



25. Safer Recruitment Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

Amicus takes very seriously our commitment to safeguarding children and we have a rigorous safer recruiting process in place. All potential candidates regardless of their role go through the process below. Teachers applying for a post with Amicus in addition undergo Prohibition Order Checks to ensure that they are not prohibited from Teaching.

Staff selection

All those applying for posts at Amicus will be sent an application form, a job description and a person specification and the Therapeutic Community Practitioner Competencies. At Amicus we only accept fully completed application forms for the job roles and do not accept CVs from applicants. For many of the roles at Amicus we ask staff to commit to the work and role for a minimum of 2 years, so as to provide continuity and an experience of stable relationships for the children from the adults that look after them. This is explained in the job description and person specification. All questions in the application forms must be answered and in particular, all previous employment or studies since leaving secondary school must be listed and any gaps explained fully and checked.

After a set deadline all applications will be considered by the recruitment panel consisting of at least one person who has been trained in Safer Recruitment.

Candidates will be shortlisted on how well they meet the criteria in the Person Specification for the post. Short listed candidates will then have online searches undertaken to identify their/ any online presence and will then be sent a letter inviting them to attend an interview, giving them the date and time of their interview.

All candidates who are successful at the interviews come and do a shadow shift where they will be given time to come and visit the home to meet the staff team and the children, as well as gain some experience of the reality of working life at Amicus. They will be observed during this period. It will also give the invaluable opportunity of hearing the feelings of the children and staff towards the candidates. The views of the children and staff on the person working the shadow shift are recorded on a form and then fed back to the recruitment panel. The candidates will be supervised at ALL times and will not be left alone with the children at any point during the shadow shift. The ID of applicants attending the interview and shadow shift will be checked prior to this process commencing so we can ensure they are who they say they are- this requires photo ID verification.

References from at least two sources will be asked for before the interview day, one of these will be their present/last employers and candidates will be asked to bring documentary evidence of their relevant qualifications and training on the day of interview. References will be verbally verified and records of this clearly evidenced. Full

employment history will be checked and employment in social care and education roles verified and reasons for leaving explored and verified by the applicant and previous employer. The organisations / companies of previous employment will be verified through Companies House records and this search evidenced.

The content of the interviews will vary according to the post being interviewed for, but the principles will remain the same. (Copies of the previous interviews, including the questions and interviewers notes are kept on file in the main office and will be available for inspection). All candidates for a post will attend the same interviews.

The interview will consist of introductions, acknowledgement of the role applying for and explanation of the layout of the interview. The questions asked to the applicant are rigorous and are linked to the role, safeguarding and therapeutic ethos of Amicus. Each candidate will be asked the same questions but maybe asked supplementary questions in relation to their answers and what they submitted on their application form. At the end of the interview, the candidate will have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

If the candidate has been successful at this interview, they will then be invited back to attend an individual Warner (safeguarding) Interview. This interview is carried out by a manager/ delegated person who is trained in Safer Recruitment. The Warner Interview explores the candidate's motives for working with children, their values and behaviours, emotional resilience, ability to cope with stress, deal with anger and to form appropriate professional relationships. In the Warner Interview the applicant will also be asked about any disclosures or disciplinary action against them and if so then this will be discussed further. Gaps in employment will also be checked and queried. Applicants will also be asked about disclosure by association – as to whether they reside with anyone to their knowledge who has been alleged or convicted of safeguarding concerns or offences. They will also be asked to sign a declaration to confirm this.

All candidates will be informed within forty eight hours whether they have been successful or not and feedback given. Unsuccessful candidates who are still deemed able successfully to fill the post will be given the option of having their application kept on file for future possible posts.

Successful candidates will then be given a letter regarding an Offer of Employment, which confirms the role that they would be employed in and the salary, hours and that they would be contracted to. It is made clear that this offer is pending satisfactory references and DBS check (and prohibition order check for Teachers). A Medical Questionnaire is also send out with the letter of employment for successful candidates to complete. The purpose of the medical questionnaire is to ensure that successful candidates will be able to perform the requirements of the job and give reliable service, and to ensure compliance with relevant Health and Safety regulations. The information is also required in order to establish whether any reasonable adjustments may need to be made to assist them in performing their duties, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

A successful candidate will not be employed until their DBS checks (and prohibition order check for Teachers) have been satisfactorily completed, any gaps in their employment history have been explained and reasons for leaving their past post have been completed. References will also need to have been received and will be checked and confirmed and verified by phone call also. The successful candidate will undergo an 'enhanced' DBS disclosure and the DBS needs to be seen and the certificate number / ID taken for reference. The candidate's identity and qualifications will also be checked.

