



SPORT INTEGRITY
AUSTRALIA

Safeguarding
in Sport



Recruitment and Screening of Staff and Volunteers in **Child-Related Positions**

NOVEMBER 2023

The screening of new staff and volunteers during recruitment is a critical part of protecting children and young people in sport. Even though we know sports depend on volunteers, it's important that we do appropriate checks of anyone who will be working with children and young people, before they start. The risk to children and young people if we fail to do this is much too great.

This information is designed to help your organisation understand what to look for when recruiting new staff and volunteers for Child-Related Positions in your sport.

For the purpose of this document, the reference to children and young people refers to any person under the age of 18.



What is a Child-Related Position?

A Child-Related Position is any role in your club, organisation or sport, that involves, or may involve, contact with children or young people.

When identifying if a position is a 'Child-Related Position', ask the following questions:

Does the position/role...

- Involve supervising children and young people?
- Involve being alone with children or young people?
- Involve engaging with children or young people in a way that is not observed or monitored?
- Involve activities with children or young people away from the organisation's usual location?
- Involve direct contact (in a group, or one-on-one) with children or young people via phone, letter, email, online or social media?
- Involve supervising child-to-child or young person-to-young person online contact?
- Have access (online or paper based) to a child's or young person's personal and/or confidential information?
- Involve the need for physical contact/touching of children or young people?
- Involve transporting children or young people?
- Involve over-night supervision of children or young people?
- Involve activities with children or young people based out-of-town?
- Have a perceived or actual level of authority (including from a child's or young person's perspective)?
- Involve any other type of contact with children or young people?

If the answer to **any** of the above questions is **YES**, the position **should be considered as a 'Child-Related Position' and appropriate screening must take place.**

Position Descriptions

Developing appropriate selection criteria for a position is a valuable first step to reducing the risk of appointing someone who poses a risk to children and young people.

Examples of appropriate selection criteria should include requirements such as:

- Must have experience working with children and young people.
- Must be able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate behaviours when engaging with children and young people.

All Child-Related Positions should also inform applicants that they will be required to undergo screening to be eligible for the role. You can do this by including this statement:

[Sport Organisation] is committed to protecting children and young people from harm. We require all applicants that will work with children and young people to undergo an extensive screening process prior to appointment.

The position description should also include any requirements for Working with Children Checks (WWCC) or equivalent and police checks required in your state/territory.

Interviews

Clubs/organisations should always conduct an interview when appointing a person to a Child-Related Position. The interview process is a very important step in selecting the right people for your organisation and in identifying any people that may pose a risk of harm to children and young people.

Interviews should be conducted in person or on a video conference (e.g. Zoom etc.) and should include questions regarding the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people.

It is recommended the following questions should be asked:

- Would you please tell us about your beliefs and values in relation to working with children and young people?
- Would you please tell us about your awareness and understanding of child protection?
- Would you please tell us about your professional experience, competencies, and qualifications in relation to working with children or young people.
- What boundaries are important when working with children and young people?
- Have you ever had any disciplinary action taken against you in relation to you working with children and young people?



In addition to these questions, you may wish to ask any of the following questions that are relevant to the role, particularly for positions working predominantly with children and young people.

- What do you find most rewarding about working with children or young people?
- What do you find most challenging about working with children or young people?
- How would you handle a child or young person that is behaving in a manner that is disruptive in a group setting?
- How do you think your peers, supervisors and referees would describe the way you work with children or young people?
- Are there any children or young people whom you would not wish to work with and, if so, why?
- How would you deal with a child or young person who is acting aggressively?
- Have you ever lost your temper working with children or young people? What was the trigger for this? What was the outcome?
- How would you respond to a child or young person who disclosed they were being subjected to abuse?
- A parent/carer of a child/young person attending your service wants someone from the organisation to care for their child or young person out of hours. What would be your response to this request?
- What would you do if you thought another staff member or volunteer had harmed or was harming a child/young person?
- What would you do if you thought a child or young person was being abused at home?
- Can you tell us about children or young people you have found challenging to work with? What strategies do you use to handle challenging behaviour?
- How would you handle a child or young person that appears sad and refuses to participate in activities?

Take notice of your own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant during the interview and don't be afraid to ask for more information if you feel the applicants answer isn't sufficient.

