

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

A GUIDE TO FACILITATING A YOUNG PERSON'S INTERVIEW PANEL



INTRODUCTION

This document is produced by the Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service at the City of York Council and aims to provide guidance in involving children and young people in the interview process. It also aims to promote the involvement of children and young people in the recruitment and selection process, as their contributions are valuable in helping shape and develop services so that they meet the needs of children and young people.

This guidance is based on the experience of the Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service. The Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service has facilitated a number of young person’s interview panels and has found the feedback from young people very valuable when making a decision on which candidate to appoint.

The Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service would like to promote the participation of young people when recruiting new candidates who would like to work directly with children and young people or who would like to work within a service that affects the lives of children and young people. Young people who are subject to child protection plans or who are looked after by the local authority are impacted by a range of services, so it is important that they have the opportunity to have their say on the individuals who work within services which affect their lives.

The YorOK Voice and Involvement Strategy states, “Children and young people are at the heart of our strategic arrangements. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people have a voice in decision-making, planning, commissioning, design and delivery of services.” The City of York Council and partner organisations who work with children and young people should be committed to this statement. This means that that the City of York Council and partner organisations, where possible, should enable a young person’s interview panel to take place.

WHY INVOLVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS?

Children and young people bring a skill set to the interview panel which differs to that of professionals. They look for qualities in a candidate that professionals may not look for, and therefore strengthen and refine the interview process. Having the best quality candidate, due to involving young people in the interview process, can assist in improving outcomes for children and young people.

“It is best when they [City of York Council] include us in interviews because we know what we want and we know what we need”

Young interview panelist

Allowing young people to have their say can often make them feel more empowered and demonstrates that professionals respect young people and their opinions. It can also strengthen the relationship between professionals and young people, giving young people more confidence in professionals and services, as they feel listened to.

Children and young people should have the opportunity to express their views on services which affect them, and this involves having their say on who works within services which affect them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children and young people have a right to have their views heard and have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their life. This is supported by the

Children Act (2004), which requires local authorities to take into account the child or young person's wishes and feelings when making decisions which impact their life.

ADVANTAGES TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Children and young people have the opportunity to gain a range of experience and skills. This opportunity of learning and development in a work environment may help prepare young people for their future.
- Children and young people feel empowered and respected, as they are given the responsibility to recruit the most suitable candidate.
- They are able to have their voice and recommendations heard by senior professionals and decision makers.
- It is excellent (and unique) experience to add to a CV or job application.
- It's fun!
- Children and young people receive recognition/reward for their involvement in the recruitment process.
- Participation in the recruitment process may encourage participation in other areas of their lives.
- Improved outcomes for children and young people, as they are able to influence and have their say on services which affect them.

ADVANTAGES TO THE ORGANISATION

- The organisation is able to see how the candidate interacts with young people.
- Staff within the organisation develop new skills from working with children and young people in a formal setting.
- Children and young people offer a varied perspective on the recruitment process
- Involving children and young people demonstrates that the organisation values and takes into account the views of children and young people. This helps shape and improve services to better meet the needs of children and young people.
- The organisation conforms to legislation (Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and the Children Act 2004) which state that children and young people should be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

ADVANTAGES TO THE CANDIDATE

- The candidate is able to interact with the children and young people that they may be working with, or for.
- They have the opportunity to demonstrate their practical ability to communicate with children and young people.
- The candidate is able to receive direct feedback from children and young people.

WHEN TO INVOLVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

A young person's interview panel should be considered for any job role which involves working with children and young people or which has an impact on a child or young person's life in some way.

If it is decided that the job role is suitable for a young person's interview panel to take place, this panel should be scheduled for a date and time that is young person friendly. This means that interviews should be arranged out of school/college time so that young people can participate. Alternatively, the organisation interviewing may be able to liaise with schools and colleges to organise release so that young people are able to participate in young person's interview panels. This would mean demonstrating the value of young person's interview panels to young people's development to staff within schools.