Online Searches

Under KCSiE 2022, shortlisted applicants will have an online search conducted as part of our safer recruitment process. This consists of a check on the internet through google and then also various social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube.

Applicants are informed at application stage that online searches will take place if they are shortlisted for interview and are requested to assist to provide usernames or aliases they use on various platforms to assist in the search. There is a section on the application form for shortlisted applicants to share their usernames on platforms that they use (if they are public) to assist us in the search. We do not ask for passwords and do not need to delve into the private / locked down content of social media accounts. Amicus are only looking for information that is available to anyone through the usual search engines and websites that is 'publicly available online.' This is likely to prompt shortlisted applicants to review what they've said or make their accounts private. So, if applicants are happy to have an online presence and identify it to us (especially as people may use anonymised usernames) then the interview panel could ask questions about what they have found and even through searches just based on their name. If any incidents or issues are identified through the searches that need further exploration or discussion and context provided, this will be done at the interview stage.

Amicus will conduct these searches inhouse and this will be done by someone in the Administrative Team with Safer Recruitment Training and this information will then be passed on to the recruitment panel. Amicus are looking for content that does one of two things: calls into question the candidate's suitability to work with children and/or causes harm to the reputation of our organisation and we would be looking back at over a 5 year period which we feel is a sensible timeframe until further guidance is issued.

Some of the more obvious things that Amicus would look for as part of the online searches would include evidence of offensive or inappropriate behaviour, jokes or language, discriminatory comments, inappropriate photos or videos, drug or alcohol misuse and anything that suggests they may not be suitable to work with children.

Checks should be carried out under the shortlisted applicant's current name and previous names and any alias's known by or usernames given. Checks should consist of a general internet search and then searches through social media platforms.

Searches should include the applicant's full name by itself and then name and location / where they live, name and occupation, name and previous employer. There is a checklist / evidence form that is completed as part of the recruitment process prior to interview to evidence the online searches that have taken place and any findings and the process followed.

Online searches may also be conducted for current employees if required if we have been alerted to concerns around social media content / use that is in the public domain.

Disclosure by Association

As mentioned previously, candidates will be asked about disclosure by association; as to whether they reside with anyone with whom to their knowledge has been alleged of or convicted of safeguarding offences or concerns. This will be queried as part of the questioning in the Warner Interview and also applicants will be given a declaration to sign to confirm this.

Prohibition Order Check – (for Teachers only)

All new teachers to the Amicus School must undergo a prohibition order check. This will be done as part of the pre-employment/ safer recruiting checking process and a record will be kept on the school's single central record.

A prohibition order check ensures the teacher is not prohibited from teaching. This requirement has been statutory since 3 April 2014 but there is no requirement to retrospectively check teachers who commenced their current employment prior to that date. Existing staff will have been checked in line with previous guidance for checking QTS status. All Teachers / education staff are asked for their TRN number if they have been allocated one so checks can be carried out.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) maintains the database of all teachers eligible to teach in the maintained sector in England. The database is called the Employer Access Service (<https://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus/nctl>). It replaces the database previously managed by the GTCE which listed any teacher who may have been the subject of a suspension or conditional order and confirmed that a teacher had QTS and had completed their induction.

To undertake prohibition order checks, Amicus is registered with the 'Employer Access Service'. This is a free service and enables employers and potential employers to view the record of any teacher with qualified teacher status or any teacher with an active restriction. Through this service we can check whether a teacher we are considering employing has:

- qualified teacher status (QTS)
- completed their induction
- a mandatory qualification for teachers of hearing impaired or visually impaired pupils
- an active teaching restriction
- been the subject of a decision by the Secretary of State not to impose a prohibition order for unacceptable professional conduct, conduct that may bring the teaching profession into disrepute or conviction of a relevant offence
- been prohibited from teaching
- a suspension or conditional order imposed by the General Teaching Council for England that is still current
- failed their induction or probation period

Please note: The prohibition order check is different to the barred list check operated by the DBS. New appointments will require an enhanced DBS check, a barred list check and a prohibition order check.

