

Safer Recruitment Policy & Procedure

1. The Aims and Objectives of our Policy

Sycamore Trust UK are committed to safeguarding and we are invested in promoting the welfare of vulnerable individuals. It is essential that when Sycamore Trust UK employs staff, uses contractors, or engages volunteers that we adopt a consistent and rigorous approach in the recruitment and selection process.

Safer recruitment is vital for keeping children and adults at risk of harm safe and our aim is to ensure that those recruited are suitable for such an important and responsible role.

At Sycamore Trust UK we aim to deter unsuitable applicants from applying for roles with vulnerable groups and through robust recruitment practices we will identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable to work with children, young people, and adults at a risk of harm and respond to concerns about suitability of employees and volunteers once they have begun their role.

Sycamore Trust UK will ensure all new staff and volunteers participate in an induction which includes safeguarding.

2. Legislation

We endeavour to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly, consistently and in compliance with all relevant legislation.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. Working together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education, 2018), Childcare Act 2006, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Section 64 of protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

3. The Purpose and Scope of this Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to outline Sycamore Trust UK's recruitment procedures for all staff, both paid and voluntary, in line with recommended best practice to safeguard all children, young people and adults at risk of harm who use Sycamore Trust UK's services.

Other related policies to refer to: -

- Appraisal & Supervision Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

4. The Recruitment Process

The recruitment processes consist of several stages - Defining the Role, Advertising, Application, Selection Criteria, Interviews & Reviews and Employment Checks. This policy will go through each stage outlining key processes to ensure safer recruitment at Sycamore Trust UK. All colleagues involved in recruitment will receive training and development on a regular basis.

Sycamore Trust UK will take a planned and structured approach to the recruitment process. This is to:

- Minimise the risk of appointing someone unsuitable
- Ensuring that the right person is selected for the role
- Making the process fair
- Making sure records of the process are kept for future reference

5. Defining the Role - Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

5.1. Job description

When a vacancy arises due to an employee leaving or moving to a different role, it cannot be assumed that 'like for like' replacement is required. A review of the job description may highlight the fact that the existing role no longer meets current needs. Therefore, the requirements for any replacement or new role will be analysed prior to drawing up the job description and person specification which define the role.

The job description is a key document in the recruitment process and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps. The job description should contain: -

- The post title
- Main purpose of the job
- Who the person reports to
- If the person manages other staff
- The main tasks or duties to be carried out
- General statement relevant to the position, such as requirements relating to equal opportunities and health & safety

5.2. Person Specification

The person specification may include: -

- Any qualifications relating to post
- Knowledge, skills and abilities required
- Specific training requirements
- The need for awareness of and commitment to equal opportunities
- Need for commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children & young people and adults at risk of harm
- Need for commitment to promotion of health & safety at work

The person specification should indicate whether the stated criteria are essential or desirable to the role.

6. Advertising

The advert will give job role, brief description of job being advertised and closing date when all applications need to be returned by. It is to include hours, salary and needs to state the charity's responsibility to safeguarding and the need for enhanced DBS disclosures. Adverts will also state our commitment to being an equal opportunities employer.

The job is to be advertised through all our social media platforms and local networks i.e., CVS and depending on the funding criteria may need to be advertised through external 'paid for' adverts.

7. Application Forms

A pre-defined application form will be used for all recruitment including volunteers. CVs in isolation will not be accepted because they are left to the discretion of individual applicants and contain only information that they choose to provide, whereas application forms are employer led. This means detailed information can be collected in a consistent format.

Application forms will include: -

- Personal details including name, current address
- Qualifications & Training
- Full history since leaving school, education, employment and voluntary roles, reasons for leaving and explanation of any gaps
- Duties undertaken and if they have supervised staff
- Key achievements relevant to post they are applying for
- Confirmation that the person has a right to work in the UK
- Request for details of appropriate referees
- DBS disclosure information
- Personal statement
- Explanation if the post is exempt from the provisions of Section 4 (2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 by virtue of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (exceptions) Order 1975.
- Signed declaration that all information given is true and that false information could result in rejection of the application or summary dismissal if applicant selected and referral to police or to other regulatory bodies if necessary

8. Selection Criteria

8.1. Shortlisting & Invitation to Interview

Sycamore Trust UK will assess all applicants in their ability to carry out the role, based on justifiable and objective criteria related to the person specification. To support safer recruitment and ensure fairness in the process the interview panel should take adequate time to consider the applications.

- For consistency
- That the application is fully completed
- Highlight gaps in employment, which can be explored in interview if candidate shortlisted
- Look that evidence supplied fits the criteria set out in person specification & job description

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview. Information will include:

- Details of date, time & venue
- Where and who to report to on arrival
- Details of any documents needed, e.g., proof of identity, documents for the immigration, asylum and nationality check, qualification certificates

8.2. Interviews & Reviews

All interviews are conducted with at least two panel members, but preferably three, one of whom will have had safer recruitment training, and one staff member will be elected as chair.