Red Flags

You should be wary of red flags in an applicant's answers. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history
- Strange or inappropriate questions/statements about children or young people
- Expressing an interest in spending time alone with children or young people
- Excessive interest in working with children or young people of a particular age or gender
- Excessive interest in child/young person photography
- Being evasive or inconsistent in responding to questions

Applicants should also be informed during the interview that their referees will be contacted as part of any final selection process.

Working with Children Checks

A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required where a person seeks to engage in child-related work. The requirements for a WWCC are legislated by the States and Territories and it is your club/organisations responsibility to make sure you meet the requirements of your state/territory. You can find these requirements on the [Australian Institute of Family Studies | Pre-employment screening: Working With Children Checks and Police Check.](#)

A person who seeks to undertake a role in child-related work is required to fulfil the requirements of WWCC at the time of applying for the role. The WWCC should be valid and issued by the state/territory where the club/organisation is based.

Your club/organisation should not place anyone in a Child-Related Position who does not have a valid WWCC required in your state/territory.

Clubs/organisations should complete checks every three months with their state/territory government to be sure that no person's WWCC has lapsed or that no person has been appointed without a WWCC. It is important to note that each state/territory has different WWCC obligations and requirements, and it is essential to understand and comply with the respective requirements, according to your state/territory.

Qualification and Registration Checks

Where required, educational or vocational qualifications, or professional registration should be verified to make sure of their validity.



Criminal Convictions

Anyone who has been found guilty of an offence that would make them ineligible to be granted a WWCC should not be placed in a Child-Related Position. These include but are not limited to convictions such as possession, use, or distribution of illegal drug, gun crimes, assault, and sexual crimes. Similarly, anyone in a Child-Related Position who is convicted of a crime of this nature should be removed from their position immediately. Under your sport's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, people involved with your club/organisation are obligated to report these types of criminal convictions to your club/organisation.

National Criminal History Record Checks

If an applicant is not required to gain a WWCC based on State and Territory Legislation, the organisation may require the person to submit a National Criminal History Check (also known as police check).

Criminal History Checks should be utilised in addition to interviewing and gaining reference checks. A decision to appoint or not appoint an applicant based on the results of the Criminal History Check, along with the rationale for that decision, must be communicated to the applicant. Additionally, the original police check document must either be returned to the applicant (if requested) or be destroyed on completion of the recruitment process. Clubs/organisations must not keep a copy of the Criminal History Check of applicants.

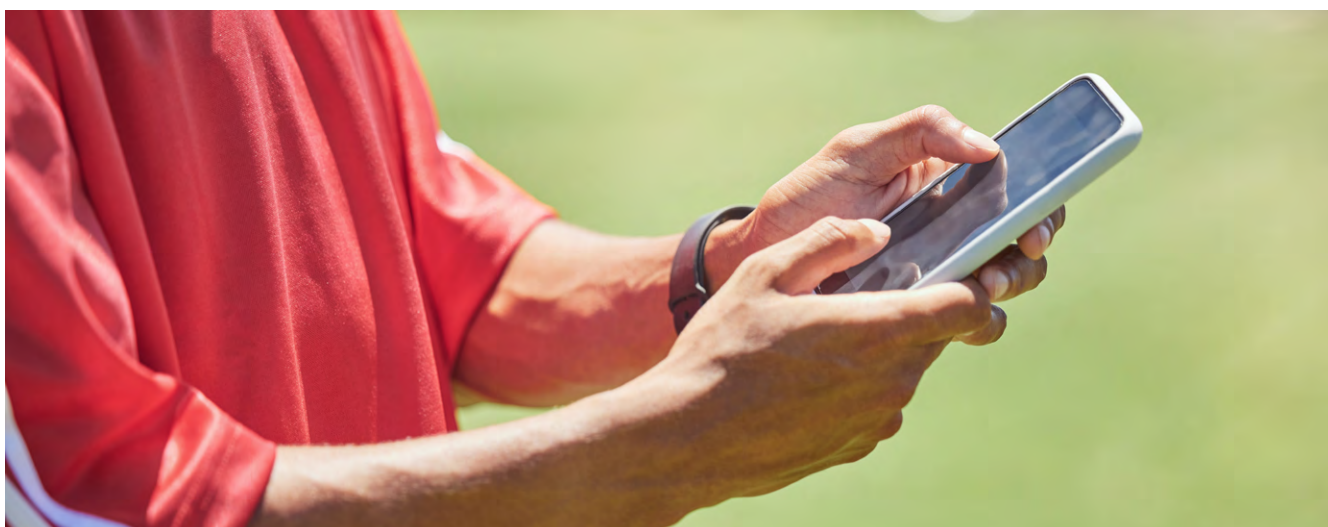
If the applicant is appointed, a record of the date and certificate number of the police check should be recorded in their personnel file.