Staff Induction

All new staff will have an initial induction month which will include completion of the Amicus induction programme covering all the induction topics and more as stated in the Children's Homes Regulations including the Quality Standards. This will include internal induction on Child Protection and Safeguarding and familiarisation with Amicus' Policies and Procedures, further external training will also be booked. Amicus has good links with the local authority; West Sussex and a lot of mandatory training is booked through West Sussex and also online through NSPCC. On a practical level, new staff will also have time in the homes to become familiar with the staff's duties and the homes routines, structures, regulations and working practices and induction also in our therapeutic model and psychoanalytic way of working. It will also enable them to develop a feeling for the culture of the community and perhaps most importantly of all, give time to gradually become familiar with, and to, the children before actually commencing work properly. During this period, 'core compulsory' training courses will be arranged where needed. New workers will also begin our internal training programme, attending seminars on relevant theoretical perspectives, treatment modalities and basic child development, attachment theory and research. Once working, full-time staff will continue this learning in ongoing weekly in-house clinical meetings with the rest of the staff group.

Probationary period

The first six months of staff working full-time will be a probationary period in order to assess their suitability for the post. This will be reviewed during this time after one month, 3 months and then 6 months. If it is felt that staff need additional support with their role to meet the expectations required of their practice, then their probationary

period may be extended by up to another 6 months. If this is the case, staff will be notified in writing and given clear aim to work towards to successfully complete their probationary period.

Supervision

Essential to the effectiveness of all staff will be regular, effective, timetabled and recorded Line Management and also Individual and Group Clinical Supervision. Sessions will last for 50 minutes and will be held at least twice a month. This will consist of both individual and group supervision sessions.

Group Process Meeting

Each fortnight all staff from all parts of the organisation attend a Group Process meeting which is facilitated by the Strategic and Clinical Director who is trained and experienced in psychoanalytical group work. These meetings are compulsory and are ongoing and will allow the whole staff group to discuss and explore what is happening in the group at any given time: the aim is to match current feelings with contemporaneous experience. All assumptions about behaviour and beliefs on which behaviour is based are open for exploration. This information is then linked to the experiences and dynamics with the children and how the staff group can re-enact these experiences by taking up different roles in the group.

Amicus also hold other regular meetings as well as Supervision and Group Process which include, Clinical Meetings, Staff Meetings and Community Meetings. These meetings all form part of staff members contracted hours and therefore attendance is compulsory. It is essential that staff attend these meetings so that their views can be heard and they can contribute and be part of the discussions around issues concerning practice and care of the children as this is an integral part of the work. Attendance of the meetings will be carefully monitored and attendance logged in the meeting minutes. If there is no authorised reason for non-attendance then this will be addressed directly with the member of staff by their Line Manager and/ or their Meeting Facilitator. Responsibilities and commitments to the role will be clarified and issues with attendance will also be discussed further as part of Supervision. If there is a recurrent problem with the lack of attendance to staff fulfilling the requirements of their roles in attending meetings or their shifts due to work then this may lead to disciplinary measures being taken.

Appraisals

The objective of a appraisal *“is to help improve individual performance, realise potential and achieve better results for the organisation”* (Lawson, 1992).

Integral to our Staffing Policies, The Amicus Community will undertake an annual review of the performance of staff members. The Annual Appraisals linked to the Line Management and Supervision process for staff members, will contribute to the strategic

planning for the organisation, and also identify the individual training needs of the staff team. Amicus' Appraisal Scheme will be framed within a learning and supportive environment, and used as an empowering tool that contributes to positive working conditions in which the work of staff is valued. Each individual's Supervision will form part of the Appraisal Scheme. The exercise should be seen in the context of personal development and strategic planning as well as the setting and achievement of targets and objectives for the organisation. The Appraisal system will also be subject to an annual review to ensure that it is appropriate to the changing needs of Amicus.

Appraisals procedures at Amicus are designed to;

- Take into account Amicus' psychodynamic approach to therapeutic childcare and education. This involves the thinking around unconscious processes and the established culture within the home and different dynamics that come into play within the staff team and organisation as a whole.
- Improve the quality of care and education for children, by helping staff to realise their potential and to carry out their duties more effectively
- Help staff to recognise their achievements and help them to identify ways of maintaining high quality or enhancing their professional skills, performance and job satisfaction;
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- Consolidate the outcomes of Supervision sessions, and will take a proactive, inclusive approach to resolving issues that emerge, appraisals will not raise unexpected issues
- Adhere to the principles of equal opportunities and confidentiality, and ensure fair and equitable involvement
- Utilise the therapeutic experience gained by staff through their work, in order to help the organisation to develop and implement its strategic plan
- Identify training needs
- Assist in planning the in-service training and professional development of staff individually and collectively;
 - Review performance
 - Determine mutually agreed performance targets for the year ahead
 - Enhance the overall management and development of the organisation and its homes and school.

