The right choice

Involving children and young people in recruitment and selection

as long as it takes
Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the children and young people who contributed to this guide, and all of the others who regularly give their time and expertise to help Action for Children to recruit the best possible staff.

Special thanks to the children and young people who provided the amazing artwork that illustrates this guide, and the Action for Children staff who supported their involvement – Natalie Evans (Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team), Gill Rees (Neath Port Talbot Short Breaks), Dee Polacarz (Pembrokeshire Children’s Centre), and Katie Evans (Caerphilly Family Intervention Team).

Thanks also to James Parsons (www.crazycomicclub.co.uk), the artist who led the cartoon workshops.

Special thanks also to the young people who gave their time and expertise, as well as their energy and creativity, to ensure the redesign of this book was so successful. Well done and congratulations Terri Anne, Hannah, Rachael, Mark, and Nikki.

Finally, thanks to all the staff and projects who contributed ideas, resources and case studies, as well as their own personal experiences. Along with the young people’s drawings, comments, and design skills, this has been a key factor in bringing the text to life and grounding this resource guide firmly in Action for Children’s excellent day-to-day work.

Mark Benson
Action for Children Participation Manager
Preface to the new edition

Welcome to the new edition of The right choice.

We’re the design team of young people from the Canal Project in Kirkintilloch, near Glasgow. We’ve just been involved in interviewing for the new Action for Children Strategic Director for Scotland and Northern Ireland post, so we know a bit about recruitment as well.

Doing the interviews was a great opportunity; it made us feel grown-up and happy that our opinions were being listened to. It was a different opportunity to experience being on the other side of the interviewing process. All the people we worked with were really friendly, and when we met the adult panel we got to put our own opinions across and they took their time to listen to us.
They understood our thoughts and took on board our opinions with an open mind. This made us feel like we were valued in the process throughout the day.

We enjoyed the whole experience and learned loads from being involved – like confidentiality and equal opportunities, as well as what it’s really like to be in an interview.

We think it’s important that children and young people have the chance to be involved in interviews. It helps you prepare for the future and gives you a say about what kind of people get to work with other children and young people. Our experience of taking part in a recruitment panel made us feel important and that people actually listened to us. It really did prove that participation can work – and that young people can make good decisions about the people who make decisions in our lives.

So, why not use this guide to involve other children and young people and help them to feel important and listened to just like us?

We hope you enjoy this book and find it useful. We’re pretty proud of it – but after all, we did design it!

Terri Anne, Hannah, Rachael, Mark, and Nikki
Foreword by the Chief Executive

Children and young people have been an important part of the recruitment process at Action for Children for some years. From administrators to group workers, managers and directors to trustees, children and young people are routinely involved, and I am absolutely delighted to be able to introduce this guide to our approach.

Within these pages you will find a thoughtful and inclusive approach to involving children and young people in the recruitment and selection of staff. They will provide ideas and explanations to encourage staff new to this area of work, alongside food for thought for those with significant experience.

The guide outlines the approaches of several Action for Children projects, and is further brought to life by the personal contributions of those who have been interviewed by children and young people. I was interviewed by young people for my current role as Action for Children’s chief executive and I found this an enjoyable and positive experience, and that the searching, appropriate questioning of the young people made me feel very accountable.

At Action for Children, we are committed to making sure that children and young people participate meaningfully and effectively in what we do and how we do it.

This commitment means that they have a voice, that their involvement is clear and valued, and that they are firmly at the centre of all we do.

Children and young people played an important part in the production of this second edition of *The right choice*, and the new design and content reflects Action for Children’s new brand. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Clare Tickell
Action for Children Chief Executive
We think involving children and young people in recruitment and selection is important because we have the right to give our opinions and we reckon it gives children and young people an opportunity to have their say. We also think that children and young people bring different skills to interview panels, for example body language, seeing if candidates are patronising and if they are able to communicate and listen to children.

‘As a member of the children’s panel, I feel more grown up as I am getting the opportunity to interview and also discuss things with the adult panel. I think I now have more confidence and I feel that I am being listened to by adults.’ Shiloh

We have been involved in recruitment for a couple of years and we all think that we have learned new skills and become more confident. We have learned how to interview, how to listen and communicate, how to ask questions, how to collect information and make sense of it, how to discuss each candidate with the adult panel and how to make a final decision.

Not thinking of including young people in recruitment? You should be ashamed of yourself! Look, we’ve already told you how ultrasonic brilliant it is to involve us in recruitment and all the different brilliant views and skills we have that will make your project better and better. It’s not that hard to include us, so give it a try!

‘I have a dream! That young people will have their say in what goes on in the world! And that every child will have a safe and happy life!’ Luke

The young reporters are a group of young people aged 10–15 who are supported by the Action for Children Gloucestershire Participation Project.

Among their many roles, they assess funding applications and support disabled children and young people to become more active within their communities. The group has designed and facilitated a young person’s conference called ‘Active Involvement’, covering different issues young people face every day.

The young reporters have also been involved in the recruitment of Action for Children trustees in February 2007.

Foreword by the young reporters
The right choice design consultants

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Welcome to Action for Children’s guide to successfully involving children and young people in recruitment and selection. Whether you are experienced at involving children in recruitment or interested in trying it for the first time, this guide will help you to deliver a high-quality experience for all involved.

Aims

This guide aims to provide an overview of the recruitment and selection process, consider why it is important to involve children and young people, and provide the basic information and techniques to do this in an inclusive and empowering way.

In addition, this guide also sets out to:

- promote children and young people’s involvement in staff recruitment as a tangible, accessible and accountable method of participation
- provide the broad range of information and skills needed to successfully involve children and young people in the recruitment and selection process
- set out a step-by-step approach that considers the key elements of the process in a manageable and meaningful way
- provide a valuable resource that reinforces our commitment to involving children and young people in the services they receive, as well as supporting a learning and sharing culture that contributes to high-quality participation in Action for Children and beyond

The guide is organised into seven sections, directing staff through the essential elements that need to be considered when involving children and young people in the recruitment process.

Each section includes sample games and activities, which are given as starting points, offering ideas that can be developed or changed to suit the age, ability or interest of the children and young people involved.

You will also find comments from staff who have been interviewed by children and young people, as well as case studies, tips and advice drawn from individual experiences.

This guide isn’t designed to champion one definitive approach to involving children and young people in recruitment and selection. Instead, it aims to provide information, examples and guidance to inspire staff to be creative and tailor their approach to suit the particular setting and group or individual involved.

A groupwork model is used as it is a useful vehicle to discuss the process and examine positive methods of engagement. This may be directly transferable to some settings, whereas others may be more suited to involving individual young people.

It is important to be clear that individual young people can be as integral to the process as groups, and that any child or young person’s involvement can be as limited or extensive as they are comfortable with.

This guide is underpinned by a strong participation ethos, but isn’t a participation guide in itself. Similarly, although groupwork is used, groupwork practice will not be covered in detail, for example ground rules are flagged as an expectation but not discussed further (see appendix 6 for examples of dedicated groupwork publications).
How to use this guide

This guide is designed to be easy to read. We recommend that you spend time familiarising yourself with each element of the process by working through each section in turn, particularly if you are new to this area of work.

However, flicking to ‘From start to finish’ will give an overview of the preparation required in most situations as well as some key questions designed as a checklist for the big day. This section also includes an example groupwork training programme, sample guidance for the interview day, and some ideas about how to build on the experience.

As with all good participation work, remember to involve children or young people in as many areas as possible, make your methods inclusive and accessible, and don’t forget to evaluate what you do with your group or individual. This will allow you to gauge the success of your approach and continually improve your participation practice.

Recruitment and selection is a formal process, but children and young people’s contribution to it can and should be fun and creative. Learning from mistakes and enjoying the process are important factors; they help build confidence and self-esteem and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Good luck!

Mark Benson
Action for Children Participation Manager
Setting the scene

This chapter looks at the political and cultural background to children and young people’s participation and involvement, and describes Action for Children’s commitment to participation and children’s rights. It highlights the key benefits surrounding children and young people’s role in recruitment and selection, examines the different stages of involvement, and considers some common anxieties and concerns.

Why involve children and young people in recruitment and selection?

Action for Children has previously undergone a process of review and reflection – Building on Success – aimed at investigating how we can make the greatest impact in the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families into the 21st century. The participation agenda is at the heart of Building on Success. This defines a commitment and strategic approach to the involvement of children and young people in all areas of their lives, including the recruitment of the staff who support them.

Involving children in the recruitment process is also underpinned by Action for Children’s endorsement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children’s involvement in the recruitment process is a key element in their ability to influence decision making as well as the support and services they receive. It demonstrates children’s rights in action, and exemplifies a number of key articles, particularly Article 12 (‘the right to be listened to, and have your views taken into account, when decisions are made that affect you’).

A little bit of history...

In 1869, when the Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson established a refuge for homeless children in London, he said ‘We do not wish to establish an institution – the name on which we have decided is “The Children’s Home”.’ In his day, this was a radical statement of objectives – providing vulnerable children with the quality of care found in a caring, loving home environment. It was about putting ‘children at the centre’.

The values of Action for Children today have a direct connection with those early founding principles. Indeed, when Stephenson established the first Children’s Home outside London, with the aim of providing a healthy environment (on the Lancashire moors, near Bolton), the children were involved in building the houses that would accommodate them. Perhaps this is an example of ‘participation’ that we would not seek to emulate today!

Stephenson was not only committed to providing care for children; he was a passionate campaigner and advocate of the rights of children, believing that the disadvantaged were entitled to safe care and nurture as well.
To demonstrate the positive impact of involving children and young people in recruitment and selection, a number of key points are included below:

**Benefits to children and young people:**
- recognition and respect – their ideas are valued, can facilitate change and influence the services they receive
- experience and skills – they have opportunities for learning and development that will equip them for the future
- 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. High-quality involvement and feedback also builds trust and relationships with staff, and improves confidence and self-esteem.

**Benefits to staff:**
- skills development – new situations require staff to think creatively about the work they do and how they engage the children and young people they support
- relationship building – enables staff to focus their work with children and young people on something other than their ‘primary need’
- 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

Each of the above contributes to building better relationships with children and young people and a greater insight into each individual’s unique situation. This assists professionals in the planning and provision of services that meet the needs of the children and young people in their care, and clearly has a direct impact on the safety of the children and young people they support.

I enjoyed doing the interviews. This is the first time I’ve done something like this. I’d do it again. I would recommend other people getting involved. I think it’s good to know how an interview goes because in life we are going to go through lots of different interviews and this will help us feel confident. I think this will make me feel better about doing interviews in future. I’ll know what I have to do and then won’t be nervous.

This is a good idea because it’s important to listen to young people. Young people have a different sense from adults – they can feel if the interviewee is really communicating with them or not, which is very important.

**Huda (16)**
Benefits to the organisation:

- improved service delivery – the increased involvement of children and young people helps to shape services to better meet their needs, and their involvement with recruitment and selection helps to recruit the right people!
- Article 12 in action – provides tangible evidence and endorsement of the UNCRC in practice
- clear messages to partner agencies, funders and potential employees – shows that children and young people are at the heart of what we do and have a direct influence on services

One of the key benefits to any childcare organisation is the ability to shape services according to the feedback and involvement of children and young people. This type of process provides further opportunities to hear children’s views and opinions, and, as a result, absorb new energy and ideas into the organisation. This provides evidence on which to base changes, increases accountability, and demonstrates responsiveness to children and young people’s needs.

At Action for Children, children are at the centre of all we do. Involving them in the recruitment and selection process ensures that we listen to their needs and views, which helps to shape our services to make a positive difference to their lives.

Karen Harvey
Action for Children Director of Performance Improvement and Inclusion Unit

What participation means to us

‘Routinely involving children and young people in staff recruitment’ is just one of the key commitments described in our participation strategy, What participation means to us.

What participation means to us explains our organisational commitment to the participation and involvement of children and young people in all that we do. Children and young people were involved in developing this strategy through Action for Children’s ‘Arts Bank’ initiative and the strategy booklet features art work as well as thoughts and comments from children and young people about what participation means to them.

What Participation means to us describes our understanding of participation and places it firmly within our commitment to children’s rights.

We believe participation is the active involvement of children and young people in experiences, opportunities, and decisions that affect their lives and their ability to fulfil their potential.

Participation can range from simple things, like having a say about meals or activities, to large pieces of work like campaigns, consultation events or residential trips. Our approach to participation reflects our commitment to ‘keeping the child at the centre of all we do’ and ensures that we maximise opportunities for our
I think that involving young people in recruitment is important for a number of reasons. Not only does it add depth and quality to the recruitment process, it also gives young people the opportunity to develop skills and increase in self-confidence. A very common response from young people involved in recruitment for the Keys Project, has been ‘I never believed I was capable of doing that!’

Significantly, I have frequently been told by interviewees that facing a panel of young people was the most difficult and challenging aspect of the whole recruitment process.

Finally, I would say that involving young people in our recruitment process sends a very clear message – that we respect young people enough to involve them in decisions about who we will employ to work with them.

Ed Robson
Project Manager
Action for Children Keys Project
Beyond Action for Children

Children and young people’s involvement is integral to a framework of key policies and initiatives developed by both the UK Government and the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Common to each nation is the endorsement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the drive to establish the post of children’s commissioner.

Participation across all four nations

Scotland

In Scotland, children and young people have statutory rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and society as a whole, in a number of significant areas. The legislative and policy framework for participation, and children and young people’s statutory rights under this framework, includes the following key legislation:

- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is the key legislation relating to children and young people in Scotland. It requires people making major decisions about children (defined as persons under the age of 18) to take into account children’s views. This provides children and young people with a statutory right to participate in many key decisions that affect their lives.

- Local authorities, the police, the NHS and other agencies deliver a wide range of services through the community planning process. These agencies all have a statutory duty under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to consult and cooperate with young people and youth work bodies in the design and delivery of their services. Statutory guidance has been produced to assist these agencies to encourage children and young people to participate in the community planning process (see appendix).

- The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003 requires the commissioner to ‘encourage the involvement of children and young people in the work of the commissioner’, including consulting ‘children and young people on the work to be undertaken by the commissioner’. Children and young people are also actively involved in the recruitment of the commissioner.

- Under the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 local authorities have a duty to consult community bodies and other relevant persons, including young people, in ‘preparing, reviewing and revising’ the local antisocial behaviour strategy. Statutory guidance is available to advise local authorities, the police and other agencies on how to develop and progress these strategies.

The Scottish Government has actively involved children and young people in the development of a number of key policies and strategies, for example the provision of free school meals, and the availability of healthier school meals, and the strategy to tackle alcohol misuse. In addition, Action for Children Scotland is currently participating in a major Scottish Parliament outreach programme, supporting young people from across Scotland to engage directly with the Scottish Parliament and to develop plans to engage directly with the work of the Parliament and promote positive change.

Wales

- The UNCRC was first incorporated into legislation in the Children Act 1989 that came into force in Wales in 1991.

- The National Assembly for Wales was established in 1999 and adopted the UNCRC as a founding principle for all children’s policy making. It developed seven core aims, based on the UNCRC, to ensure all policy and practice relating to children and young people is underpinned by it. Core Aim 5 includes that children and young people ‘are listened to, treated with respect’.
Wales appointed the first children’s commissioner in March 2001 and also established Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales in the same year.

Under the Education Act 2002, the National Assembly, via The Schools Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, made it obligatory for all primary and secondary schools in Wales to have school councils.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to providing citizen-focused services and participation of children and young people is a high priority. The sections relating to Wales in the Children Act 2004 made statutory the cooperation of local partners in Children and Young People Partnerships, and the production of Children and Young People’s Plans. The statutory guidance Shared Planning for Better Outcomes gives a statutory basis for children and young people’s participation. The Welsh Assembly Government produced guidance, Local Participation Strategies 0–25, and all partnerships have produced local participation strategies.

The Welsh Assembly Government is a partner in the All Wales Participation Consortium and has funded a participation unit. As part of the work of the unit, National Standards for Participation in Wales were launched in 2007. The participation standards were developed in partnership with children and young people and designed to provide a means for inspecting and assessing participatory practice.

Currently the National Assembly for Wales is scrutinising two pieces of draft legislation. The first is to give children the rights to make special educational needs (SEN) appeals and claims of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales. The second is the Children and Families Measure, in which local authorities must make, and publish, arrangements for the participation of children in its decision making.