International Criminal History Record Checks

Any applicant who has lived overseas for 12 months or more in the last ten years should obtain an international criminal check.

If an international criminal check can't be obtained from the country where the person lived, reference checks should be conducted with at least two referees that personally knew the individual whilst they were living overseas. Clubs/organisations should let applicants know that their referees will be asked if the applicant has engaged in criminal behaviour.

Clubs/organisations should use discretion when assessing referees and should consider the credentials of any referees. Information given by one referee should be verified by another, where possible.



Reference Checks

Clubs/organisations recruiting for Child-Related Positions should conduct a minimum of two reference checks for the preferred applicant to gather additional information about the applicant's suitability to work in the role, including confirming their suitability and experience working with children and young people.

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support your decision to appoint someone or not. You should ask the same questions of each referee.



The selected referees should have:

- Known the applicant for at least 12 months
- Not be related to the applicant
- Be able to vouch for the applicant's reputation and character

Written character references aren't sufficient and should be followed up and verified by a phone call or another form of direct contact.

Referees should be able to answer direct questions about the applicant's suitability and experience working with children and young people.

When contacting the referee, you should do the following before asking any questions:

- Identify yourself, your organisation and your position
- Give the name of the candidate and the reason for your call
- Describe the job and the competencies that you are seeking

You should also have your questions listed and ask the same questions of each referee.

As a minimum, the following questions should be asked:

- Are you related to the applicant?
(Please note, if the person answers yes, another referee should be obtained from the applicant).
- In what capacity have you known the applicant and for what length of time?
(Please note, if less than 12 months another referee should be obtained from the applicant)
- How would you describe the personal character of the applicant?
- Would you have any concerns about this applicant working with or being in contact with children or young people?
- How does the person respond to supervision/oversight?
- In your time working with the applicant, was there anything that led you to believe that this applicant is not suitable to work with or be in contact with children or young people?
- To your knowledge, has this person ever been involved with the abuse or neglect of children or young people?

How valid is the opinion of the applicant's referee?

The panel should consider the validity of the referees by reflecting on the following questions:

- What is the relationship between the referee and the applicant?
- Has the referee known the applicant in a professional capacity and if so when and for how long?
- Is the referee able to provide relevant information about the applicant's history and performance in a similar role?
- Has the referee observed the applicant demonstrating the skills and knowledge required for the position and to work with children and young people?

Again, take notice of your own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the referees during reference checks and don't be afraid to ask for more information if you feel the referees answer aren't sufficient.

Red Flags

You should also be wary of red flags in a referee's answers. This could include, but is not limited to:

- A reluctant referee
- A referee who does not know (or appear to know) the applicant well
- Information that the referee will not provide
- Information that differs from the applicant
- Evasive or convoluted responses
- Referees that would not re-hire or work with the applicant
- Referees that cannot be contacted
- Referees that were not informed they would be used



Appointing young people to a Child-Related Position

If a person under the age of 18 is appointed to a Child-Related Position, the club/organisation should undertake the same recruitment and screening process as for adults, including complying with relevant state/territory WWCC legislation, interviews, reference checks, and relevant qualifications.

Clubs/organisations should also ensure that the young person is aware that they are bound by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Children and Young People Safe Practices, and make sure they are aware of and document any pre-existing personal, professional, and sporting relationships the young person may have with other young people at the club/organisation.

Training

Anyone appointed to a Child-Related Position should complete the Sport Integrity Australia Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport Induction online course within 12 months of their appointment. The module can be found on the [Sport Integrity Australia eLearning](#) site.

The club/organisation is also responsible for ensuring that everyone involved in their sport has access to up-to-date information regarding their child/young person safe obligations, including a range of resources available from Sport Integrity Australia.

Contact us

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