Person(s) Responsible For Dealing with Safeguarding Issues:

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Safeguarding Adults from Abuse

Section 1 - Policy

Policy Statement

Living a life that is free from harm and abuse is a fundamental right of every person. All of us need to act as good neighbours and citizens in looking out for one another and seeking to prevent the isolation which can easily lead to abusive situations and put adults and risk of harm.

When abuse does take place, it needs to be dealt with swiftly, effectively and in ways which are proportionate to the issues and where the adults in need of protection stays as much in control of the decision making as is possible. The rights of the individual to be heard throughout this process are a critical element of the drive towards more personalised care and support.

All staff, in whatever setting and role, are in the front line in preventing harm or abuse occurring and in taking action where concerns arise. The policy and procedures set out here are designed to explain simply and clearly how we should work together to protect adults at risk. The target audience is management, staff and volunteers.

Introduction

Protecting adults at risk represents the commitment of our organisation to work together to safeguard adults at risk. The procedures aim to make sure that:-

In all cases of suspected, possible or actual cases of any of the examples of abuse highlighted in this policy, contact ADULT SOCIAL CARE DIRECT on 0191 433 7033 or POLICE on 999 or 101.

- The needs and interests of adults at risk are always respected and upheld
- The human rights of adults at risk are respected and upheld
- A proportionate, timely, professional and ethical response is made to any adult at risk who may be experiencing abuse

The procedures aim to make sure that each adult maintains:-

- Choice and control
- Safety
- Health
- Quality of life
- Dignity and respect.

Practice Guidance

- Services provided should be appropriate to the adults at risk and not discriminate because of disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture or lifestyle.
- The primary focus/point of decision making should be as close as possible to the adult at risk and individuals must be supported to make choices.
- Staff have a duty to report in a timely way any concerns or suspicions that an adult at risk is being, or is risk of being, abused.
- Actions to protect the adult from abuse should always be given high priority. Concerns or allegations should be reported without delay and given high priority.
- Dignity, safety and wellbeing of service users should be made priority at all times.
- If the person allegedly causing harm is also an adult at risk their support needs must be addressed
- Staff will understand their role and responsibilities in regard to these policy and procedures.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that adults at risk are afforded appropriate protection under the law.
- Organisational internal procedures which relate to this policy, including complaints and in respect of support to staff who raise concerns (whistleblowing) comply with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and must be referred to in appropriate instances.
- Our organisation will ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with the policies relating to safeguarding adults, know how to recognise abuse and how to report and respond to it.

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- We will ensure staff and volunteers have access to training that is appropriate to their level of responsibility and will receive management supervision that affords them the opportunity that reflect on their practice and the impact of their actions on others. **All new staff members and Trustees must undertake Safeguarding Adults Reporting Concerns (Level 2) with Gateshead Council. Training is to be renewed every 2 years.**
- Action taken under these procedures does not affect the obligations to comply with our statutory responsibilities such as notification to regulatory authorities under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 or to comply with employment legislation.

Definition of Adult at Risk

An adult as risk is:-

"An adult aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation" (DH, 2000).

An adult at risk may therefore be a person who:-

- Is elderly or frail due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment
- Has a learning disability
- Has a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment
- Has mental health needs
- Has a long term illness/condition
- Misused substances or alcohol
- Is a carer such as a family member/friend who provides personal assistance and care to adults and is subject to abuse
- Is unable to look after their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests
- Is in need of care and support but is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make and informed decision about themselves.

(This list is not exhaustive)

This does not mean that just because a person is old or frail or has a disability that they are inevitably 'at risk'. For example, a person with a disability who has the mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety could be perfectly able to make informed choices and protect themselves from harm. In the context of safeguarding adults, the vulnerability of the adult at risk is related to how able they are to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or

undue influence of any sort, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation. It is important to note that people with capacity can also be vulnerable.

An adults at risk's vulnerability is determined by a range of interconnected factors including their personal characteristics, factors associated with their situation or environment and social factors. Some of these are described below.

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Factors Determining Vulnerability

Personal Characteristics of the Adult at Risk that Increase Vulnerability may include:	**Personal Characteristics of the Adult at Risk that Decrease Vulnerability may include:**
• Not having mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety • Communication difficulties • Physical dependency for personal care • Low self esteem • Experience of abuse	• Having mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety • Good physical and mental health • No communication difficulties or if so, having the right equipment/support • No physical dependency or if needing help, able to self-direct care • Positive former life experiences • Self confidence and high self esteem.
Social/Situational Factors that Increase the Risk of Abuse may include:	**Social/Situational Factors that Decrease the Risk of Abuse may include:**
• Being cared for in a care setting that is more or less dependent on others • Not getting the right amount or the right kind of care that they need • Isolation and social exclusion • Stigma and discrimination • Lack of access to information and support • Being the focus of anti-social behaviour	• Good family relationships • Active socially • Able to participate in the wider community • Stigma and discrimination • Good knowledge and access to the range of community facilities • Remaining independent and active • Access to sources of relevant information

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Abuse

For the purpose of this policy and procedure the term abuse is defined as:-

"…a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which result in significant harm." (DH 2000)

Abuse may be:-

- A single act or repeated acts
- An act of neglect of a failure to act
- Multiple acts

Abuse is about the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. Where there is dependency, there is a possibility of abuse or neglect unless adequate safeguards are put in place.