OTHER WAYS OF INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Facilitating a young person's interview panel is the most effective method of obtaining children and young people's views on candidates. This is because the young people can communicate face-to-face with candidates and can provide instant feedback to managers on their thoughts and feelings.

If a young person's interview panel is unable to take place, there are other ways you can involve children and young people in the recruitment process. It is important to note that young people should be supported by a professional in all forms of involvement of the recruitment process.

Children and young people can be involved in:

- Writing a person specification
- Preparing the job advertisement
- Short-listing candidates
- Observing the candidate at work and providing feedback

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

The participation of children and young people in a young person's interview panel should be rewarded or recognised in some way. The types of reward or recognition will depend on the amount of time the young people have devoted to the young person's interview panel. If young people have been involved in the recruitment process in a way other than sitting on a young person's panel, an appropriate type of reward and recognition should be decided upon.

The following types of **reward** should be considered:

- Vouchers
- Leisure activities
- Tickets to an event
- Going out for a meal
- Financial reward

The following types of **recognition** should be considered:

- Saying thank you – **this is a must.**
- Informing other professionals of the young people's involvement
- Certificates
- Providing a reference for the young people
- A card thanking the young people for their contribution.

It should be noted that the department which is facilitating the young person's interview panel should be prepared to provide a form of reward and/or recognition. Young people often find certificates useful to use as evidence of their participation when applying for employment and further education. A feasible reward should be provided; for example, some departments may not have the capacity to facilitate a leisure activity or a meal, so vouchers may be more appropriate.

Young people should be made aware that there are forms of reward and recognition for taking part in the young person's interview panel. Offering reward and recognition demonstrates to young people that their contribution is valued. A certificate is very important, as young people can use this as proof of their participation when applying for employment or further education. A certificate template is available from the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, please email sophie.barnes@york.gov.uk. Involvement in a young person's interview panel is unique experience for a young person to have and can aid in strengthening any applications for further education or employment.

FACILITATING A YOUNG PERSON'S INTERVIEW PANEL

ORGANISATION OF THE INTERVIEW PANEL

The participation of children and young people should be requested a few weeks prior to the interview panel and children and young people should have the option of whether they would like to participate. The panel should consist of between 2 and 5 young people; this is a manageable number and ensures all young people will have the opportunity to ask a question or have their say in some way.

Representation

Young people have a varied experience of services, depending on their age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or ability, living circumstances, ethnicity and personal beliefs. A diverse range of young people should have the opportunity to participate in young person's interview panels. This is not only to provide equal opportunities for all, but because diverse groups have varied thoughts, perspectives and opinions which often means they reach better outcomes and decisions than homogeneous groups, Page (2007).

Young people who are included in the interview panel should have experience using the service that the job role is within, or should have some knowledge of the job role or service. For example, if the City of York Council was recruiting a social worker, young people in receipt of social work services, such as looked after children, should be represented in the young person's interview panel. The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service can be approached to identify young people who are interested in being involved in the young person's interview panel.

Date and time

A date and time for interviews should be decided upon and should be young person friendly. This means that interviews should be arranged out of school/college time where possible so that young people can participate. If the interviews take place during school/college time, the department recruiting should liaise with schools on whether the selected young people are able to participate.

Interviewing can often be a lengthy process. If the interviews run for a lengthy period of time, refreshments and lunch/snacks should be provided for the young people. It is important to be mindful of how long the

interviews will take; a full day of interviewing can be tiring and may affect young people's judgment of candidates.

Venue

An appropriate venue should be arranged for the interviews to take place. Two rooms will be needed: one for the adult interview panel and one for the young person's interview panel. The rooms should ideally be close to each other and if they are not, a member of staff should be able to escort the candidate from one interview room to another.

Staff

Wherever possible, the appointing service should support the young people in preparing and participating in the young person's interview panel. If the appointing service would like to facilitate a young person's interview panel but are unable to for some reason, the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service can be approached to provide support.