Appraisals will be implemented annually and will be undertaken annually by the Line Manager, who will be responsible for appraising staff in their team/section. Staff will be issued with an annual appraisal review form, to be completed prior to the appraisal interview by the member of staff and the Line Manager. The appraisal interview will be based on the collated information, and will review progress and performance against aims and objectives (both of the individual and the organisation). The Line Manager will record the appraisal, including any objectives set and any commitments made by the member of staff or manager. Both the Line Manager and member of staff should sign and date the form to indicate that it is a true record of the discussion held, and keep a copy. A Senior Manager will then check this record for consistency and fairness. A copy of the appraisal will be stored in the staff member's individual personnel file at the Amicus Head Office.

Training

Through their supervision, staff will be offered an external training programme worked out and developed according to their individual needs and interests. External training courses will be supported by the Amicus training budget and staff will be given time to attend and where necessary, assisted in the successful completion of course work or with any vocational aspects of the training. Amongst the external training programmes and courses we will support are Level 3 Diploma in Residential Child Care, which will need to be completed by all Therapeutic Childcare Practitioners, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Residential Child Care for managers, CACHE course relevant to the work and also part time courses at the Tavistock Institute which relate to our therapeutic and psychoanalytic way of working.

Staff also have the opportunity to be part of training, workshops and conferences through our network organisations in which there is a focus in our therapeutic (psychoanalytic and group relations) model way of working as a children's therapeutic community. This creates opportunities to share experiences, best practice and be part also of research in this area.

Part of the staff consultations on offer will be the opportunity for all workers to have individual extra clinical sessions/ supervision with their Clinical Supervisors if need be. These will be neither compulsory nor timetabled but available on request for staff who feel they may need extra support or specialised input with a particular work problem on top of the scheduled sessions. Difficulties in their relationships and work with the children and any anxieties around these can be discussed.

Staff are also recommended and supported to attend their own personal therapy and Amicus believe that engaging in one's own personal therapy/ analysis gives a greater understanding of one's self in the work and the experiences they bring with them that impact on them professionally and personally which assists in enhancing emotional growth and development. Freud proposed that personal therapy was the deepest and most rigorous part of one's clinical education. Personal therapy / psychoanalysis is

funded for our Home Managers and Senior Managers for them to attend to see an external psychoanalyst of their choice once a week.

Staff exiting employment

When a member of staff resigns or leaves The Amicus Community it is important that the procedure adopted continues to be as professional as at any other time of their employment. Employees are given a final Clinical Supervision and are offered the opportunity to have an Exit Interview at the time of leaving and these provide a valuable source of information to help monitor the effectiveness of the organisation's employment strategies and to provide information concerning the organisation's 'performance' as an employer.

If a member of staff wishes to terminate their employment with Amicus, they must provide written notice addressed to their Line Manager and send the Senior Manager who deals with Human Resources. This is not intended to replace any additional verbal communication; however, it does confirm the ultimate decision to terminate employment. Similarly where Amicus terminates a contract of employment, the member of staff will be sent confirmation of this decision in writing.

The HR and Recruitment Officer of Senior Manager will write to the member of staff acknowledging and confirming their resignation. This information will then be passed on to the Administrator who will inform Amicus' Accountants, who deal with the payroll of the impending leaver and update the Personnel database accordingly.

In exceptional circumstances, notice periods may be waived on either side by mutual agreement with both parties. Notice during the probation period may be for a reduced period as contained within the appropriate procedure and terms and conditions of employment.

Members of staff leaving Amicus will be acknowledged in the Staff Meetings. This is normally carried out in the Group Process Meeting space.

If a member of staff is terminating their own employment they must as a minimum give a period of eight weeks' notice as detailed in their Employment Contract, for education staff this is a terms notice. Normal pay for the notice period will be paid in all cases.

Under circumstances where Amicus may terminate a member of staff's employment, notice of four weeks will be given in accordance with their Employment Contract. Amicus may terminate employment without notice or payment in lieu of notice in the case of serious or persistent misconduct such as to cause a major breach of Amicus' disciplinary rules and/or Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures.

After a member of staff has submitted notice to their Line Manager, it is expected that they will liaise to plan any outstanding annual leave entitlement and work

schedules/handover during the notice period.

Once notice has been given (initially this will usually be verbal) there is no requirement for the other party to agree to its withdrawal. Where either the member of staff or Amicus wishes to withdraw notice of the termination of employment, this should be put in writing and will only take effect with the agreement of the other party. Where a member of staff wishes to withdraw his/her notice and makes such a request to their Line Manager, the Manager must consult with Human Resources prior to confirming this with the individual, to ensure that the appropriate arrangement can be made.

