



Safer Recruitment, Selection and Retention

Policy and Procedures

March 2025

Contents

Policy Rationale and Scope

Safer Recruitment Statement

Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Stage 1: Vacancies

Stage 2: Advertising

Stage 3: Applications

Stage 4: Shortlisting

Stage 5: Formal Interviews

Stage 6: Work visit

Stage 7: Employment Offering

Self-Disclosure

Staff Retention

Staff Retention: Statement

The Resignation Process

Exit Interviews

Leavers Questionnaires

Developments

Promotions

Policy Rationale and Scope

Arc's safer recruitment, selection and retention policy is designed to ensure that children's safety and wellbeing is paramount throughout their time with us. It is therefore essential that children are cared for by staff carefully selected and regularly supervised to ensure they are and remain competent, motivated, of good character and are both aware of and able to meet their safeguarding responsibilities.

The DfE Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Safer Recruitment in Education 2022, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and the Children's Home Regulations 2015 (32.1) make clear Arc has a duty to ensure there are safe recruitment practices and on-going safe working practices for individuals whom Arc permit to work regularly with children. This policy is written in line with these pieces of legislation and applies to all who work for Arc.

Arc aims always to appoint the most appropriately equipped candidates in terms of experience, insight, personal values and from the widest field possible. In doing so Arc aims to ensure that no applicant or employee is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on any of the prohibited grounds. (See also Equality and Diversity Policy).

Arc HD Services actively invests in staff training and development and aims to provide opportunities for career progression in order to promote staff retention. This policy applies to all employees of Arc HD Services and Arc HD Services' Directors.

Safer Recruitment Policy Statement

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people. It's a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment and making a commitment to keep children safe from harm. At Arc we view safer recruitment as a continuing process of improvement. Our safer recruitment policy statement below sets out our commitment in this respect.

- We have in place robust safer recruitment practices aimed at proceeding towards employment with only those suitable for working with children and rejecting those applicants who are unsuitable.
- At all stages of the recruitment process, applicants are made aware of our emphasis on safeguarding children and of the responsibility they have to share concerns they have about the safety of children or inappropriate behaviour of adults caring for them.
- Prior to commencing lone work with young people, employed staff are subject to a four-week shadowing period in which they are continuously supervised by experienced staff.
- All staff read and sign the Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies on their first day of induction and complete face to face safeguarding training on identifying abuse and how to report this in the induction period.
- Those involved in the recruitment process complete NSPCC Safer Recruitment training.
- This policy is reviewed at least every two years and earlier if legislation and guidance is updated.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

The Recruitment and Selection Process consists of 7 stages:

Stage 1: Vacancies

The Registered Manager of the Home in consultation with the Responsible Individual for the Home is responsible for identifying actual and potential vacancies to Arc HD Services Directors, together with proposals and recommendations for recruitment. Proposals should include:

- Role / title of vacancy (ies)
- Number of posts available
- Hours available
- Pay scale point or range
- Timescale for appointment
- Preferred methods of advertising
- Person specification
- All cost implications
- Arc HD Services Directors are responsible for approval of recruitment recommendations, in liaison with the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual for the Home regarding staff budget implications.

Stage 2: Advertising

- Arc CEO is responsible for the arrangement and co-ordination of internal advertising of vacancies
- The advert itself sends out a clear safeguarding message as it includes a statement about our commitment to keeping children safe.
- Arc CEO is responsible for all external advertisements and for ensuring that all advertisements adhere to current legislation and best practice guidance regarding safer recruitment, equality and diversity.
- Any vacancy at Registered Manager level will normally be advertised internally first, as Arc prefers to promote from within where the values and safe working practices of applicants can be more readily established.
- Advertisements should endeavour to appeal to all sections of the community, using positive, clear and concise wording, and should state:
 - The job title.
 - The necessary and desirable criteria for the post.
 - The function of the organisation.
 - The job location.
 - The hours and reward package.
 - The contract length.
 - The Home's commitment to safeguarding and safer recruiting and selection.
 - The requirement of applicants to provide photo identification to the interview which will be retained by the Home.
 - The requirement for staff to apply for an enhanced level DBS disclosure.
 - The application procedure.

