

Appendix 9 The Warner Interview

Discussion on the 'Warner interview'

In his report on the selection of staff for residential child care, Warner advocated a pre-visit and an informal interview to examine people's attitudes and general suitability for this type of work and this type of interview is being more commonly used in other settings where direct work with children and young people will be required. Some people have raised concern about this because of its potential for unfair discrimination. A selection procedure that sees the job go to the person who gives the best answers to interview questions fails to provide adequate safeguards. Given the vulnerability of the young people looked after in children's homes, erring on the side of caution seems to be justified.

The fact that this interview is usually one-to-one can also cause concern, but people are unlikely to talk freely about their attitudes to sensitive matters to an interview panel. To minimise the risk of unfair discrimination, do not use the Warner interview to contribute to the overall assessment of an individual to do the job, but as an exercise to screen out people whose attitudes make them unsuitable. We consider it is important element in the selection process, especially of candidates with no previous experience. This is a good point in the process to see and check qualifications.

The interview

The setting for the interview should ideally be comfortable and relaxed, with the interviewer and interviewee seated as equals rather than in a formal position; a conversational style is probably most effective. The preamble should tell the candidates that the object of this part of the process is to find out about their feelings and attitudes to a variety of issues that are important in social care.

Some example questions follow:

NB *The exact answers are often less important than evidence of the thought processes that the candidates go through in reaching their answers; supplementary questions and clarifications from the interviewer are invariably necessary.*

Question	Purpose for Question
<i>Tell me about your work history up to now and why you think this job would be a good move for you.</i>	To ascertain motivations and relax the candidates. The candidate will find it easier to become conversational when dealing with an area they are familiar with and confident about.
<i>In Social Care, we often talk about our role as being that of the 'corporate</i>	This can provide some indication of whether motivations to work with children

<p>parent'. <i>From your experience of being parented, what would you identify as qualities a good parent should have?</i></p>	<p>and young people are due to unresolved issues in their own childhood. It can also indicate whether they have an understanding that is compatible with the role.</p> <p>Red Flag answers may include allusions to <i>'giving children the love I never got'</i> and <i>'there is a need for rigid discipline'</i>. These would require further probing.</p>
<p><i>You're a Social Worker to a young person living in a Residential Unit. She is 16 and she tells you that when she leaves next month she is moving in with Dave. Dave is a 22 year old male colleague. What do you do?</i></p> <p>You can push this along after the candidate's initial response by saying that the manager interviews Dave who says it's all very professional and nothing has happened in the home.</p>	<p>Often people who are new to this work will need to talk this through to come to an appropriate conclusion</p> <p>Do they say they will report it, or investigate it themselves?</p> <p>Do they recognise the inappropriateness of this?</p> <p>Do they think she is 16, so it's legal and nothing to do with the home?</p>
<p><i>What sort of things may young people do or say to make you angry or upset?</i></p> <p><i>How do you think you would respond to these situations?</i></p> <p>If they struggle with providing situations, give examples such as swearing, name calling, making personal remarks</p>	<p>To see whether the candidate can demonstrate self awareness.</p> <p>To see whether they understand appropriate responses to young people's behaviours</p>
<p><i>You become aware that one young person is a victim of bullying – he is black and says his treatment by the others is racist. The others are white and say he brings it on himself because he will not join in their activities.</i></p> <p><i>What questions would you ask?</i></p>	<p>To see whether there is a basic awareness of bullying and racism</p> <p>To see whether they can identify a suitable course of action</p>
<p><i>What should you do if 2 young people confided in you that they were in a same sex relationship on condition that you did not pass on the information?</i></p>	<p>Would they breach confidence?</p> <p>Would they provide appropriate advice?</p> <p>Would they have any personal difficulties with this situation?</p>
<p><i>On the application form we asked whether you had any criminal convictions or disciplinary actions against your name. Are you aware that this post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act</i></p>	<p>Make sure candidates fully aware of the requirements for this type of work.</p> <p>Where they are uncertain you may wish to give them an opportunity to disclose any information that they may have left</p>

<i>and you must declare all convictions?</i>	off the application
This interview should be used to explore any issues from the application form or other sources including gaps in employment, convictions etc	To provide an opportunity to gain clarification from the applicant's point of view about such issues. It may be necessary to explore these further with previous employers
Please show me your qualification	Physically checked against claims on application form