If a member of staff requests to shorten their notice period and bring their termination date forward then, they must agree this with their Line Manager. If the request is accepted, the individual's employment will terminate on the earlier date and no further pay or benefits will be payable. If the notice is shortened at Amicus' request, and the member of staff is not required to work out their full notice period, they will be paid in lieu for the remainder of the notice period.

Members of staff will be required to return all Amicus property allocated during the course of their employment, whether as a contractual benefit or to assist in the performance of their duties, on or before the last day worked. This will include their Amicus ID card, all books, keys, documentation, files, client lists, records and other paperwork or any other equipment belonging to The Amicus Community and in the possession of the leaver.

Failure to return any property may result in Amicus deducting the cost of replacement items from any monies due and payable to the member of staff, or invoicing the member of staff for these costs.

The children may ask about keeping in contact with staff once they have left employment. Staff are not to give current or past children their personal phone number and/or email or accept or send friend requests to them via social media. These measures are in place to protect both staff a/ ex staff and children / young people as there are potential safeguarding implications to making contact personally and it is against our policy. If staff would like to keep in contact, Amicus can help to facilitate appropriately.

If staff wish to, their details can be kept on file so that they can be invited back to community events and celebrations. When attending these events they are welcomed as guests/ visitors and would not be left unsupervised with the children.

Amicus payroll in conjunction with our Accountants is responsible for ensuring that all final payments are concluded at the earliest opportunity, that any over payments of salary are avoided wherever possible, and for the production of all statutory forms (e.g. P45 and Statutory Sick Pay documentation).

It is important that the Line Manager informs the Strategic & Clinical Director as soon as

possible when a member of staff hands in their notice in order to ensure the correct salary adjustments in their final salary payment.

All members of staff must endeavour to take their accrued annual leave entitlement prior to the end of their contract or employment with Amicus. In exceptional circumstances, where this has not been possible due to work restrictions, any outstanding annual leave will be paid in lieu at the date of leaving.

Line managers will be asked to confirm the amount of any outstanding leave for the member of staff on termination. Members of staff summarily dismissed for gross misconduct or resigning without notice will forfeit any outstanding leave pay in excess of his/her statutory entitlement.

Any approved outstanding/owed leave at the employment end date will be paid in lieu/deducted from final salary as appropriate.

Where a member of staff has taken more than his/her accrued leave entitlement at the date of termination, Amicus will deduct the equivalent payment from the employee's final pay.

In order to help the organisation improve working practises, all members of staff who resign from employment will be asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire and attend an Exit Interview with their Line Manager or the HR and Recruitment Officer. The questionnaire will form the basis of discussion at the Exit Interview. The information given during the interview is held confidentially until after the employee has left the organisation. After this time any issues will be discussed (when and if appropriate) with the appropriate person concerned (e.g. Line Manager) and Senior Managers.

When employees leave they will also be given a final Clinical Supervision and also have an 'Amicus Ending Gathering' to say goodbye and reflect on their time at Amicus with the children and staff.

Amicus is committed to the provision of accurate and timely references for past employees. Employment references are provided by a manager if other staff are asked to provide a reference this should be passed on to the manager. References provided are verified / authorised also by a senior manager. When writing a reference managers are aware that the wording used in reference letters or reference request forms must be carefully considered to avoid committing the organisation or the individual reference provider to contractual obligations and the risk of personal litigation. References we provide are factual but give a detailed account of the previous employee's practice highlighting strengths and weaknesses and any areas for concern. Any repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious should not be included in any reference. Individuals may seek guidance from a Senior Manager before references are supplied if they are unsure.

In the context of this policy “retirement age” is the age at which a member of staff will be required to retire if they have not been granted early retirement, or left voluntarily before aged 65.

The normal retirement age for all employees is their 67th birthday, (their last day of employment being the day before their 67th birthday).

All members of staff should note that this policy forms part of their Contract of Employment and are therefore required to adhere to its terms and conditions.

Individual managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied within their own area. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy may be discussed with the Strategic and Clinical Director prior to any action being taken.

The Strategic & Clinical Director and DSLs/ Safeguarding Team has responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy will be agreed in consultation, where applicable, with External Consultants, Co-director and the Management Team.

Corresponding Policies

This Safer Recruitment Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- DBS Disclosure Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Involving Children in Recruitment Policy

Reviewed: September 2022

Next review date: September 2023