

# Guidance Documents for Applicants

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## 1 Background Briefing Paper

### **Vision:**

Our vision is that all children grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

### **Values:**

The values to which we will adhere in fulfilling our vision are that we:

- Recognise and respect people for who they are
- Believe in and defend the rights of the child and equal opportunities for all
- Are caring and supportive
- Act in an open and transparent way
- Work flexibly and are community spirited

Our community services include: Family Support; Early Learning and Childcare; Sessional Childcare in our family play centres; Mobile Crèches in various centres, Out of School Childcare and Rural Money Advice and Family Support Service.

### **Employees:**

Approximately 55 people are employed with us on full time, part time, sessional contracts.

The Registered Office is located in Paisley.

The work is carried out within Stepping Stones for Families Policies and Procedures. Our Safer Recruitment practice helps to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults have confidence in our employment procedures.

## **Current Services:**

### **Glasgow:**

Possilpark Flexible Childcare:

- Ardoch Early Learning and Childcare Centre
- Possilpark Child and Family Centre
- Out of School Care/ Holiday & Weekend Childcare

Thistle Early Learning and Childcare Centre (Blairtummock - Greater Easterhouse)

Glasgow Mobile Crèche Service

Power of Play (Townhead)

### **South Ayrshire:**

Carrick Money Advice includes Family Support, Financial Literacy in Schools and community.

### **Renfrewshire:**

Registered Office

## **Real Living Wage Employer:**

Stepping Stones for Families is an accredited real Living Wage Employer.

## **Quality Standards:**

Our childcare services are regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate with grades of Very Good during unannounced Inspections.

Stepping Stones for Families was awarded the SQA Lifelong Learning Centre of the year award in 2007; Healthy Working Lives recognition from 2012; Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce Social Enterprise of the Year 2011, Chartered Faculty of Public Health Scotland Award 2018 and Investors in People recognition from 2000 with Platinum standard in 2022.

## **Structure:**

Stepping Stones for Families is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the membership. The Board reports annually to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

Day to day management of the organisation is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.

## 2 Child Protection Statement

Stepping Stones for Families recognises that Parents / Carers are often under pressure in different ways which can make it hard to care for their children as well as they would like. Parents / Carers often have little control over matters which create a safe environment for their children.

If during the course of our work, we come across a child who we think is being, or has been, harmed, we will try and find out more about the situation by talking to parents and other people who play a part in the child's life unless we believe that this would cause harm to the child.

Stepping Stones for Families is committed to protecting children and recognises the risk of putting adults and children together. In this respect, we have a Whistleblowing Policy which encourages staff to report any concerns they may have about the behaviour / conduct of a colleague.

If we are concerned that the child is being, or has been, harmed we have to notify the Social Work Department, and they will investigate the situation and decide what will happen next.

If we have been working with the family, we will continue to support them throughout any investigation (if they want us to).

We will deal with information about families in strict confidence unless our duties under child protection require us to make a referral to the Social Work and / or Police.

Being a Parent / Carer can be a difficult job and many parents struggle to cope at times. We would like parents to talk to us if they feel that they are finding it hard to cope with their children. We are here to help.

*Stepping Stones for Families believes that by working together with parents and local people we can help to keep children safe.*

## 3 Protection of Vulnerable Adults Statement for Service Users

*“Our vision is that all children and young people have an enjoyable life in a healthy, fair and safe environment where they are respected and supported to achieve their full potential”*

Stepping Stones for Families protection of children and young people and protection of vulnerable adults is provided within the relevant legislation. On occasion our work with vulnerable children will require us to work alongside parents who might be described as vulnerable.

The fact that the protection of Vulnerable Adults and Children is a shared responsibility is reflected within our procedures and each employee and volunteer should be clear as to their responsibilities with respect to reporting abuse and protecting actual or potential victims.

Our Vulnerable Adults policies and procedures provide a framework for staff where there might be concerns about someone being vulnerable or the subject of abuse.

If, during the course of our work, we come across a situation where we think a vulnerable person adult or child is being, or has been, abused, we will try and find out more about the situation by talking to parents/carers and other people who play a part in the child's/adult's life, unless we believe that this would cause harm to the child.

Stepping Stones for Families is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults and in this respect we have a Whistleblowing Policy which encourages staff to report any concerns they may have about the behaviour / conduct of a colleague.

If we are concerned that the child/vulnerable adult is being, or has been, abused we will notify the Social Services, and they will investigate the situation and decide what will happen next.

If we have been working with the family, we will continue to support them throughout any investigation (if they want us to).

We will deal with information about families in strict confidence unless our legislative duties require us to make a referral to Social Services and/or Police.

We recognise that caring for a child/vulnerable adult can be a difficult job and many parents/carers struggle to cope at times. We are here to help.

Stepping Stones for Families believes that by working in partnership with service users and relevant agencies we can help to keep children and vulnerable adults safe.