Intent is not an issue at the point of deciding whether an act or a failure to act is abuse; it is the impact of the act on the person and the harm or risk of harm to that individual.

Abuse can take place in settings such as the person's own home, day or residential centres, supported housing, educational establishments, or in nursing homes, clinics or hospitals.

A number of abusive acts are crimes:-

- Significant harm including forms of ill treatment which are not physical
- Physical harm including restraint
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
    - Theft, fraud and exploitation
    - Undue pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transaction
    - Misuse of property, possessions or benefits
    - Misuse of enduring power of attorney
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Institutional abuse occurring an any setting providing health and social care

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Key Considerations

Self-neglect

The relationship between self-neglect and safeguarded is contested within the UK, in part because the current definition of abuse specifies harmful actions by someone other than the adult at risk. There may however be individual cases that warrant consideration for progressing through safeguarding for example if a person lacks capacity.

If in doubt, contact the Adult Social Care Direct team within Gateshead Council for advice.

Hate Crime

The impact of hate crime on an individual and their family can be devastating, affecting social, psychological and physical wellbeing. Where individuals are targeted because of personal characteristics they often feel fearful of further incidents and isolated, it can also affect others who may share that characteristic, leading to impacts across the wider community.

The most commonly used definition of hate crime is that agreed by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Crown Prosecution Service which states:

“Hate crimes and incidents are taken to mean any crime or incident where the perpetrators hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised.”

Individuals may be targeted because of their actual or perceived:

- Disability
- Gender
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Or a combination of these

Individuals may also be targeted due to other issues which identify them as different. Hate crime and incidents can cover a range of actions, including but not limited to:

- Verbal abuse
- Threatening behaviour
- Deliberate ‘outing’ or threat of ‘outing’
- Criminal damage

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- Offensive graffiti
- Arson or attempted arson
- Physical attack
- Harassment by phone, text, email or via the internet
- Abusive correspondence

The police and other organisations work together to intervene under safeguarding adults policy and procedures to ensure a robust, coordinated and timely response to situations where adults at risk become target for hate crime.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

“Controlling behaviour” is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolation them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.”

“Coercive behaviour” is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

Whatever form it takes, domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and should be instead be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over the victim. Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth or geography. The figures show, however, that is consists mainly by men against women.

Effective safeguarding is achieved when organisations share information to obtain an accurate picture of the risk and then work together to ensure the safety of adults at risk is prioritised. The abusive partner should not be informed of any disclosures.

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Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage that is performed under duress and without the full and informed consent or free will of both parties.

There is a clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, sexual financial and emotional pressure. Guidance recommends that cases involving forced marriage are best dealt with by child protection or adult protection specialists.

In a situation where there is concern that an adult at risk is being forced into marriage they do not or cannot consent to, there will be an overlap between action taken under the forced marriage provision and the safeguarding adults process. In this case action will be co-ordinated with the police and other relevant organisations.

Allegations Against Carers who are Relatives of Friends

It is important to remember that adults at risk may be abused by a wide range of people including relatives and family members. It is always essential to remain open minded when responding to allegations and be aware of the potential impact on carers when allegations are subsequently deemed to be unfounded.

In cases where unintentional harm as occurred this may be due to lack of knowledge or due to the fact that the carer's own physical or mental needs make them unable to care adequately for the adult at risk. The carer may also be an adult at risk. In this situation the aim of safeguarding adults work will be to support the carer to provide support and to help make changes in their behaviour in order to decrease the risk of further harm to the person they are caring for. It is important to ensure that the views of the alleged perpetrator are sought and that consideration is given as to their involvement in future care planning if they are to remain the carer.

Abuse of Trust

A relationship of trust in one in which one person is in a position of power or influence over the other person because of their work or the nature of their activity. There is a particular concern when abuse is caused by the actions or omissions of someone who is in a position of power or authority and who uses their position to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of a person at risk who in many cases could be

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dependent on their care. There is always a power imbalance in a relationship of trust.

Where the person who is alleged to have caused harm is in a position of trust with the adult at risk, they may be deterred from making a complaint or taking action out of a sense of loyalty, fear of abandonment or other repercussions.

Where the person who is alleged to have caused the abuse or neglect has a relationship of trust with the adult at risk because they are a member of staff, paid employee, a paid carer, a volunteer or a manager or proprietor of our organisation, we will invoke our disciplinary procedures as well as taking action under safeguarding adults policy and procedures.

If the person alleged to have caused the abuse is a neighbour, a member of the public, a stranger or a person who deliberately targets vulnerable people, in many cases the policy and procedures will be used to ensure that adults at risk receive the services and support they may need.

In all cases, consideration should be given to issues of consent, confidentiality and information sharing.

Roles and Responsibilities

In its broadest terms, safeguarding is everybody's business. Adult abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere and responsibility for dealing with it lies with us all as public, volunteers and employees.