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England

The Children Act 1989 came into force in 1991 in England. It set the stage for children to increase their influence in decision making by emphasising the importance of consultation, children’s needs, and keeping young people informed of what will happen to them. The legislation also provides for arrangements to be made to establish the views of a child with complex needs or communication difficulties.

Paragraph 3.10 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001 states the same opportunities for involvement and participation should be made for children and young people attending special schools, with additional support or time to express their views where necessary.

The action plan *Learning to Listen: core principles for the involvement of children and young people* was published by DfES in June 2002 to implement the Government’s core principles on involving children and young people. Each government department was encouraged to develop its own participation action plan.

The Children Act 2004 gave legal force to the Every Child Matters Five Outcomes and created the role of the children’s commissioner to promote awareness of the views and interests of children (and certain groups of vulnerable young adults) in England.

The Childcare Act 2006 provides that local authorities are under a new duty to have regard to the views of young children in developing services, applying Article 12 of the UNCRC to younger as well as older children.
In England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families launched The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (December 2007), bringing together a number of existing policy announcements from previous reviews into a single plan to develop the policy framework across education, youth and family support, safeguarding, and safe play. Among the key themes were: the development of an entitlement for all young people to participate in positive activities that develop their talents, and the improvement of the quality and range of places for young people to go and things for them to do.

Northern Ireland

- The Children (NI) Order 1995 Volume 5 Guidance, paragraph 6.7 provides an example in which arrangements are made to establish the views of children with communication difficulties.

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places particular equality duties on statutory authorities to involve children and young people (as one of a number of ‘equality’ groups) in decisions about the services and policies that affect them.

- The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 was used to establish the office of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). It includes various powers and the mandate to undertake three main areas of work: promoting children’s rights, complaints and legal action, and research and inquiries.

- NICCY recently published a comprehensive update of its Children’s Rights Review (NI) and launched five key priorities that will drive its work from 2008–2011, including:
  - play and leisure (‘having safe places to go’)
  - having your say (‘being heard and making a difference’)
  - wellbeing and mental health (‘getting the right mental health services’)
  - protection (addressing child abuse in particular)
  - equal treatment (tackling discrimination).

In 2007, the Children and Young People’s Unit of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) demonstrated government commitment to promoting children and young people’s participation, and allocated funding to form The Participation Network (TPN). TPN focuses on developing the capacity of statutory agencies, local government and government departments in Northern Ireland to fulfil their duties to effectively engage children and young people in public decision making.
The following items are highlighted in more detail as they are particularly relevant to both children’s participation and involvement, and to this ‘how to’ guide.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the world’s most widely accepted human rights agreement. It was ratified by the UK Government in December 1991. This means that the UK Government agreed to make all laws, policy and practice compatible with the UNCRC. It is now the most widely accepted human rights agreement with over 190 countries signed up. The UNCRC was designed completely around children’s lives and needs, and includes, for example, the right to play (A31) and the right to education (A28).

The UNCRC applies to all children aged 0–18 years old, and can be split into four main areas:

Playing a part: being included in decisions, freedom to join with others, freedom to express ourselves, and freedom to receive information from many sources.

Reaching potential: the need to develop as best we can, and the importance of education, family, culture, and identity in our lives.

Living well: the right to survival, including basic needs – food, shelter, and standard of living.

Being free from harm: protection from abuse, neglect and economic exploitation, torture, abduction and prostitution.

In total, there are 54 articles in the UNCRC. Articles 1 to 42 are statements of children’s rights, for example:

- Article 12 gives children and young people the right to express their views, and be listened to.
- Article 13 gives every child the right to freedom of expression – so long as they respect the rights of others.
- Article 23 gives disabled children the right to active participation in their community.

Articles 43 to 54 explain how governments and international organisations will work to implement the UNCRC.

The UNCRC should be seen in the context of other human rights charters and conventions, which state that everyone is entitled to rights regardless of their race, colour, sex, or other differences in status or background.

The UNCRC is the gold standard by which laws and policies should be judged but it does not form part of the law. However, all human rights (including those of children) are protected in law by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the UK Human Rights Act (see appendix).

For more information, see You have the right, an Action for Children film and resource guide featuring a film made by children, and a number of activities designed to help children explore children’s rights in fun and creative ways. This resource is available internally from the Action for Children library.
Outcomes frameworks

In England, Every Child Matters (ECM) is an example of the outcomes framework approach in operation across the UK. ECM is a government initiative designed to improve the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to age 19. The approach aims to put 'better outcomes for children' at the centre of all policies and approaches involving children's services.

The five outcomes are:
- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve through learning
- make a positive contribution to society
- achieve economic wellbeing

'Making a positive contribution' is one of the key outcomes in the Every Child Matters agenda which sets out to build services around the needs of children and young people. There is an expectation that children and young people have a voice in services they use, are engaged in decision making and are supported in making positive contributions to their community.

This outcomes-based focus is reflected across the UK.

Wales has agreed a set of outcomes and outcome measures under each of the seven core aims that the 22 Strategic Children and Young People's Partnerships will be reporting on annually. Further work is to be done on outcome measures for inclusion in the next phase of Children and Young People Plans in 2011.

Scotland has adopted eight key outcomes for children and young people in the 'Getting it right for every child' process. This road map for improving children’s services, and positive outcomes for children, clearly states that children should be 'included' and have access to high-quality services and assistance to overcome barriers and inequality.

In Northern Ireland, Our Children and Young People, Our Pledge – the 10-year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland (2006–2016), outlines the Government’s commitment to obtaining the views of children and young people in Northern Ireland on matters that impact on them, which all Northern Ireland government departments have signed up to. The strategy sets out the vision and a framework of six outcomes to indicate that children and young people in Northern Ireland are:
- healthy
- enjoying
- learning and achieving
- living in safety and with stability
- experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing
- contributing positively to community and society
- living in a society that respects their rights

The latter outcome is unique to Northern Ireland.

Each of these outcomes-focused programmes demands that all organisations that provide services to children work together in more integrated and effective ways to ensure that children are safe and supported to reach their potential.

It is also important to reference a number of inquiry reports that have highlighted the importance of listening to, and involving, children and young people, particularly with reference to safeguarding and child protection. There is growing acknowledgment that speaking to, listening to and involving children can help ensure their protection.

One of the most significant is Choosing with Care (The Warner Report, 1992), which makes recommendations about the recruitment and selection of staff, particularly in relation to those children who live away from home or who have substantial unsupervised contact with staff. Subsequent reports, including Utting (1997), Kent (1997), and Waterhouse (2000) have often supported and called for the full implementation of Choosing with Care (see appendix).
There is also a broader context of children and young people’s engagement, characterised by the momentum of participation and involvement work across the voluntary and private sector, including: the citizenship agenda, the development of school councils and youth parliaments, and the ‘Votes at 16’ campaign, as well as the development of key participation and involvement training resources, standards and toolkits, like ‘Ready Steady Change’, ‘Total Respect’, ‘Hear by Right’ and ‘Youth at the Table’.

As you can see, it is widely accepted that offering children and young people the opportunity to make choices, take responsibility, and develop their ownership of places and services helps to equip them for active participation within civil society, and gives them the opportunity to contribute to their community in a positive way.

**Why should we routinely involve children in this type of experience?**

Children and young people told Action for Children Kirklees Children’s Fund that one of the top factors in them receiving the best preventative work possible is that ‘great grown-ups’ are able to work with them.

In order to shape children and young people-led services, it is essential that children and young people are involved in the recruitment process of the adults who will be working both with and for them. It is only they who can truly decide whether these adults are ‘great’ enough to deliver the parts of the work that will directly affect them.

In our experience, children’s comments have been the distinguishing factor in deciding between two similarly suitable candidates.

**Important things to remember when involving children and young people in recruitment:**

Always ask the children and young people in the feedback if they would work with the candidate again in the future. If the answer is ‘maybe’ or ‘no’, this response obviously needs further questioning.

Make sure the children have thorough and appropriate training (particularly around equal opportunities) to ensure their involvement is meaningful.

Children can be involved in as early or late a stage of the recruitment as necessary – from advertisement to panel.
How does it feel to be involved in recruitment and selection?

'It makes you feel that you have accomplished something. It makes you feel that you are listened to. It makes you feel excited and important and happy. Grateful!'

Why should people involve children and young people in interviews?

'Because the people that they are going to employ are going to be working with children so they need to be happy with the person that gets the job'

How does it affect the people who are going for the job?

'It gives them an idea and understanding of what they need to do when working with children and young people'

'We were asked to do the interviews because one key worker left and we needed a new person. It was important that we got involved because we might have different skills to offer.'

Children and young people at Action for Children’s The Children’s Say project
Action for Children BYPASS

At the beginning of this project, which was designed to provide services to unaccompanied asylum seekers, we were determined that the first piece of work was to offer the young people the opportunity to participate in the recruitment of their own worker.

Although BYPASS had experience of involving young people in the recruitment process, this was a very progressive piece of work, requiring different skills to the normal recruitment process in order for the young people to participate fully. We used a number of groupwork sessions to train the young people, covering the concept of recruitment, recruitment procedures, the role of a worker, understanding of the job description, devising questions, interviewing skills and formulating selection procedures.

Fresh skills in communication were created using games and pictorial aids to break down these new concepts, and the use of an interpreter ensured that the young people’s views were made clear. Ultimately, the young people were able to devise their own marking systems to record their views.

The young people worked extremely hard and successfully formed a panel with their own Chair to carry out interviews and decision making. Feedback from the young people was extremely positive, stating that they had learned new knowledge and skills, felt valued by being included in this process and that their views were considered important. It also felt empowering for them to ask other people questions after their experience of being questioned many times since arriving in this country.
Since its origins in 1869, Action for Children has always aimed to involve children and young people in its day-to-day work. In recent years, we have made great strides in involving children and young people in the recruitment and selection of staff, an area that until fairly recently was still considered by some organisations to be dangerous or unworkable. Indeed, although many professionals are now looking to engage children and young people in the recruitment process, using a variety of skills and approaches, there remains some scepticism and uncertainty. This can range from anxiety around ‘how to do it’ and about ‘getting it right’, to a reluctance to share power and give up control of an area that has formerly been reserved for adult decision making (see FAQs).

This guide promotes the involvement of children and young people in recruitment by demonstrating a best practice approach and addressing some of the traditional anxieties and concerns. It was designed by young people in partnership with our in-house design team. It includes the views and artwork of children and young people, and has drawn on the expertise of key staff from across a range of service areas.

The staff involved have worked with their service users to develop a variety of tools and activities designed to engage and empower the children and young people they support using a range of creative and innovative approaches. Some of these are highlighted throughout this guide in the form of activities and case studies.

This guide is designed to be easy to use and offers a chance to ‘start the participation ball rolling’ through tried and tested methods that offer tangible and measurable ways to involve children and young people directly in service delivery.
Areas of involvement

There are a number of methods and models for including children and young people in recruitment and selection. Three of the most common are:

1. **A parallel children and young people’s panel**
   This is the method used throughout this guide and is applicable across a wide range of settings. It creates unique opportunities for children and young people to plan, organise and facilitate their own involvement. They can have a lot of control over the format of the interview and their role within it.

2. **A guided group discussion**
   This method brings all of the candidates together and asks them to either answer in turn or openly discuss a number of topics or statements that are directly relevant to the post or the children and young people they will be working with if successful (see ‘Action for Children Young Refugee Befriending Project’ example, page 17).

3. **Mixed adult and young people panel**
   This usually involves one young person sitting alongside adults on a formal interview panel. Candidates should be aware of the different roles of the panel members and the young person may need support in their role. This allows other panel members to concentrate on their roles rather than on supporting the young person. The young person’s weighting may vary according to the type of post and the level of knowledge needed to assess different aspects of the person specification (e.g., strategic planning and financial management versus knowledge of young people’s issues and experience of working with children and young people).

   Each of the above requires training and preparation, although the timescales and depth of knowledge required will vary according to the type of involvement.

The recruitment and selection continuum

The recruitment and selection continuum (also known as the ‘wheel’ or ‘clementine’, as suggested by Corinna Chartier at Action for Children Gloucestershire Participation Project) illustrates some of the stages in children and young people’s involvement in recruitment and selection, as well as examples of the range and types of involvement and possible starting points.

The aim of this model is to show that involving children and young people in recruitment and selection can happen at different levels and in different ways. While continual development of the quality and range of children and young people’s involvement is a key factor of good participation, it is important to recognise that the child should be firmly at the centre at all times. Children and young people should be given the choice and the necessary training and skills to get involved at the level they choose, and using the ‘clementine’ or ‘wheel’ avoids the difficulties of other hierarchical participation models in the recruitment and selection process.
Corinna’s clementine

Children and young people:
1. are informed that interviews are taking place
2. meet candidates informally and feed back views
3. inform the adult panel’s questions
4. form a panel and interview candidates
5. contribute to the job advert
6. are involved in writing the job description
7. are involved in identifying the need for a new post and its potential roles and responsibilities

It mustn’t be a hierarchy of involvement – we need to encourage all projects, particularly those who may not have done it before but want to give it a go without trying the whole process. That said, I do think it’s important to involve children and young people at as early a stage as possible and not just at interview stage.

Dory Dickson
Action for Children Customer Service and Complaints Manager

When we appointed the befriending co-ordinator a year and half ago, we invited two young people to meet the candidates at a post-interview group discussion. This involved posing six ‘controversial’ statements that tested their value base, ability to negotiate, personality and attitudes. The young people acted as observers and then fed back to the recruitment panel their thoughts about the different candidates.

I briefed the young people and asked them to let us know if there was a preferred person who could work with them and whom they liked. The young people were very honest, mature and clear about the candidates, and their opinions verified the candidate who was “appointable”.

All in all, the recruitment process was positive and worthwhile and this method worked particularly well. The participation of young people was clearly beneficial for all parties concerned – Action for Children and service users.

Action for Children San Jai Chinese Project and Young Refugee Befriending Project
Action for Children Dewsbury and Mirfield Locality Children’s Centres

We have involved service users in the recruitment process a number of times. The participants are the parents of young children under five years who are supported by our service and also children aged 10 years who are involved in our young peoples consultation group.

We have involved these young people both formally (sitting on interview panels), and, most recently, as a separate parents’ and childrens’ panel. The parents’ panel was led by a member of staff and required each candidate to give a presentation. The parents asked questions and recorded their comments but they did not rate the candidates 1, 2, 3 etc. Instead, they fed back to the ‘formal panel’ and said whether they thought each person they’d seen was a viable candidate. A format was used at the end of each interview to ensure all applicants are treated with equality.

The children supported by a Children’s Centre worker have assessed candidates in various ways, for example through formal questioning or setting presentations. They have scored candidates and given written feedback to support their scores, they are invited to give feedback to the formal panel at the end of the interviewing process and their views are taken into consideration when decisions are made.

It’s important to bear in mind that setting up two sets of interviews requires careful planning. It’s also advisable to have a back up of young people (parents at this project) who can attend at short notice as, due to a range of reasons, some participants may need to withdraw late in the process. Organising crèche facilities with the local nursery was also an important element to the smooth running of the process.

The parents found the process interesting and were happy to participate. The children reported that it made them feel important and grown up and it was a fun way to learn grown up skills. It took a lot of organisation – but was well worth it!
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

The following frequently asked questions have been suggested by Action for Children staff. They are designed to highlight some regularly expressed anxieties and concerns, common misconceptions and genuine misgivings about this area of work and the extent to which children and young people can be involved.

1. How much of the process can children and young people be involved in?

This can range widely. Broadly speaking, at one end of the spectrum children and young people may offer suggestions about the staff qualities they would like to see in their project. At the other end they may be involved in identifying a potential new post, working with staff to develop the necessary job description and person specification, and participating fully in the recruitment process.

The nature and degree of involvement will depend on a number of factors including: staff knowledge and experience of involving children in recruitment, the interest and abilities of the children involved, and the point in the process when children and young people’s involvement is first considered.

2. What about very young children or children with special needs?

Action for Children is committed to the participation and involvement of all children and young people. The involvement of younger children and children with more complex needs will rely on a number of factors, not least the expertise, knowledge, and skills of the staff who support them. Staff play a key role in empowering children to be involved; their expertise will be important in translating or pitching the concepts and activities in this book to suit the children and young people they support.

