



LINKS



Summary of benefits and challenges of involving young people in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

Introduction

This document summarises the benefits and challenges of involving young people in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, drawing from the evidence in the publications in the Resource Sheet for this workshop.

Benefits of involving young people in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

There are many benefits to including young people in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers for the young people themselves, the organisation, existing staff within the organisation and the candidates.

Benefits to young people

Developing skills, knowledge and experience for the future:

Children and young people have the opportunity to gain a range of experience and skills for learning and development in a work environment which may help prepare young people for their future.

The experience of being involved in interviewing candidates provides them with valuable knowledge and skills for when they find themselves being interviewed for employment, volunteering opportunities or college/university.

It provides opportunities to gain accreditation or recognition of their involvement. The experience can make a valuable addition to their CVs/job application forms (or Records of Achievement) and they can call on a professional from the organisation to provide a job reference (or similar) should they need one.

Developing skills, knowledge and experience for the present:

Improving interpersonal and communication skills with adults and peers, verbal, non-verbal and presentation skills as they witness how information is presented to an interview panel and they themselves may also prepare and present information to different audiences. They may also learn new skills like team work, negotiation.

debating and problem solving, but also create the conditions whereby young people are more likely to be committed to making decisions work.

Improve relationships across friendship or user groups and with staff.

It's enjoyable, interesting and fun!

It supports the participation and empowerment of young people. It can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility: their involvement will help to build an understanding of the world around them and encourage their active participation and citizenship in other areas of their lives.

Children and young people's involvement is key to continually developing a needs-led approach. Their involvement gives them a greater understanding of their own needs and opinions, as well as the skills and opportunity to express them.

Increasing a sense of purpose, self-esteem and confidence:

Young people can see that their contribution makes a difference, is valued and that they have directly influenced appointing the strongest candidates into the services. High-quality involvement and feedback builds trust and relationships with staff. With professionals valuing and respecting them, the experience has a very positive impact on young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Children and young people receive recognition/reward for their involvement in the recruitment process and they have a sense of achievement in a job well done

Enabling young people to have their say can often make them feel more empowered.

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. It creates a better balance of power between young people and professionals.

It can create a virtuous cycle as the organisation is more likely to appoint staff who respect children and young people and then young people are more likely to respect the staff.

Young people can also develop a sense of belonging (to the organisation) and ownership (of the process/staff) Young people can learn more about the agency/organisation.

There can be improved outcomes for children and young people, as they are able to influence and have their say on services which affect them and ensuring the organisation/project considers what young people want from staff. This in turn may result in young people being more confident in seeking help when they need it and in using services when they are offered.

Benefits to candidates:

Young people's involvement also means that candidates will:

Have an opportunity to interact with the children and young people that they may be working with or for and to **demonstrate their practical ability and interpersonal skills** with the young people. They will be afforded the opportunity to give a truer reflection of their character and how they would interact with young people in practice than they would if only speaking with adults. They will have a better understanding that how they interact with children and young people is a crucial part of the job they are applying for.

Have a **realistic role preview** for those who haven't previously worked with children.

Have a better understanding of your **organisation's commitment** to young people's participation, and that you value it and take it seriously.

Once selected and appointed they will have a **positive sense of endorsement** from young people.

If they are not selected they will gain from being able to **receive direct feedback** from children and young people.

Benefits to the organisation:

It helps to show your commitment to children and young people's participation in a meaningful way. It helps organisations to demonstrate respect for children's rights in action (in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child) and provide tangible evidence and endorsement of the UNCRC in practice, which may be relevant for inspections by statutory bodies.

Broadening participation also makes **recruitment a more thorough**, effective and inclusive process. Children and young people bring a varied perspective and skill set to the interview panel which differs to that of professionals. They may look for qualities in a candidate that professionals may not look for, and therefore strengthen and refine the interview process.

It gives a positive and powerful message to existing staff, potential new recruits, funders, partner organisations, and other young people, that the involvement and views of young people are at the heart of decision-making in your organisation and that their input is valued, taken seriously and has a real impact.

You can **see first-hand** how candidates interact with children and young people and there is more likelihood that you will recruit the best candidate for the role. Having staff that have been able to demonstrate their ability to interact positively with children and young people will inevitably make for a more accessible and relevant service for its users. **Improved service delivery** can assist in improving outcomes for children and young people.

It helps to build **stronger working relationships** between adults and young people.

Benefits to existing staff include:

Staff within the organisation **develop new skills**, (e.g. communication, listening and creative skills) from working with children and young people in a formal setting.

It gives staff **greater insight** into young people's views by communicating with and listening to them.

It helps to **build positive relationships between young people and staff**. It gives an insight into children and young people's views and concerns – staff develop a wider understanding of children's wishes, feelings and opinions through exploring new subjects together, for example the qualities they want in staff. This can help adults to be more effective in meeting their needs and in shaping policy and practice.

Challenges to involving young people in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

Involving children and young people in recruitment and selection of staff/volunteers does not just happen organically. There are a number of issues that may pose challenges to doing this:

It requires **resources** including staff time for planning, recruitment, training and support for the young people and may require some type of reward or payment in recognition of the time they have given up to participate in this process. Having funds available for transport, refreshments, reimbursement and any access needs (e.g. a sign language interpreter) is very important and needs to be confirmed early in the process. Time needs to be allocated for a debrief on the process once it is finished, so that the positives can be discussed and also any negatives in order to continuously refine it for the next occasion.

If young people receive a monetary reward, there may be a **negative impact on welfare benefits** they are in receipt of. Young people, therefore, need specialist advice on this from reputable advice centres and organisations should link the young person with such centres.

Ensuring **legal compliance** with Employment Law. All organisations need to comply with Employment Law and it can take time to ensure that young people fully understand what this means. Part of the training for young people needs to cover the legal obligations and duties of recruiting organisations.

Adult attitudes towards young people's participation may be an issue. This includes organisational management and staff as well as the management committee/Board of Trustees. If any of the adults do not fully understand why young people are involved or are not fully 'bought into' it, this will be apparent and be a barrier to the genuine participation of young people in the process.

Negative dynamics either between among the young people or between the young people and adults. All groups have dynamics, positive and negative, so it is important

that all of those involved in the recruitment process are facilitated to build positive dynamics, which can be achieved through team building, training and support from appropriate staff.

It requires **clarity** about the role young people have: it's really important that the professionals and young people are absolutely clear about **the role and weighting** of the panel(s) and that this is agreed at the beginning of the process.

Getting all the **information** from the professionals and to the young people is also extremely important and can sometimes be a challenge. The job description/person specification, interview date(s) and schedules etc. Ideally candidates' application forms and any other relevant material should be available to the young people at the earliest opportunity.

Arranging the **date and the timings** to have the minimum impact on the young peoples' education/work commitments can be difficult and requires some flexibility from all parties. Often schools/colleges are very supportive because of the positive nature of the experience but it is really important to consider the young people's needs and commitments elsewhere (e.g. caring responsibilities).

Decision making Vs decision taking: Ultimately the decision to select and appoint lies with the organisation, which may be challenged by a candidate on that (potentially resulting in a case being taken to an employment tribunal). So there is a difference between being involved in decision making and decision taking. However, It's important that the young people are involved in the final deliberations so that they can see first-hand the impact of their feedback and they can hear the professionals' assessment of the candidates.

It is vital that the young people receive feedback for the contribution that they have made and are invited to give feedback on the process. Also, it is really important that they are told when the candidate has accepted the post or, if they don't, that an offer has been made to the second-choice candidate.