Everyone – all staff and volunteers

The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of the adult at risk.

All staff and volunteers should know about the policy and procedures. All staff and volunteers who have contact with adults at risk have a responsibility to be aware of issues of abuse, neglect or exploitation. All staff and volunteers have a duty to act in a timely manner on any concern or suspicion that an adult who is vulnerable in being, or is at risk of being, abused, neglected or exploited and to ensure that the situation is assessed and investigated.

Staff and volunteers should:

- Be aware that they must call the police and/or ambulance (by calling 999) where appropriate in situations where the abuse of the adult indicates an

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urgent need for medical treatment, or where there is immediate risk of harm indicating urgent action is needed to protect the person

- Be authorised to make a report to the police and if a crime has been committed, ensure action is taken to preserve evidence. This could be where there has been a physical or sexual assault, especially if the suspect is still at the scene.
- Share concern with colleagues and seek advice and support unless colleagues are implicated in the abuse or to do so would cause delay in reporting the concern to a manager
- Know they must inform their line manager. If their line manager is implicated in the abuse then they should inform a more senior manager.
- Know what services are available and how to access help and advice for the adult by contacting Adult Social Care Direct on 0191 433 7033.
- Know how and where to make a direct referral to Adult Social Care Direct where speaking to a manager would cause delay.
- Know that they must make a clear factual record of their concern and the action taken.

Day Centre Coordinators should:

- Ensure the alleged victim is made safe
- Ensure that any staff or volunteer who may have caused harm is not in contact with service users and others who may be at risk, for example, whistleblowers
- Ensure that appropriate information is provided in a timely way
- Make staff aware of their duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse to their line manager, or if the line manager is implicated, to another responsible person or to the local authority
- Operate safe recruitment practices and routinely take up and check references (see recruitment policy from page 17 of this document).
- Adhere to and operate within their own organisations' 'whistle blowing' policy and support staff who raise concerns.

Managers must fulfil their legal obligations under the Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service where appropriate. Managers have responsibility for making checks on and referring staff and volunteers who have been found to have harmed and adults at risk or vulnerable adult at risk of harm.

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Managers in health settings should report concerns as a serious incident in line with procedures, and a decision must be made whether the circumstances meet the criteria for referral to the Safeguarding Adults process in line with the policy and procedures.

Responsibilities to those who are alleged to have caused the harm

Adults who are alleged to have abused an adult at risk have the right to be assumed innocent until the allegations against them are proven on the evidence. Whether they are a member of staff, a volunteer, a relative, a carer or another service user they also have the right to be treated fairly and their confidentiality respected.

Arrangements for Managing Safeguarding Adults

Information Sharing

Effective and structured sharing of information between partners has the ability to inform planning, allow for an understanding of trends and patterns of activity to be developed, to respond to emergencies and disasters appropriately, and to intervene and support the lives and safety of individuals, families and communities.

In a world of increased information gathering and recording, individuals and organisations have a moral and statutory responsibility to share information carefully and responsibly.

Organisations involved in providing services to the public have a legal responsibility to ensure that their use of personal information is lawful, properly controlled and that an individual's rights are respected. This must however be balanced with the need to share information to provide safe quality services, to protect individuals and the wider public and the protection of those individual's confidentiality.

Uncertainty over the legal position may lead to information not being readily available to those who have a genuine need to know in order for them to do their job properly and provide the services required to safeguard adults at risk.

Whistle Blowing Guidance

It is the legal duty of every employee that works with adults at risk to report potential or actual abuse. This does not make the process comfortable or easy. Strong group cultures may be acting against the whistleblower. Therefore it is the responsibility of the employer to promote openness among staff and promote this process, taking the lead in giving clear priority to the protection of adults at risk.

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Processes which empower staff to voice concerns about the practice they encounter is in place and can be found within the Code of Conduct and Whistle Blowing policies. Any complaints received from any source will be handled in line with the complaints procedure and our policies and procedures regarding record keeping and confidentiality can be referred to for additional guidance on recording and storage of records.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments carried out also include assessment of risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation of people using the services. Assessment of risk is ongoing and reviewed regularly so that adjustments can be made in response to changes in levels and nature of risk. The primary aim of a safeguarding adults risk assessment is to assess:-

- Current risk that people face
- Potential risks they and other adults may face

A safeguarding adults risk assessment will determine:

- What the actual risks are – the harm that has been or may be caused and the level of severity of that harm and the views and wishes of the adult at risk
- The person's ability to protect themselves
- Who or what is causing the harm
- Factors that contribute to the risk (person, environmental etc)
- Relationships that result in increased or decreased risk
- The risk of future harm from the same source

A plan to manage the identified risk and to put in place protection measures will include:-

- What action must be taken immediately to protect the person at risk
- What needs to be in place to meet the need for an interim protection plan
- What measures need to be taken to address risks that are caused by the setting which is providing care to the person at risk
- What needs to be put in place to meet the ongoing support needs of the person at risk

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Section 2 – Procedures

Introduction

The six key stages of the safeguarding adults process are as follows:

1. Alert
2. Referral decision
3. Strategy
4. Case conference
5. Review
6. Quality assurance

Foundations Furniture are part of the alerting process.

