

# Safeguarding Briefing

*Let the right ones in...*

exploring safe hiring practices

# What is Safeguarding?

**Safeguarding** – the responsibility of organisations to **make sure their staff**, operations, and programmes **do no harm** to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. This term covers physical, emotional and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by staff and associated personnel, as well as safeguarding risks caused by programme design and implementation. Many organisations now also use this term to cover harm caused to staff in the workplace.

*Core Humanitarian Standard, 2020*



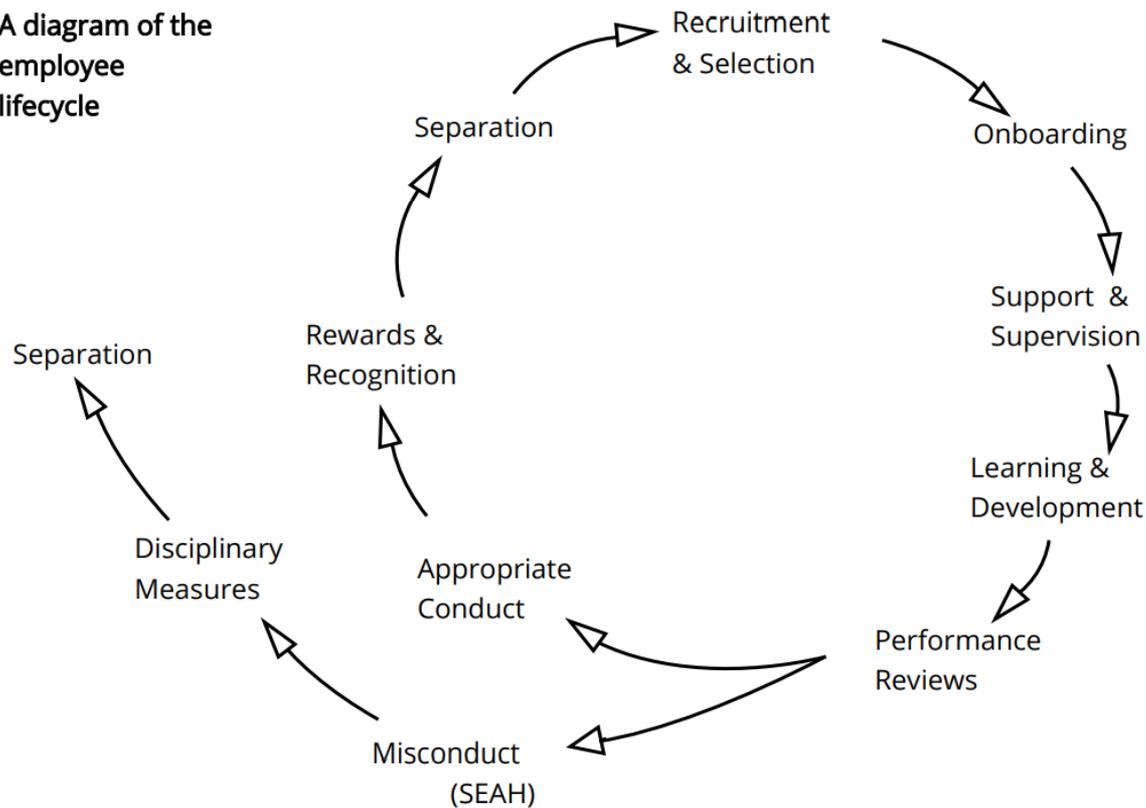
# Power inequalities are at the root of safeguarding incidents





# Safeguarding throughout the employment cycle

A diagram of the employee lifecycle



# What's the problem?

- Harm has been and continues to be caused by people who are hired and retained by organisations in the humanitarian aid and development sector
- People who cause harm don't wear labels
- People who cause harm can seek out loopholes and weaknesses in recruitment practices to gain access to children or adults at risk, in contexts where there may be limited legal protections
- People who sexually exploit children are not seen as monsters until they are caught
- Until they are caught they are usually:
  - \* Very Nice People
  - \* Pillars of Society/Organisation
  - \* Can have excellent CVs
  - \* **So how do we accurately judge character?**

Hello  
my name is

Ogre of  
the Ardennes

# What do we need to do?

- *Let the right ones in...*
- Kick the bad apples out and make sure they don't continue to move around the sector
- Strengthen response systems to ensure that a zero tolerance for harm and abuse is applied

# What are the challenges to having really robust and safe hiring practices?

- Poll function needed, can choose multiple items and this slide updated to reflect this. Some suggested challenges:
- Getting reliable references
- Timely response from candidates and referees
- People choose their referees
- Difficult to authenticate references
- People may not hold the qualifications they claim to hold
- People lie about their experience
- Emergency situations require speedy recruitment of staff
- Organisations may have limited time and resources
- Different employment laws
- Perceptions and misconceptions about what can and cannot be shared in references
- Balancing protecting the organisation from litigation versus risk of a “bad hire”
- Legislation about criminal background checking and GDPR compliance
- Systems for legal background checking
- Making change happen in established systems