A set of the same basic questions will be asked to all candidates and interviews will be used to: -

- Focus on requirements to carry out duties of the job
- Explore issues relating to safeguarding
- Identify gaps in employment

8.3. Areas of Potential Concern

These are areas that may come out in the interview which would give rise to potential concerns about a person's suitability for the position.

- No understanding of children's needs or expectations
- Inappropriate language when talking about children
- Unclear boundaries
- Vagueness about experiences and unable to give any examples to support what the candidate answers
- Unwilling to work with others

9. Employment Checks

9.1. Disclosure & Barring Services (DBS) Security Checks

Under the 2002 Education Act, a number of people are banned from working with children and the checks Sycamore Trust UK has a legal responsibility to undertake are aimed at identifying individuals that are barred from working with children and young people, or who could pose a potential threat.

Criminal records checks enable you to ensure that people 16 and over have nothing on their record that makes them unsuitable to work or volunteer in roles that have contact with children or adults at risk of harm. They are only valid on the date stated on the certificate but individuals who have a new DBS check can subscribe to the annual update service, which means staff can keep their certificate up to date and take it with them to a new employer.

Sycamore Trust UK undertake enhanced DBS checks for staff and volunteers before starting work with us and every three years thereafter.

9.2. Further Checks

Applicants from overseas - the same checks will apply to applicants from overseas and those who have lived outside the United Kingdom in the same way as for those residents in the UK.

Right to work in the UK - Sycamore Trust UK has a duty to confirm the right of those they employ to work in the UK and will make the necessary checks to ascertain this.

9.3. Reference Checks

As well as an enhanced DBS and any further checks needed, all offers of employment will be subject to receipt of a minimum of two references which are considered satisfactory by Sycamore Trust UK.

One of the references must be from the current/most recent employer. The second reference must be someone who has known the individual preferably in a professional capacity, they must have known the candidate for a minimum of 2 years and family members, or partners cannot be named as referees.

References will confirm: -

- Applicants dates of employment
- Job titles
- Whether applicant has been under investigation for any safety and welfare of children and disciplinary actions taken (except where issues from allegations or concerns that were found to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious)

10. Offer of Employment

A letter will be sent to the successful candidate/s with an offer of employment dependent on successful DBS and reference checks, setting out basic terms of employment as follows: -

- Job title
- Mutually agreed start date
- Relevant details relating to the position, type of contract/hours

11. Induction and Probation Period

Induction is an extension of the recruitment process with the initial induction meeting either taking place prior to starting or on first day of employment with a monthly review for the first five months, then a six-month probation review meeting. Where staff are either: -

- a. Successful in completing their probation period and offered a permanent position.
or
- b. The probation period is either extended for an agreed amount of time, with reasons for the extension and improvements/training needed.
or
- c. Employment is terminated.

When completing the induction there is a pre-defined Induction Starter Pack which is to be used with all new staff and volunteers. The induction pack will include: -

- Name, Job Title, type of position, who their line manager is and start date
- Emergency contact details including medication, illnesses or disabilities that Sycamore Trust UK should be aware of
- Introduction, including nature and structure of organisation, roles of key people
- Work environment
- Employment conditions including Job descriptions and responsibilities working arrangements etc.
- Pay arrangements request for account details, P45 and National Insurance Number
- Health & Safety policy, Safeguarding policy and covers relevant information about safeguarding and who is Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Security – including Lone Working

- Training required which includes mandatory Safeguarding, Autism Awareness (for all staff & Cyber Security (for office staff)
- Staff information – handbook, core values, mission statement, confidentiality, and data protection
- Dates for monthly reviews and end/continuation of probation period

The induction provided by Sycamore Trust UK covers relevant information about safeguarding and how to identify and raise concerns about the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm.

Certificated training in safeguarding by an accredited trainer forms part of the compulsory training paid staff complete as part of their induction and must be completed within one month of appointment and this is updated annually.

During the probation period and continuing throughout their employment with Sycamore Trust UK all office staff will receive monthly supervisions and yearly appraisals. Once probation period has been successfully completed all activity-based staff will receive termly group supervisions, one yearly individual supervision and a yearly appraisal.

Relevant safeguarding issues are discussed in team meetings and supervisions with specific safeguarding issues dealt with in line with Sycamore Trust UK's Safeguarding policies & procedures.

12. Complaints

Sycamore Trust UK will always try to provide a professional, fair and efficient recruitment service to all applicants. We recognise that things go wrong occasionally, and you may not be happy with our service, if so, let us know and we will do all we can to put things right.