Stage	Actions for Consideration	Responsibility	Timescale
Stage 1 Alert Raise an alert via Adult Social Care Direct on 0191 433 7033 or by calling 999 if an emergency	• Act to protect adult at risk • Deal with immediate needs • Report to relevant manager • Consider reporting to police, if a crime • Gather initial information to clarify facts • Record • Raise alert via Adult Social Care Direct on 0191 433 7033 Take any immediate action to identify and address the risk.	Everyone with a duty of care within the organisation	Immediate, if emergency Or Within same working day (this should be within four hours

Alerting refers to the duty of all staff and volunteers of any service involved with adults at risk to raise a safeguarding alert with Adult Social Care Direct at Gateshead Council. An alert will place the information about the concern in a multiagency context on Gateshead Council's Care First System.

Where possible, report via line management or a nominated safeguarding adults lead. This person will then be responsible for raising the alert with Adult Social Care Direct, Gateshead Council. In emergencies or when a line manager or nominated

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safeguarding adults lead is unavailable, staff or volunteers should raise the alert and follow the procedures outlined below:

Taking Immediate Action

Make an immediate evaluation of the risk and take steps to ensure that the adult is in no immediate danger:

- Where appropriate, dial 999 for an ambulance if there is need for emergency medical treatment
- Consider contacting the police if a crime has been or may have been committed
- Do not disturb or move articles that could be used in evidence, and secure the scene, for example by locking the door to a room
- If possible, make sure that the other service users are not at risk

Responding to an Adult at Risk who is Making a Disclosure

- Assure them that you are taking them seriously
- Listen carefully to what they are telling you, stay calm, get as clear a picture as you can, but avoid asking too many questions at this stage
- Do not give promised of complete confidentiality
- Explain that you have a duty to tell your manager or other designated person, and that their concerns may be shared with others who could have a part to play in protecting them
- Reassure them that they will be involved in decisions about what will happen
- Explain that you will try to take steps to protect them from further abuse or neglect
- If they have specific communication needs, provide support and information in a way that is most appropriate for them
- Do not be judgemental or jump to conclusions

Consider the Alleged Perpetrator

If the Alleged Perpetrator is an Employee

- Consider liaison with the police regarding the management of risks involved
- An immediate decision has to be made based on the organisations procedures for suspensions of staff and/or removal to another area of work. The employee has a right to know in broad terms what allegations or concerns have been made about them

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- If no reasonable alternative can be found, suspension can be the only option, but lengthy suspensions during investigations should be reviewed to see if an alternative is possible where the investigation can allow this.
- Ensure that any staff or volunteer who has caused risk or harm is not in contact with service users and others who may be at risk, for example, whistle blowers.
- Consider whether any allegations against employees in their work situation may place their family members, dependents or the public at risk. In such cases, referrals must be made to relevant organisations/services and consideration of referral to the police where there is an imminent risk of harm.

If the Alleged Perpetrator is a Service User

- Consider liaison with the police regarding the management of risks involved
- If the person causing harm is another service users, action taken could include removing them from contact with the adult at risk. In this situation, arrangements must be put in place to ensure that the needs of the person causing harm are also met.

Informing a Manager

- Inform you line manager immediately
- If you are concerned that a member of staff has abused an adult at risk, you have a duty to report these concerns. You must inform your line manager.
- If you are concerned that your line manager has abused an adult at risk, you must inform a senior manager in your organisation or another designated manager for safeguarding adults
- If you are concerned that an adult at risk may have abused another adult at risk, inform your line manager.

Making a record

It is vital that a written record of any incident or allegation of crime is made as soon as possible after the information is obtained, and kept by the person raising the concern.

Written records must reflect as accurately as possible what was said and done by the people initially involved in the incident either as a victim, suspect or potential witness. The notes must be kept as safe as it may be necessary to make records available as evidence to disclose them to a court.

You must make sure your record includes:

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- Date and time of the incident
- Exactly what the adult at risk said, using their own account about the abuse and how it occurred or exactly what has been reported to you
- Appearance and behaviour of the adult at risk
- Any injuries observed
- Name and signature of the person making the record
- If you witnessed the incident, write down exactly what you saw.

The record should be factual. However, if the record does contain your opinion or an assessment, it should be clearly stated as such and be backed up by factual evidence.

Information from another person should be clearly attributed to them.

Policy Links: Lone Working, Risk Assessment, Health and Safety and Gateshead Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults from Abuse Policy and Procedures.

Latest Policy Review: August 2025

Next Review Date: August 2026

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Recruitment and Selection Policy

Introduction

Recruiting and selecting the right people is of paramount importance to the continued success of Foundations Furniture. This Recruitment and Selection Policy sets out how to ensure, as far as possible, that the best people are recruited on merit and that the recruitment process is free from bias and discrimination.

The Equality Act 2010 places a responsibility on organisations to monitor, amongst other things, their recruitment processes to ensure they are not discriminatory.

