Competency interview questions to address suitable personal behaviours for roles working with children (including safeguarding children and young people)

These are based on examples of questions and indicators prepared for training purposes by one local authority (Buckinghamshire). These are to provide an illustration rather than to provide standard interview questions for ongoing use.

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| **Positive indicators** | **Personal competencies** | **Negative indicators** |
| Convincing responses based on balanced understanding of self and circumstance.  Has a realistic knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses.  Examples of having considered/tried other options and alternatives.  A realistic appreciation of the challenges involved in working with children.  Evidence of others having supported and encouraged based on observation of personal talent. | **1. Motivations for working with children**  Self-awareness/knowledge and understanding of self, interconnection between self and professional role.  Example questions:   * What do you feel are the main drivers that led you to want to work with children? * How do you motivate young people? * What has working with young   people, to date, taught you about yourself? | Unconvincing responses based on whimsical examples. Not self-aware, don’t see themselves as others do.  Driven by personal needs not needs of others.  Not realistic about personal strengths and weaknesses.  Unrealistic impression of what working with children is really like; idealisation of children.  Failure to consider other alternatives.  Pushed by others, or forced by circumstance, to do something they don’t appear to have personally thought through. |

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| **Positive indicators** | **Personal competencies** | **Negative indicators** |
| Behaves consistently and appropriately under pressure or in a position of authority.  Has control over emotions with adults and children.  Demonstrates a good understanding of boundaries between children and adults.  Understands position of power and how to seek help in difficult circumstances. | **2. Emotional maturity and resilience** Consistency under pressure, ability to use authority and respond appropriately, ability to seek assistance/support where necessary.  Example questions:   * Tell me about a time when you have been working with children when your authority was seriously challenged. How did you react? What strategies did you employ to bring things back on course? How did you manage the situation? * Tell me about a person you have had particular difficulty dealing with. What made it difficult? How did you manage the situation? | Inappropriate responses when under pressure or when in a position of power.  Inconsistent responses.  Handles conflict badly.  Fails to control temper/emotions with children and or adults.  Implies that adults and children are equal.  Doesn’t seek help when needed.  Fails to go to others for advice. |

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| **Positive indicators** | **Personal competencies** | **Negative indicators** |
| Demonstrates a balanced understanding of rights and wrongs.  Puts the child first. Alive to the realities of abuse.  Understands how and why children may be vulnerable  Shows a contemplative approach, drawing on personal experiences and lessons from others.  Builds values and judgments based on new information.  Shows an appreciation of safeguarding issues and an ability to contribute towards a protective environment.  Shows respect for others’ feelings, views and circumstances  Demonstrates a commitment to FBV and is able to relate this to the formal and informal curriculum | **3. Values and ethics** Ability to build and sustain professional standards and relationships, ability to understand and respect other people’s opinions, ability to contribute towards creating a safe and protective environment.  Example questions:   * What are your attitudes to child protection? How have these developed over time? * What are your feelings about children who make allegations against staff? * How do you feel when someone holds an opinion that differs from your own? How do you behave in this situation? * Have you ever had concerns about a colleague? How did you deal with this? * What does ‘promoting fundamental British values’ mean to you? | Extreme opinions that don’t account for the views/feelings of others.  Doesn’t show balance in opinion.  Doesn’t build on new information or understanding.  Opinions harden/become dogged.  Doesn’t show a full or rounded appreciation of safeguarding issues.  Dismissive of, or underplays, the risks.  Consistently puts the blame and responsibility for child protection elsewhere.  Idealises children  Fails to believe in suspicions/reports of abuse  Dismissive of FBV or expresses views that undermine these |

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| **Positive indicators** | **Sample questions to test for safeguarding knowledge and understanding** (pick one or two – not all) | **Negative indicators** |
| Proactive and has personally taken actions to improve safeguarding culture.  Has personal experience of having appropriately dealt with a challenging safeguarding issue.  Personally committed towards making improvements. Sees it as part of their job.  Prepared to challenge others in the workplace to make tangible improvements to safeguarding.  Prepared to tackle difficult issues and confront individuals if necessary in order to promote best practice.  Shows a good understanding of the issues. Up to date with events and legislation. Knows about test cases. | * Tell us about what you have done in the   last 12 months to actually improve child protection in the workplace. How did this action arise?  Follow up with: Who did you talk to? What were the results?   * What is the safeguarding policy in your workplace?   Follow up with: How is it monitored? What steps have you taken to improve things?   * Give me an example of when you have had safeguarding concerns about a child.   Follow up with: How did it arise? Who did you speak to? What actions did you take?   * Tell us about a situation where you felt you fell short of safeguarding standard.   Follow up with: How did it arise? Who did you speak to? What actions did you take?   * Have you ever had to challenge the views of someone more senior than yourself in relation to safeguarding concerns?   Follow up with: What were the circumstances? How did you go about it? What was the outcome? | No evidence of having taken steps in own right to make improvements.  Passive approach to safeguarding issues.  Reluctance to challenge people/systems/processes to make things better.  No real experience of handling safeguarding issues. Naïve approach.  Sees it as someone else’s job and/or responsibility.  Not well versed or clear in understanding of the issues/sensitivities.  Intolerant of the bureaucracy around safeguarding.  Shows a tendency to take inappropriate chances/risks in area of safeguarding. |