



Charlotte R Quinn

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Ask for: **Ben Fulton**

Your ref:

Our ref: **LS/B/09551/425**

Date: **19 August 2009**

Dear Ms Quinn

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – INTERNAL REVIEW**

I refer to my letter dated 12 August 2009, which was sent to you by e-mail. As you are aware, I have been instructed to conduct an internal review into your Freedom of Information request dated 16 June 2009 and your subsequent e-mail dated 13 July 2009.

I have considered the initial request from you, the response provided by Kent County Council ("KCC") and your complaint e-mail.

1. I began my review by considering your initial request dated 16 June 2009. I then considered the response that was provided to you by KCC.
2. After considering the request that you made and the response given it was my conclusion that further information could have been provided to you in order to adhere to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I note that an authority such as KCC can only spend a maximum of 18 hours responding to your request and sourcing or otherwise the information that you requested. In some circumstances, information does not exist or is not held and if this is so then it should be communicated to you.
3. As part of my review I conducted internet searches into the website links that were sent to you on 13 July 2009. My conclusion from the response provided by KCC was that some further information could be provided to you, but the response was sufficient in some aspects. Therefore, I contacted various people within KCC and requested that they provide further responses in relation to the 9 questions that I summarised from your initial information request, so that KCC could fully respond to your information request within the statutory limitations of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**Geoff Wild** LL.B, Dip.LG, Solicitor  
Director of Law & Governance

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**



The following is the further information that has been sourced from my internal review:-

1. The first question that you asked in your request to KCC was "A copy of any information you hold on your policies, procedures and guidance for recruitment of Social Workers". I deemed that the initial response sent to you partly satisfied your request for information and over and above that I have included the following information. I attach a document entitled CSS Compass Cannonball. This particular document outlines some tips for Social Worker interviews, core questions that are used in the interviewing process for Social Workers and an example of a recent case scenario that was used for recruiting Social Workers. As far as I am aware from the internal review that I have conducted there is no specific guidance for recruitment of Social Workers and this is the reason why a general response was sent to you because the overall objective is to use best practice in all areas of recruitment at KCC.

The initial response that was sent to you provided a link to the website and on examination of the link and the website that you were directed to I concluded that this provided sufficient information in relation to KCC policies, procedures and guidance for the general recruitment of people at KCC. However, the attached document has been included for your benefit and so that further information is sent in relation to the recruitment of Social Workers, which gives you a recent example of the type of criteria and questions that are used for the recruitment of Social Workers.

2. The second request for information that you made in your e-mail was "How, when and where job adverts are placed, how long are they placed and after the closing date how long the interview process should take?" As originally stated in the response sent by KCC, job advertisements are carried out on the main Council website at the link provided to you at [www.kent.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers/](http://www.kent.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers/). However, I requested further information from people within KCC that may have been able to assist in further clarifying your request for information. My conclusion was that job advertisements are usually carried out at KCC on a quarterly rolling basis at all levels and suitable examples were in the planning stage at the time of your request. An example of an advertisement placed in the Community Care Directory, resulting from that planning, is attached and has been forwarded to you as part of the internal review.
3. Your third question was "How the short listing of job applications is undertaken and recorded?" I considered the response sent to you and then conducted my internal review into what was provided. My conclusion to this question was that the website and link that was provided to you mentioned under the heading "Tips for Applying" was sufficient to satisfy that your request for information. I was able to easily find this particular information by following the website links such as short listing and information would come up such as "Tips for Applying". Therefore, I believe that the website link provided to you was sufficient to adhere to this information request.
4. Your next question was "How long you retain copies of job applications and related information?" I reviewed your request for information and response provided and concluded that further information could have been provided to you. Therefore, my internal review has concluded that the following information could have been provided to you. This is an extract from the Blue Book, which is a document, similar to an

Employee Handbook. This document existed at the time of your application and therefore I have provided the following extract:-

#### Recruitment Records

"Notes of any selection process including, interviews and tests results, with outcomes and reasons for decisions must be made and retained on the recruitment file for 6 months. The successful applicant's details are retained on their personnel file. Candidate information is subject to Data Protection legislation. Written formal authorisation for all appointments in accordance with minimal authorisation levels should be kept on a recruitment file".