3. What level of ‘say’ will the children have?

This will depend on the actual appointment being considered. For example, when Action for Children Particip8 recruited a new group of casual workers (whose primary role was to support existing staff to deliver groupwork sessions to children), the decision was shared by simply adding the scores of the children’s panel to those of the adult panel. The rationale for this, given the thorough and successful training undertaken by the children involved, was that the new staff’s main role was direct contact with children, and therefore their ability to engage children and build a rapport was crucial.

By contrast, the same project involved children in the recruitment of a local Children’s Fund deputy programme manager, whose role was primarily office based but required occasional contact with children. In this situation, a group of children underwent similar training but this time their role was limited to influencing the adult panel, based on their assessment of the inter-personal skills of the candidates (see appendix 4 for an example of a ‘weighted’ process where a strict scoring system was agreed before the interviews began).
4. What happens if the children and young people disagree with the staff?

Staff who have routinely involved children and young people in recruitment and selection often say that they continue to be amazed at the correlation between the adult’s and children’s decisions. However, disagreements will arise and there are a number of points to bear in mind. Firstly, there should be clarity at the outset, when children are first asked to be involved, so that they know how decisions will be made and who has the final say. Secondly, there should be an opportunity for the children to speak directly to the adult panel to explain their points of view and explore any disagreements. And lastly, any potential fallout from disagreements at the end of the process is often best managed at the start of the process – thorough training enables those involved to develop a good understanding of the process and what happens after each panel has reached its decision.

5. Who makes the final decision?

Ultimately the responsibility for all new appointments lies with the Chair of the interview panel. The Chair will be a senior member of staff and will have completed the Action for Children recruitment and selection training course. In terms of organisational responsibility and accountability, the final decision must be signed off by the Chair of the adult panel.

6. How should children and young people be rewarded for their contribution?

Action for Children projects and staff who were consulted for this guide employed a variety of approaches to reward children and young people’s participation. These included:

- certificates and letters of thanks
- being paid by the hour for their time
- gift vouchers for a shop or activity requested by the group
- a group outing or event

Each of the above was judged to be appropriate to the Action for Children project in question and, importantly, each was determined with the involvement of their children and young people. It is also worth noting that rewards or payments to older young people may impact on their benefits and this should be considered closely before any decisions are made.

7. Can children’s involvement be fun?

Although recruitment and selection is a formal process, children and young people’s contribution to it can and should be fun. Many examples appear in this guide to demonstrate a creative approach to this topic – this is particularly important when considering the involvement of those who are harder to engage. Making it fun, or simply enabling people to join in at a stage that they are comfortable with, will enable greater participation.
8. What happens if a candidate performs well during the children’s panel but says something to the adult panel that means they would be unsafe working with children?

As in any recruitment and selection situation, safeguarding is paramount. Any concerns should be handled in the usual way, irrespective of the candidate’s performance in the children or young people’s panel. This may be hard for the children to accept, particularly if the concerns prevent details being shared between the panels. However, this underlines the importance of good preparation – disagreements between the panels and clarity around decision making should always be discussed in the training sessions leading up to the interviews (see FAQs 4 and 5).

9. When can the children and young people involved be told the final decision?

Those involved should be told as soon as all checks (CRB, references, health checks) have been satisfactorily returned, a start date has been agreed with the candidate and this is able to be made common knowledge.

I discuss decision making and what influence the young people will have very early on. In some instances I talk to the young people about this before they even agree to come to the training. In Hillingdon, in our work with the local authority we have been able to agree that the young people’s scores will be a part of the final decision.

I also discuss reasons why the candidates they choose might not get the job. This includes talking about things like not passing a CRB [Criminal Records Bureau] check, other candidates performing in certain areas higher than the one young people chose, and even that a candidate might decide the job is not for them. In our interview process we also include feedback to the young people about who has been chosen, why, and what influence their participation had on this decision. I think this last part is very important – it ensures the young people know that their views are listened to even if their choice does not get the job.

Ray Dalton
Participation Worker
Action for Children  Hillingdon Children’s Rights Service
When I was interviewed by children...

I was interviewed by a children and young people's panel in my first position as an Action for Children Children's Rights Advocate.

I remember initially feeling both excited and nervous at the prospect of young people being involved in this process. However, I was very impressed by the two young people involved. They were very professional in their approach; they asked some probing questions, and were happy to answer questions that I had.

When I was offered the position, I felt committed to doing a good job as the young people had given me positive feedback and had identified that I had the qualities to be a good advocate, which gave me the confidence to accept the position. I found the process to be a very positive experience and as a result I have since trained children and young people to be involved in recruitment and selection.

I am also driving forward a borough-wide policy in Stockport to involve children and young people in recruitment and selection interview panels, training and induction.

Tina Lavender
Participation Manager
Action for Children Tameside Participation Project

When I was interviewed by children...

I found it a very interesting experience but also probably the hardest part of the interview. I have been interviewed by panels of children and young people for two different posts at Action for Children. When I was interviewed for my current post, I had to prepare a presentation to the young people about an arts event I would run and then they asked me a series of questions. They asked me questions such as ‘What is your experience of working with children and young people?’ and ‘Do you think children and young people interviewing staff is a good idea, and if so why?’

When I was interviewed by children and young people I felt like different elements of my personality and capabilities were being tested compared to those tested by the adult panel. I think it’s very important that my ability to talk and explain things to young people was tested out by young people. Children and young people have a way of cutting through the jargon and asking you to explain things in a way that is very difficult to fake!

It wouldn’t matter how good I was at organising arts events if I didn’t have the ability to explain and enthuse children and young people, and encourage their involvement. The best way to judge this was to ask them directly!

Ruth Baldwin
Action for Children Arts Initiatives Manager
When the interviewee is talking about their experience and their qualifications, you can get an idea of what that’s like and you’re learning what skills they’re going to bring.

In the first lot of interviews, I was a bit nervous, even though you shouldn’t be nervous if you’re doing the interviews, but it does make you nervous… now that I’ve done a few I am more confident.

I enjoy doing interviews with other people. It’s like training. The more you learn, the more skills you get. I loved all of it actually, the planning, doing the interviewing, you’re learning a lot, getting to meet new people and having a laugh.

I feel that if you get more involved in things that are being thrown at you, you learn a lot more, you gain experience and you can pass that onto other people. That’s a good thing. It’s like a chain – it runs down the chain smoothly.

Shelley (17)

Luke and Shelley were part of the young people’s panel involved in the recruitment of Action for Children’s Participation Manager
At Action for Children Family Solutions, we involve service users in most of our interviews and shortlisting. We have a specific programme that is offered in conjunction with the participation officer (from our partner agency) and an Action for Children advocacy worker. They work in partnership to deliver recruitment and selection training to the young people involved.

We use two main approaches to involving children in recruitment and selection. The model we use in any given appointment is determined by the type of vacancy and the age, ability and understanding of the young people who wish to be involved.

**These include:**

- **Two-panel approach** – this includes one panel of professionals and one made up of children and young people. The children’s panel uses a question and answer format and devises their own set of usually no more than six questions. Each panel has a copy of all the questions to be asked.

- **One panel, which includes a young person** – each panel member asks three to four questions, and the candidates are scored on whether or not the criteria has been fully, partly or not met with both panels.

Our experience is that it is very successful because the young people are involved and contributing directly to their service. It helps to build their confidence and self-esteem, and also gives them a valuable insight of the interview experience from the other side, which helps to prepare them for interviews of their own.
The ‘five pillars’ of involving children and young people in recruitment and selection

The ‘five pillars’ is a convenient way to group together much of the knowledge and skills needed to prepare children and young people for their successful involvement in recruitment and selection.

The five pillars follows the children’s panel approach to recruitment and selection, but this in no way represents the definitive approach. It is used as it has proved to be a reliable and successful method that is popular with both children and young people and staff, and can be used in a wide range of settings.

The five pillars are:
1. understanding recruitment and selection
2. understanding equality and diversity
3. understanding confidentiality
4. the job description and person specification
5. learning the skills

Training and preparation derived from the five pillars will ensure that children and young people understand the interview process and are clear about the degree of their involvement and their influence on the decision making process. They will be confident about their role, familiar with key concepts such as valuing diversity and confidentiality, and will have the skills they need to participate in a meaningful way.
The right choice – participation in recruitment
Pillar 1: Understanding recruitment and selection

The first of the five pillars is simply to provide an understanding of what we mean by the phrase ‘recruitment and selection’.

A simple definition

Recruitment and selection is a way to tell people about a job, find out who is interested in doing the job, and then picking the best person for the job.

Explaining the jargon

Some words and phrases we may use every day, like ‘valuing diversity’, ‘shortlisting’ and even ‘interview’, may be difficult or confusing to some children and young people. Therefore, a good way to approach this is to first outline the process and then find parallels within children and young people’s personal experience. We can then look at the stages of the process and some of the jargon involved.

Example

What experiences may children have had that contain some similarities to recruitment and selection?
- school council elections
- school tests or exams
- family members looking for work
- joining a club

The above may contain elements of ‘choosing candidates’ or ‘being tested on your knowledge’, however a more easily understood analogy may be found in popular TV programmes such as X Factor, Dragon’s Den and Britain’s Got Talent. In each of these, we see candidates being put through their paces in order to be selected for a future role, or to achieve their goal.

Finding commonalities between recruitment and selection and these examples should help to set the scene and outline the idea that people may have a goal they are aiming for and a process to go through in order to get there.

Exercise

‘Easy as abc’

Aim:
This is a ‘jargon buster’ activity that should help to explain some of the terms used in the recruitment and selection process.

What you do:
This activity can be used either as a quiz or a Call my bluff-type game. First, divide the group. One person has a jargon term and three cards containing explanations of the jargon term. Only one of the explanations is correct. The others must choose which is the correct term. Use a range of terms, including: ‘shortlisting’, ‘valuing diversity’, ‘CRB’ and ‘vacancy’.

For example,
‘Shortlisting’ is:
a) Always having less than five things on your shopping list
b) Writing down lots of words that mean ‘short’, like small, tiny or little
c) Scoring each application form to decide which candidates you’d like to interview for the job
‘CRB’ stands for:
a) Cows regularly burp
b) Criminal Records Bureau
c) Cats run backwards

What you need:
Paper, pens, scissors
**Advertising the job**

This activity helps children and young people understand this element of the recruitment process and, depending at which stage in the overall process the children and young people become involved, it may feed directly into the actual job advertisement.

‘The Recruitment process at Action for Children is extremely receptive to including children and young people’s comments within the job advert wherever possible to reflect their involvement in the process’

*Cameron Stewart*

*Action for Children Head of HR Shared Service*

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**Exercise**

**Design a job advert**

**Aim:**
To begin thinking about how organisations target the right people and which information is necessary to do this.

**What you do:**
Think of a job you’re interested in (footballer, pop star, marine biologist) and write or draw a job advert.

How will you attract the right people to this job? What are the main things you need to include? What should not be included?

**What you need:**
Paper, pens and coloured pens
An overview of the recruitment and selection process

In simple terms, we can break the recruitment and selection process down into eight stages:

1. vacancy becomes available (someone leaves or a new job is created)
2. job description and person specification are written or revised
3. job advert is prepared
4. vacancy is advertised in the local and/or national press
5. candidates request application forms and return them by a set date
6. candidates are shortlisted
7. interviews are held
8. a candidate is chosen

Recruitment and selection where children are involved and the two-panel approach is used will contain a further two stages: feedback between the panels and evaluation of the process.

When describing the recruitment process the amount of detail you choose to go into, or the number of areas where you focus attention, will depend on:

- the type of process and the job in question
- the level of the children and young people’s involvement
- the children’s or young people’s level of understanding and interest

It is also important at this stage, particularly if this is the first time children and young people have been involved in the recruitment and selection process, for supporting staff to be aware of another key factor: the amount of time available before either the process gets underway or the interviews take place. This timeframe will be one of the guiding factors (alongside staff knowledge, skills and confidence, and the interest, understanding and ability of the children or young people) on which the degree and stage of involvement of children and young people will depend.

Exercise

‘What comes next?’

Aim:
To highlight the different stages in the recruitment and selection process and the timescales involved.

What you do:
Give the group or individual eight cards, each one describing a stage of the recruitment process (using words and/or pictures), and ask them to place them in the correct order. This is a quick task that will create discussion around the topic, and can be developed to include a timeline between each stage. This should reinforce the different stages in the recruitment and selection process, and the timescales involved. To make this more fun you could draw and colour some ‘clothes’ (each representing a different stage of the process) and try to hang them along a washing line in the correct order!

What you need:
Photocopies of the sheets supplied, pens and paper (see appendix 1), scissors
Clearly, it is important to ensure the quality of this involvement, even if time constraints may affect the degree of involvement or the stage at which it begins. Children’s participation should be an organic process and often delivering and evidencing high-quality work at ‘lower rungs of the ladder’ can create the momentum and experience on which to build.

This approach may also support the structural, policy or cultural changes that may be required so that ‘time’, in terms of systems and procedures, becomes less of a barrier to future participation in your project or setting.

I recently worked alongside a young people’s panel during the recruitment for a strategic director of children’s services at Action for Children.

The adult panel were impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the young people – they had clearly spent time and effort thinking through the relevant points in order to design an appropriate and challenging interview for each of the candidates.

Following the interviews, the adults met with the young people to share their observations and to start the decision making. In addition to providing detailed feedback, the young people displayed a firm grasp of the issues and were very clear about who had met the criteria and had provided the evidence they were looking for.

The young people’s involvement inspired the adult panel; their contribution was welcomed and they brought a real clarity to the decision making.

This was an extremely positive example of the value of enabling children and young people’s participation in staff recruitment. It reaffirmed our belief that it’s essential that we support children and young people to be able to shape the services they receive, and involving them in the recruitment of the staff who support them is an ideal way to do this.

Margaret Dillon
Action for Children Executive Director of Children’s Services
The decision making process

As mentioned in the FAQs section, it is vitally important to ensure there is clarity about the decision making process right at the start. Children and young people must be aware that although they may have a significant influence over the final decision and how it is reached, the final say and the responsibility for the appointment lies with the Chair of the interview panel.

However, this should not underplay the importance of their involvement, the value we place on their feedback and opinions, and the uniqueness they bring to the process.

If there is disagreement between panels in a two-panel model, the adult panel must share as much information as possible with the children and young people about how and why they have reached their decision, with due consideration to the views expressed by the children and young people’s panel (see appendix 4 for an example of a ‘weighted’ process where a strict scoring system was agreed before the interviews began).

What will happen after the interview?

Addressing the decision making part of the process should lead naturally on to ‘what happens next?’. At this point it is worth reiterating the timescales discussed above, and also considering rewards or celebrations for their involvement (see FAQs).

A positive way to build on the experience is to continue the involvement of children and young people into the induction process for new staff, and ultimately into the training of the next interview group (see the Particip8 case study on page 32); this area of development may also expand the group’s role into one of peer mentoring and modelling positive engagement.

It will also send out clear messages to new staff about the importance of children and young people’s participation and involvement in the project or service (also see ‘Post interview and next steps’ on page 83).
Case study

Action for Children Particip8

At Particip8, we have involved children in all staff recruitment since we started in 2002. We have also been proactive in supporting schools and other partner agencies to develop the skills and confidence needed to adopt this as part of their work.

In addition, in August 2006 we began a new piece of work designed to enable children previously involved in recruitment to share their skills and train other children. We planned preparatory sessions to support the children to become trainers but it quickly became apparent that they were determined to plan and organise every aspect of the training themselves, based on their recent interview experience and many of their own ideas!

Following this preparation, the group planned and delivered a two-day training course to 12 children aged nine to 12 years old. Each day used a variety of games and techniques designed to explore important aspects of recruitment and selection, while also having fun and making new friends. Among the most popular activities were ‘Designing your own job advert’ and ‘The goldfish bowl’ (see appendix 2), a roleplay game where those watching tried to guess the unusual characteristic of each ‘interviewee’.

The day was evaluated using the ‘Juggling Jim’ activity (see appendix 3) and comments included: ‘I really enjoyed the two days and learned a lot’ and ‘Mint, excellent, fun, enjoyed it’. Also, no sooner had the training finished than the children were putting their skills to the test, successfully interviewing new casual workers for the project.

