Tip Sheet

Safe Recruitment

For CSOs in development and humanitarian settings

This tip sheet covers general safe recruitment practices for civil society organisations (CSOs) in development and humanitarian settings. The tip sheet will be useful for human resources staff and all staff involved in any recruitment stage.

Safe recruitment is key to effective safeguarding

- All CSO staff and associated staff, particularly those who have direct contact with vulnerable populations, have the power to carry out sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH).
- Recruiting people with an understanding of, or willingness to learn about, the importance of safeguarding can contribute to a safer organisation culture, safe programmes and can help prevent SEAH.
- Recruiting leaders, including board members, who are committed to safeguarding can help contribute to stronger organisational safeguarding systems and procedures and a safer culture.
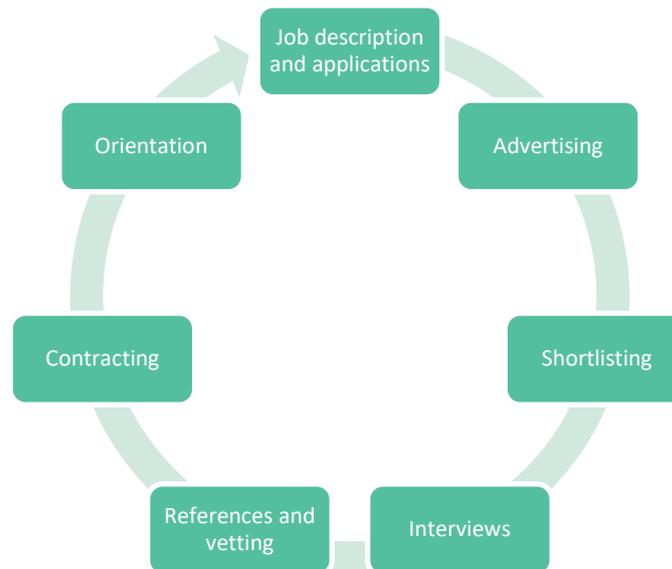
Two key approaches to remember!

* Take a risk-based approach.

Consider the risks of having different positions, categories of worker (e.g. staff, volunteers, contractors) and different people in your context. Identify how to mitigate the risks throughout the recruitment cycle. Take this approach in both development and humanitarian settings.

* Prioritise safeguarding your staff and others over timeframes and other factors.

Do not relax or reduce the safety of your recruitment practices in a humanitarian setting or due to urgency or donor demand. The risks of SEAH may increase if you relax your safe recruitment practices. Also, the potentially extreme situations or vulnerability of people with whom you interact in a humanitarian setting may increase existing risks of SEAH. This makes it more important to ensure that you recruit safely in all settings.

Follow a safe recruitment cycle

Job description and application process

⇨ All job descriptions, including for associated staff, should list the safeguarding responsibilities.

⇨ All job descriptions should have a statement on the CSO's commitment to safeguarding and refer to an organisational Code of Conduct and safeguarding or PSEAH policy.

⇨ In your application process, include a section for applicants to self-declare prior issues of sexual or other misconduct, legal convictions or other related issues. Read pages 2-3 here for more detail.

⇨ For roles that do not require a job description or application (e.g. incentive /community workers) a short note or explanation of key information, safeguarding responsibilities and self-declaration is important.

Advertising

⇨ When CSO staff and associated staff represent the diversity of the people and societies that they are working with and for, they can build a greater understanding of and respect for a range of perspectives. This may, in turn, contribute to a safer environment for all staff and people who interact with the CSO.

⇨ Use different communication methods in your job advertising strategy to reach a diverse group of applicants, e.g. use webpages, social media, radio, newspaper, universities and other channels.

⇨ For informal job advertising (e.g. "word of mouth" for community workers) you can reach a diverse group of applicants through actively speaking to different groups or leaders within the community or area.

⇨ Any job advert should clearly include your CSO's commitment to safeguarding / PSEAH.

Shortlisting applications

⇨ For the reasons noted above, aim for a diversity-balance across your staff, e.g. consider gender, disability, ethnic group, language and other different characteristics that exist where you are working.

⇨ Involve two or more people in the shortlisting process to ensure key information is not missed. For community or incentive workers, different community members can be involved in the shortlisting.

Interviews

⇨ Make sure that there are at least two people on an interview panel and that the panel is diverse.

⇨ An interview process for volunteers or community workers is also important and possible. Including other community members and using existing resources and materials is key. Read this RSH product for suggestions if you are recruiting many volunteers or recruiting quickly.

⇨ The interview should be structured to understand an applicant's:

  o **Attitude and values** towards programme participants, vulnerable adults, women, children and young people etc. as relevant to your organisation and programmes.

  o **Motivation** to work for your organisation and in the relevant position.

  o **Past behaviour** as this can provide an indication of future behaviour.

⇨ Read this RSH product for safeguarding interview and reference check questions.

Reference checks and vetting

⇨ A person's past behaviour can help with understanding their future behaviour. For all staff, including volunteers, collect a minimum of two references from previous managers, peers or individuals in another organisation / profession.

⇨ Gathering checks in written form (email or letter) should be the priority. Where this is not possible, consider audio files, conversations (phone / in person) and community-led references.

⇨ Ensure that all the reference check questions have been answered in the reference received. Read this RSH product for reference check questions.

⇨ For formal staff members, conduct background checks / vetting (e.g. police records, internet searches) alongside reference checks. Align your checks with local employment, privacy and data protection laws.

Contracting

⇨ A staff contract should be shared when the recruiting team are confident that the two reference checks and relevant background checks are satisfactory.

⇨ A contract for volunteer staff may have different content (or less detail) or format (e.g. audio file with verbal approval / signature). **An agreement of some sort is important for all staff and associated staff.**

⇨ Every contract should attach or include the Code of Conduct and safeguarding / PSEAH policies, or summaries, in an understandable format and language and with local examples.

⇨ The implications of breaching the Code of Conduct or safeguarding / PSEAH policies should be made clear in the contract.

⇨ A signed contract is only valid if it is accompanied by a signed Code of Conduct. For staff or associated staff who are illiterate, explain the content in detail, provide space for questions and obtain a finger print, cross, recorded audio approval or other appropriate alternative as a signature.

Orientation

⇨ Safeguarding / PSEAH should be included in all staff and associated staff orientations. It can be useful to set a goal of providing orientation to all staff within a certain time period of being employed.

⇨ Training on the SEAH-related policies, procedures and the Code of Conduct should be provided. All staff should be aware of:

- How to contact organisational safeguarding focal points and who they are
- SEAH risks in the operating context
- How to report misconduct
- How to receive a report and respond appropriately
- How they should behave and when the Code of Conduct is and is not valid
- What confidentiality is and their commitment to confidentiality, and
- What will happen to their contract if there is misconduct

⇨ Staff should be given the opportunity to ask questions and challenge assumptions in a safe space so they are aware of the behaviour that is expected of them in their work and private lives.

⇨ Confirm that supervisors or safeguarding focal points can be approached for questions, support and advice at any time.

Further reading

The below resources informed the content of this tip sheet and can be referred to for more detail:

- Action Against Hunger and Interaction: Safeguarding-sensitive human resource and organisational systems

- CHS Alliance, Safer recruitment guidelines

- CRS and Interaction, Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SPSEA): A toolkit for local and national organizations

- RSH, Safeguarding interview and reference check questions