5. Your next question was "How short listed candidates should be interviewed and what method of assessment an interviewer used?" Once again, I considered your request for information and the response provided to you. Please see the attached document to this e-mail, which includes Social Worker interviews, core questions and an example of a case study. Also, I looked at the response that was originally provided to you and the website link. My further review revealed that KCC tries to use the best possible practice to ensure the best people are selected and candidates may also be asked to carry out a case study exercise and again, a copy of a recent scenario and related questions are attached for your benefit.
6. Your next questions was "How are interview questions, assessments and case study exercises devised and formulated?" I considered your e-mail and the response provided. I believe that the attachments will further satisfy the information that was provided to you. My review concluded that it is uncertain whether KCC have a set of standard interview questions for recruiting Social Workers, but sets of questions are compiled for the particular recruitment campaign and to make certain that the interview process is fair to all candidates and that all candidates are asked the same core questions.
7. Your next question was "Copies and details of any guidance and training interviewers are given on how to conduct interviews, recorded and evaluate how interviewees respond to questions, complete assessments or case study exercises?". Again, I considered the question and the response. Although, this particular question is not entirely clear and contains several questions within the question I did attempt to break it down and review what was provided to you against your question. My review has concluded that interview panels commonly use a selection matrix, where individual candidates can be scored on relevant criteria that is applicable to the certain position that has been advertised at and is being recruited for. These are set up by the recruitment team within KCC and are included in the recruitment pack sent to the leading recruiting manager. At least one member of each panel must have been trained in Positive Action Recruitment. The following is an extract from the Blue Book:-

#### Positive Action

"Section for recruitment or promotion must be on merit. However, where there is evidence of under representation of particular groups within KCC the Race Relation and Sex Discrimination Acts allow for special measures to encourage the groups to apply. This may include:-

1. Selecting alternative media to reach members of under represented groups,
  2. Using job centres and career centres in appropriate areas,
  3. Wording advertisements to encourage applications from these groups.
8. Your next question was "What procedure should be followed to inform candidates of the outcome of any interview/assessment?". My review concluded that it was normal procedure for candidates to be informed by letter or e-mail in terms of whether they have an interview and whether they have been successful in their application. However, there may be circumstances where a letter is not sufficient communication and this may be in the case of where an applicant is illiterate. Therefore, an exception may be made in these circumstances and the candidate may be communicated to by other means such as telephone. Candidates are invited to interview by e-mail. Those that are not successful are given verbal notification and this may be followed by a letter or e-mail. Those that are successful are told verbally and sent an e-mail and/or letter.
9. The final question that you asked in your request for information was "What criteria is used to make one candidate more successful and employable than any other individual?". Whilst the response to your request for information directs you to the website I can provide further information as part of my internal review, which may directly assist you in your request for information. This would come under the best practice umbrella. The proper preparation of one's job description by a candidate and the person specification may assist, thereafter selection matrixes are used by experienced professionals at interview and where possible and increasingly in employment of Social Workers, Service Users are included in the interview panels and assessment centre techniques are used when relevant. Additionally, if you check the website and the response that was provided to you it was stated at KCC were passionate about fairness and diversity and operate under the Job Centre Plus "Two Ticks" policy.
10. I trust that the above satisfies your request for further information.