# What's the bigger risk?



Balancing  
the rights of the applicant  
and the risk to children and vulnerable adults

# Principles to apply in hiring:

- Transparency
- Fairness
- Equality
  
- Balanced with the responsibility to safeguard the children and adults that our organisations are entrusted to assist

*Our shields are up and we're **not** a soft target for perpetrators of harm and abuse...*



# Safeguarding measures in hiring practices (1/2):

---

- Sending clear messages about the commitment your organisation has to keeping children and adults safe – be explicit about your organisation's position on safeguarding
- Fair notice to candidates – they can self select if willing to go through the rigorous screening process
- Risk assess roles
- Criminal background checking and / or at least self declaration of relevant previous criminal convictions
- Equitable hiring processes – realistic criteria that does not unintentionally exclude good candidates
- EDI: Gender and equality lens on hiring practices - gender balance on teams and on hiring panels
- Build in safeguarding competencies into job descriptions and performance management processes – safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Build in Code of Conduct, expected behaviours into contracts

# Safeguarding measures in hiring practices (2/2):

---

- Interview panels trained and sensitised in safeguarding
- Include safeguarding specific questions in interviews / assessments
- Have a healthy, respectful curiosity about gaps in CVs
- Be up front about the expected behaviours in advance of candidates joining and throughout the employment cycle
- Minimum two (ideally 3) references from most recent employers, verified for authenticity
- Qualifications checked for authenticity
- ID checked throughout the different steps of the hiring process, *they are who they say they are*
- Fair procedures apply if candidates' screening process indicates concerning past behaviours, attitudes or values
- Manage probation periods carefully – it's the final stage of the hiring process
- Collaborate with other INGOs – consider the Inter Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, for example
- Consistent procedures for all offices

# Criminal background checking – how?

## National Vetting Bureau, (Children & Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

Humanitarian and aid workers in programmatic contexts are outside of the scope of what is categorised as “relevant activities”.

Staff in HQ working directly with children through school debates and similar are eligible for Garda Vetting.

*Recognised as a gap and inconsistent from an equality perspective*

### GOOD NEWS...!

Advocacy, listening, change as of January 2022:

**Garda Certificates available for:**

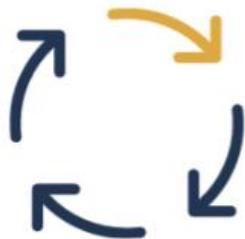
***Development / Humanitarian / Aid Workers deployed Overseas*** on behalf of a Registered Non-Governmental Organisation with supporting documentation issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and / or any other Statutory Agency related to the activity concerned.



**So that was Ireland...now what about our very diverse and mobile workforce?**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants/guidance-on-the-application-process-for-criminal-records-checks-overseas>

# Inter Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme



MISCONDUCT DISCLOSURE  
SCHEME

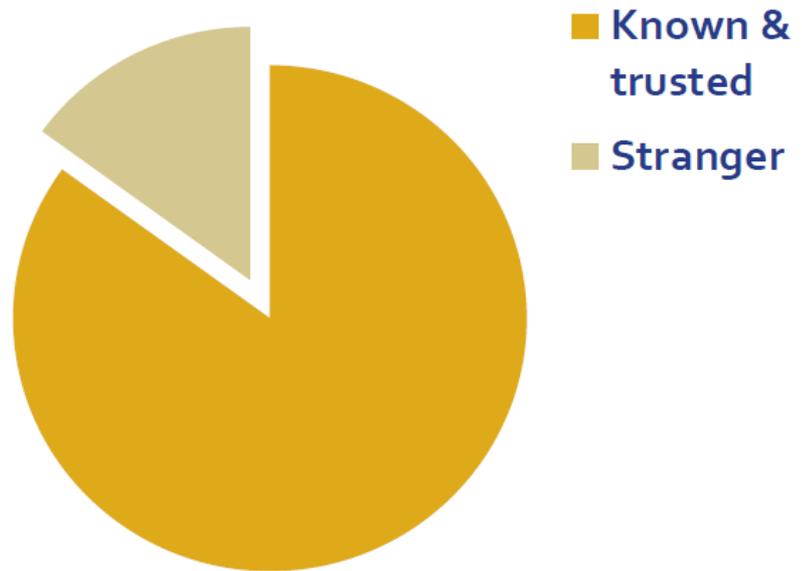
<https://misconduct-disclosure-scheme.org/>

- The Scheme facilitates the sharing of misconduct data between employers.
- The Scheme consists of **two main commitments**:
  - A commitment to systematically check with previous employers about any SEA issues relating to potential new hires
  - A commitment to respond systematically to such checks from others.
- It **enables hiring organisation to get better references** to make a well-informed hiring decision
- The Scheme is intended to **ultimately cover all staff** in positions of power over affected people, including both national and international/expatriate staff, of a majority of humanitarian and development organisations.