## **4 Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders**

### **Protecting the Vulnerable by Safer Recruitment**

Part V of the Police Act 1997 is aimed at helping employers and other organisations assess the suitability of applicants for particular posts and to make safer recruitment decisions in relation to positions of trust by widening access to criminal record information. To this end, the Act provides for the issue of criminal conviction certificates, criminal record certificates, and enhanced criminal record certificates. In Scotland, these certificates will be issued by Disclosure Scotland. In practice, the certificates will be known as PVG's, Basic, Standard and Enhanced Disclosures.

The Act also provides for a Code of Practice to be published by Ministers governing the use of all information issued in respect of PVG's, Standard and Enhanced Disclosures. The Code requires all recipients of such Disclosure information to comply with the Code and to use that information properly and fairly. Where conviction or other information is revealed as part of the Disclosure process, that information must not be used to unfairly discriminate against individuals when considering them for positions.

Employers and others who make use of the Disclosure scheme are expected to have a written policy on the recruitment of such individuals, which can be given to applicants for positions where a Disclosure is requested, and to ensure that anybody or individual, at whose request applications for PVG's, Standard and Enhanced Disclosures are countersigned, has such a written policy.

## Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

- 1 Stepping Stones for Families complies fully with the Code of Practice, issued by Scottish Ministers, in connection with the use of information provided to registered persons and other recipients of information by Disclosure Scotland under Part V of the Police Act 1997, for the purposes of assessing applicants' suitability for positions of trust. We undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not to discriminate unfairly against the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
- 2 This written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.
- 3 We are committed to equality of opportunity, to following practices, and to providing a service which is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. We ensure that no applicant or member of staff is subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents or offending background, or is disadvantaged by any condition which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.
- 4 Stepping Stones for Families actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. The selection of candidates for interview will be based on skills, qualifications and experience.
- 5 We will request a PVG, Standard or Enhanced Disclosure only where this is considered proportionate and relevant to the particular position. This will be based on a thorough risk assessment of that position. Where a Disclosure is deemed necessary for a post or position, all applications forms, job adverts, careers literature, website, and any other appropriate literature will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- 6 Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, Stepping Stones for Families will encourage all applicants selected for interview to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We ask that this information be sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within Stepping Stones for Families and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- 7 In line with the changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Updated 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015), Stepping Stones for Families will only ask about convictions which are defined as "unspent" and "spent" in terms of that Act.

*Note: If you are not sure about spent and unspent convictions go to Disclosure Scotland website ([www.disclosurescotland.co.uk](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk)) or phone 0870-609-6006.*

- 8 At interview, or under separate discussion, we undertake to ensure an open and measured discussion on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be considered

relevant for the position concerned. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

- 9 We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the subject of that Disclosure before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.
- 10 We ensure that all those in Stepping Stones for Families who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to employment of ex-offenders (e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).
- 11 We undertake to make every subject of a Disclosure aware of the existence of the Code of Practice, and to make a copy available on request.

**Having a criminal record will not necessarily debar an individual from working with Stepping Stones for Families. This will depend on the nature of the position, together with the circumstances and background of their offence.**

## 5 Disclosure of Previous Convictions Guidelines

### Notes to Applicants

As part of our Safer Recruitment procedures we require the applicant to disclose information about all convictions, “spent” and “unspent”, in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (updated September 10<sup>th</sup> 2015). A PVG’s and Enhanced Disclosure’s may also include relevant non-conviction information concerning any involvement with the police an individual may have had.

The procedure for applicants to disclose previous convictions is as follows:

- All short listed applicants will be asked to complete Rehabilitation of Offenders form giving details of and circumstances surrounding any “spent” or “unspent” convictions in line with the changes to the Act on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015. These forms will be sent out with invitations to interview. Please complete the form and hand it to an authorised person at the interview. The form will be kept in a sealed envelope and only opened by a person registered with Disclosure Scotland.
- This form is confidential and will only be seen by Managers registered with Disclosure Scotland.
- For short-listed applicants who are unsuccessful the form will be destroyed by shredding
- The successful applicant will be asked to complete a Disclosure form as soon as possible after being provisionally offered the post.

- When this Disclosure is returned it will be compared to information provided by the candidate in the Rehabilitation of Offenders form.
- If there is any discrepancy between the two, we will endeavour to discuss this with the candidate. However, this may result in the offer of contract being withdrawn or the contract terminated.

Please also refer to the enclosed Stepping Stones for Families Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.

## 6 Equality Policy

### Policy Statement

- (i) Stepping Stones for Families recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the organisation and its workers to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of Stepping Stones for Families to ensure that no worker or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- (ii) Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and each worker feels respected and able to give of their best.
- (iii) We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment.
- (iv) All workers, whether part-time, full-time, temporary or volunteers, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All workers will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of Stepping Stones for Families.
- (v) Our workers will not discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customers or people who access our services because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation in the provision of Stepping Stones for Families goods and services.
- (vi) This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, full account will be taken of any guidance or Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, any Government Departments or any other statutory bodies.