Careful preparation, alongside pitching all methods and input to suit the ability and interest of those involved, was key to the success of this peer-training project. Also, organising the training in the run-up to ‘real’ interviews gave the training more gravity and provided a strong focus to the work.
What are the key learning points for children and young people at this stage?

Balancing fun and learning will be an essential factor in the success of any interview training process for children. As with other groupwork approaches, it’s important to weight the early sessions towards getting to know each other and having fun, while at the same time providing enough information so that the group has an understanding of the whole process, what it entails and what their involvement will be. With this in mind, here are a few key points that it would be useful to cover early in the process.

1. **The eight stages**
   - It is important that children and young people are clear about what recruitment and selection means. They should have an overview of the whole process and some understanding of the different stages involved.

2. **Timescales**
   - It is important that those involved know what they are signing up to in terms of their time and effort. Children’s timescales can be markedly different to adults and the idea that it may take at least three months from placing the advert to someone starting work may come as a bit of a shock! A helpful way of addressing this is to be clear about the length of time involved, but to focus on the build up to the interview day as the key period. This will often encompass all of the children and young people’s major involvement and will target the interview day as the culmination of their efforts.

3. **Different ways to be involved**
   - It is useful at this stage to think about the different ways that children and young people can be involved and what each stage entails in terms of commitment, responsibility and time.
   - Some examples include:
     - successfully training a group to run their own interview panel to assess prospective project workers (alongside an adult panel) may take up to four one-and-a-half-hour sessions (see page 76 for sample session plan)
     - preparing a panel to assess the attributes of non-direct staff (trustees or senior managers) may take only two one-hour sessions
     - supporting young people to join an ‘adult panel’ may only require up to two hours’ preparation

4. **What will children and young people need to prepare themselves?**
   - It is unusual that children are asked do any ‘homework’ as part of their involvement. However, if you are asking for any extra work to be done outside of the groupwork sessions (asking friends and relatives about their interview experiences, or seeking out the local paper’s jobs section), now would be a good time to mention it!

5. **Who makes the decision?**
   - It is important to be clear about this from the very start. The group’s involvement and influence may range from advice to the adult panel in one instance, to contributing an agreed percentage of the scores for each candidate in another (see appendix 4). However, it is a vital element of any preparation work that it is made clear at the start of the process how decisions are made, who has the final say and how disagreements will be managed (see also FAQs).
I enjoyed the interviews. The best bit was... all of it. It could have been better if the people we were interviewing had been more lively. Some of them weren’t very lively.

I was nervous while I was interviewing, because they were adults. The people we were interviewing were nervous – they were shaking. When I saw they were nervous, I felt sorry for them. I think it was harder for them to be interviewed by us because we’re children.

We came up with the questions by writing down the important things we were looking for and merging them into questions. We scored people’s questions from one to 10.

All the training has been helpful. Otherwise I wouldn’t know what to do. The best bit of the training was when we were making up the questions.

I’d like to do this kind of thing again – I think it’ll be useful for school, especially English. It’s helped me broaden my skills. I’d recommend that other children get involved, because it can help them in school, and to be more confident.

I think it’ll make me better at interviews in the future because I’ll be used to it. I’ll feel less nervous going into an interview because I’ve done interviews myself. This is a good idea because it lets children get more involved with making decisions.

Daisy (13)

My interview experience has two unique perspectives. Firstly, I was interviewed by a group of young carers as part of the recruitment process to become an Action for Children trustee.

The young people worked hard to ensure I was welcomed and put at my ease but that didn’t stop them asking some tough questions on why I wanted to join Action for Children and what I thought could bring to the role. On the other side of the coin, I worked with two groups of young people as part of the process to recruit new trustees, one of which was to appoint the Chair of the Scotland Board of Trustees.

I led on the latter example and witnessed how seriously the panel took their role, asking to meet the outgoing Chair so they could be sure they understood what qualities would be important and then taking the candidate through their paces. Interestingly, the conclusions reached by the young people and also that of the adult panel were remarkably similar.

I think it’s essential that all our trustees are able to relate well to the children and young people Action for Children is here to support and it makes it clear to candidates from the outset that children and young people are at the centre of all that we do.

Pamela Chesters
Action for Children Chair of Board of Trustees

When I was interviewed by children...
Action for Children Derbyshire
Youth Reach Leaving Care

At Youth Reach, we use a two-panel model to involve young people in the recruitment of all staff. One of the panels is made up of adults or professionals, the other consists of between three and five young people.

For the young people’s panel, each candidate is usually asked to do a 10-minute presentation, which is followed by two questions from each of the young people. Finally, there is an opportunity for the candidates to ask questions.

All answers and discussion points are recorded by the Chair and a numbered marking system akin to the professional panel is used to rate each candidate. The young people’s panel then meets with the adult panel to share views and feed back their thoughts. The final decision is taken by the adult panel.
Pillar 2: Understanding equality and diversity

The second of the five pillars underpins all genuine participation and involvement work. Understanding the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, and how we promote and value these principles, is also essential to all areas of social work and social care. In recruitment and selection, they are the key principles that ensure a fair and equitable process for all who apply.

This section looks at how we can explore and describe the basic ideas behind ‘equality, diversity and inclusion’, and provides some suggested activities aimed at bringing these concepts to life.

Where to start

A good starting point when addressing the issue of equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment and selection is to describe what it means in basic terms, and then use some simple activities to start to unpick the different layers that it contains.

A simple definition

In recruitment and selection, ‘equality, diversity and inclusion’ is about making sure that everyone has an equal chance to do their best, and is judged on the skills and abilities they bring to the job.

You can then use the information contained in the following pages to look at what it isn’t, what forms discrimination can take and how we can overcome common barriers.
Adding more detail

Depending on the interest and abilities of the group or individual, or the stage of the process they are involved in, it may be useful to explore this topic further.

Promoting and managing equality, diversity and inclusion can present a range of quite complex issues that are not always easy to deal with or explain. Issues may present themselves in different ways and may mean entirely different things to different people depending on their own outlook and beliefs or background. While this is not a reason to avoid this subject, it is something to bear in mind and something that staff, as well as children and young people, may need to be supported through in order to gain the insight, awareness and confidence to both recognise and address issues that may arise during the recruitment process.

For example, a young person may be confused or antagonistic when challenged after saying something offensive or unacceptable (for example, racist or homophobic language) if they live in an environment where this is considered acceptable and ordinarily goes unnoticed. However, it is the responsibility of the staff present to make sure that the group knows what the ground rules are in respect of language and behaviour, what is considered unacceptable and why. Discriminatory language or behaviour is in opposition to the ethos and values of Action for Children, and can contribute to those present feeling unsafe, isolated or even victimised.

Supporting the group to set their own ground rules at the beginning of their involvement is a useful way to provide clear guidance and shared understanding of how to conduct an equitable, fair and inclusive selection process.
So, what do we mean by equality, diversity and inclusion?

Equality is at the heart of how we believe all individuals should be treated and commits us to tackling discrimination and promoting fairness. It's also about providing opportunities and resources that enable individuals to learn, develop and achieve their fullest potential.

Diversity is about recognising, understanding and valuing the uniqueness that exists within our workplace and our communities. We must address the challenges this presents both as employers and service providers to harness the positive benefits diversity brings to our organisation.

Inclusion helps us understand and address the root causes of disadvantage, discrimination and marginalisation, and helps us to find ways to promote social justice and human rights. Addressing the needs of the most marginalised and vulnerable children and young people will ensure participation in its broadest and truest sense.

In summary:

Equality is what needs to happen
Diversity is why it needs to happen
Inclusion is how we can make it happen

The same difference

‘Equal opportunities means treating everyone the same’ is a response you will often hear. Although this is inaccurate and over simplistic, it may provide a good starting point and it shows that basic ideas around ‘equal chances’ and ‘fairness’ have been taken on board.

The next stage, despite the complexities involved, is about developing this idea into the understanding that often people need to be treated differently in order to be given an equal chance of success.

Examples include:

- providing the resources of an interpreter for someone who is deaf
- agreeing to shortlist all candidates who meet the minimum requirements for the job from black or Asian backgrounds – this may be because there are not enough people from that background working in the project and this would be valuable to service users who also come from that background

It is also worth noting that exploring issues of diversity often focuses very simplistically on difference. A more positive approach is to look at what people share and have in common. Difference is not necessarily a barrier, but may present some challenges that can often be overcome through good participation practice, which raises awareness and creates meaningful dialogue within the group.

Examples of good practice include:

- how and where we advertise jobs – making sure the broadest range of people get to see the adverts
- making sure times and location of interviews are accessible and reasonable for people, accommodating childcare and transport difficulties
- making clear that we judge people on their ability to do the job as set out on their form and at interview, for example removal of personal details in shortlisting, not making any assumptions about them during interview that may be based on their background or personal characteristics that are not relevant to the job (eg race, dress, gender)
Exercise

‘Same difference’

Aim:
To show that we are all individual and unique

What you do:
Present a bowl of 12 lemons and ask each young person to choose one and look at it very carefully. Next, put all the lemons back, mix them up, and ask each young person to identify their own lemon.

Usually everyone succeeds in finding their own lemon despite them ‘all looking the same’ at the start of the activity!

What you need:
12 lemons and a large bowl

Promoting equality and working inclusively is about recognising and responding effectively to diversity among our staff and the people who use our services. We do this because we strive to be both a good employer and a provider of quality services that meet a variety of needs among children and young people.

In recruitment, ‘equal opportunities’ is about ensuring we create a level playing field for all applicants who may want to work for Action for Children. This may involve taking a variety of approaches in recruiting and selecting people for jobs. We do this by considering anything that may create a barrier or a particular challenge for people and removing these barriers as much as possible.

We also seek to meet individual needs by asking people to tell us what additional support may help them to apply for a job, attend an interview, or take up a post.

We recognise that people are unique and that we may at times need to implement a more proactive and positive action approach in the pursuit of providing equality of opportunity for all.

Wendi Bestman
Action for Children Diversity Manager
**Policy and legislation**

Another aspect to managing equality and diversity is the legislative backdrop. While it is unnecessary to cover this in any great detail, it is important to reinforce that not only is valuing equality and diversity good practice and represents a fair and inclusive approach, it is also underpinned by Action for Children’s own policies and procedures and is written into the law. For example:

- **Race Relations Act 1976**
  
  It is unlawful to discriminate against a person in relation to employment on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality.

- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**
  
  It is unlawful to discriminate against existing or prospective employees on the grounds of disability.

- **Human Rights Act 1998**
  
  This act guarantees the right to privacy in one’s family life, beliefs and the right to freedom of expression. Candidates have the right not to be questioned on personal information that is not directly appropriate to the job, for example this may include marital status or sexual orientation.

However, in some cases there can be specific exceptions to the above, and jobs may be advertised that target people of a particular gender or ethnic origin. This may be for reasons of decency or privacy (for example working in a woman’s refuge), and is known as a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR).

**What are the key learning points for children and young people at this stage?**

1. **What do we mean by ‘equality, diversity and inclusion’ and ‘equal opportunities’?**
   
   The group should understand that candidates won’t be successful solely because they have a ‘cool piercing’ or a designer shirt! They should also be clear that a candidate’s suitability is grounded in their skills and abilities and what they bring to the job irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity etc., and that Action for Children is bound by policies and procedures to ensure this happens.

2. **Awareness of examples of discrimination within the recruitment and selection process**
   
   The group should be able to highlight examples of discrimination that could affect the recruitment and selection process. These may be clearly visual factors at the interview stage or other factors, such as inaccessible buildings.

3. **Equality, diversity and inclusion is not about treating people the same**
   
   If possible, it is important for the group to understand that ‘treating everyone the same’ does not reflect an equitable approach to recruitment and selection. It is important to emphasise the idea of ‘equal chances’ rather than ‘equal treatment’.

The involvement of children and young people in recruitment further validates the process and again demonstrates our commitment to going beyond compliance with the necessary legislation. It also shows that we are striving to constantly develop best practice and apply it to all areas of equality and diversity.

**Paul Devlin**

**Action for Children Head of Inclusion**

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**The right choice – participation in recruitment**  

41
I thought it was a great opportunity to be involved with interviewing for new support assistants, it gave me a chance to see what happens, I found it really interesting and felt that the other people interviewing listened to my opinions.

Rachael (22)

It was my second time round interviewing and it was good to be involved. I am one of the older tenants so it was important that I was on the panel because I know what is needed from a support assistant. I felt really pleased to be involved – I would have struggled if I was not because I have a right to have a say in who supports me.

Andrew (22)

When I was interviewed by children...

I was interviewed for the position of administrator for Action for Children’s Particip8 project in South Tyneside. The children who interviewed me decided that I was to take part in the quiz ‘Who Wants to be an Adminaire?’ (instead of ‘Millionaire’!). I had to answer a series of questions and find relevant information from these questions. The quiz was fun and imaginative – the children were so enthusiastic and also quick to tell me when I got a question wrong, which made it all the more enjoyable!

I definitely think this is the way forward when employing new staff, as after my adult panel interview I wasn’t entirely convinced I wanted the job but after the children’s panel quiz, I left the office desperate to get the job! What a fun and worthwhile place to work, I thought – I was longing for the phone to ring and fortunately it did! The rest is history!

Christine Pogson

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Christine Pogson
Action for Children Warren Park

At Warren Park, we routinely involve young people in all our recruitment and have built up valuable experience over the last 12 months. We have developed a range of approaches, including:

Groupwork
This involves working with young people to ask them about the kind of person who they think is best suited to work with them. For example, asking ‘what does the ideal project look like?’. This simple question provides some very interesting responses depending on the age and gender.

Informal visits to the project for candidates
Young people are supported by staff to be involved, and their response to each individual is gauged by asking and recording feedback.

Young people’s interview panels
Each panel is short and focused, and the young people use questions they have devised about issues that are important to them. A variety of communication methods are used, including symbol-based systems such as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Makaton and Widget.

In each case we have a feedback session. It’s vital to listen to their views, and ensure that they are an integral part of the recruitment process and that their participation is valued. No decisions are made until after the feedback session.

Involving young people in recruitment has been a great success; they have enjoyed their involvement and both staff and young people have learned a lot.

It is always humbling as a professional to see how intuitive young people can be. They often speak from the heart and are more direct in their approach than adults, enabling them to solicit a different range of responses and reactions from candidates and bringing a new dimension to the process.
You've got the job!
Pillar 3: Understanding confidentiality

Confidentiality is included alongside equality, diversity and inclusion as one of the five pillars. It underpins work with children and young people in most settings, including all social work and social care.

Confidentiality will often be described in relation to the child or young person, for example:

‘Action for Children has a duty to keep information about children and young people confidential. However, Action for Children also has a duty to help keep children and young people safe, which means that at times staff will have to share information about a child or young person with other people in order to keep children and young people safe.’

In recruitment and selection, confidentiality takes on another dimension. In this instance, we must also consider the integrity of the process, and the needs and privacy of the candidates.

Making a start

A good starting point, depending on the nature of the children and young people’s involvement and the service they receive, is to recap how confidentiality relates to children and young people and their safety and protection.

A simple definition

Confidentiality is when information is kept private between certain people. It is usually about personal issues. This can be written information kept in files or information that you have given in a conversation.

If a member of staff has a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of harm, then they have to share that information with others to help keep the child or young person safe. The child or young person should be told that the information will be shared, unless doing so would place them at further risk.

It is important to make sure everyone understands these basic concepts before moving on. The next step is how confidentiality specifically relates to the recruitment and selection process.
Exercise

Circle of confidentiality

Aim:
This is a tried and tested activity used to explore the nature of confidentiality by looking at people who are part of a young person’s life, the kind of information they would share, and with whom.

What you do:
First, do a brainstorm with the group to find out all the people they think may ask them about the interviews, as well as all those they’d like to tell. Next, show the circle of confidentiality diagram (either on another flipchart or individual sheets) and explain that:

- the inner circle contains the children and adult panels with whom you can discuss the detail of what happened and the names of those involved
- the middle circle contains the names of those people who you can tell about the day but without using names and going into detail (for example, family and friends and teachers)
- the outer circle contains people who don’t need to know anything about their day (for example, a taxi driver or shop keeper)

Next, start to add names to the diagram from the original list drawn up from the children and young people’s suggestions until there are no names remaining.

