Northern Ireland Social Care Council

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Safer recruitment and employment

Guidance for social care employers

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This guide has been co-produced by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Social Care Council) and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) along with representatives from the social care sector.

Thank you to reference group members – Jackie McCaughey, Mindwise, Mahan Salgado, Home Instead, Debbie Walton, Unique Homecare NI and Bronagh Hamill, Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Why safer recruitment matters

Development of this regional guidance has been informed by a number of emerging concerns and learning across the social care sector:

- **Regional concerns**: An investigation into concerns about fraudulent employment records and references has highlighted the importance of robust verification and due diligence when recruiting staff.
- **Regulatory findings**: RQIA inspections have identified recurring gaps and weaknesses in some providers' recruitment systems and processes.
- **Inconsistent practice**: Issues can include the verification of employment history, references, identity documentation, qualifications and the maintenance of comprehensive recruitment records.
- **Safeguarding responsibilities**: Employers must have confidence that the people they recruit are suitable, safe and have the required knowledge, skills, values and attributes to work with vulnerable adults and children.

Recruitment challenges and employer responsibilities

- Ongoing recruitment and workforce challenges across the sector.
- Balancing workforce needs and skills gaps with safeguarding responsibilities.
- Employers have a legal and professional responsibility to recruit safely.
- Ensuring staff have the right skills, qualifications, values and behaviours.

Getting the balance right: recruiting the right people while keeping adults and children safe.

What is expected of social care employers?

- **The *Standards for Employers*** published by NISCC and enforced by RQIA: employers are expected to adhere to these standards, including their responsibilities for safe and effective recruitment.
- ***RQIA Regulatory Requirements***: Registered providers and registered managers have a responsibility to ensure robust recruitment and selections procedures are in place to support the safe recruitment of staff.
- ***Regulatory Assurance***: RQIA assesses compliance through registration, inspection and enforcement activity, against both overarching registration requirements and the specific regulations and minimum standards applicable to each service type.

PRISM Model (Skills for Care, 2024)



Adopting a Safeguarding Mindset and being professionally curious

Scope of guidance

- The guidance focuses on the safety aspects associated with recruitment rather than the recruitment process in its totality.
- Supports social care employers to recruit suitable and safe staff.
- Clarifies employer responsibilities under NISCC standards and RQIA regulatory requirements.
- Highlights key safeguarding checks and considerations throughout recruitment.
- Promotes consistent, fair, lawful and values based recruitment practices.
- Strengthens safeguarding and protects adults and children receiving care and support.

Pre-employment Checks

1. Identity verification
2. Right to work
3. Enhanced AccessNI/Barred list checks
4. Qualifications and competence
5. Full employment history
6. Health declaration
7. Two robust, verified references

Any gaps, anomalies or disclosures must be explored, risk assessed and documented.

Registered Manager Perspective

Mahan Salgado –Ardmore House Healthcare (previously Home Instead for majority of this co-production)

Reflection:

- Safe Recruitment is an integral part of the overall accountability of a Registered Manager
- There was no central document beyond the minimum standards that supported us in understanding the expectations surrounding safe recruitment.
- New recruiters do not always have the industry knowledge therefore training can be time consuming and inconsistent.
- Piecing together information was time consuming, frustrating and can be ambiguous
- Developing this guidance highlighted that different registered managers had different experiences

Registered Manager Perspective

Benefits:

- Standardised process
- Clear guidance
- Best practices across various organisations within the sector.
- Improved Safeguarding for organisations, staffing and service users.
- It marries up processes, standards and lived experiences.

Accessing Guidance

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

https://niscc.info/employers-responsibilities/