The complaints process can be summarised in the following steps:

- You identify an issue with the service you received during recruitment.
- You contact the vacancy holder whose details are listed on the job advert with your contact details and a clear description of the recruitment issue
- Sycamore trust UK will try to resolve your complaint as soon as reasonably possible.

Approval of Policy

Signed:  (Chair) Date: 17 April 2025

For and on behalf of the Trustees of Sycamore Trust U.K.

Signed:  (CEO) Date: 17 April 2025

This policy will be reviewed in **September 2026** or if legislation should change whichever is sooner.

Appendix 1 - Procedure

1. Defining the Role

A written job description and person specification is in place for each post. Both documents include statements about skills, behaviours, experience, and attitude to young people necessary for the post. The job description outlines clear boundaries of the role, it describes what responsibility and opportunity for contact with children, young people, and adults at risk of harm there is in the role and includes statements about safeguarding responsibilities of the post. These need to be checked that they are still relevant and up to date for the post that is going to be advertised. If it is a new position, then they will need to be written in-line with the policy and job being advertised.

2. Advertising the Role

The adverts to be written and agreed by the line managers and will be sent out, in accordance with policy above.

3. Application Information Pack

On request the candidate will be sent an application pack which will include:

- Covering letter (with a statement on our safer recruitment process)
- Application Form
- Job Description
- Job Specifications

All applicants must complete a Sycamore Trust UK application form. A personal statement which outlines how the applicant meets the person specification should be included. Applicants must sign the declaration at end of application form.

4. References

Reference check letters (using the Sycamore Trust UK reference request proforma) are to be sent to the two referees who are identified on the application form. At least one reference must be from a previous employer.

The reference request form confirms details on application form such as anything of concern/disciplinary action during the course of employment, safeguarding issues, periods of employment, reason for leaving etc, and will include the candidate's suitability to work with children and young people and adults at risk of harm.

Reference requests will be sent as soon as job offer and acceptance of job by candidate has been made. Any offers of employment will be conditional until satisfactory references are received.

5. Selection Criteria

The short-listing process will be based on the person specification and job description it is consistent for all candidates. At least two people always shortlist in order to assess the candidate's ability to carry out the role, based on justifiable and objective criteria. They will also look at identifying gaps, inconsistencies, or disclosures and will ensure that there is full history since leaving school and any qualifications shown on the application form must be

supported by certificates. Ideally those who are doing shortlisting will also be on the interview panel.

6. Invitation to interview

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview. The invite will include venue, time and who to report to.

7. Interview

Interviews will be conducted face to face.

The questions for the interview are to be planned in advance, they are to be structured with previously agreed criteria designed to ascertain the candidate's ability to meet the requirements of the post as per the person specification and job description. They will also assist the interviewers to determine the candidates' suitability to work with children, vulnerable adults and the families, their attitude and their motivations for applying for the role.

Each candidate will be asked the same questions, treated equally and fairly.

During the interview there are questions which probe attitudes towards safeguarding and, where appropriate motives for working with children and adults at risk of harm. Frequent changes in employment will also be explored.

Interviewers should make notes during the interview this will form evidence for assessing each candidate after the interviews are complete. Sycamore Trust UK uses a scoring system based on person specification and following the same criteria for each candidate.

During the interview candidates should show that they are able to:

- Establish and maintain professional boundaries and integrity
- Establish and maintain relationships with children, vulnerable adults and families.
- Take action to protect vulnerable clients.

8. Practical test

Depending upon the position applied for, a range of selection tools such as interaction with others i.e., short presentations, role play, group discussion, written exercise may be used. For some job positions the candidates may be asked to voluntarily attend one of the activity groups as part of the recruitment process.

9. Checking Identity

Check each candidate's identity during recruitment process as per policy.

10. Offer of Employment

A letter to be sent to successful candidate offering job, subject to suitable references and DBS checks. The successful candidate to be contacted to make arrangements for completing the DBS. Reference letters to be sent to referees identified on the application form as soon as possible.

11. Post Appointment Induction and Probation

When all necessary checks are completed to the satisfaction of Sycamore Trust UK the Operations Manager will arrange an Induction interview either, prior to the start date or first day of taking up the position for all office-based staff and office-based volunteers. The Youth and Adult Service Manager will arrange inductions for all activity staff and activity volunteers.

Following the induction the new office-based employee will receive a monthly review meeting for the first five months, then a six-month probation review meeting. Where they are either successful in completing their probation period and offered a permanent position, or the probation period is either extended for an agreed amount of time, with reasons for the extension and improvements/training needed or employment is terminated.

During the probation period and continuing throughout their employment with Sycamore Trust UK all office-based staff will receive monthly supervisions and a yearly appraisal. All activity-based staff will receive termly group supervisions and a yearly individual supervision and annual appraisal.