Finally, to reinforce this learning and to check out the group’s understanding, ask a few key questions like: ‘What do you say if your parents ask you who you liked best?’ or, ‘Can you tell your friends what the candidates said about wanting to work at this project?’

What you need:
Paper or flip chart, pens
Confidentiality and the recruitment and selection process

Confidentiality within the recruitment and selection process includes, but also extends beyond, the welfare and safety of the children and young people involved. Alongside the responsibility of staff to children and young people, there is also the responsibility to the integrity of the process (see ‘Role of staff during interviews’ on page 80). This includes the responsibility of children and young people to each other, and also to the candidates they will meet during the process.

Children and young people

In recruitment and selection, and particularly within any training and groupwork element to this process, confidentiality represents one of the key strands that support the safety of the children and young people present. This is both in terms of their physical wellbeing, and also their confidence and ability to express themselves and take risks. Examples include:

- **bullying** – confidentiality and the ability ‘to tell’ when something is distressing or uncomfortable is an important part of a young person’s ability to respond to bullying and intimidation, both in the recruitment and selection training sessions or in any groupwork situation

- **making mistakes** – the best and most memorable learning is often gained from taking risks, particularly when starting to explore a new area of learning. Therefore, the ability and ‘permission’ to have a go and make mistakes without the threat or prospect of your comments, ideas or suggestions being repeated or broadcast is a crucial part of the training process

Candidates

It is important for children and young people to understand that most organisations are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of candidates who apply for posts within the organisation, and will ensure that this is upheld at every stage of the process.

Here are some examples to explain this point:

- **Application process**
  If requested by the candidate on their application form, Action for Children will not ask for a reference from a candidate’s current employer until after the interview.

- **Shortlisting process**
  Candidates’ personal details (for example, gender or age) are routinely removed during the shortlisting stage. These details are kept confidential from the shortlisting panel to ensure a fair and equitable process, so that candidates are not disadvantaged because they are, for example, male or over 50 years old.

- **Interview process**
  No information given by the candidates (for example about the nature of their current job, or past experience in their day-to-day work) will be repeated outside of the interview situation. This enables candidates to be open and honest about any frustrations they may feel in their current job.
**Limits of confidentiality**

However, clearly there are limits to confidentiality and these apply equally to each of the above. For example, Action for Children would have a duty to act if any information given during the process suggested that a child or young person was being harmed or was at risk of being harmed, or if illegal or unlawful actions or behaviour came to light.

When children and young people are involved in the recruitment and selection process, whether this is ‘meeting and greeting’, shortlisting, or within a children and young people’s interview panel, they need to be aware of both the safeguards that are in place to protect them as well as the responsibility they have towards the process and the candidates they will meet during their involvement.

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**Exercise**

**Good and bad secrets**

**Aim:**
This activity is designed to explore the difference between information that it is fine to ‘keep secret’ and the type of information that it is important to share.

**What you do:**
First, introduce the idea of good and bad secrets:

- ‘good secrets’ make you feel happy and comfortable, such as what you’ve bought someone for their birthday or that Santa Claus may not actually exist
- ‘bad secrets’ can make you feel sad, upset or angry, and should be shared with an adult you can trust, for example a teacher, your project worker or a parent or foster carer

You can then test out the group or individual’s understanding by using different statements and asking for them to decide which are good and which are bad. This can be done by using prepared sheets with statements and ‘tick boxes’, a ‘traffic light’ approach where people hold up cards or run towards the correct sign (green for good, red for bad and amber for not sure), or simply by calling out the statements and asking for responses from the group or individual about which category the statement falls into.
What are the key learning points for children and young people at this stage?

1. **What is confidentiality?**
   The group should be able to describe what is meant by the term confidentiality. They should understand how this affects their safety and wellbeing, and also their responsibility to both the candidates and the other children and young people present.

2. **Why is confidentiality important?**
   The group should understand the importance of confidentiality in building trust, and its role in their safety and wellbeing.

3. **When should confidentiality be broken?**
   The group should understand that the primary reason to break confidentiality is when there is a concern that a child or young person may be at harm. Staff have a duty to share information with others to help keep the child or young person safe. They should also be aware that if they are concerned by anything a candidate says or does during the interview process then this should be shared with a member of staff.

4. **What will happen if children share information with staff?**
   Children should understand that if a child or young person is at risk then staff have a duty to share the information with others to help keep the child or young person safe. They should also understand that the child or young person will be told that the information is to be shared, unless this would put them at further risk. If a child or young person reports any concerns in relation to one of the candidates, the response from staff will reflect the severity of the allegation, for example this may range from talking to the candidate or their current employer or in extreme cases contacting the police.

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**Exercise: Rumour mill**

**Aim:**
This shows how information can change when it is passed on through a number of people and how important information can often be lost or changed.

**What you do:**
Arrange the group in a line at least an arm’s length apart and explain that they must try and pass messages from one end to the other without missing anyone out. Next, whisper a different statement to each of the two people at either end of the line (the statements should be sufficiently convoluted to make them difficult to pass on accurately). Wait a few seconds (the longer the better!) and then start the rumour mill.

**What you need:**
Sample statements, for example:

- The 12.15 express service from Carlisle stops four times before it reaches Newcastle, twice before York, and three times before Leeds.
- Tom, Alex, Jane and Mary all like ham, cheese, tuna and egg, but no one likes chicken sandwiches.
I enjoyed it. It was very hard work. The best bit was when we got to play football outside... I can’t really think of anything that would have made the day better. Everybody made me feel welcome.

I was a little bit nervous before doing the interviews. I can’t remember what it was that made me feel nervous. Some of the people we interviewed were nervous too. I don’t think it was harder for them to be interviewed by us than by adults. I thought it was fun. It’s much better to give children a chance to do fun things.

For the questions we asked them, we made them up on the board at Marylands. For scoring, we ticked the level we thought they got to. If they got a ‘one’, it meant they didn’t say what we wanted them to say – they did not answer the questions properly... three was ‘ok, good answer’. We got some good answers. We only got two bad answers. But that didn’t make it hard to choose which one got the job.

I haven’t done anything like this before, but if I had the chance I’d do it again.

The training was helpful. The best bit was when we were acting when the people first came in. I’d tell other children to get involved.

I’ve learned how people get interviewed and why the people want the job and what qualities they need for the job. I think it’ll make me better at interviews in the future. It’s a good idea for Action for Children to do something like this because I think children should get a better chance.

Adrian (9)

When I was interviewed by children...

My recruitment involved a two-stage interview. The first stage was a panel of three young people who were care leavers. They were supported by an adult who took notes so that they could concentrate on the questions and responses.

The questions they made up were really interesting and I feel that they were able to be quite direct and ask the questions that would be important for young people who might use the service. One of the questions was really hard – ‘What do you think ‘challenging behaviour’ is?’ It was such a simple but thoughtful question that seemed to get to the heart of what young people really wanted to know about a prospective worker’s attitude towards them.

The second stage of the interview was a mixed panel of staff and two young people who were care leavers. I had to do a 20-minute presentation to the panel and then each member asked a question in turn.

I feel that the difference between the panels was that the first one felt more ‘free’ and open, whereas the second panel’s questions were clearly based on the person specification, which can sometimes restrict the scope of the questions.

I would always expect to be interviewed by young people if I went for a job where I was working for young people. It gives an important message about the organisation when they respect young people enough to be involved in the decision about who works for them.

Angie Treby
Children’s Rights Officer, Action for Children Tower Hamlets
At Gen R 8, we use quite an informal approach to involving young people in the recruitment process, based around project visits from candidates.

Young people are advised that we are looking to recruit a new member of staff and that we are keen to involve them in the process. There is then discussion around what this may entail and what demands will be made on those involved.

Key workers then agree with the young people and the project manager who might be best suited to the task.

The young people meet with members of the recruiting panel, usually the project manager, to agree the format of their involvement, and to discuss and agree the questions they wish to ask.

A project visit is then arranged to take place the evening before the ‘formal’ interview panel. Young people are supported to ask questions and interact with candidates by the project manager and administrator. Assessment includes observation of each candidate’s engagement with the young people, and discussion between project manager and young people following the visit.

Candidates report this as a very useful part of the process as they get to visit the office and meet young people before the interview panel. The young people get the chance to meet prospective project staff and feed back their views on how well the candidates engaged them. This is often quite a fun experience and the young people certainly feel more involved in their project as a result.
The right choice – participation in recruitment
Pillar 4: Understanding the job description and person specification

The fourth of the five pillars is supporting children and young people to develop an understanding of two of the important pieces of information supplied to candidates: the job description and person specification. This pillar should ground the young people’s training firmly within the mechanics of the recruitment and selection process, and create an understanding of which skills and experience candidates will need to demonstrate in the forthcoming interview.

Making a start

A good start point is to remember that these two phrases are likely to be either new or confusing (or both!) to children and young people for a range of reasons. Therefore, a good way to approach this is to first outline the fundamentals of the process and then find parallels within children and young people’s personal experience (see pages 27 and 55).

An overview of the process

A job description is the main document that describes the role, purpose and responsibilities of any given post in an organisation. The job description (JD), along with the person specification (PS), is used by candidates to guide them through the completion of their application form, and then by the organisation to support the shortlisting process. The expectation is that in order to stand a good chance of being invited to interview, application forms must show clearly how candidates meet all of the minimum requirements.

The person specification is an important document for children and young people’s interview panels as it sets out clearly which skills, abilities and experience are required by a successful candidate. This information brings the JD to life and helps to identify tangible parts of the role that children and young people may be able to test out as part of their involvement in the process.

A simple definition

The ‘job description’ is a way of writing down all the things someone will be expected to do in their new job, if they are the successful candidate.

The ‘person specification’ is a list of the different ways the candidates will be asked to show that they can do what is written in the job description.
Aim:
This activity is designed to start the group thinking about the various skills, knowledge and experience needed for a job of their choice. The second part of the activity looks at how they would test the ability of candidates to meet the criteria.

What you do:
Ask each person in the group to think of their dream job – this can be real or imaginary. They then draw a picture to represent their dream job, and on the back, write or use pictures or symbols to show the characteristics needed to do this job (the headings ‘skills’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘experience’ can be used if this would be helpful). Each person then shows their drawing to the group and highlights the key skills they think are important for the job. The group then discuss what would be the best ways to test prospective candidates.

What you need:
Coloured pens, paper
What experiences may children have had that can be used to demonstrate the use of job descriptions and person specifications?

Examples of parallels to job descriptions and person specifications can be found in many areas of children’s lives, particularly where they can identify a goal or aspiration. Their goals and aspirations, real or imaginary, can be used to look at what skills and abilities are needed to reach their goal. It is then possible to look at how each of these factors can be put to the test.

The diagram below shows a basic, everyday illustration of what job descriptions and person specifications can look like.

This is just one example, and it is used here to demonstrate a scenario that children may be able to relate to:

**Job: babysitter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Job purpose:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Key responsibilities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Person specification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
<th>Method of assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Demonstrate that you have worked as a babysitter</td>
<td>Be known to Suzie and her parents</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Must be mature and responsible</td>
<td>Experience working with young people, or looking after younger brothers and sisters</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Must be punctual</td>
<td>Be good at telling bedtime stories</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Must be able to reassure and calm Suzie if upset</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the key aspects of this pillar, and one that is often more meaningful to children and young people, is the concept of ‘qualities’, or ‘what someone needs to be good at’.

‘Qualities’ are ‘real life’ characteristics that represent the thread that links:

- **the job description (main purpose and responsibility of the job)**
- **the person specification (skills needed and how they will be demonstrated)**
- **the candidate**

Reviewing the job description, either in its published form, or revised for children and young people using more accessible language or pictures, should start a process where children and young people can identify which qualities (skills, abilities, values, attitudes, qualifications and experience) are needed to successfully do the job. The next step is to decide which of these qualities the group or individual thinks that they could test out, and how they could do this.

For example, a job description or person specification for a project manager will contain elements that are difficult or impractical for children and young people to test out (for example management of financial systems or strategic planning), alongside elements that are very relevant to children and young people using the service (for example ability to engage and involve younger children in the service, or knowledge of issues affecting children in the local area).

Involving children and young people in recruitment gives them the opportunity to test out specific parts of the person specification that they are uniquely qualified to comment on.
Example

A casual support worker person specification highlighting the areas that a children’s panel chose to test:

This is a modified version of an actual person specification used by an Action for Children project. The yellow boxes were identified by children as the areas that they would aim to cover in their children’s panel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Criteria to be tested by (tick as appropriate):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Essential/Desirable) A I P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, education and qualifications</td>
<td>Good standard of general education</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding of child development</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic understanding of safer care and child protection issues</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding of and commitment to the involvement of children in issues that affect them</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills and abilities</td>
<td>Ability to work as a member of a team</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to relate to children and their families</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good communication skills with children and their parents</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer literate</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to organise their time</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>Experience of working with children aged 5–13</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience of working with groups of children aged 5–13</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>Understanding of and commitment to working with children and adults from a variety of backgrounds</td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other requirements</td>
<td>Ability to drive</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:

A = application
I = interview
P = presentation
Exercise

Quirky qualities

Aim:
This is a fun activity that asks the group to create a picture, painting or collage of the best person to do the actual job the group is considering in its recruitment and selection training.

What you do:
The idea is to use as much imagination as possible to come up with your own ‘super-being’ who would be totally equipped for the job in hand. At this point, it may be useful for the facilitator to demonstrate using a picture they created earlier (for a different job) or to give some examples of what is possible.

For example, a drawing of a fantastic teacher may include lots of arms (they can help more than one person at a time), an enormous watch (they always have time for you), a huge heart (they are very kind and thoughtful), or a large head (they are very clever and have a large brain!).

What you need:
Coloured pens, paper

What are the key learning points for children and young people at this stage?

1. General understanding of the job description and person specification
   The group should be able to explain what both a job description and person specification is, and give examples, real or imaginary, that describe a job, its related skills and qualifications, and how these may be tested to help find the right person for the job.

2. How the job description and person specification fit into the overall recruitment and selection process
   The group should be aware that the job description and person specification are key parts of the application pack that is sent to all candidates, and that candidates write their application based on this information. The job description and person specification are two of the main factors that guide the candidates when preparing for their interview.

3. Knowledge of the qualities related to the role being considered
   The group should be able to list a number of qualities that specifically relate to the job in question. They should also be able to explain why these particular qualities are important and how candidates may be able to demonstrate them.
I would like to say that I found my interview/recruitment process very interesting. At first I didn’t know how this would work but on the day of interview, I was interviewed by four young people who I thought were very confident, well-organised and knew exactly what they were doing. The whole process lasted around 40 minutes; this included an interactive formal presentation, then interview questions. I felt that the process was very empowering for the children and young people involved.

Ruhel Ahmed
Participation Development Worker, Action for Children Tameside Participation Project

Why did you get involved?
Ant – ‘Because my sister was involved and she told me what it’s about so I decided to get involved and thought it would be a good opportunity’
Chelsea – ‘Thought it would be an experience, something to learn from, a good skill for when I get older’
Georgia – ‘To get out more’

Why do you think it’s a good idea to include young people?
Ant – ‘Because children get experience from interviewing and get their say on who they like and dislike’
Chelsea – ‘To see what their views of the visitor are because as an adult you wouldn’t see them in the same way as younger people do’
Georgia – ‘So they know if they want them’

What did you get out of it?
Ant – ‘Experience interviewing people, gained confidence, money, skills, socialising abilities’
Chelsea – ‘New skills, interviewing, socialising, meeting new people’
Georgia – ‘Learn more skills, more confidence’

Ant (12), Chelsea (14), Georgia (13)
Example
A project worker person specification designed by young people at Action for Children Lisalanna: The person specification below was the result of simply asking the young people who access Lisalanna what was important to them about the staff who support them. The views collated give a clear insight into what is important to the young people. Each time you read through the person specification, you will be struck by different elements of what the young people have to say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Essential (must have)</th>
<th>Desirable (would be good to have)</th>
<th>Assessment method (how do you know?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 This is what you will be | Happy/smiling  
My friend/friendly  
Nice  
Funny  
Nice to my mum  
Helpful  
Great with children  
Chatty/talkative  
Caring  
Receptive (open doors)  
Welcoming | Manners  
Not crabby | Ask  
Do they smile?  
Speak to them  
Ask their boss who they work with  
Are they tidy – look at them  
Ask if they know different symbols |
| 2 This is what you will be able to do | Drive  
Go on outings/park  
Interact – play on the PlayStation/other games  
Make dinner/cook  
Give me peace/space  
Give me grown-up things to do  
Help me with homework  
Help look after me – shower, dress, bedtime, school  
Be able to work with wheelchairs  
Ask me things – listen to me | Work the listening monitor  
Work the alarms  
Watch football  
Work the PS2  
Go out for walks  
Speak to my mum | |
| 3 This is what you will be good at | Talking to me  
Helping me  
Making breakfast, dinner, snacks  
Baking chocolate cakes  
Making children laugh  
Telling people yes/no  
Talking to mums and dads  
Helping me with my homework  
Reading stories  
Working with boys and girls  
Outdoor activities | Giving cuddles  
Art  
Helping me look nice/do nails | |
| 4 This is what you will know | Different communications  
Children’s interests  
Know all about my life – what I like/don’t like  
Know when to leave me to do things on my own  
First Aid – to help when I’m sick  
Know how to work the TV and video  
Know good things to do and places to go | | |
This was carried out by the staff at Lisalanna over a period of a couple of months and as many young people as possible took part. Staff recorded the views on an individual basis, using the young person’s preferred method of communication, and all the views were collated into one person specification.

‘Sometimes in life, we complicate things to such an extent that we lose the essence of what we are trying to achieve – this specification brings the recruitment and selection of staff right back to what is important to young people.’

**Margaret Sutton-Hibbert**  
*Project Manager, Action for Children Lisalanna*
Action for Children Penhurst School

At Penhurst School, we support children with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). The involvement of our children in the recruitment of new staff is very informal, and is managed in a way that is appropriate to their needs and levels of ability and understanding.

Prior to interview, each candidate is involved in a ‘show around’. This involves prospective new staff members touring the school and residential blocks, where they are able to observe the day-to-day running of the school, witness regular activities, and meet some of our children.

The staff member accompanying each candidate monitors the way they engage and respond to the children, and how the children respond to them. This is then fed back to the interview panel and informs the final decision.
Pillar 5: Learning the skills

The fifth pillar is designed to support children and young people to feel confident and comfortable during their involvement in the process and to build on the communication skills needed.

Once again, the skills and learning needed depends on the level and stage of the children and young people’s involvement, and will also be influenced by their interest, understanding and ability. Here we have again primarily used a children’s panel as the main vehicle for children and young people’s involvement, but clearly the ideas and principles discussed will be useful to whichever format or model you choose to use.

What are the skills involved?

‘Learning the skills’ focuses on the training required to prepare children and young people for the actual interview situation, encompassing:

1. Knowledge (understanding of the process and the key concepts – see previous chapters)
2. Interaction and communication (includes testing the knowledge and skills of candidates)
3. Assessment (includes recording and sharing the information received)

Look again at what will be assessed – how does the group think they can test out the necessary qualities and skills? Common methods used by children and young people’s panels include one or more of the following:

- asking a series of questions
- requesting a short presentation from candidates
- asking candidates to respond to a scenario
- setting the challenge of an activity or game

Suggestions from the group should be expanded, where necessary, by input from supporting staff who can share examples of children and young people’s involvement from across the organisation or in other settings. This is also a good opportunity to demonstrate approaches (for example, using basic drama or roleplay) and show reports or best practice examples that have been collected. Decisions made by the group at this point will determine which methods of testing will be used to assess the key skills the group has chosen to focus on.

Where children and young people form their own panel running alongside an adult panel, it is common that candidates face:

- questions plus either a sample game, activity or scenario (for frontline staff)
- a short presentation or practical test followed by questions from the group (for most other posts)
Making a start

Interaction and communication
This describes the part of the process that is concerned with the direct contact between children or young people and candidates, and will consider the four most commonly used approaches. Designing the process to include more than one of the four elements will give the candidates more opportunity to express themselves and will give the panel a greater range of ‘information’ to assess. In most cases it is important to include information about what is required of the candidates in their ‘call to interview’ letter.

1. Questions:
A good approach to formulating a list of questions is to start with the list of qualities previously collated from considering the job description and person specification, and then using a process based on the following steps:

- Ask the group to generate as many questions as they can that relate directly to the qualities (see activity ‘Post-it, say it’).
- It is often useful (and fun!), to play the ‘Yes/No’ game (see appendix). This is an opportunity for the supporting staff to highlight different types of questions available (for example open, closed, probing, hypothetical), and encourage the group to think about which types of questions will be the most appropriate to the interview situation and the qualities being tested.

- The next stage is for the group to rewrite their questions (if necessary), taking this learning into account, before ranking each question to decide which are the most important to include in the interview.

- Once the group has decided which questions are to be used, they will need to think about the quality of responses they are looking for, and how they will attribute scores to the answers that are given by candidates (see pages 68 and 69).

2. Scenarios:
Groups may often decide to develop one of their questions into a longer scenario to draw out more detail from the candidates. Scenarios are a useful way for the group to put candidates into a ‘real life’ situation that may reflect, say, a regular occurrence within their project or setting, or something that’s important to them.

The group should design a scenario based on their own setting, or appropriate to the post being considered, and link the required range of responses closely to the skills and qualities they are testing.

Exercise

‘Post-it, say it!’

Aim:
To collect suggestions and ideas

What you do:
The facilitator hands each young person four or five Post-it notes and a pen. The group members then write down one question per Post-it note and attach this to a flipchart next to the corresponding part of the person specification. At the end of the activity, there will be a collection of possible questions that can be ranked, before final decisions are taken as to which questions will be used in the interview.
It is important for the supporting staff to guide the group through the possible range of responses and help the group to identify the key elements they are looking for in a strong reply (see ‘A good answer’, pages 68 and 69).

A colleague once described a scenario where he was faced with a cabbage when he arrived in the interview room. He was then asked to spend 60 seconds explaining as many uses as possible for this object!

The young people on the panel later explained that this was more about the candidates’ ability to think creatively and build a rapport with the group rather than any expert knowledge of vegetables!

3. **Activities:**

   Any activities should be clearly linked to the job description and person specification. They should also call upon practical skills that are, ideally, a requirement for the job in question, or which enable the candidate to demonstrate some of the required skills. The use of activities should be considered carefully as it may not always be appropriate to the situation.

   For example, depending on what will be required of successful candidates in their new role, the interview may include:
   - a short game or ‘ice-breaker’
   - a short activity, for example an art activity or storytelling
   - a short challenge set by the group

   A scenario will describe a situation or dilemma that the candidate must respond to, for example:

   During an after-school club one of the young people starts to disrupt the games and activities of others. Eventually, another young person responds by shouting and threatening to hit him if he doesn’t stop it. You arrive in the room just as this happens – what would you do?
**A note of caution:** It is easy to get carried away when planning this part of the interview – there’s a lot of fun in thinking up trials or hoops that candidates will have to jump through! However, the group must also be sensitive to the situation the candidates find themselves in. Putting the candidates under undue pressure will not improve the quality of the interview process or the outcomes that can be expected.

The group should also be clear that even activities based on required skills or grounded in real life situations are to some degree artificial when they are part of an interview situation. It is important, where necessary, that the group is guided towards a ‘compact’ scenario that reflects the aspects of the job description and person specification that they are testing, that runs to time, and that complements other elements of their approach.

4. **Presentations:**

Presentations are an opportunity for the group to set a task that candidates can prepare prior to the interview day. This enables candidates to plan their input in a form and style that is appropriate to the young people present, and allows this to be tested by the group.

Examples can include something as basic as: ‘Tell us about yourself and what you bring to this role’.

Alternatively, they can include more job description and person specification-specific tasks, such as: ‘Tell us about a successful residential trip you have organised for young people. What went well and what would you do differently next time?’

An additional aspect to interaction is the understanding and influence of ‘body language’, for example where candidates choose to sit, the amount of eye contact they give, and folded arms.

An insight into this can be gained from using roleplay games that will also enable the children or young people to physically put themselves in what is often the uncomfortable position of being interviewed. This also provides an insight into how the candidate may perceive the children’s own body language and how this can support or detract from the process.

If managed carefully, an understanding of body language will inform the assessment process (see also ‘Word frieze’ on page 68).

**Assessment**

Responses from candidates are usually recorded using either individual scoresheets or as a group. In both cases it is important that the information is judged against agreed criteria (see ‘A good answer’ on pages 68 and 69) and that the recording is uniform to ensure consistency throughout the process and across the candidates.

It is important that both group and individual assessment should consider the following key points:

- the recording method is the same for each candidate
- the points included link directly to what they have agreed to test from the job description and person specification
- it is understandable to others (i.e. the adult panel) following the interview
- information recorded and words used don’t contravene previous learning about equal opportunities
- it involves ideas from the whole group, for example the style, layout and design – using their own plan, format or scoresheets will help to create and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility throughout this process (see appendix 4 for examples of individually completed scoresheets)
Exercise

Hear, Here!

Aim:
To demonstrate the benefits of active listening, how this shows the candidate that you are paying attention, and how it guards against missing important information that may lead to not choosing the best person for the job.

What you do:
Split the group into pairs; one person from each pair then leaves the room. Next, instruct the remaining people to ask their partner a simple question (like describe the way you got to the training today) when they return to the room and that they should then display poor listening and attention skills. For example, they could ask the question then start to play with their phone, look out of the window, yawn, or subtly turn to the person next to them and start a conversation.

Next, swap the pairs round asking the other person to leave the room. Instruct those remaining to display active listening techniques, like nodding in understanding, maintaining eye contact, and asking follow-up questions.

Then, as a whole group, discuss what everyone discovered during the activity and how each person felt about how they were treated when answering the questions (normally the first scenario gives little information and leaves the person feeling that they were not listened to, and vice versa).

Finally, discuss active listening techniques with the whole group and also consider body language and verbal and non-verbal cues that support good listening and communication.

I supported a local community project working with disabled children and their siblings to recruit new support workers.

The children decided that their part of the recruitment process would involve asking each candidate to introduce themselves and organise a quick game that would include everybody (as this was one of the job’s key tasks).

Following the game, and once each candidate had left the room, a Polaroid picture of the candidate was put on a flip chart and the children chose from a range of options to express their view. These included: happy, ‘medium’ or sad faces, pictures (for example thumbs up or down, sunshine or clouds), words that they could choose and stick on, or they could use a pen to write any thoughts or comments.

Barbara Seale
Four example assessment ideas:

1. **Word or picture friezes**
   
   These have a number of uses, both in group assessment and within individually completed scoresheets. Friezes are particularly useful when trying to assess across a range of values and attributes, or when considering certain aspects of their performance, such as body language.

   For example, following the group or individual’s assessment of the desired qualities for, say, a new outreach worker, a list of words, symbols or sample pictures may be added to the scoresheet (see also ‘Example scoresheet’ in appendix 4).

   The group can then circle each of the words, phrases or pictures that they think the candidate has evidenced during the course of the interview. This may help to guide their overall assessment, or act as a useful reminder when feeding back to the rest of the group and to the adult panel.

2. **A good answer**
   
   This is a concept that will be familiar to staff who have previously been involved in an interviewing panel themselves. Once the interview questions have been set, the panel will often agree some key things they will be looking for in response to each question. This can be done through discussion, using an activity (for example ‘Post-it, say it!’), or through drama or roleplay. This is an important part of the process that will help to build up the children and young people’s knowledge and understanding, and ensure they make a more informed assessment of each candidate based on the agreed set of criteria.
### Example:
Scoresheet including ‘A good answer’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>A good answer includes…</th>
<th>Score (circle one)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) What qualities do you have that you can bring to this job?</td>
<td>Good listener&lt;br&gt;Respectful&lt;br&gt;Honest&lt;br&gt;Interested in, and committed to, helping people&lt;br&gt;Friendly attitude&lt;br&gt;If they can’t help, they can find someone who can</td>
<td>Not met&lt;br&gt;Part met&lt;br&gt;Fully met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) What attracted you to this job, and what do you hope to achieve from it?</td>
<td>Possible promotion&lt;br&gt;Chance to work in the voluntary sector&lt;br&gt;Looking for a career change&lt;br&gt;Chance to work ‘hands on’ with young people&lt;br&gt;Help young people achieve independence&lt;br&gt;Help young people achieve their plans and ambitions</td>
<td>Not met&lt;br&gt;Part met&lt;br&gt;Fully met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Can you tell us about past work experience that is relevant to this job?</td>
<td>Previous work with young people&lt;br&gt;Previous work with families, including young children&lt;br&gt;Possible experience: youth work, schools, social work&lt;br&gt;Knowledge of housing procedures&lt;br&gt;Knowledge of child protection procedures</td>
<td>Not met&lt;br&gt;Part met&lt;br&gt;Fully met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) What is your view of young parenthood?</td>
<td>Aware of problems young parents face&lt;br&gt;Non-judgmental&lt;br&gt;Respectful&lt;br&gt;Aware of discrimination that young parents face&lt;br&gt;Prepared to advocate on your behalf</td>
<td>Not met&lt;br&gt;Part met&lt;br&gt;Fully met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from ‘Young people’s interview questions for role of project worker’
3. ‘Doing a round’

This is a simple but very effective method that can be used to focus the group on their main observations or assessments. Once all scoring and recording is complete (and the candidate has left the room!), ask the panel to turn their recording sheets face down. Next, explain that each person should bring to mind one or two key points; these points should sum up their main impression of the previous candidate.

After a few seconds, ‘do a round’ of the group, listening to each person in turn and recording each response. It is important that each person speaks without interruption and that everyone has a say. If someone is not ready then move on to the next person but be sure to return to each person before you finish the round.

This technique is often used in general groupwork and is a good way to create a short pen portrait of the children or young people’s assessment. This can be used later to focus the group on some of their main observations. It is often helpful to hand to the adult panel as a good recap of the children’s assessment, and is frequently a very useful tool to start discussions between the group and the adult panel when they meet following completion of all the interviews.

4. Bringing panels together

There are many benefits when using a children’s panel approach of bringing both of the panels together, and this should always be encouraged. There is important learning for both the children and the adults, and this also helps children to feel that their views are being given due consideration.

This opportunity can also be a vital aspect in the effectiveness of the process. For example, meeting with the children or young people often gives the adults a clearer understanding of the children’s views (and vice versa); the personal contact can allow the children to make comments that weren’t otherwise written or recorded; it provides a unique opportunity to share and discuss their individual views and assessments; and it is also a useful time to discuss any disagreements.

A note on environment

The choice of venue or setting for the interviews can be significant for the children and young people involved. Generally, their sense of ownership is enhanced by their responsibility level, the number of ways they can influence the process, and the number of choices they can make.

A group’s first choice of location will often be somewhere that represents ‘their turf’ – a place they are comfortable and familiar with. However, a number of external factors may have a bearing on the actual location of the interviews, which may move them away from the group’s preferred location. This can present difficulties, both in terms of unfamiliarity and uncertainty. Conversely, it can also be positive, as a change of venue can often add a sense of importance or prestige to the proceedings.
In either case, it is important to make sure:
- the group is familiar with the venue – pre-interview visits may be useful
- the group is encouraged to think about the layout of the room and the general environment they are setting up for the interview
- a ‘dry-run’ or practice interview is conducted in the interview space prior to the arrival of the first candidate

**Using drama to enhance the training**

Drama and roleplay have been mentioned a number of times throughout this pillar, and in activities included in other sections of this guide. This is because drama techniques are useful in preparing for the interview situation, and can also support the interview training process in a number of ways.

For example, drama can be used to encourage team building and risk taking, and it can also build confidence and provide an opportunity to try out some of the key skills. It can also help the group to put themselves in the position of the candidates, therefore increasing their understanding and empathy, and further informing their decision making around how and what to test at interview.

Some practical examples:
- using drama related ice-breaker games can build confidence and team spirit, and give the group the chance to ‘hear their voices in the room’ (see the activity ‘Secret’s out’ on page 72).
- staff roleplaying the interview situation can provide an insight to what this situation looks like in reality
- children and young people experimenting with the interview process can provide an understanding both of being on a panel and being a candidate

Roleplay can reinforce the format and overall shape of what to expect and what will happen on the day. This will help the group identify what they need to know, think about, and do. Visualising and rehearsing their involvement may also help them feel more confident and comfortable on the actual interview day.