Following the policy, in addition to fulfilling employment law requirements, Foundations Furniture will also ensure that it continues to uphold its commitment to equal opportunity.

1. Introduction

This policy is designed to assist recruitment and select the best candidate for a vacancy. In doing so it also enables us to take account of:

- FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE's equal opportunities policy
- Legislation including the Equality Act 2010,and the Data Protection Act 1998,
- Requirements for compliance with UK Immigration legislation

It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to ensure that this policy is carefully followed within their department/division. All members of staff should be made aware of the obligation to familiarise themselves with and follow this policy.

Principles

Appointments must be based on merit. Principles including fairness, credibility and equal employment opportunity underpin recruitment and selection at FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE.

2 Scope

Normally appointments must be made in accordance with this policy and must, therefore, be subject to advertisement and interview. Requests to waive the requirement to advertise an appointment in exceptional circumstances may be approved as outlined below under Advert Waivers.

When employing temporary or casual staff on a short-term basis the principles of good practice outlined in this policy should be followed. In summary these are that

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details of a post must be publicised, selection must be on the basis of appropriate criteria and merit, a record of the process and decision must be kept.

Financial approval from the board of directors/trustees for the establishment of a new post or the filling of a vacancy must be obtained before recruitment commences.

New Jobs and Job Vacancies

The occurrence of a vacancy is an opportunity to review the necessity for the post and its duties, responsibilities and grade.

When a vacancy arises, consideration must be given to staff whose posts are being made redundant and for whom redeployment is being sought. Redeployees should meet the essential criteria for the post (or can achieve this with minimal training) but do not need to meet the desirable criteria. If there is insufficient information on a record but there is sufficient evidence that a redeployee may be suitable for the role, the Project Manager should send them the job description and person specification, asking whether they are interested in the role and would like to provide further evidence of their suitability via email; alternatively they may be invited directly to a placement interview. If a redeployee meets all the essential criteria, they must be invited to a placement interview. Recruiting a redeployee can reduce both the time and the cost incurred in filling a vacancy.

Job Description (details of the role)

A job description is a key document in the recruitment process, and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the process. It should clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job and must include:

- the job title (which must be sex and age neutral)
- the location of the job i.e. department/faculty/division/research group
- grade of the post
- the post to whom the postholder is responsible
- any posts reporting to the postholder
- main purpose of the job
- main duties and responsibilities
- any special working conditions (e.g., unsocial or shift working patterns etc)

Items that should be included in job descriptions are:

- A note that indicates that, as duties and responsibilities change, the job description will be reviewed and amended in consultation with the postholder
- An indication that the postholder will carry out any other duties as are within the scope, spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the line manager or Project Manager

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- A statement that the postholder will actively follow FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE policies including Equal Opportunities policies
- An indication that the postholder will maintain an awareness and observation of Fire and Health & Safety Regulations

The language in job descriptions should:

- Avoid jargon and unexplained acronyms and abbreviations
- Be readily understandable to potential applicants for the post
- Avoid ambiguity about responsibilities and be clear about the postholder's accountability for resources, staff, etc.
- Use inclusive language

Person Specification

The person specification is of equal importance to the job description and informs the selection decision. The person specification details the skills, experience, abilities and expertise that are required to do the job. It should be drawn up after the job description and, with the job description, should inform the content of the advert. The person specification should be specific, related to the job, and not unnecessarily restrictive - for example only qualifications strictly needed to do the job should be specified. The inclusion of criteria that cannot be justified as essential for the performance of the job may be deemed discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010, if these impact disproportionately to the disadvantage of specific groups.

The person specification must form part of the further particulars of a vacancy along with the job description in order that applicants have a full picture of what the job entails. The person specification enables potential applicants to make an informed decision about whether to apply and those who do apply, to give sufficient relevant detail of their skills and experience in their application. The person specification forms the basis of the selection decision and enables the selection panel to ensure objectivity in their selection.

Elements of the Person Specification

The person specification details the:

- knowledge (including necessary qualifications)
- skills and abilities
- experience
- aptitudes

required to do the job, specifying which are essential and which are desirable; these may be different from the attributes of the previous postholder.

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Essential criteria are those without which an appointee would be unable to adequately perform the job; Desirable criteria are those that may enable the candidate to perform better or require a shorter familiarisation period.

Criteria which are subjective and for which little evidence is likely to be obtained through the selection process should be avoided (for example, 'a flexible approach' is often too vague to be of any help in the selection process).

Knowledge can be derived in a number of ways, for example through education, training, or experience.

For some jobs a particular qualification(s) may be essential, while for others no single qualification may be appropriate and a particular type of experience may be just as relevant as a formal qualification. Where qualifications are deemed essential these should reflect the minimum requirements necessary to carry out the job to an acceptable standard. UK qualifications should be stated but (other than for required membership of a UK professional body) it should be made clear that overseas equivalents will be accepted.

Candidates will increasingly come forward with National Qualification Framework qualifications (NQFs - previously NVQs). These qualifications recognise the achievement of employment-led standards of competence.

