she has ever worked with.</p> <p>Has a cynical view of other people, whether children or adults.</p> <p>Gives the impression of being “burnt out”.</p> <p>Is not able to control temper.</p> <p>Uses inappropriate language when talking about children.</p> <p>Gets caught up in office politics.</p>

4. Attitude and ethics

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Demonstrates a clear set of values that fits with the values of the group/organisation.</p> <p>Is able to be child-focused, even in difficult circumstances.</p> <p>Accepts that abuse of children is a reality.</p> <p>Does not jump to conclusions, or condemn people.</p> <p>Is honest and realistic about his/her own feelings and struggles.</p>	<p>How would you describe your attitude to children's safety? How has this changed and developed over time?</p> <p>What are your feelings when you hear about someone in a professional position that a child has made allegations of abuse about? How would you feel if you knew and liked the person who is the subject of the allegations?</p> <p>Can you tell us about a time when you felt you made a mistake and what you learned from this?</p>	<p>Is not able to learn from experience.</p> <p>Does not appear to have values, or his/her values lack clarity and consistency.</p> <p>Does not know what he/she stands for or believes in.</p> <p>His or her values are totally at odds with the culture of the organisation.</p> <p>Holds extreme or rigid views and has no respect for other opinions.</p>

Indications that the candidate meets the requirement	Sample questions	Indications that the candidate may not meet the requirement
<p>Shows balance and a willingness to reflect.</p> <p>Is able to learn from past mistakes.</p> <p>Is someone who shows the capacity to contribute towards creating a protective environment.</p> <p>Shows respect for others and their opinions.</p> <p>Shows courage to challenge appropriately.</p>	<p>Give me an example of a time when you disagreed with an opinion or point of view. How would your response have changed if you had felt that the opinion expressed was prejudiced or discriminatory?</p>	<p>Does not demonstrate any ability to reflect.</p> <p>Is quick to jump to conclusions and to condemn.</p> <p>Is not child-centred.</p> <p>Is unlikely to believe that a child has been abused.</p>