Stage 3: Applications

- All applicants will receive an initial phone call to analyse suitability for the position applied for. A first contact discussion form will be completed at this stage.
- All appropriate applicants will be provided with an application pack and the Home's Safeguarding Policy
- The application pack includes a section where the candidate can to explain how they meet the criteria outlined in the person specification.
- The application pack contains a self-disclosure form giving candidates the opportunity to tell us confidentially about any unspent criminal convictions, child protection investigations or disciplinary procedures they have on record. Applicants are also required to disclose any unprotected spent convictions and cautions on this form. Self-disclosure forms are sealed in an envelope marked confidential and only opened once a candidate has accepted a conditional offer.
- Applicants are asked to provide two references, one being the most recent employer. Additional references are taken up where the candidate has worked in the past with children or vulnerable adults.
- All applicants are scrutinised for gaps in their employment history and evidence of how these gaps were spent.
- All applicants are scrutinised for any safeguarding concerns.
- All applications that are not completed as per requirement are discarded.
- Arc HD Services is unable to accept applications from parents/carers or other close relatives of its young people, or from former young people.

Stage 4: Shortlisting

- On return of Application Forms the Arc CEO is responsible for ensuring that all necessary documents have been completed and submitted.
- The copy of the Application Form and CV is circulated by the Arc CEO to the appropriate shortlisting panel, who will make recommendations regarding whether or not the application should proceed. Information is collated on a Selection Tracking Record. Arc Head Office retains the original documents and photos.
- At least one member of the shortlisting panel will have completed a recognised safer recruitment training course.
- Recommendations should be objective, and are based on the match between the person specification and the skills, abilities and qualities identified on the application form.
- Only candidates who appear to meet the person specifications for the role will proceed to the next stage of shortlisting.
- Candidates who reach the shortlist will be invited to attend a formal interview.
- Arc CEO is responsible for ensuring collation of all relevant information, which will include:
 - Application Form and any relevant attachments, CV
 - Selection Panel Feedback
 - CP Feedback

The copy of the papers relating to candidates proceeding to formal interview will be overviewed by one of Arc's Designated Child Protection Officers.

When an interview is to be offered the CEO will liaise with Arc Operational Director, the Responsible Individual and the Registered Manager to identify appropriate interview times, taking into account the availability of these panel members.

Email or telephone confirmation of attendance at formal interview is required. Interviews are held at Arc Head Office, Wessex House and are recorded in the Wessex House Calendar. In exceptional circumstances interviews can be held virtually.

Stage 5: Formal Interviews

- On confirmation of attendance at Formal Interview, the Arc CEO will inform the relevant Registered Manager, Responsible Individual and / or Arc HD Services Director, who will, subject to their availability, select an Interview Panel which will consist of at least two, but no more than four staff members. At least one panel member will have completed a recognised safer recruitment training course. Where a succession of Interviews is planned for a single appointment a consistent approach is ensured through maintaining the same interview panel wherever possible.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that the Interview Panel is appropriately diverse, whilst also reflecting the professional knowledge and experience for the appointment. The CEO should also ensure that all panel members are fully aware of the key questions for safeguarding children, and of the 'triggers' for concern.

- The Arc CEO will ensure the following are made available to the Interview Panel at least 48 hours in advance of the interview:
 - Application Form (and any relevant attachments)
 - CV
 - Any testimonials received
 - Shortlist Panel Comments
 - Interview Assessment Form
 - Person Specification
- The Interview Panel will convene at least 10 minutes prior to the Formal Interview to:
 - confirm the structure/format and timing of the Interview
 - discuss any relevant areas for focus within interview format
 - ensure appropriate room layout
 - identify timeframe for notifying successful applicants
- The CEO or identified other panel member will meet the applicant, escort them to the Interview Room, and introduce them to the interview panel.
- The CEO or identified other panel member will explain the format for the interview, and identify the timescale of the interview itself and subsequent decision making.
- The Interview Panel should also ensure that key questions relating to safeguarding children are addressed at interview.

- The Interview Panel remains responsible for the smooth running of the interview. This should include maintaining time boundaries, and formally concluding the interview by allowing the applicant time to ask their questions of the panel. The applicant should be reminded of the decision-making timescale.
- Questions at interview are asked that give candidates the opportunity to show they are able to establish and maintain professional boundaries, establish and maintain relationships with children and take appropriate action to safeguard children.
- The candidate at interview is given an overview of the questions that will be asked of referees.
- Following the interview, the Arc CEO or identified panel member should check and take copies of all forms of identification and relevant certificates
- The Arc CEO or identified panel member will escort the applicant back to the reception area.

(Where a series of interviews is planned, at least 10 minutes will be allowed between interviews for the Panel to review papers).

The Interview Panel must be prepared to give guidance regarding terms, conditions and salary, but must state that details will be specified in any offer made.

- Following the interview(s) the Interview Panel will ensure that Interview Assessment Forms are completed, and that following appropriate discussion, a majority decision on potential appointments is reached.
- The applicants who impressed during the formal interview will be offered a work visit.

Note: Arc prefer to conduct every interview face to face. In exceptional circumstances they can be carried out via Zoom or MS Teams. A face to face work visit must take place however before an applicant is offered employment with Arc.