The type of experience required of applicants should be specified; but stipulating the length of experience must be avoided unless it can be objectively justified because the quality of experience is more important than its length and the Equality Act make such stipulation unlawful unless objectively justified. It is also important to remember that experience is sometimes transferable from one area of work to another, in which case specifying skills is likely to be more effective than specifying a narrow definition of experience.

Required abilities should be expressed in terms of the standards required, not just in terms of the task to be undertaken. For example, avoid statements such as 'Ability to write reports'; instead, indicate the expected standard, such as 'Ability to write detailed financial reports that encompass departmental budgeting, annual variances, and forecasting'.

Extreme care must be taken if physical requirements are specified. The Equality Act 2010 requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to a workplace or the way a job is carried out to make them suitable for disabled people. It is therefore important that any physical requirement is stated in terms of the job that needs to be done. For example a job may require that the appointee 'must be able to travel to a number of different locations on FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE business'. For driving jobs, it will be appropriate to specify the ability to drive.

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Personal qualities may affect the ability of an individual to do the job, but they should not be seen as substitutes for skills.

Details for Applicants

The details of a vacancy or 'further particulars' of a post must include the job description and person specification for the post together with any other important information that a potential applicant needs to decide whether to apply. The purpose of advertising a post is to attract the widest range of high calibre applicants possible and therefore the further particulars sent to or accessed by applicants must give a clear picture of the post, the department, and of FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE as an employer.

Further particulars must include the following where they apply:

- details of the main terms and conditions of employment (including holiday and pension arrangements, working hours, call-out or shift patterns arrangements if appropriate, etc.).
- the Equal Opportunity Policy statement
- guidelines about completing the application form, including the number of referees and whether there is an intention to seek references before interview
- where a CV is required, candidates should be advised that it must include: education history (institution name, start and end dates of courses, qualification gained), details of membership of any professional organisations, details of current or most recent employer (name and address of current organisation, job title, salary and duties), details of previous employment and how the applicants' knowledge, skills, and abilities meet the job requirements;
- where applicable, a statement explaining that only candidates who are shortlisted will be contacted
- an indication of the need for a criminal records check, depending on the post

Publicising the Vacancy

Authorisation needs to be obtained from Project Manager before a role is cleared for advertising, or the Trustees if it is the Project Manager role that is vacant.

Except where approval to waive advertising has been granted all job advertisements must be placed on the appropriate websites and emailed to all existing staff.

This ensures that vacancies are open to external and internal applicants. The only exceptions to this are where an individual is named on a grant application, where restructuring is taking place or where staff are facing redundancy and the HR Division is seeking redeployment for existing staff.

The majority of posts, however, will also be concurrently advertised in other specialist media to maximise the chances of attracting the best candidate. All posts

must be advertised for a minimum of one week to help attract the best pool of applicants up to a total of four weeks.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises that 'word of mouth' recruitment is likely to be indirectly discriminatory in terms of race and/or sex discrimination. It is very important therefore that all posts are advertised as widely as possible in media that reach underrepresented groups and that all applicants are dealt with in the same way and given the same information and opportunity to make an application.

To ensure that applicants are fully informed about the vacancy for which they are applying and to ensure that they provide FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE with all the information we require, adverts must direct applicants to the further particulars, which will provide more information including how to apply.

An advertisement is written from the job description and person specification and should contain the following points:

- FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE name and logo
- title of vacancy
- salary
- brief details of the job
- key details of the person specification
- the necessity of a criminal records check, if required
- duration of the appointment (if fixed term)
- how to access further particulars of the vacancies
- closing date for applications (sufficient time should be allowed to enable applicants to consider the further particulars and make their application)
- where known, date of interview

Permission to fill a post from the Project Manager or Trustees must be obtained before seeking to publicise a vacancy.

Copies of adverts placed in all media should be retained in like with the GDPR policy.

Processing Applications

All staff must be made aware that when dealing with enquiries about vacancies it is unlawful to state or imply that applications from one sex or from a particular racial group or in relation to any other protected characteristic would be preferred and to do so may lead to a complaint of race, sex or other discrimination against FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE.

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Care must also be taken when initiating contacts with applicants that all are treated in the same way, for example with regard to invitations to visit the department, informal meetings to discuss the vacancy, and provision of information.

The confidentiality of applications must be respected by all of those involved in the selection process.

Selecting the Interview Panel

All interviews must be conducted by a panel. The Trustees should select interview panel members prior to the closing date; this allows panel members to assist in the shortlisting process. Familiarity with the vacancy and preparation for the interview is a key to successful interviewing.

Panels must:

- consist of a minimum of three people including the immediate line manager of the vacant post, a colleague who is familiar with the area of work and a third person, preferably from outside the department to balance the panel's perspective.
- declare if they already know a candidate, and the nature of their relationship to them. It is considered a conflict of interest for the panel to consist of a close friend or relative of an interviewee and therefore must be replaced in accordance with the interview panel selection process.
- be willing and able to attend all interviews for the duration of the recruitment process, to maintain consistency and to ensure fair treatment of all candidates.

Single sex panels must be avoided (i.e. all male or all female).