# Who might abuse?

- Staff
- Volunteers
- Partners
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Visitors
- Family members
- Professionals providing services
- Spouses
- Community members
- Strangers

Relationship to Perpetrator

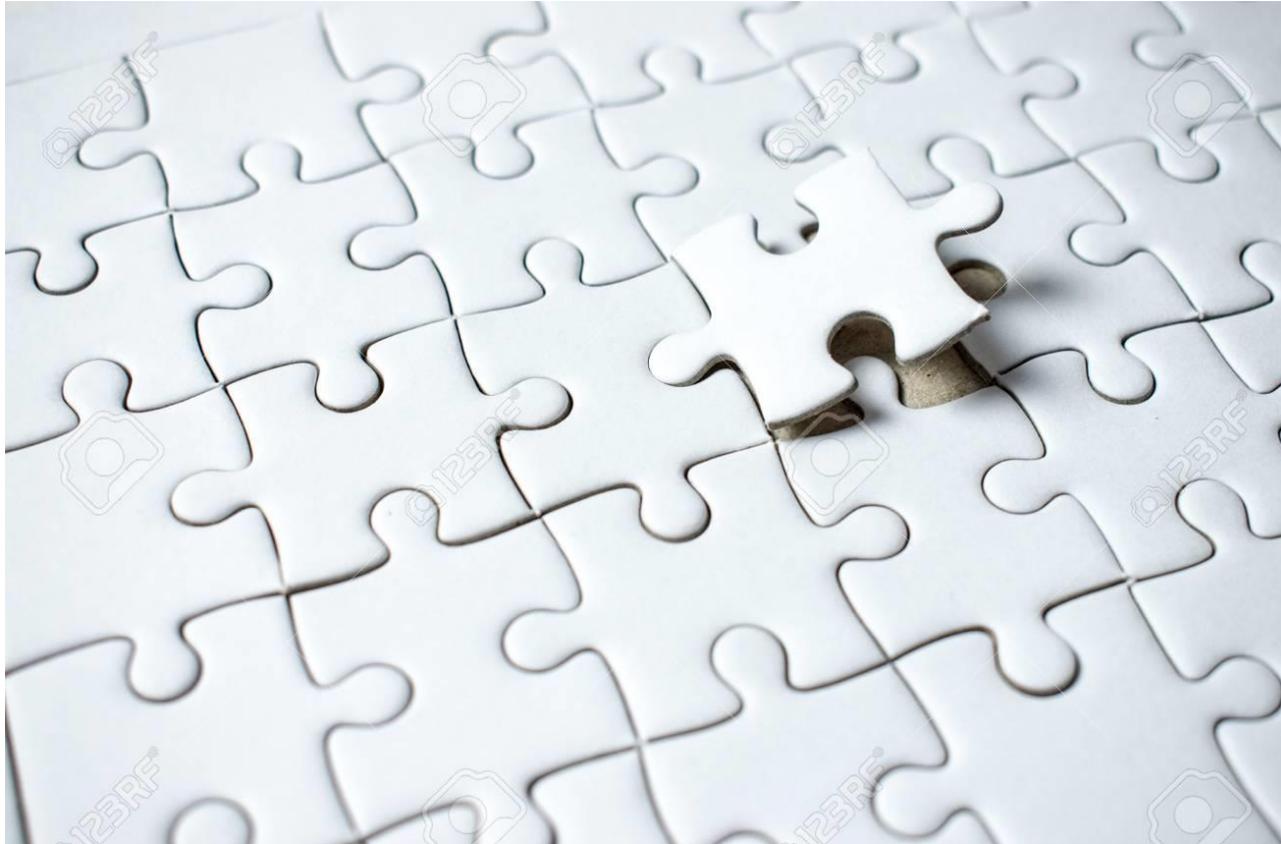


Anyone can abuse, especially those in a position of power, or perceived position of power!

Safe hiring practices need apply to all people we engage

Learn as we go...





**Add in the chat function – any tips, suggestions or challenges that we could discuss now (or later) in our collective responsibility in safeguarding ?**



# Welcome to stay in touch or if you have any questions:



Sara Barnes, Safeguarding Adviser, Concern Worldwide  
[sara.barnes@concern.net](mailto:sara.barnes@concern.net)  
[safeguarding@concern.net](mailto:safeguarding@concern.net)

Thank you!

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

**ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES**