

RESOURCE

**Solihull
Children's Fund**



**The
Children's
Society**



Involving Children in Recruiting Staff

Contents

Contents2

Introduction.....3

Getting Started4

Preparation.....5

Training Toolkit.....7

Practical Considerations.....10

Conclusion.....11

Appendix 1: Children's Panel Interview Checklist.....12

Appendix 2: Icebreakers.....13

Appendix 3: Recruitment Steps.....16

Appendix 4: Open and Closed Questions.....17

Appendix 5: Equal Opportunities.....18

Contact Details.....20

Introduction

The Children's Society is committed to the active involvement of children in the services it provides. Through work at Solihull Children's Fund, staff have developed effective ways of involving children in the recruitment and selection of staff.

At the Children's Fund, children have been involved in the recruitment process for all posts, whether face-to-face delivery, management or administration. We believe that this helps us to select the staff who are best at relating with children and are passionate about this work.

This guidance details how the Children's Fund staff have trained children in the recruitment and selection process for staff and organised interviews to accommodate this. It is intended to help other agencies begin to do the same.

This guide uses the term "child" and "children" because most of this work has been developed in primary schools. However, the content is also appropriate to young people and has been used with young people up to 14 years of age.

Getting Started

When the Children's Fund (The Children's Society) advertises vacant posts, applicants are asked to submit a child friendly summary of their application as well as the standard application form. The summary should be interesting to children under 13 years and can be in paper or electronic form. This gives the children the opportunity to learn something about each candidate before the interview.

After short listing, the candidates are informed by letter that 2 panels will interview them i.e. practitioners and children. Any details about a presentation to the children's panel are clearly stated in the letter.

Children who are interested in getting involved need to be identified and invited to join the training. Potential participants have been selected in a variety of ways: through school council, after school clubs or youth groups.

It is recommended that between 3 to 5 children take part in the training so that different tasks can be shared and allows for possible absences.

Preparation

Children should be well prepared for the interview and briefed about:-

- The job the candidates are being interviewed for and what it may entail (job description)
- The kind of qualities the organisation would be looking for in the candidates (scenarios can be used for this).
- Children should think about and formulate the questions to ask each candidate. They could also devise their own marking scheme for each question.
- **Appendix 1** shows an example of a marking sheet developed by the children at the Children's Fund. This sheet lists each quality, and each is scored during the interview as met, partially met or not met at all.

Time and Venue

Interview times and dates should be centred around the children i.e. not in school time, better in school holidays or after school. Time should be given between each interview for the children to digest information and prepare for the next candidate. A 20-minute slot for each candidate works well, as this allows for a 15-minute interview and a 5-minute discussion. Depending on the number of short listed candidates, this may be a long session so it is worth considering splitting the children's panel interviews over a couple of days/sessions.

The room should be set out to the children's liking so that they are comfortable and feel at ease, however, candidates with special needs should be accommodated. Little things like refreshments readily available are always helpful.

Structure of the Interview

There should be a good balance of involvement between the young people and candidate during the interview. The format used previously has been a mixture of introductions, presentation from the candidate and a question and answer session. A staff member should be in the room at all times assisting the children with writing notes, time keeping and giving moral support if needed. This staff member should not ask questions or be drawn into taking a lead.

Scoring Each Candidate

During the preparation, the young people need to decide how they will score the answers. Our children have come up with two systems: a 2 star rating or marking out of 3 as below.

- 0 The candidate didn't want to answer the question
- 1 Ok only slightly touched on the answer
- 2 Good answer but left out maybe crucial words – didn't explain fully
- 3 Excellent gave excellent answer – gave lots of examples

The children use a checklist to mark the answers (see appendix 1). After each candidate has left the room, the young people will have time to score all the questions and fill out the checklist, which can be used as feedback to the candidate.

After all the candidates have been seen, a broad decision is made as to whether each candidate is appointable to work with children, and any candidate who is justifiably not appointable is removed from further consideration. Then all the scores are added up for each candidate. The candidates will then be ranked from the highest to the lowest score.

Feedback

The children should be given ample time to feedback their thoughts for each candidate to a representative from the adult panel shortly after the final interview has finished. They should also be reassured that their decision will carry an equal weight with the other panels decisions when it comes to a final selection. The successful candidate will be judged to be appointable by both panels and have the highest combined score.

The Training Toolkit

Children need the opportunity to be prepared for recruiting staff so that they can take part to the best of their ability. Training can be delivered in one day or broken down into shorter sessions over a number of weeks.

These training activities have been delivered to children aged between 9 to 13 years. They can be tailored to meet the individual needs of children in the group and the facilitators own delivery style.

It is helpful to start each session with an icebreaker. These are particularly useful for a group who don't know each other, or if the adult facilitator doesn't know the children. Suggested icebreakers can be seen in **appendix 2**.

The following activities have been used to prepare children to be actively involved in the recruitment process.

Activity A: Stages of recruitment and selection

The stages of the whole recruitment and selection process are listed in child friendly terms (see **appendix 3**) This sheet can be photocopied, laminated and cut out.

The children can do this in small groups or in pairs. They have to consider the order in which the cards should be placed to reflect the whole recruitment process.

- Use the statements at the start of this section to explain what the different terms mean
- When children feedback, discuss some of their reasons for their thinking.
- After getting feedback show and explain to the children the right order of this process.

Activity B: World's Best / Worst Friend

This activity can be done either in small groups or in pairs.

A large sheet of paper is needed, it's a good idea to draw around a child lying down on the floor, if not a freehand drawing will be fine.

The children will write words or sentences around the outline relating to what makes a best or worst friend. For example; friendly, polite, nasty, appearance, clothes etc.

A useful follow up to this activity is looking at the world's best / worst worker. The same format as before but looking at the characteristics of what they think a worker should be.

Activity C: Interviewing for a Friend / Worker

This is a quick exercise made up of pieces of card with questions. This will get the children thinking about the difference between open and closed questions. **Appendix 4** lists some useful starter questions.

The group should be prompted to think about what type of question will find out more information from the candidate. The children can put this into practice by pretending they are going to interview a friend and formulate 5 questions they would like to ask. This activity will:

- develop team building skills
- practicing asking questions
- understand the difference between open and closed questions and when to use them.

Working in pairs or small groups, take turns to be the interviewer and interviewee by asking open and closed questions. Roles are then reversed. When each pair / group have finished their role-play, discuss and feedback, concentrating on the questions.

Note that through role-play 'the penny often drops' about the difference between these types of questions.

During discussion, both parties are asked how it felt going through the process of being interviewer and the interviewee e.g. were you nervous? If so, why? This makes the children think about how adult candidates might feel when they are been interviewed.

Activity D: Active listening

This exercise will focus more on active listening. The facilitators could demonstrate this by staging a role play about good and bad listening,

showing body language, expression, tone of voice, eye contact etc. The adults will ask the children questions about the role-play.

What were the differences between the good and bad? This should bring all the above points up.

The children will repeat the first exercise, this time remembering all the points about showing the candidates they are listening.

Activity E: Equal Opportunities

Working in groups the children should write down all the ways that people are different e.g. skin colour, hair, eyes, age and ethnicity, culture and interests. The groups then feedback and discuss how this may affect people applying for jobs.

Each group is then given three case studies to read and answer the questions (**see appendix 5**).

Ask each group to share their thoughts and answers. Individuals will have their own opinion about who would they choose for the job, so it's the discussion around the whole exercise that's important. Any pre judgments that children disclose should be challenged in a non-threatening manner.

Practical Considerations

Consent

Parental consent is needed in order for the children to participate in this initiative.

As stated in section 3 interviews should be preferably carried out not in school time. However, if there is an interview during school time then the facilitator will need parent and school permission to allow that child to have the allocated time off school.

Transport

The children will need to be able to get to the venue for the training and the interviews. If a mini bus is used two members of staff are required, one driver and one escort. If a car is used it is advisable that no more than 3 young people should be transported on a journey.

Refreshments

Refreshments will be needed during the training and the interviews. It is important any dietary requirements are obtained.

Conclusion

The benefits of involving children in staff recruitment are:

- Children can directly influence how a service is established and delivered.
- It reinforces to potential candidates the importance of actively involving children within the service.
- This provides an opportunity for services to ensure that candidates can demonstrate their ability to communicate and engage appropriately with children.
- The children will gain new skills through the recruitment process. In turn, this will increase their knowledge and understanding around this topic.
- Children will increase in confidence and self esteem.
- It promotes good positive working relationships between adults and children.

Appendix 1: Children's Panel interview checklist

Key:-	
Fully Met	✱ ✱
Partially Met	✱
Not Met	X

Candidate No:	1	2	3	4
1. Child Friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Good Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Good Explanation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Experience With Young People	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Good Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Patience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Body Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2: Ice Breakers

The following exercises can be used as icebreakers at the start of a group session to introduce people, share names and have some fun.

Exercise 1 – The Sun Always Shines On

- Get chairs into a circle. You will need one less chair than the number in the group.
- The facilitator starts to tell the group what will happen. They say “the sun always shines on people who have brown hair” then everyone with brown hair has to get up and change places. The facilitator has to try and get a seat.
- The person left standing starts again with a different reason why the sun shines on them.
- Examples of what to include could be: -
 - If you are wearing blue?
 - If you feel happy?
 - If you have a birthday in May?

Exercise 2 – Famous People

- Everyone in the group has the name of a famous person written on a post it note on their back.
- They have to walk around the room asking other members of the group about the person whose name is on their back. The other person can only answer “yes” or “no”.

Exercise 3 – Find Someone Who

- Prepare a sheet beforehand with a number of questions that could be asked by children to find out more about those in the group.
- Find someone who:-
 - travelled here by bus
 - knows the name of their MP
 - likes chocolate
 - supports Birmingham City Football Club
 - can tell a funny joke
- The children are all given a copy of the questions and they have to go round the group to get all the answers.

- The game can be made more competitive by offering a prize for the first person to finish.

Exercise 4 – Name and Action Chain

- Get group to sit or stand in a circle.
- The first person in the group says their name and does an action.
- The second person then repeats the first person's name and repeats the action before adding their own name and action.
- The third person then repeats the names and actions of the previous two in order and adds their own.
- This continues all the way round the circle until the final person has to remember all the names and actions.

Exercise 5 – Budge Budge

- The children and facilitator stand in a circle.
- The facilitator explains the game.
- The leader starts off game by walking over to one person saying "budge budge" and adding on the person's name. The worker swaps place with a child.
- The child then goes to another child and goes "budge budge (name)".
- The game continues until all the children have had a go.

Exercise 6 – Three Things I Would Take To a Desert Island

- Children and facilitators sit in a circle.
- The leader uses an object to pass around the circle i.e. a teddy /ball / fluffy dice.
- When the first child gets the object the leader says their name and asks, "If you were on a desert island what 3 things would you take with you".
- The child with the object states what 3 things they would take with them and then passes the object into the next person asking, "If you were on a desert island what 3 things would you take with you".
- Continue until everyone has had a go.

Exercise 7 – Fruit Basket

- The children sit in chairs in a circle.
- Each child is given a name of a fruit. You prepare cards with names of fruit in advance. There needs to be more than one of each of the fruits.
- The worker stands in the middle of the circle and calls out the name of a fruit e.g. apple. All of the children who are apples get up and have to change seats. The facilitator also needs to try to sit down.
- The child who does not find a place stands in middle of circle and calls out another name of fruit and again children have to change seats.
- The person standing in the middle can call out “fruit salad” at any time. When this happens all the children have to get up to swap places. They are not allowed to move to the chair next to them or back to their own chair.

Exercise 8 – Fives

- Children and facilitators stand in a circle.
- Explain to the children that you have to take it in turns to count up to 5.
- People can say 1 or 2 numbers at a time.
- Example: - the person will say number 1, the second person could say 2, 3 and then the third person could say 4. That would mean the fourth person would be the number 5 and therefore be out.
- When they are out, people have to crouch or sit down. The next person will start again from the beginning.
- The person left standing at the end is the winner.

Appendix 3: Recruitment Steps

1. There is a job with no-one to do it
2. Make a job description (what the person will do) and person specification (what things the person needs to do the job)
3. Advertise the vacancy in the newspapers
4. Interviewing people for the job
5. Shortlist the application forms
6. Telling someone they have got the job
7. Checking references and other checks
8. The person starts the job

Appendix 4: Open and Closed Questions

1. What is your favourite colour?
2. Is your favourite colour red?
3. What is your favourite food?
4. Do you like liver?
5. What is your favourite TV programme?
6. Do you like watching Eastenders?
7. What did you have for breakfast?
8. Did you have toast for breakfast?
9. What are your hobbies?
10. Do you like ballet?

Appendix 5: Equal Opportunites

1. Think of the following when discussing equal opportunities:
2. Will their gender (male/female) affect the job?
3. Will their age affect the job?
4. Will their ethnicity affect the job?
5. Will their disability affect the job?
6. Any other thoughts?
7. Out of the three candidates, which one would you offer the job to?

1. Hardip is a 45-year-old Asian female. Hardip has had quite a bit of experience working with children. She worked in a nursery for 4 years and now works part time in a school as a teaching assistant. Hardip would like to work as an assistant play worker as she feels she would like to offer her art and drama skills to the children.
2. Sarah is an 18-year-old white female. Sarah is a little bit deaf, and at times finds it hard to hear people. Sarah can hear them better if they stand close to her and she is excellent at lip reading. Sarah as just finished learning about childcare at college, and she would like this job as she likes playing with children and she has got an excellent imagination.
3. Tom is a 38-year-old black man. Tom has got a stutter, and is nervous around new groups of children and adults. When he gets to know people you hardly notice his stutter. Tom has worked with children for the past 15 years, Tom is very good teaching different sports to children.

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The Children's Society is a leading children's charity committed to making childhood better for all children in the UK.

Our network of centres and projects deliver specialist services for children throughout the country who face danger or disadvantage in their daily lives; children who are unable to find the support they need anywhere else.

Our schools work, children's centres and mentoring schemes help children in local communities develop the skills and confidence they need to make the most of their childhood and play a full part in society.

Our research and campaigning aims to influence the thinking of everyone - from people like you and me to politicians and decision makers - creating real change and making childhood better for all children.