



Interviewing

Interviewing a candidate for the organization presents an opportunity for getting to know the candidate and how they think as well as set expectations for working with children and present the values of the organization. The interview process should look to establish:

The candidate's

- Motivation for children or youth work
- Ability to self-reflect and development of emotional intelligence
- Propriety to set professional boundaries
- Diligence to protecting and promoting the safety and welfare of children and youth
"Warner Interview Information for Applicants and Candidates: Safer Recruitment to safeguard Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults." p3.
- History compatible with entrusting the safety and wellbeing of children and youth

The organization's

- Commitment to child safeguarding and protection
- Expectation of professionalism and professional relationships with children
- Diligence in vetting adults who will be interacting with children and vulnerable populations

The United Kingdom (UK) has governmental standards and guidelines for interviewing candidates who will work with children. It is primarily based on the 1992 *Choosing with Care: The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Selection, Development and Management of Staff in Children's Homes*, a parliamentary investigation lead by Baron Norman Warner into child abuse. It has since become known as *The Warner Report*. Organizations within the UK are expected to follow those guidelines for interviewing during recruitment for any position working with children or vulnerable populations.

The following document is based on UK interviewing rules as well as incorporating other expert recommendations and the specific international work, volunteer, and tourism context into a general guideline for interviewing.

The Interview

It is advisable to have more than one person present to interview the candidate who will be working regularly in caretaking or direct supervision of children.

Notes should be taken during the interview and retained in the candidate's file (subject to local and national laws dictating their destruction).

Interviews should always be conducted so that you can see the candidate as they answer – in-person or over a video chat/conference. Interviewers want to be able to note non-verbal

communication such as discomfort, agitation, unease, and potential “tells” for lying or hiding information. These are much harder to pick up when there is only a voice.

This part of the interview is meant to dive into understanding the interviewee and less about understanding skills. The interviewers are trying to get a picture of the interviewee’s character, values, and motivations.

In a second interview or later in this interview, you should dive into skills and education to make sure that the candidate fulfills your needs. However, be sure to keep these questions separate from the safeguarding vetting questions described here. Some safeguarding organizations recommend that the skills and qualifications interview be conducted at a different time as they do not recommend having the position’s line-manager or supervisor present for the safeguarding interview.

Interview Questions

As an interviewer, you want to ask questions that:

- ✓ Inquire about experience working with children
- ✓ Seek concrete examples
- ✓ Are open-ended, analytical, and probing questions
- ✓ Take one question at a time (do not ask multiple questions at once)
- ✓ Have a minimum of one scenario
- ✓ Probe into situations which might indicate a history of abuse
- ✓ Continue to dig for more information when vague answers are given

Each job and organization is different so there is not a specific set of questions that should be used. Interviewers need to create questions relevant to their specific situation. Some examples of questions, although not an exhaustive list, are:

- Why do you want to work with children?
- How do you understand “child protection/safeguarding”?
- What experiences have you had that you think would make you a good fit for working at our organization in this position?
- Please explain the gaps in your employment and education history.
- How would you deal with this scenario . . . ? (asking about discipline, conflict, or adult-child work relationships are usually good for insight)
- If anything raising warning flags on a social media site, ask about it directly (ex- multiple accounts, fake names, overly sexual photos, overly physical with unrelated children, etc.) On your FB/Instagram/social media account, I saw Can you explain to me about those posts/photos/etc.?
- What do you see as particular issues that make the children at our organization vulnerable to abuse, and how can you help keep them safe?
- Please give an example of time when you were working with children and had to deal with (decision-making, cooperation issues, challenge to authority, dangerous/hazardous situation, an emergency, needing assistance, etc.)

- What would you do if you saw a colleague violating organization rules or the code of conduct?
- This position requires that you pass a criminal background check. In addition, we do an internet search. Is there anything you would like to disclose or discuss about what we might find?
- What are some things or situations that cause you to get frustrated or angry?

For international staff or volunteers:¹

- Why are you interested in working/volunteering abroad?
- Tell me about your experience traveling internationally.
- What did you do when you travelled to _____?²
- What do you like to do when you travel?
- How do you/will you deal with the stresses of living in another culture/ country?³

Answers

There are no “correct” answers to the interview questions above. However, interviewers should look for answers and a self-presentation that demonstrates:

- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Self-reflection and Self-awareness
- ✓ Emotional Intelligence
- ✓ Maturity, Professionalism, and Professional Boundaries with children and youth
- ✓ Sound Decision-Making
- ✓ Genuine Concern for helping children and youth
- ✓ Realistic Understanding of working with children and youth
- ✓ Commitment to Promoting Safety and Protecting Children and Youth
- ✓ Concrete Examples

Always follow up and seek more in-depth answers if the initial answer is vague or evasive.

¹ Living and working in a developing country can be stressful, a shock, and much more difficult than an applicant expects. These questions are to help understand the candidate’s ability to deal with these stresses as well as understand the candidate’s motivations. You would not want to take someone who wants to party or is “running away” from dealing with a situation, their fears, or emotions (such as a break-up).

² Sex-tourism is growing. This can take place both as trips to exotic locations, such as Thailand and Kenya, and as volunteering with children overseas. Interviewers should ask questions to understand if this could be the case.

³ Again, improperly managed stress from living and working in another culture can cause an individual to not be able to cope with situations, lose patience, or not be mentally or emotionally present. This can be detrimental if not dangerous when working with children. For example, it can exacerbate mental illness, anger issues, or alcohol or drug consumption.

Young candidates might give naïve, simplistic, or theoretical/ideological answers. They need not be automatically disregarded if your organization has the capacity to train, supervise, and mentor young workers. If you do not, then hire an experienced and mature child or youth worker.

If a candidate, young or old, answers questions without the maturity to self-reflect, make good decisions, or keep professional boundaries, this should raise warning flags about the candidate's appropriateness and/or intentions.

Some other reasons to probe deeper into answers or to have concerns, are if the candidate:

- Is overly emotional or displays a temper
- Appears agitated, angry, or uncomfortable at questions or scenarios
- Has unrealistic idea of child or youth work
- Wants to be "friends" with the children or youth or lack of professional boundaries
- Displays a disregard for authority or management
- Provides a lack of specificity esp. when asked for examples
- Cannot adequately explain gaps in employment history, foreign travel, or social media postings

If after asking for more information, the answers have not satisfied concerns, or met the outlined objectives and values for a good candidate, interviewers should mark down the information on their notes. The candidate should not be considered for the position or allowed to advance in the hiring processes.

References

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