Monitoring

FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE is required by the Equality Act 2010 to monitor the ethnic origin, sex and disability status of applicants for all posts, those shortlisted and appointees. In addition FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE has also decided to monitor the age, sexual orientation and religious belief of applicants. This informs FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE how its Equality and Diversity Strategy is working in practice and whether its recruitment practices are having a discriminatory effect on any particular groups. Applicants will complete equality monitoring information as part of their online application.

Shortlisting

After the closing date has passed the interview panel should assess the applications to determine which applicants are to be called for interview. All applications are assessed using a scoring system. At least two members of the interview panel,

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including the immediate line manager, should undertake the task of shortlisting. Where the panel has an external member, that person should take part in the shortlisting wherever practicable. Shortlisting decisions should be based on evidence that the applicant has met the requirements of the person specification. Shortlisting panel members should avoid dismissing applicants who appear to be over-qualified. Assumptions should not be made about their reasons for applying for the post as they may eliminate an otherwise exemplary candidate.

The original applications for all applicants, together with a written note of reasons for shortlisting or rejecting applicants must be retained for a minimum of 12 months from the date that an appointment decision is notified, in case of complaint to an Employment Tribunal and to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration requirements to keep records for 12 months where a certificate of sponsorship is required.

Arrangements for Interviews

Letters or e-mails to shortlisted candidates should include:

- date, time and place of their interview
- instructions on how to find their way to the interview venue
- a request that they contact the author of the letter/message if they have any particular requirements or to discuss the interview facilities (related to access to the venue or any other need related to a disability).
- if appropriate, details of any test or presentation they will be required to take or anything they should bring with them (e.g., examples of work)
- qualification certificates that are essential to the post

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 makes it an offence to employ anyone who does not have permission to be in, or work in, the UK. To avoid making assumptions about such permission, it is the Department's responsibility to ask all appointees for evidence of eligibility to work in the UK. It is unlawful racial discrimination to carry out checks only on potential employees who by their appearance or accent seem to be other than British. It is therefore a requirement to ask all candidates attending for interview to bring with them evidence of their right to work in the UK.

Departments must take a copy of the original document, sign to confirm they have seen the original and keep on file for 12 months.

It is best practice to write to candidates who have not been shortlisted, but if this is not possible due to limited resources, the further particulars for the post should make clear that after a certain period, if they have not heard from FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE, applicants should consider themselves not to have been shortlisted.

Interviewing

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Interviews should be scheduled as soon after the closing date as reasonably possible, as delays are likely to lead to a loss of candidates.

The structure of interviews should be decided in advance by determining who will chair the panel and what areas of questioning are required to cover all of the elements of the person specification. The question areas to be explored by each panel member should be agreed in advance to avoid overlap or repetition and panels may find it helpful to discuss their expectations of full answers to the questions, prior to the interview. Scoring systems will also be agreed by the panel before interviews and used appropriately for each candidate.

The same areas of questioning should be covered with all candidates and assumptions should not be made regarding the expertise or abilities of candidates because of their employment history. Interview questions should be phrased so that they do not favour any one candidate or group of candidates. Supplementary questions should be used to probe for further information or clarification where answers are incomplete or ambiguous. Care must be taken to avoid questions that could be construed as discriminatory (e.g, questions about personal circumstances that are unrelated to the job). It is, for example, legitimate to ask for confirmation of whether individuals can comply with the working patterns of the post, but not to ask details of their domestic or child care arrangements etc. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to ensure that such questions are not asked.

Staff conducting interviews must be aware that, although questions asked may not in themselves be discriminatory, the interpretation of answers by the panel could exhibit prejudice. For example, if indications of ambition were to be regarded as a worthy characteristic in applicants of one sex or ethnic group but not in another. Information regarding personal circumstances which is offered in a CV or at interview must not be taken into consideration in reaching a selection decision. For example, the fact that a male candidate shares details of his domestic circumstances with the panel but a female candidate chooses not to (or vice versa), should not be taken into account.

Interview panels act for FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE in making selection decisions and are accountable for them. Interview notes must be taken by each panelist to help the panel to make an informed decision based on the content of the interviews. Such notes must relate to how candidates demonstrate their knowledge, skills, experience and abilities in relation to the person specification. The Data Protection Act allows applicants to request disclosure of such notes in the event of a complaint and an Employment Tribunal would expect FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE to have notes of every selection decision. The lack of such notes would seriously impede FOUNDATIONS FURNITURE's ability to contest such a complaint. Obviously any inappropriate or personally derogatory comments contained within the notes could be considered discriminatory and are unacceptable.

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It is good practice to offer internal applicants feedback after interviews and it is Foundations Furniture's policy to respond to requests for feedback from external applicants. Feedback should be specific, relating to the person specification, and honest. In feeding back to candidates it is good practice to balance the applicants' weaknesses with some positive points.