Two workers should be identified to facilitate the young person's interview panel. These workers should ideally work within the appointing service and should have knowledge of the job role being interviewed for and a strong knowledge of the organisation. Two workers are needed, as the candidates will need escorting out of the building by one worker while another worker stays with the young person's interview panel. A casual youth worker can be requested to facilitate the young person's interview panel if no workers within the organisation are able to facilitate the young person's interview panel. All workers facilitating the young person's interview panel should be DBS checked and are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the young people throughout the interview process.

Reward and recognition

A form of reward or recognition should be established, to thank the young people for their participation. This should be funded by the department facilitating the young person's interview panel. The young people should be made aware of the reward and/or recognition before they agree to take part in the young person's interview panel.

PREPARATION

Interview questions

The young person's interview panel should meet prior to the interviews so they can generate a list of questions they will be asking each candidate. They can meet on a separate occasion before the interviews, or they can meet on the day of the interviews an hour or two before the interviews take place. The job description and person specification should be shared with the young people so that the questions they prepare are appropriate for the job role. Questions prepared by the young people should be shared with the adult interview panel to avoid duplication.

The young people should receive guidance from the facilitators of the young person's panel when preparing their questions. The workers facilitating the panel should prompt the young people, asking what they would like to know about each candidate. The young people may find it easier having an example of the job role being interviewed for. For example, if the young people are interviewing for a Rights and Participation

officer, they may find it helpful to think of current Rights and Participation Officers, what they like and don't like about them, and what they expect from their role.

A young people's guide to interviewing is available alongside this document, and should be given to young people prior to their involvement in the interview panel. The young people's guide includes information on employment laws, what being on the interview panel involves and benefits to young people for participating.

Running of the interview

Young people should be asked if they would like to take control of conducting the interview; this will include welcoming candidates and closing the interview. Young people should always ask the interview questions, but if they do not want to open and close the interview, a worker can do this instead.

Interview room set up

The interview room should be prepared on the interview day; this will include setting up the table and chairs appropriately and providing water for candidates. It is important to think about the where the young people sit in the room and where the workers sit. The young people should be close to the candidates and should be in a position where they can face them easily.

Young people's feedback

The young people should be briefed on how their feedback will be taken into account. The young people can either give verbal feedback to the adult interview panel, give verbal feedback to the workers facilitating the young person's interview panel (that will then be passed on to the adult interview panel), or provide the adult interview panel with written feedback. The preferred option is for the young people to provide feedback directly to the adult interview panel.

A quick note on employment law: It is vital to understand that children and young people's panels need to have the same consideration of employment law requirements as any other recruitment process.

This document provides support and guidance on how to engage with children and young people throughout every stage of the recruitment process. Use existing support available to you as a manager in this respect about what questions are suitable to ask, what factors decisions should be made on and what feedback is appropriate to give.

Equal opportunities

The young people should be briefed on equal opportunities, and should not prejudice against a candidate because of gender, age, sexual orientation, faith, ethnicity, disability or appearance. Terms like equal opportunities may be new to some young people, so it is important to explain all terms to young people so that they understand. The young people's guide to interviewing briefly explains the Equalities Act 2010.

If a young person on the interview panel tells you that they know a candidate, a decision needs to be made on whether it is appropriate for them to continue interviewing. If the young person knows the candidate in a professional capacity, this may not be so much of an issue, but measures should still be taken to ensure the young person does not form any bias towards the candidate. The young person's guide to interviewing

explains that all candidates should be treated equally, and it is worth reiterating this to any young people who states that they know a candidate.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

If any young people would fully like to conduct the interview, they should welcome the candidate, offer them a drink of water and begin introductions. If the young people do not want to do this, the workers facilitating the interviews should. It is important to note that the worker can take control of opening and closing the interview, if the young people would prefer this, but the young people should always ask the questions.

"The best interviews were the candidates who asked us questions as well"

Young interview panelist

Following pleasantries, the young people should proceed asking their questions. Each candidate should be asked the same questions. The young people should be provided with paper so they can make notes on each candidate. It is important for the young people's notes to be clear, appropriate, detailed and relevant because:

- Candidates can request to view the young people's notes;
- The adult interview panel will review the young people's notes in order to understand the young people's feedback and to inform the final decision;
- The young people's notes will be used to help in providing unsuccessful candidates with feedback on their interview.