Stage 6: Work Visits

Work visits facilitate further assessment of the match between the applicant and the person specification as well as giving the candidate the opportunity to meet and engage with young people.

The safeguarding of young people during these visits is essential. This is managed during the work visit by ensuring the work visitor is closely supervised by an experienced identified staff member throughout their visit and that at no point are they left unsupervised with young people.

The work visit gives both staff and young people at the home the opportunity to offer their feedback on the person visiting. Both staff members and young people's views are recorded on the work visit form and these views inform judgements as to the visitor's suitability.

Work visits are only offered after the formal interview stage for two reasons.

1. This allows the interview panel to ask the required safeguarding questions and request further information if required. This added layer of protection will help reduce the risk to young people at the home.
2. Disruption to young people at the home should be kept to a minimum.

Candidates will be informed within 7 days of their interview whether they are being invited to a work visit. An appropriate arrangement will be negotiated by telephone or email and will be

confirmed by email. Candidates not selected will be informed in writing within 7 days of their interview.

Stage 7: Offering Employment:

All candidates are offered an appointment subject to satisfactory references and appropriate checks.

Where there are several candidates for a single post, the Panel should identify a majority second choice in the event of the preferred candidate declining the post.

When a decision has been reached, the Interview Panel will inform the CEO who will in turn inform the successful candidate by telephone or email within the specified time span: the offer will be confirmed in writing by the CEO within seven days of the verbal offer.

All offers of employment are made subject to receipt of satisfactory:

- At least two references including most recent employer
- Enhanced DBS Disclosure
- CV with no unexplained employment gaps
- Verification of all professional qualifications, or other relevant qualifications, listed in application
- Verification of right to work in the UK.

The Arc CEO is responsible for ensuring that unsuccessful candidates are informed in writing (letter or email) within seven days of interview.

When the offer has been accepted a DBS disclosure application is forwarded for completion. The candidate is required to supply original documents for DBS process and certificates for verification.

All interview papers are returned to the Arc CEO following interviews: for those subsequently taking up appointment, papers are retained in Personnel Records. All other papers are kept for a period of three months and then shredded as confidential waste.

Agency Staff Suitability Checks

Although in most instances staff absence is covered from within existing employed staff within the Home including bank workers, there are occasions where agency staff are used. To ensure these staff are safely recruited and appropriate checks are carried out the following is undertaken:

- A check on the agency to ensure that satisfactory references checks have been undertaken on the agency worker in line with those required for staff directly recruited by Arc
- A current enhanced DBS certificate for the agency worker must be viewed or the original certificate alongside the latest update from the DBS update service
- Identification must be seen in the form of a driving licence, passport or birth certificate) prior to the commencement of the first shift

Essential Administration

DBS Disclosures

- DBS Disclosures are requested at the point which an employment offer is made. (Refer also to DBS Statement of Practice).
- The DBS check will be completed and the outcome known prior to appointment. Where soft information reveals concern(s) of a possible safeguarding nature, these are discussed as per the Allegation Management procedures. Where any convictions are revealed, they will be discussed with the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual (in addition to any internal agreement) and if appropriate the local authority Designated Officer who is informed via the Registered Manager.
- On receipt of all necessary documentation, the Arc CEO will be responsible for making contact with the appointee to confirm their start date.

References

- A minimum of two written references are required for all potential employees to whom a job offer is made, one of which must be from the current or most recent employee. Additional references may be sought if the candidate has worked with children or vulnerable adults in other organisations or if the initial two references do not cover a 5 year span, to fully establish their suitability.
- The Arc CEO is responsible for ensuring all references are checked and verified.
- Reference providers will be spoken to and specifically asked to comment on the candidates suitability and ability to work with children and whether there are or have been any safeguarding concerns or disciplinary issues in relation to the candidate
- Confirmation of the detail of the reference will be verified and recorded. This is evidenced on the Safer Recruitment Checklist.
- If references, vetting, self-disclosure or other disclosure and barring checks reveal concerns about a person's history, Arc assess whether or not they are suitable to work with children and young people. Further contact with those providing references and the candidate themselves may be necessary to ascertain the information required to make a final decision. All conversations and subsequent discussion are recorded as is the decision to offer or decline employment.
- If necessary, Arc passes on information to the relevant authorities, such as the criminal records agency, professional bodies or police. It is not assumed this was done by past employers.

Induction Day and Induction Programme

On the first day of induction, all staff members read the Home's Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies and sign to say they understand them and their responsibilities as staff members to adhere to them.

All staff attend an 'Induction Day' at the commencement of their employment. This provides basic essential details of the Home's functions, policies and procedures, and an introduction to various Human Resources and employment issues. It also provides the opportunity to meet key staff and familiarise with the Home and grounds, as well as providing the first essential elements of training. An induction programme and task completion list is also issued on Induction Day.