However, drama is not for everyone! There are ways of gently introducing drama as a useful and enjoyable tool (see activity ‘Freeze frames’ in appendix 2) but care should be taken not to isolate any children or young people who may be uncomfortable with this type of approach. In this case, it may still be useful for staff to role-play situations and model behaviour, and this may be the extent of your use of drama at this stage.

The recruitment of the Action for Children Participation Manager was the first time I’d personally been involved in a two-panel approach. While I was certain that we should be involving young people in the process, I was less sure about how well it would work.

However, this model worked very well indeed. Bringing the two panels together at the end of the day was particularly significant; this meeting confirmed how well prepared and committed the young people were, and reinforced the importance of their very positive contribution.

The young people’s feedback added real value and an extra dimension to the process and certainly impacted on the final decision.

**Chris Spragg**
**Action for Children Head of Programme Management**
What are the key learning points for children and young people at this stage?

1. **What types of approaches are available to use in the interview process?**
   
   Children and young people should be familiar with a range of techniques in order to choose methods that they are comfortable with and that are appropriate to the skills they are assessing.

2. **How can candidates be assessed and how is this information recorded?**
   
   There should be clarity around what is being assessed, how it is being assessed, and which options are available to do this (this should link to the job description and person specification). The group should also understand the method they are using to score the candidates, and the importance of following the same procedure for each so that there is fair and comparable assessment.

3. **What does the interview environment look and feel like?**
   
   The group should be clear about where the interviews will take place, what it feels like to be in the interview room and how an interviewee may feel, and how they can influence and arrange the interview environment.

---

**Some sample secrets:**

- The interview chair is becoming gradually hotter and hotter
- The interviewee is a compulsive liar
- The interviewee can see into the future
- The interviewee is a super hero

---

**Exercise**

**Secret’s out**

The room is set out as it would be for the interview and the children form a panel facing the interview chair. One at a time, the children take their turn to be the candidate, and each time they are concealing a secret. Each interview progresses and ideally begins with the group using the questions they have prepared for the real candidates. However, it soon becomes clear that each interviewee has something to hide and the panel adjust their line of questioning until the ‘secret’s out’!

Some sample secrets:

- The interview chair is becoming gradually hotter and hotter
- The interviewee is a compulsive liar
- The interviewee can see into the future
- The interviewee is a super hero
I first started doing interviews in April 2008, and to begin with found it extremely hard to be able to ask questions with confidence. As time went on I grew more confident and more comfortable, and now find it a lot easier. Being involved with these interviews has been a great opportunity for me, as I have felt more involved with decision making and it feels good to know that my opinion, as a young person is valued. I think any young person who gets offered to be involved would really not want to miss out. It has been a good experience for me, and has even helped me when I myself have gone to job interviews. I feel that I can only keep learning from this.

Cat (20)
From start to finish

This section features a number of checklists and key questions designed to act as prompts to staff. It begins with key questions when first considering involving children and young people in recruitment and selection. Next, there is a sample training schedule setting out timescales for a children's panel approach applicable to the recruitment of most front-line staff. And finally, we consider how to manage the interview day.

Advance planning

The stage at which you start thinking about involving children and young people in recruitment and selection depends on a number of factors, not least your own knowledge and experience. However, in each case there are a number of key questions that should be asked:

- Are you clear about why you are involving children and young people in the interview process?
- What form will children or young people's involvement take?
- At what stage will their involvement begin?
- What influence will they have over the process and final decision? (Remember to communicate this to the group or young person at the outset)
- How will you ensure that this is a learning process for both staff and service users, and that children and young people's involvement is meaningful and valued?

There are a number of stages of involvement in the recruitment and selection process, and throughout this guide we have highlighted a number of approaches that can be considered. As with all positive participation work, it’s vital that children and young people are included at the earliest opportunity and that there is clarity around the degree of their involvement, and the influence they have on the process and any decisions that are taken.

Staff support

Ideally, projects should earmark one member of staff who will manage and facilitate the children and young people’s involvement – from first contact, to supervising the panel on the day, to facilitating the feedback and discussions with the adult panel.

Timings and notification

Ensure that the amount of time and notification given to children is appropriate. For example, preparation for a children and young people’s panel should be given three to four weeks to ensure sufficient time for all training and preparation, and to enable the assigned staff to plan and prepare their approach.

It is also important that the interview date is communicated at this point and that, ideally, no changes are made.
## Example of a four-session approach to training:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Session 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outing – the group is meeting for the first time so the project has organised a meal at their local fast food restaurant. The group members get to know each other, share experiences of the project, and talk about the forthcoming interviews. They explore the different ways they can be involved and staff clearly set out the decision-making process and the weight of the children’s views.</td>
<td>Explore different ways to test the candidates: questions, scenarios and activities (agreed presentation followed by questions from the panel). Brainstorm and agree final questions and presentation title. Explore ‘good answers’ for each question to help in assessment. Share ideas for how the scoresheets will look, for example scale 0–5, tick boxes, word frieze.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Session 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The group explores their understanding of the job role and discuss the key tasks in conjunction with the job description and person specification. Activities are used to explore confidentiality and equal opportunities. Activities are used to explore ‘qualities’ of successful candidates. The group revisits the job description and person specification to decide which parts they can test out at their panel.</td>
<td>Recap weeks one to three. Check out the scoresheets and make adjustments. Discuss roles on the day, for example who will welcome the candidates, what order will the questions take, who will ask which questions. Roleplay the interview situation. Discuss the details and arrangements for the interview day and explore any concerns or anxieties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: each session must be designed to include activities appropriate to the children and young people present, and should be evaluated against the aims.
Information

- Staff need to think carefully about what they need to supply (for example a job description and person specification) and if any materials need to be modified to include different or more easy to understand language, or signs and symbols.

- Adult panels should be told what form the children and young people's involvement will take. The 'share' of the decision making should be agreed and communicated, as well as which aspects the children and young people will be testing (in order that the person specification is covered across the two panels).

- Candidates should be aware that children and young people are involved in the process and what form this will take. Each candidate should receive a letter accompanying their call to interview letter, explaining key details of the children and young people's involvement. For example for children and young people's panels, this will include the duration of the interview, what the tasks or format will be, and what, if anything, they are required to do as preparation. They may also be informed of the number of children involved, their age, and any factors that may influence their preparation or style of presentation or interaction.

It's worth noting again the importance of clarity from the very start of the process.

Decisions about the weighting of the children or young people's assessment and feedback will depend on a number of factors. These include the job role under scrutiny and the aspects of the person specification that the children and young people are able to test out, as well as the degree and stage of their involvement, and their understanding of the process and their role.

Whatever weighting is agreed, this must be clear right from the start. The children and young people must also be clear of the role of the Chair of the adult panel and their organisational responsibility for the final decision in all cases (see FAQs).

See also appendix 4 for an example of 'weighting' in a parallel panel approach.
Looking ahead to the interview day

Have you arranged for permission or consent for the children and young people’s involvement?
It is important that parents and carers are aware of the interview project and there is consent for the involvement of the children and young people. It may also be important to obtain signed consent for photographs if the project is to be publicised.

Is the group familiar with the venue?
Pre-event visits should be arranged wherever possible if the interviews are taking place somewhere other than the project base. Clearly this is important for staff in terms of planning, preparation and risk assessment, but it is also important for the group to be familiar with their surroundings. A pre-event visit for the group will offset some of the interview day nerves and help them to settle in easier and begin to focus on the task in hand.

Have you planned ‘timings’ suitable for children and young people’s involvement?
The time the group spends with each candidate is usually no more than 10–12 minutes, depending on the group involved and the nature of the job role they are assessing. They should then have a break that is long enough to complete their assessment sheets, ‘do a round’ and have a five-minute break (too long and they may become bored or distracted).
There should be a plan or timetable outlining when each candidate will be spending time with each panel (see example on page 79).

Other considerations include:
- the number of candidates seen in one day – as a general rule six is usually the maximum number to ensure the quality of the process and the engagement of the children and young people
- days and dates for interviews – it is not usually appropriate for children to miss school, so late afternoon, early evening or holiday time interviews should be considered
**Example: Interview day schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult panel</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Candidate 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>Candidate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Candidate 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>Candidate 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5pm</td>
<td>Candidate 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s panel</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>Group arrives after school. ‘Settling in’ time includes looking through scoresheets and ‘dry running’ the interview scenario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30pm</td>
<td>Candidate 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50pm</td>
<td>Candidate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10pm</td>
<td>Candidate 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.40pm</td>
<td>Candidate 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6pm</td>
<td>Candidate 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30pm</td>
<td>Both panels meet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Is the room set up correctly?**
As part of their preparation, the group will have considered the interview environment and possibly even roleplayed interview scenarios within a room set out a certain way. This should be replicated on the interview day. This will help the group to ‘own the space’ and will, again, offset some of the anxiety they may be feeling. It is useful to do a dry run at this stage as part of the final preparation.

**Is there food and drink available throughout the interviews?**
It is important that there are refreshments available when the children arrive (it may have been a while since lunchtime!) and also during the planned breaks. This will help the group to concentrate and it’s also a good social element that helps to facilitate discussion or create a break from the work part of the day.

**Are all the required resources in place?**
There should be enough scoresheets for each young person to assess each candidate in turn, with spare copies in reserve. It may also be helpful to have resources including magazines or games to fill time in the result of a hold up in proceedings, or to use during breaks to recharge everyone’s batteries.

**Does the group have all the information they need?**
This includes the names of each of the candidates, and the names and roles of each member of the adult panel. They should also be reminded about the decision-making process and how disagreements will be addressed.
Role of staff during the interviews

A member of staff, ideally the person who has supported the group through the process, should always be present during interviews. This is equally important during children and young people panels, assessed group discussion or when a young person sits on the formal panel.

In each case the staff member present ensures the safety of both the children and young people and the candidates, but will rarely become actively involved and should not be addressed by the candidate. The staff member may intervene if there are safeguarding or equal opportunity concerns or if a member of the panel requires specific support.

If necessary, when a young person sits on an adult panel, they should have a dedicated member of staff who is not involved in the interviews other than to support the young person. This provides security and a source of support for the young person and enables the other members of the panel to concentrate on the task of interviewing.

Other important aspects of the staff role include:

- keeping the group to time, both during and between interviews
- ‘doing the round’ (see page 70)
- making sure all interview sheets are fully completed by the young people for each candidate. This helps to ensure fair and comparable scoring, and is also important both to aid discussions with the adult panel, and to maintain the integrity and accountability of the process through an established audit trail
- ensuring that the completed scoresheets are handed directly to either the Chair of the formal (adult) panel or safely delivered to an agreed member of the human resources team

facilitating the feedback session between the two panels. This can be an anxious time for the children and young people and also for the adults, who may not have been involved in this type of process before. It’s important that the staff member who has been supporting the children is clear and confident in facilitating this session, including the introductions and ensuring that everyone has their say

A note on confidentiality

All staff involved in preparing young people, travelling with young people, and assisting with the recruitment process in any way must be advised and reminded of the importance of confidentiality. This applies to all aspects of the process: from young people’s comments and scores to the candidates own details and actions. It applies equally to young people and supporting staff. This would only be breached if they were concerned about risk or illegality.
Evaluation

In addition to session-by-session evaluation, it is also important to evaluate the interview day and look back at the process as a whole. This can be done using some of the evaluation methods in appendix 3, or combined with a social activity immediately following the interviews to celebrate the day and the involvement of the group in the process.

Evaluation is an essential element to most participation activities; it is another way of giving children and young people a voice and the opportunity to have their say about their experience. It also supports the skills development of staff and participation development across the organisation.

Evaluation also creates evidence of children and young people’s involvement in service design and delivery. This is vital to the development of the service and also provides information to support tendering or new business opportunities.

In addition, some projects routinely seek formal feedback from the adult panel as well as asking all candidates to return a feedback sheet about their experience of the process.

**Have you considered and prepared for after the interview?**

There are a number of tasks that may be necessary:

- Have you prepared certificates and/or evidence for accreditation or school records of achievement?
- Have you considered offering a gift or reward? What is common practice in your setting or locality? Is it possible to include the group in the decision making about possible rewards? (see FAQs)
- Have you informed the children and young people about when it is likely that they will be told who is to be appointed and their start date? (see FAQs)
- ...and, don’t forget to organise safe travel home for everyone!

---

**‘Juggling Jim’**

For this, a picture of a clown was placed onto a large piece of paper. The children were then given small pieces of paper (shaped like juggling balls) where they wrote comments about something they have learned about the recruitment and selection process and what they enjoyed or didn’t enjoy. The balls were then stuck onto the board above Juggling Jim’s head.
We have used this staff checklist to support the young person’s role in the young people’s interview panel:

- Remind young people to attend!
- Ensure young people have an appropriate set of questions. Young people’s questions should aim to demonstrate the applicant’s capacity to engage young people. For example, this may include questions about relationships, confidentiality and confrontation. Young people need to agree what makes a good answer and agree a scoring system.
- Make sure each young person has a set of question-and-answer sheets, and a pen, for each candidate. Young people need to agree who is asking which questions.
- Help the young people set up the room – including a glass of water for the candidate.
- Make sure young people have food, drinks and breaks during the interviews.
- Help young people appoint a panel Chair, and help the Chair prepare their introductory remarks. This should be to introduce the panel; explain that the interview will last about 20 minutes; tell the candidate that young people will each ask a number of questions; and inform them that they will have an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview.
- Collect the candidate and take them into the interview. The support person will be in the room during the interview. They should not say anything during the interview or take notes unless the candidate asks a young person an inappropriate personal question, or a young person makes a remark that contravenes Action for Children’ equality and diversity policy. Both these issues should be challenged at the time and should be reported to the Chair of the adult panel at the end of the interviews.
- Ensure young people have given a score to each question for each candidate, before the next interview begins.
- At the end of the interviews, help the young people come to a joint agreement about scores for each of the candidates. Encourage young people to be professional about this assessment and challenge any subjective remarks or personal criticisms.
- Help the young people share their views and insights with the adult panel.
- Arrange certificates for the young people and pay their expenses.
Post interview and next steps

There are a number of tasks that follow the successful involvement of children and young people in the recruitment process, including:

- all recording and scoresheets should be retrieved, and copies sent alongside those used by the adult panel to HR department
- the supporting staff should ensure there is evidence of evaluation of each stage of the process to inform future opportunities
- in addition to the agreed reward, each young person should receive a letter or certificate from the supporting staff member thanking them for their involvement
- the relevant manager or Chair of the adult panel should write to each child or young person to thank them for their involvement, and inform them of the decision made (see FAQs)

Where possible, there should also be an opportunity for the interview group to meet the successful candidate when they officially start their new role. This enables both the candidate and the children and young people to share their experiences of the interviews and ‘complete the circle’ of their involvement.

In addition, there are a number of other benefits and opportunities for children and young people following this type of process. Two of the most positive, both from the point of view of the interview group as well as the project and successful candidate, are involvement in staff induction and also the opportunity of training or peer mentoring other children or young people in recruitment (see Particip8 example on page 32).
It is worth recapping that children and young people can be involved in all aspects of the interview process, and that participation is concerned with the involvement of all children and young people. Involving younger children and children with more complex needs will rely on a number of factors, not least the expertise, knowledge and skills of those who support them. However, this, along with the basic premise that the weight of children and young people’s influence is guided by their interest, understanding and maturity, equally applies to all children and young people.

The key factors for successful recruitment are that participants are well prepared, interested and engaged, and that their involvement is meaningful and valued. There should always be clarity at the outset around the extent of their involvement, and the level of responsibility and influence they have on the final decision. And remember, disagreements are to be welcomed, not feared! Although staff who routinely involve children and young people say that they are amazed at the correlation between the adults’ and children’s decisions, disagreements provide a valuable opportunity to explore points of view and how assessments were reached.

Evaluation will enable everyone to give their feedback about the process and is vital to develop and improve the process and level of children and young people’s involvement.