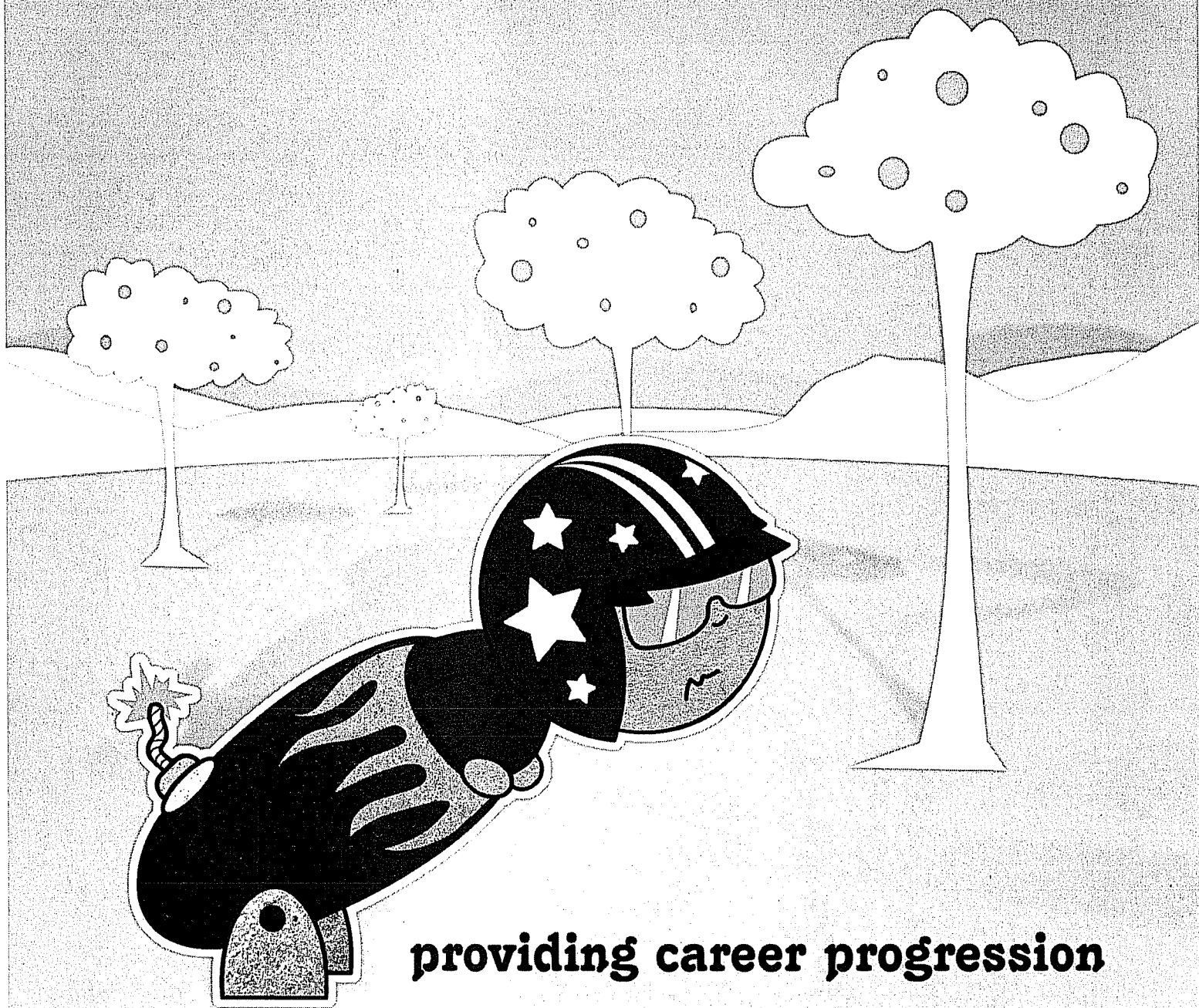
Yours sincerely



**Ben Fulton**  
for Director of Law & Governance

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At Kent, we recognise that Children's Social Work can be one of the toughest areas to work in. That's why we do our utmost to reward your contribution by offering genuine career progression at every opportunity so you're never left standing still. This year alone, we've invested £1.5 million in training and development which helps to fulfil potential, enhance performance and increase expertise. What's more, we offer a programme of specialist support that means we're always ready to listen to issues and talk through potential challenges. It all adds up to a culture that embodies and promotes professionalism; so, if you're serious about your profession, and expect to be treated as an integral part of a successful service, then Kent is the place to be.

Find out more at [www.kenttrustweb.org.uk?compassguide](http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk?compassguide)



## **A few tips for the Social Worker Interviews**

Before the start of the interviews the interview panel should go through the questions and decide what constitutes an acceptable answer for each of the questions.

Ask all candidates the same core questions; however you should feel free to add supplementary questions to further explore individuals' skills and experience as required.

The interview should not take more than an hour and candidates should be able to comfortably answer all the questions within this time, as well as having time to cover any questions they may have about the job in Kent.

An interview is a two way process and it is not just about determining the best person for the job. It also gives the candidate the opportunity to decide if the job is what they are looking for as their next career step.

We have hopefully identified questions that will assist to probe or explore the candidates' personality, attitude, skills and knowledge to help gauge if they will be a good fit for the job.

### **Core Questions**

1. What interested you in applying for a social worker post in Kent?
2. By providing examples convince me/us that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments?
3. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort and what qualities or attributes do you feel will most contribute to your career success?
4. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team?
5. What does anti-discriminatory practice mean to you and how will you ensure that anti-discriminatory issues remain alive in your work, and within your team?
6. How would you go about undertaking an assessment of a child and it's family? What would be the important things to get right? What would you include in the written report?

7. Describe a piece of work you have undertaken where there have been concerns that a child could be at risk of harm. What theory or theories did you use to influence your practice?
  
8. Every Child Matters is a shared programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people in England; can you tell us what you know about this strategy.
  
9. What are your expectations of Supervision and how would you contribute to its effectiveness?

## **Boston Social Worker Recruitment**

### Case Scenario

26 September – 3 October 2009

**Julie: Mother age 31 years**

**Lorna – age 15**

**Kirsty – age 2**

The social work assessment team has received a referral about Kirsty, aged two-and-a-half. The previous evening she had been brought to the hospital Accident and Emergency Department by her mother, Julie, who said that she had found her earlier that evening holding an empty bottle of methadone (heroin substitute) with no lid on it. Julie was concerned that she had drunk some, although when seen by the doctor, Kirsty showed no indication of methadone ingestion. Julie refused to allow Kirsty to stay in hospital overnight for observation, but said she would return if she had any concerns.

The hospital nursing staff thought Kirsty looked rather 'grubby and unkempt', but appeared happy. She seemed to have a good relationship with her mother. Julie told the hospital staff that she was pregnant.

Social Services records show that a number of previous referrals have been made on this family and dealt with by initial assessments. Julie has made four requests for financial assistance in the last year, citing theft or problems with the Benefits Agency as the cause of her difficulties. There has also been a recent school referral about Lorna, age 15, who was reported to have a pattern of erratic school attendance over the previous 12 months, with no attendance at all for the last academic term. In response to this, a letter was sent to Julie reminding her of her legal responsibilities for her daughter's education.

### **Questions**

1. What do you consider to be the risk factors in this case scenario?  
What theoretical models will inform your judgement?
2. Decide what further information you need to complete the assessment, and who you would want to speak to in order to get that information.