Selection Tests and Presentations

Consideration should be given to using job-related selection tests or asking candidates to give presentations as part of the selection process if there are some elements of the person specification that are difficult to test at interview. If selection tests or presentations are to be used, all candidates should be given the same written information as to how long they will take, the topic area(s) they will cover, and what - if anything - they should prepare in advance. In all cases care should be taken to ensure that job-related tests are well explained in writing for candidates, in plain language, that all candidates are subject to the same tests under exactly the same conditions, (excluding any allowances made as 'reasonable adjustments' to disabled candidates) and that presentation topics do not favour any one candidate. It is very important that selection tests are not unfairly discriminatory.

Making a Decision After Interview

The information obtained in the application, the interview, any selection tests and in references (if obtained prior to interview) will allow candidates to be assessed against the person specification and a selection decision to be made. The Chair of the panel must ensure that a written note of the reasons for selecting the successful candidate and rejecting others is made and placed on the recruitment file, together with the original applications and notes of all panel members, for a minimum of 12 months after the appointment decision has been notified to the candidates.

Positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 can be used to recruit a staff member from an underrepresented group where they score equally. These provisions can be used to support the achievement of Foundations Furniture's Equality targets as stated in Foundations Furniture's Equality and Diversity Strategy .

Interview proceedings are confidential and interviewers are free to divulge to others the decision reached only once the appointee has accepted the post.

If references, or other pre-employment checks, e.g. the right to work, have not been taken up prior Project Manager will not issue a contract to the preferred candidate. Provisional offers may be made, subject to a certificate of sponsorship being issued and entry clearance gained, Criminal Records Bureau check or occupational health clearance, where appropriate.

Where the successful candidate is disabled, reasonable adjustments may need to be considered depending on their disability and in consultation with them. This should

be done as soon as possible after appointment. Foundations Furniture has a duty to consider what reasonable adjustments can be made to working practices, or premises, or to enable access to goods, facilities and services by disabled people.

References

The further particulars for a post should make clear to candidates the number and status of referees required and whether the panel intends to seek references before interview. We currently ask for two references, one from a most recent employer. If no employment history is given, an academic reference must be provided.

References must only be taken up once a preferred candidate is selected. Where an applicant indicates that s/he does not wish his/her current employer to be contacted prior to a provisional offer being made, this should be respected. In most cases references will be requested after a preferred candidate is identified. When requesting a reference at this stage information on the candidate's sickness/unauthorised absence record should be requested.

It is helpful to seek precise information and confirm facts, such as length of employment, relationship of the applicant to the referee, job title, brief details of responsibilities, reasons for leaving, unauthorised absence, attendance including sickness absence, performance, and any other relevant information. It is helpful to the referee to include a copy of the job description and person specification of the post to which you are recruiting. Do not make requests that only elicit generalisations about candidates' attendance, honesty, or subjective information as to the applicant's suitability for the job. The value of unsolicited references submitted by candidates and addressed 'To Whom It May Concern' is very limited and should be disregarded.

Telephone references should be avoided but, where time pressures or the location of referees dictate that this may be appropriate, recruiters should ensure that they are certain as to the identity of the person to whom they are speaking. When conducting telephone references, it is helpful to plan the conversation beforehand and to have a list of questions ready. A file note should be made at the time of the telephone conversation and written confirmation should always be requested.

References are confidential and must be sought 'in confidence'. Any request for disclosure of references must be forwarded to the Project Manager. References should only be used for the purpose for which they were intended and their confidentiality must be maintained. Panel members must return all copies of any references with the application forms and their interview notes to the Project Manager on completion of the recruitment exercise. References must only be kept on the recruitment file and the personal file held by the project manager.

Criminal record checks

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It is Foundations Furniture's policy to require applicants to disclose any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013) as part of their application. The amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975 (2013) provide that certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected' and are not subject to disclosure to employers , and cannot be taken into account. However certain types of posts, particularly those that involve working with children or adults in a vulnerable position or other positions of trust or sensitive areas, are exempt from these provisions, and in these cases all convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warning that will not be filtered in line with the current guidance must be declared.

The Disclosure and Barring Service makes decisions about who will be barred from working with children and vulnerable adults. If a manager believes that the appointee to a vacancy will be working in a 'regulated' position s/he will require an enhanced criminal records check before commencing employment. Applicants must be made aware early in the recruitment process that a criminal records check will be required of the appointee.

Appointees to such positions involving regulated activity must be briefed on their responsibilities towards safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Induction and Probation

It is Foundations Furniture's policy that all staff who are new to Foundations Furniture undergo a planned induction, during which they will be introduced to the main duties and responsibilities of their post. Certain staff are also required to pass a probationary period. Job offers will be made by telephone and probation period will be stated at this time. Probation periods for permanent posts is 13 weeks or 4 weeks for short term employment contracts.

Foundations Furniture will keep candidate records who are not successful for 12 months after the interview and the records of the chosen candidate will remain on their employment records.

Breaches of Policy

Any member of staff with concerns about the application of this policy should raise their concerns in writing with the Project Manager.

Adopted October 2014 and currently reviewed annually.

Policy Links: Lone Working, Risk Assessment, Health and Safety and Gateshead Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults from Abuse Policy and Procedures.

Latest Policy Review: September 2026

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Next Review Date: September 2027

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