



Volunteer Pre-engagement Checks

When recruiting volunteers, there are a range of checks you can undertake to ensure you are getting the right person for the role, the right person for your organisation, and the right person to work with your clients. Your organisation may have policy that outlines required checks, and there may be other checks that will give you a broader picture of the person you are looking at recruiting into your team.

KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

There are a range of things that you can check during an initial interview. Questions regarding the required skills or experience are always included, but questions regarding motivation can be just as important. Why is the volunteer interested in this role, and why your organisation? Do they have the required time? Are there other requirements that they need to be aware of?

REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks are usually done over the phone but can also be done via email and post. Be clear what information you are seeking before you make that phone call. Be careful to ask questions that do not breach the Human Rights Act or Privacy Act. It is advisable that you do more than one reference check, and ensure that at least one is not a friend or family member.

CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS

Many organisations do criminal history checks, and this is strongly recommended for any volunteers (or paid staff) that have access to vulnerable clients, money, goods etc. An increasing number of organisations now have policy that requires all team members to undergo criminal history checks, and we strongly recommend this.

Some organisations have a policy regarding what type of criminal history you can or cannot accept, but more often this is at the discretion of the Manager or Co-ordinator, and will depend on the person, the number of convictions, the type of offending, and how recent this was. The

www.police.govt.nz website has some great information about considerations to make to assist in making this decision.

There is also useful information at www.justice.govt.nz, particularly regarding the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004. This is useful for understanding what information you will or will not be provided.

It is important to remember that any information obtained about a potential volunteer or staff member is private and must be kept confidential (including criminal records and information obtained through a reference check). You need to take care not to discriminate against someone whose criminal record is not relevant to the voluntary work they have applied to do, e.g. a conviction for careless driving need not preclude someone from a gardening role.

IN SUMMARY

Taking time to complete 'pre-engagement' checks regarding a potential volunteer can save you time further down the track. Most importantly doing checks allow you to make an informed decision about whether a person is suitable not just for the role but for your organisation. You may do one or all of the above checks, to do no checks could be hazardous in many ways. It is worthwhile to seek information from more than one source to get a broader picture of the person you are looking to engage.