



Involving Children and Young People in Recruitment & Selection

Guidance on good practice approaches and a suggested timeline of how to implement them.

Written by Lancashire Participation Network for all partners.



Introduction

The subject of how to effectively involve children and young people (CYP) in the recruitment and selection of staff was one raised within Lancashire Participation Network.

The Network is a collection of operational and strategic staff across different teams and services both within Education and Children's Services within Lancashire County Council and our partner agencies and commissioned services. All members have an interest in the meaningful participation of CYP and furthering learning and practice in this area.

This good practice guidance has been written collectively and reflects our current understanding of how to do this well.

Involving CYP in recruitment and selection is an activity that happens very regularly across lots of different organisations and at all levels of role. It's also a practical and tangible activity for CYP to be part of with lots of opportunity for creativity, often with a reasonably quick turnaround, so the evidence of their involvement and influence over the process is quick and relatively simple.

If you have further questions regarding this guidance, please contact participation@lancashire.gov.uk

How could CYP be involved in recruitment?

The most common ways CYP are often involved are:

- Through joining a panel as a member alongside adults and scoring responses to questions against agreed criteria
- Through forming a CYP Panel that meet separately to other aspects of the interview (adult panels, tasks, presentations etc.) and scoring responses to questions against agreed criteria
- Submitting a question or series of questions and scoring criteria that an adult panel ask and score on their behalf
- Setting a task for the candidates
- Asking candidates to prepare an activity or a presentation
- Being part of an informal welcoming committee where they are interact with candidates before or during the process

Things to consider before you recruit to a post

- If the role is new, can CYP be part of writing the job description and person specification? Or can they adapt a current one to ensure the experience, skills and knowledge of the candidate match what they would prioritise alongside the expectations of the organisation and recruiting service?
- Could CYP be part of articulating or promoting the opportunity? A good example could be CYP making a short video of the key criteria they are looking for and introducing what they'd like to see from the successful candidate.

Things to consider when you are ready to advertise

- **Really think about how to involve CYP at this stage to give plenty of time for it to be meaningful!**
- Consider how appropriate it is for young people to be involved and consider approaches that work for the particular post. For example, if you're recruiting over a number of days with a large number of candidates, or conducting cycles of recruitment, can CYP submit a question and scoring criteria rather than being physically present? We need to be mindful of the time CYP might have to take out of education, work or other commitments they have and avoid these clashes wherever possible. If possible, can interviews take place towards the end of a day, into the evening, or in holiday periods?
- Is it reasonable to have CYP involved in shortlisting as well as the interview process? Ideally young people would be involved throughout but you may need to consider the time commitment of this. Even if they're not involved in everything, it's helpful for CYP to know which parts of the process they won't be part of but have an awareness that it's taking place.
- Think about who the young people are who would be best suited to being involved. Do they need to have experience of working with the role being recruited to or can they be briefed on this? Can you approach young people with this experience to strengthen the process? That might mean going to speak to a different service, group or organisation to offer them the opportunity and identify CYP who could be involved.
- Think about what young people may be best to assess and ask them how they'd like to do this. Is it a front-line role and so they need to focus more on communication, rapport, commitment, energy? Or a more strategic role and so you want to focus on experience, ambitions, goals and partnership work?
- What weighting or influence will children and young people have over their aspect of the process? How will their input or scoring be combined with others'? This should be clearly outlined when approaching young people so they know the boundaries of

their involvement and the weighting their influence will have. Ideally, any young person contributing to a panel alongside adults should have the same weighting. If the panel is a separate aspect alongside others, it should have a proportionate and meaningful weighting (minimum 25%). If adults will take into account CYP's feedback, but ultimately make the final decision with no clear weighting defined, CYP need to be aware this is the case.

When you know you're involving CYP in the process and CYP have been identified:

Before the recruitment process begins:

- Consider when children and young people would be available to be involved. Negotiate dates, times, format (online or in person) and venues. Ensure CYP have appropriate permission and support to be excused from commitments if absolutely necessary. Formal letters from the organisation may be required as evidence for school, college or employers.
- We need to ensure children and young people are adequately trained for the role and if possible are offered accreditation or acknowledgement for their time, skills and experience. Suggestions on how this can be found in Lancashire County Council's Reward and Recognition Guidance. Ideally CYP will have already completed training on recruitment and selection that covers issues such as impartiality and bias, objective decision making and justification of scoring.
- The practicalities of the process are agreed (timings, format, number of candidates, tasks, presentations, questions and who will support the children and young people involved?)
- Have young people been fully briefed on what the role is, the key knowledge, skills and experience required, and they understand the scoring criteria of any questions they are asking. This may be better to happen within the week before the interviews so the information is fresh in their minds, some CYP may need this closer to the event, or a reminder before the interviews begin. If they are setting the question themselves, they will require support to devise this as well as what an answer would be expected to include and a scoring framework. What has also worked well is allowing CYP to ask a 'settling in' question first that may not be scored, something that helps them get to know the candidate more personally but still has relevance to the role. This can help the panel and the candidate relax into the more formal content!
- Are you aware of any additional or learning needs for the CYP? Have you spoken to them about these and considered how appropriate support can be provided? Ideas might include large print information, a scribe to support, fidget toys being available to aid focus, any printed documents on a particular colour paper or using tick boxes against key criteria rather than expecting written notes. Also consider the schedule for the session and incorporate regular short breaks to aid concentration.

- Ensure candidates have any prior information they need regarding the expectations of the CYP's aspect of the process. From experience, we find that candidates often find this the most daunting and unfamiliar part of an interview so some reasonable prep and guidance on what to expect is helpful (i.e., is it an assessment of their values, skills, experience, a task) – fewer surprises on the day usually yield stronger outcomes!

During the recruitment process:

- Take key feedback on each candidate after they have met the CYP to keep that fresh and authentic.
- Have an adult available to support the CYP's panel or group. They may need to be challenged on consistency of decision making and have support in referring back to notes made and how to clearly articulate their decisions.
- Allow time for young people to be part of the deliberations after and if possible, bring panels together to share their findings.
- If the outcome can be determined at the time, and it's appropriate for CYP to do so, consider allowing them to contact the successful candidate with an adult supporting to offer them the post. If CYP can know the outcome but need to keep it confidential for a period of time to allow candidates to be contacted, ensure the CYP know this.

After the recruitment process is over:

- Make sure you feedback the outcome to CYP. This ideally should be as soon as possible once interviews have concluded. If the successful candidate(s) is different to the one(s) CYP recommended, ensure reasoning for decisions been shared so CYP can understand this. Some points to consider in feeding back to CYP include:

What did you agree with that I said?

What, if anything, surprised you and why?

Did you disagree with anything? If so, what and why?

Has it influenced your views in any way? If so, how?

What have you decided?

What is happening next and when will it happen?

- CYP should have the opportunity to feedback on the process themselves and make recommendations for future. What the CYP have learned, understood or can do differently as a result of the process is worth capturing as evidence of impact. This could be through a short survey or by capturing short quotes from the CYP.
- If any reward and recognition has been agreed as part of the process, CYP should ideally receive this on the day they take part but if not, at least within a week of the activity taking place.