## **Our Commitment**

- (i) To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our workers are recognised and valued.
- (ii) Every worker is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- (iii) Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all workers.
- (iv) To promote equality in the workplace which we believe is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- (v) We will review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- (vi) Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- (vii) This policy is fully supported by senior management and Board Members and has been agreed with workers through Stepping Stones for Families consultation process.
- (viii) The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually

## **Responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of Management**

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Chief Executive. Managers will ensure that they and their workers operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination. Each manager will ensure that:

- (i) All their workers are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy;
- (ii) Grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible;
- (iii) Proper records are maintained.

Head Office will be responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy in respect of workers and job applicants.



## **Responsibilities of Workers**

Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all workers and the attitudes of workers are crucial to the successful operation of fair employment practices. In particular, all workers should:

- (i) Comply with the policy and arrangements;
- (ii) Not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
- (iii) Not victimise, harass or intimidate other workers or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics.
- (iv) Ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- (v) Inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

## **Third Parties**

- (i) Third-party harassment occurs where a Stepping Stones for Families worker is harassed, and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties such as people who access our services. Stepping Stones for Families will not tolerate such actions against its workers, and the workers concerned should inform their manager at once that this has occurred. Stepping Stones for Families will fully investigate and take all reasonable steps to ensure such harassment does not happen again.

## **Related Policies and Arrangements**

- (i) All employment policies and arrangements have a bearing on equality of opportunity. Stepping Stones for Families policies will be reviewed regularly and any discriminatory elements removed.

## **Rights of Disabled People**

Stepping Stones for Families attaches particular importance to the needs of disabled people.

Under the terms of this policy, managers are required to:

- (i) Make reasonable adjustment to maintain the services of an employee who becomes disabled, for example; training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: the organisation is expected to seek advice and guidance from external agencies to maintain disabled people in employment);
- (ii) Include disabled people in training/development programmes;

- (iii) Give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their particular aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

## **Equality Training**

- (i) A series of regular briefing sessions will be held for workers on equality issues. These will be repeated as necessary. Equality information is also included in induction programmes.
- (ii) Training will be provided for managers on this policy and the associated arrangements. All managers who have an involvement in the recruitment and selection process will receive appropriate training.

## **Monitoring**

- (i) Stepping Stones for Families deems it appropriate to state its intention not to discriminate and assumes that this will be translated into practice consistently across the organisation as a whole. Accordingly, a monitoring system will be introduced to measure the effectiveness of the policy and arrangements.

The system will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on workers by age, gender, ethnic origin, disability, grade and length of service in current grade and held in an anonymised format.

- (ii) There will also be regular assessments to measure the extent to which recruitment to first appointment, internal promotion and access to training/development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all groups.
- (iii) We will maintain information on workers who have been involved in certain key policies: Disciplinary, Grievance and Bullying & Harassment.
- (iv) Where appropriate equality impact assessments will be carried out on the results of monitoring to ascertain the effect of Stepping Stones for Families policies and our services / products may have on those who experience them.
- (v) The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose.
- (vi) If monitoring shows that Stepping Stones for Families is not representative, or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the organisation, then an action plan will be developed to address these issues. This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, Stepping Stones for Families policies and practices.

## Grievance/Discipline

- (i) Workers have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation via the Stepping Stones for Families Grievance Procedures.
- (ii) Discrimination and victimisation will be treated as disciplinary offences and they will be dealt with under the Stepping Stones for Families Disciplinary Procedure.

## 7 Right to Work in the UK Check Policy

*Section 15 to 25 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006) deals with preventing illegal working in the UK; under Section 15 of the Act an employer may be liable for a civil penalty if they employ someone who does not have the right to undertake the work in question.*

As an organisation we have duty under the act to prevent illegal working in the UK by carrying out prescribed document checks on **all potential workers** before employing them to ensure they are lawfully allowed to work. These checks will be repeated in respect of those who have time-limited permission to work in the UK

The checking of a person's documents to determine if they have the right to carry out the type of work we are offering comprises three key steps;

- 1 Potential workers are asked to bring in original documents
- 2 The documents are checked in the presence of the holder
- 3 A clear copy is made and retained and a record of the date of the check is made.

This information is confidential and the checks will only be carried by Authorised Managers.

If the worker is employed the copies will be retained in a sealed envelope in the workers' personnel file in the Head Office.

**Note: Stepping Stones for Families will follow 'An employer's guide to acceptable right to work documents 2019' issued by the Home Office**

## 8 Review

The effectiveness of these Guidance Papers and associated arrangement will be reviewed annually under the direct supervision of the Chief Executive.

Signed: 

Position: CEO

Latest Review Date: March 2023

Next Review Date: March 2024