The workers facilitating the young person's panel should also make notes on the candidates, and should particularly look at how the candidate interacts with young people. The workers facilitating the panel should not influence the young people's views; they are there to ensure the interviews run smoothly, and that the young people are treated with respect. They are also there to listen to the young people's views and voice these if necessary.

Following each interview, the candidate should be discussed among the panel so that the young people can share their views. It is also helpful for the young people to use a rating scale to rate each candidate; this provides a concrete number which makes it easier for the young people to compare each candidate. The facilitating workers should help the young people by asking prompting, but not leading questions in order to fully understand the young people's views and to get the young people to think in more detail about the candidate and their responses.

The workers should note the young people's thoughts and feelings and should not influence them in any way.

AFTER THE INTERVIEWS

Following the interviews, the young people should have the opportunity to meet with the adult interview panel to share thoughts and to make a decision on which candidate to appoint. This is very important as it

ensures young people feel that their feedback is valuable and is taken into account when making a final decision. If the young person's panel is unable to share verbal feedback with the adult interview panel, written feedback should be taken from the young people and shared with the adult interview panel. The young people should always be informed of the final decision, if they were not present when a final decision was made.

EXAMPLE

The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service at the City of York Council have facilitated a number of young person's interview panels. Young people aged 14-18 from the Children in Care Council have taken part in interviewing candidates, and have interviewed for roles such as Rights and Participation Officer and the Director and Assistant Director of Children' Services, Education and Skills.

The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service involved young people in the recruitment of a Rights and Participation Officer, a role which includes advocating on behalf of young people and facilitating the Children in Care Council. Although both young people on the panel had not used the advocacy service, they had both participated in the Children in Care Council and had known young people who had benefited from using the advocacy service.

The young people were asked to participate 3 weeks before the interviews were due to take place and were informed that they would receive a £30 voucher for their participation. The interviews were due to take place over a day and a half, so a £30 voucher each seemed an appropriate way to reward the young people for their participation. The young people were informed that lunch, snacks and refreshments would be provided, due to the length of time they would be spending interviewing candidates.

The structure of the interview day was such that the candidate would first be interviewed by the adult interview panel, and would then be interviewed by the young person's panel. The adult interview panel anticipated they would spent 45 minutes with each candidate, and the young person's panel anticipated they would spent 20 minutes with each candidate, and this helped develop the timetable for each day.

The young people arrived on the morning of the interviews, one hour before interviews were due to commence; this was so they could spend an hour preparing questions to ask each candidate. The young people were provided with the job description, a list of candidates and the questions which the adult interview panel would be asking. This was to aid the young people in preparing their questions. The two workers who facilitated the young person's interview panel assisted the young people in preparing their questions, and one worker typed up the questions, one question per half a page – this was so there was space below each question to write feedback. Multiple copies of the question sheets were printed so that the young people and workers had a copy of the questions per candidate.

The workers and young people then went to the interview room and set it up according to their preference. A jug of water and glasses were provided for candidates. As the adult interview panel was due to last longer than the young person's panel, the young people had lengthy periods of time where there were no candidates to interview. The Rights and Advocacy Service consulted with the young people on some pieces of work, such as designing a website banner for the Children in Care Council website; this made constructive use of the free time with the young people. During the lengthy periods of time where there was no

candidate to interview, the young people were also given some free time; it is very important that the young people have regular breaks and some leisure time, particularly if they are spending all day in the same room.

The young people were asked to write feedback on each candidate, and rate each candidate on a scale from 1-4, 4 being very good. Following each interview, the workers discussed the candidate with the young people in order to better understand their views.

Following the day and a half of interviews, the young people, workers and adult interview panel met to share feedback. The young people and adult interview panel shared views on each of the candidates and eventually came to a final decision together. The young people were directly involved in making the final decision.

REFERENCES

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