Recruitment and selection is a formal process but children and young people’s contribution to it can and should be fun and creative. Learning from mistakes and enjoying the process are important factors; they help build confidence and self-esteem, and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Mark Benson
Action for Children Participation Manager
Appendix 1

Resources for activities

Photocopying sheets for 'What comes next?'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy becomes available (someone leaves or a new job is created)</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job description and person specification are written and revised</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job advert is prepared</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy is advertised in the local press</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates request application forms and return them before the closing date</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-listing for interviews</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews are held</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Picture Communication Symbols used are from Boardmaker
Photocopying cards for ‘Face game’
Appendix 2

More games to try

Sun shines down
This game is an excellent way to energise a group. It begins with everybody sitting on a chair in a circle. One person stands in the middle and their chair is taken out of the circle – this person is the ‘caller’. The caller calls out ‘The sun shines down on... everyone wearing the colour red’ and the people who are wearing red must then swap seats with each other, while the caller also tries to find a seat. The person left in the middle becomes the new caller.

Freeze frames
This activity is an excellent way to use drama to explore issues. If using with bigger groups, first divide into smaller groups of four people. Each group is then given a ‘scenario’ and a few minutes to prepare their ‘freeze frame’. Each group then takes their turn to present their frozen image to the other group, who try to guess the situation being described.

To build on this activity, the facilitator may pretend to ‘release the pause button’ on their imaginary remote control, and the image comes to life for a few seconds to develop the scenario.

Example scenarios can be fun and used as ice-breaker activities (United’s goal is disallowed when a dog runs on the pitch) or to support issue-based work (John and Emma talk about Clare behind her back and spread nasty rumours).

Hot seat
This is an energiser game that involves the whole group working together as a team. For this game, everyone sits on a chair in a circle. One person then stands in the middle, leaving a spare chair.

The idea of this game is for the person in the middle to try to sit down on the spare chair, while the others try to prevent this from happening. The two people on either side of the spare chair must protect it, eg when the person in the middle walks towards the spare chair, one of them must sit on it first. This leaves their chair spare, and someone either side of it must protect it by sitting on it first. This continues until the person in the middle manages to sit on the spare chair and the person failing to protect it goes in the middle and it all starts again.

Animal farm
A fun game to play with younger children. A volunteer plays ‘the farmer’ and the rest of the group slowly come into the room moving and ‘talking’ in the style of their designated animal. The game is over when the farmer successfully guesses which animal each person is pretending to be.

Blast off!
This is a game that requires everyone to work as a team. It is useful when calming a lively group and helps to focus attention in preparation for an activity.

Everyone stands in a circle. The idea of the game is for everyone to work as a team and count down from 10 to one without more than one person saying the same number at any one time. Anyone can start and anyone can jump in to say a number. No signals or gestures are allowed in this game, and if more than one person says the same number, you must start again from 10. If the group successfully counts down from 10 to one, everyone then shouts ‘Blast off!’

Splat!
The group stands in a circle. One person stands in the centre of the circle (the caller) and everyone puts their own hands together in front of them to form a ‘splat gun’. The idea of the game is for the person in the middle to point their splat gun at someone in the circle and say ‘Splat!’ The ‘splatted person’ must then either turn to their left or their right and say ‘Splat!’ to the person next to them. As they turn to their left or right, either one of the people on each side must try to splat that person before they are splatted themselves. The quickest person wins and the person who is splatted sits out for the remainder of the game. The last person standing wins the game!
**Goldfish bowl**

This is a drama-based activity that allows groups to explore situations, eg interview scenarios. It can also contain a Forum Theatre element where observers have the opportunity to stop the scene and interact with the participants in a number of ways (these are set out by the facilitator at the start of the activity). In interview preparation, this activity can be used to demonstrate the interview situation and the course it can take depending on the questions asked and responses given. One idea is to split the group so that you have, say, two observers, two interviewers and one interviewee. Either of the interviewers or interviewee can be given 'role cards' that describe character traits that they will display when the scenario begins (eg ‘you must interrupt whoever is talking’ or ‘you must talk really quietly’ etc). Once the interview is underway, the observers can ask to stop the action at any point if they want to either guess the role a certain participant is acting out, or swap places with one of the participants and assume that role.

**Post-it, say it**

This activity is simply a different way of collecting suggestions, which also avoids the need for children to speak up in front of the whole group. The facilitator hands each participant four or five Post-it notes and a pen. In the example used in the text, the children write down one question per Post-it note and then attach this to a flipchart next to the corresponding part of the person specification. At the end of the activity, there will be a collection of possible questions that can then be discussed and ranked, before final decisions are taken as to which questions will be used in the interview.

**Yes/no game**

This is a fun game designed to encourage the group to start thinking about different ways that questions can be phrased to avoid ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. The group takes it in turn to be the ‘contestant’ and the remainder of the group (or the facilitator) take it in turn to fire questions at them. The contestant must answer each question, avoiding the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’. If either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ are used, then this person is ‘out’ and it’s someone else’s turn.
Appendix 3

Sample evaluation techniques

Why evaluate activities?
Evaluation is a key part of any groupwork with children and young people. The reasons we use evaluation include to check out with children how much they’ve learned or understood, to use feedback to improve the activities or other future work, and to evidence the quality of the work delivered.

Some evaluation ideas
The following examples describe a semi-structured approach to evaluation. This basically uses three levels, each of which features its own range of techniques and games, with each providing different ‘qualities’ of information and feedback. The techniques below are included to help those who are new to evaluation with children. They are included purely as a starting point from which to develop your own methods and approach. All of the techniques shown can be easily incorporated into any of the activity sessions in this guide. However, you may choose to combine activities from different levels depending on the session your are delivering and the quality of the feedback required.

Level 1: Snapshot
Snapshot activities are designed to provide a quick and fun way to find out from children (or adults!) if they have, for example, enjoyed the session, know more than when they arrived etc.

Mountains and molehills
Following an activity, the group stand in a line. They are then asked a number of questions. Following each question, they either stand really tall (if they thought the activity or event was excellent), crouch to the floor (if they didn’t enjoy the activity) or choose somewhere in the middle (if they weren’t sure).

Traffic lights
Place three traffic lights around the room, one showing ‘red’, one ‘amber’ and one ‘green’. Next, ask the group a question, e.g. ‘Have you enjoyed today?’. The children then run to either red (no), amber (not sure) or green (yes).

Level 2: Range
As the title suggests, this level of evaluation adds some detail to what you may have discovered using level 1 by showing a range of opinions or feedback.

Targets
Place a target somewhere in the room with a question written above it. Everyone is given a sticky dot and is asked to place their dot onto the target. The position of their dot represents their response to the question. The closer the dot is placed to the centre of the target, the more positive the response. Conversely, the further a dot is from the centre, the more negative the response.

Continuum
A line is marked out on the floor. At one end is a positive/’Yes’ sign, at the other a negative/’No’ sign. The group are asked questions and they must decide where to place themselves along the line according to how strongly they agree/disagree. Example statements could include ‘All children should be involved in recruiting staff’ or ‘I now know enough to tell others about recruitment and selection’.

Appendix 3

The right choice – participation in recruitment
**Level 3: Information**

This level of evaluation provides the most detail. Although methods shown focus on written feedback, it’s also possible to use, say, ‘word friezes’ so that children are able to pick words/phrases that describe how they are feeling.

**Juggling Jim**

Preparation for this activity includes creating a picture of a clown (a job for staff or a fun art activity for the group) and making a number of juggling balls (Post-it notes cut into circles usually work well and are easy to stick).

To begin, ask the group to each collect a number of ‘balls’. The idea is that the children write or draw each of their comments/feedback onto a ball and then stick this onto the picture above the clown (see page 81). When everyone has stuck on their comments, you are left with lots of feedback about the activity and a colourful picture that is also a record of the activity.

**Post-it ladder**

Members of the group are given sticky post-it notes. A statement or question about the workshop is read out and they are asked to write their comments onto the post-it and place it at the appropriate point on the ladder (eg if a question was asked about the ice-breaker games, someone might write down the name of the game and, if they enjoyed it, place it somewhere towards the top of the ladder).

**Appendix 4**

Note: The next two scorecards are amended from an actual external interview where children from an Action for Children project supported the recruitment of a service director. As you can see the children’s panel contributed approximately 18 points towards the overall 98 maximum score. The scores from each panel were simply added together to find the highest scoring, and therefore successful, candidate.
**Recruitment and selection: individual interview assessment form**

Date: 

Service director vacancy

Candidate: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel Member</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Daisy</td>
<td>Why do you want this job?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lucy</td>
<td>What's the most important thing you can bring to the post and why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Kyle</td>
<td>What experiences do you have of working in a team? And do you think you work well in a team?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Caitlin</td>
<td>What are your plans and ideas for improving the service?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Daisy</td>
<td>What is your priority?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Lucy</td>
<td>How are you going to support our plans for developing participation within the service?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 3 points 0..1..2..3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kyle

Is there anything you would like to ask us?

Caitlin

Thank you for meeting with us. I’m sure the adult panel has mentioned that someone will be in touch.

**Total (maximum 18 points)**
# Recruitment and selection: individual interview assessment form

**Date:**

Service director vacancy

**Candidate:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel member</th>
<th>Questions/task</th>
<th>JD/PS criteria</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel member 1</td>
<td>Example question 1 Can you start by telling us what skills you would bring to the post?</td>
<td>Build positive relationships with: CYP, colleagues, service users and service providers Supervision/management skills Organisational skills Partnership working Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum 8 points 0..1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel member 1</td>
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<td>Question 10</td>
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<td>Maximum 8 points 0..1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8</td>
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</table>

Total (maximum 80 points)
# Casual worker interviews

Candidate name:

1. Can you demonstrate one game?

2. What experience do you have with children?

3. Do you have any first aid experience if there was an accident?

4. What sort of talents have you got for the job?
5. What would you do if a fight started in a group?

6. What would you do if you had 20 minutes left with a group and you’d finished all the activities and stuff you needed to do?

7. Tell us a joke, impression or funny story that’s happened to you.

8. Why do you want the job?
9. Circle the words to describe the candidate: (circle/write your own)

- Kind
- Boring
- Helpful
- Happy
- Lots of ideas
- Organised
- Imagination
- Grumpy
- Good with children
- Eye contact
- Hard to understand
- Good listener
- Smiley face

10. Final thoughts/comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Final overall score = 80
Appendix 5 – Sample certificates

Action for Children staff can access and print this certificate template for free on the web to print system.
Certificate of achievement – recruitment

This certificate is presented to

who was involved in recruiting and learned about the recruitment process, equality and diversity, confidentiality, communication and teamwork, and interview questions and techniques

_______________________________  _______________________________

Project manager

Registered charity nos. 1097940/SC038092 Company no. 4764232
Appendix 6

The following is not an exhaustive list, but instead highlights some useful information related to the main text and to more general participation, involvement and children’s rights.

**Reports**


**Books and resource packs**

Scottish Executive (2006) *Community Planning Advice Note – Engaging children and young people in community planning* (includes details of a wide range of resources to encourage young people’s participation in their local communities and in society as a whole) (available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Resources/Doc/154089/0041433.pdf)


Michel, Emma and Hart, Di (2002) *Involving young people in the recruitment of staff, volunteers and mentors*, NCB/Princes Trust

Save the Children (2005) *The Recruitment Pack – Involving children and young people in the selection of staff*

Save the Children (2002) *Participation – spice it up!: practical tools for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations*


Dickins, Mary, Emerson, Sue, Gordon-Smith, Pat (2004) *Starting with choice: inclusive strategies for consulting young children*, Save the Children (practical guidance on consulting young children, for early years workers, with particular emphasis on the inclusion of disabled children)

Fajerman, Lina, Treseder, Phil, Connor, Joyce (2004) *Children are service users too: a guide to consulting children and young people*, Save the Children (guide to consulting with children and young people in decision making that affects their lives)

Lancaster, Y Penny, Broadbent, Vanessa (2003) *Listening to young children*, Coram Family/Open University Press (training resource pack for parents and professionals focusing on the participation of young children and the importance of listening to their views)

Phillips, Julie (2001) *Groupwork in social care: planning and setting up groups* (practical guide to planning and setting up groups in a wide range of social care settings)

Manor, O (2000) *Choosing a groupwork approach: an inclusive stance* (describes and presents a model, grounded in systems theory, for working with different groups tailored to meet individual clients’ needs)
Doel, M and Sawdon, K (1999) *The essential groupworker: teaching and learning creative groupwork* (examines a number of contextual issues, eg social work education, in-service training and anti-oppressive practice; and describes the planning, setting up and maintenance of a working group)


Kellett, Mary [et al.] (2004) ‘Just teach us the skills please, we’ll do the rest’: empowering ten-year-olds as active researchers. Children and society, 18, 5, November 2004, 329-343 (describes a study in which a group of ten-year-olds participated in a taught programme aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and skills to design their own research)

Shier, H. (2001) *Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations a new model for enhancing children’s participation in decision-making*, in line with article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children and society, 15, 2, April 2001, 107-117 (the model is based on five levels of participation: (1) Children are listened to; (2) Children are supported in expressing their views; (3) Children’s views are taken into account; (4) Children are involved in decision-making processes; (5) Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.)

‘Saying Power’, developed for Participation Works by Save the Children, aims to equip participants with an understanding of the Saying Power approach to participation, accredit young people’s learning and support young people to lead project work. For more information: www.participationworks.org.uk/events-training/products/saying-power

‘National Standards for Children and Young People’s Participation’ is a set of Participation Standards for Wales developed by the Children and Young People’s Participation Consortium and the Participation Unit. Based on commonly agreed ‘core principles’ of participation, these are quality standards that can provide a means for inspecting and assessing participatory practice. There are seven National Standards. For more information: www.funkydragon.org/en/fe/page.asp?n1=1478&n2=1737

‘Total Respect’ is a CROA training resource for introducing listening, hearing and participation into your organisation. The course is designed to be delivered by young people and adults, and to a mixed audience of frontline workers and managers, to make sure that young people’s voices are at the centre of the training. For more information: www.croa.org.uk

‘Youth at the Table’ is about giving children and young people the right skills and knowledge to be effective members when involved in organisational governance, ie decision making. For more information: www.byc.org.uk

‘Hear by Right’ is a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors, to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. For more information: http://hbr.nya.org.uk


The Northern Ireland Participation Network provides useful participation resources at: www.participationnetwork.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=4#casestudies

**Articles**


Dickins, Mary (2004) ‘Have their say’, *Nursery Word*, 24 June 2004, 12–13 (highlights the importance of listening to young children with disabilities, considers ways of communicating effectively to ensure participation in consultation and planning activities)


**Useful web links**

**Participation works**
www.participationworks.org.uk

A hub for information, resources, news and networking on the involvement of young people in dialogue, decision making and influence across a wide range of settings.

**CRAE** (Children’s Rights Alliance for England)
www.crae.org.uk

**NCB**
www.ncb.org.uk

**UNICEF**
www.unicef.org

**Save the Children**
www.savethechildren.org.uk

**Children’s Rights Information Network**
www.crin.org

**Children’s Commissioners**
www.11million.org.uk (England)
www.childcom.org.uk (Wales)
www.sccyp.org.uk (Scotland)
www.niccy.org (Northern Ireland)

**National Youth Agency**
www.nya.org.uk

**CROA** (Children’s Rights Officers and Advocates)
www.croa.org.uk

**British Youth Council**
www.byc.org.uk

**Every Child Matters – Participation**
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation
Self-portraits of our artists

Thanks again to our artists for all the amazing pictures that bring this book to life. The inside front and back covers feature self-portraits of all those involved. They were: Aneira, Scott, Steven, David, Stevie, James, Asher, Daniel, Jasmine, Ciaran, Sarah, Lauren, Kynan, Mitchim, Tommy, Sion, Ryan, Luke, Joshua, Kieran, Tomas, Carys, Amy, Seren, Ben, Lewis, Kal, Eve, Reuben, Martyn, Conner, Andy, Karen, Kirstie, Toni, Josh, Adam, Leanna, Ben, Jamie, Sean, Amy, Rachael, Rhiannon from the following projects: Neath Port Talbot Short Breaks, Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team, Caerphilly Family Intervention Team, Pembrokeshire Children’s Centre.
Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.

For information about participation across Action for Children, please go to

www.actionforchildren.org.uk/participation

participation@actionforchildren.org.uk