Self-Disclosure

Staff complete a self-disclosure form as part of their application to indicate whether they have ever been the subject of a child protection enquiry or police investigation and if so what the outcome was. Staff are further expected to alert Arc if during their employ they become the subject of such investigations. Failure to disclose this information may result in disciplinary action being taken or dismissal.

Staff Retention: Statement

Arc HD Services recognises the value of maintaining a high quality, stable and effective staff team. The Home aims to retain staff by providing them with a safe and supportive work environment and by offering opportunities for career development, promotion and increasing responsibility, implemented through:

- A Staff Induction Programme.
- A Staff Training Programme.
- Regular Line Management/Supervision.
- Regular Performance Management Reviews.

The Resignation Process

- On receipt of a resignation letter the Registered Manager retains these and keeps these for personnel records.
- Verbal resignations cannot be accepted: where this is offered, a letter of resignation must be requested.
- On receipt of a resignation letter the Registered Manager will confirm the notice period requirements.
- The departing employee may be offered the opportunity to meet with the Registered Manager, the Responsible Individual or an Arc HD Services Director to discuss their resignation. This is not obligatory. At this point the employee may request to withdraw the letter of resignation; such requests will be considered contextually.
- When the employee is proceeding with departure, the resignation letter should be forwarded to the Arc CEO who will accept the resignation in writing on behalf of the Home.
- The departing staff member will be offered an Exit Interview and Leavers Questionnaire.

Exit Interviews

All departing staff are invited to attend an Exit Interview with an appropriate Senior Staff Member identified by the departing staff member. Exit Interviews are arranged at a mutually convenient duty time within the notice period, and a time of up to one hour is allocated.

Exit Interviews are intended to allow the departing staff member time to reflect upon, explore and discuss their departure, and its underlying reasons, guided by an appropriate Senior staff member. The Exit Interview follows the same basic framework as the Leavers Questionnaire.

Exit Interviews are confidential, though the facilitator may ask permission to take notes, which may be of value in guiding future developments in staff recruitment, selection and retention,

supplementing information gathered from Leavers Questionnaires. Exit Interviews are **not** intended to be pressurising, persuasive, or critical of the departing staff member.

Structure:

- Reflection on reasons for original employment.
- Achievement of aims and expectations.
- Main and contributory factors in leaving.
- Planning and timescale of departure.
- Positive aspects of employment.
- Areas identified for development of Arc HD Services or the Home.
- Future employment plans/aspirations.
- Other reflections/observations.

The Leaver's Questionnaire

The Leaver's Questionnaire is provided to all departing staff members. Completion is optional and anonymous. All information is treated confidentially.

The information gained from Leavers' Questionnaires is collated and analysed by the Registered Manager and / or Responsible Individual.

Any issues requiring a more immediate response will be directed immediately to the Arc HD Services Directors.

Development

Information obtained from Leavers' Questionnaires and relevant anonymous feedback from staff facilitating Exit Interviews is collated and analysed by the Registered Manager and / or Responsible Individual who presents findings and such development proposal as are indicated to the Arc HD Services Directors.

Promotions

Arc HD Services recognises that opportunities for promotion are a key feature of staff retention.

All staff involved in this process are expected to be fully aware of confidentiality requirements and of issues relating to equal opportunities, diversity and discrimination.

- All opportunities for promotion within the Home must be approved prior to advertising. A job description, person specification and draft of the advert should be submitted.
- All such approved opportunities must be advertised internally in order to ensure equality access to the post offered.
- The advert should include:
 - Job Title or area of responsibility
 - Main tasks
 - Reason for Vacancy
 - Application process details.

- A job description and person specification should be made available to all potential applicants.
- Interested parties should respond by email or by telephone.
- Interviews should be facilitated by the Arc CEO and should be carried out by the Registered Manager and another (Responsible Individual or Arc HD Services Director). The same panel should interview all candidates for the post and notes must be taken.
- The Registered Manager should verbally inform all interviewees of the outcome of their application, providing a debrief if requested.
- The Registered Manager is responsible for informing the Arc HD Services Directors of the outcome of interviews, in order that a written job offer can be made, along with any contractual amendments.
- Copies of all documents relating to internal applications and interviews are retained for three months following interviews.
- In all cases the promotion following appropriate selection procedures is confirmed in writing to the appointee, with full details of any salary and/or role amendments and any probationary requirements.

Linked Documents

Children's Homes Regulations 2015

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safer-recruitment>

DfE Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Safer Recruitment in Education 2022

Children Act 2004 (particularly Section 11)

Safeguarding Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Staff Handbook

To be Reviewed by March 2027