



Case study: Using the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme

Oxfam's approach to implementing safer recruitment procedures



Using the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme



Cultural change



Safeguarding Commitment 6:

We collaborate within and beyond our sector to improve employment practice, including background checking, to minimise opportunities for perpetrators' access to our sector and to reduce their ability to move between organisations. [Read the commitments.](#)

Safeguarding challenge:

- How can we implement safer recruitment procedures internationally?
- How can we address the risk of individuals who have abused or exploited children and/or adults being recruited by other organisations?

Organisation: Oxfam International

Date: February 2020

Key recommendations:

- Start discussions on what information your organisation can share in the countries you work in.
- Have a look at [the Scheme](#) as it can be used flexibly across different locations where your organisation works.
- Consider lobbying for change if a country does not legally permit sharing safeguarding information about aid workers with other organisations.

Oxfam tackles global inequality by working with communities and responding to emergency situations, helping people build better lives for themselves. Oxfam's legal consultant Felicity Decker explained why Oxfam co-founded the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme.

Aid organisations work with vulnerable people. Their staff need to be fit for this responsibility. The Scheme was set up to enable information sharing between aid organisations about staff and volunteers who have sexually abused or exploited children or adults; it complements other checking systems such as police checks but reflects the fact that much abuse does not get prosecuted, so criminal checks alone leave residual risk. The Scheme empowers organisations to make better informed and safer recruitment decisions. It also reduces the risk of investigations being dropped when an individual leaves an organisation. It asks members to (1) commit to systematically checking with previous employers as part of the recruitment process and (2) provide misconduct information for those it has previously employed.

A key challenge is that organisations can use different terminology around areas of misconduct, so members of the Scheme are required to include the definitions that

shaped employment decisions when they share information about an individual.

Another challenge is that information sharing is dependent on a country's data protection legislation. Member organisations are working together to identify countries where information cannot be shared to strengthen recruitment procedures despite the restrictions. Felicity Decker said: "We need more guidance and support from governments on how we deal with this."

The Scheme is reliant on individuals reporting abuse and those reports being followed up on, so organisations need to raise awareness on identifying and reporting concerns and safe whistleblowing channels. Additionally, it's important for organisations to look at reasons why abuse may be under-reported, such as whether power imbalances and harmful behaviours need to be addressed.

Felicity said: "We are all working towards the same goal of preventing harm to vulnerable people so it's worth looking at the Scheme as it can really help by bringing organisations together to address these issues. However, recruitment is only one piece of the safeguarding jigsaw – it's important, but it's just one piece. You could recruit someone with no history of abuse who goes on to abuse. So other processes are vital for developing robust safeguarding throughout the organisation, such as reporting procedures, organisational cultural change, and survivor support."