



Involving children & young people in the Recruitment and Selection of staff and volunteers

Information for Management bodies and practitioners

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Introduction

This guide aims to provide practitioners, managers and strategic bodies with information regarding the reasons and legislation as to why organisations and institutions working with children & young people should involve them in the recruitment and selection process. This guide is not intended to be prescriptive, more a set of ideas and information to allow practitioners to begin building their own policies and procedures.

The guide contains information to support and guide practitioners through the initial stages of establishing the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process. Links to research covering participatory practice as well as research on recruitment and selection have also been incorporated within this document, allowing managers and practitioners to make an informed decision that is both relevant and adaptable to their organisational policies and strategic direction.

Context

For some the thought of involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process can seem a daunting experience and can bring about concerns over issues such as cost, resources, safeguarding and organisational/H.R. support.

However it should be considered in terms of reasons why they would be involved and the benefits it can bring. When interviewing for roles where it might have a direct affect on children and young people themselves, it is important to consider their opinions too and so the most effective way to do this would be through involving them in the process itself. This relates specifically to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stated below where a reference to the rights of the child to influence decisions that may affect them is made.

We understand that many organizations and strategic bodies will perhaps envisage involving children & young people in recruitment and selection as an addition in terms of workload, resources and cost, particularly during the current climate, where many have seen organisational restructures and cuts. Throughout this guide and the accompanying toolkit we will look at the potential barriers that individuals and organisations may face, as well as looking at ways to overcome these barriers to carry on this crucial development within the children's workforce.

Scope of the document

Every child & young person and the service they use are unique, and what works for one may not work for another. The fun part is learning with the children & young people on how to make your recruitment and selection process unique to your specific group.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is suitable for anyone working in the children's workforce within Kent who is exploring the idea of involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection processes within their service, organisation or project.

Practitioners often report that in order for the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process to be successful, it must be openly supported throughout the organisational or strategic structure and embedded in the culture of the organisation; in other words it must be supported from top to bottom and vice versa. As Kirby *et al* (2003) state;

"The fact that participation is part of international law or public policy is not always enough to convince those who work with children and young people to engage in this work."

Similarly;

"Increasing children and young people's participation within organisations is a political process about shifting power relationships."

This guide and the accompanying toolkit will therefore aim to be relevant to all members of an organisation/service, including:

- Practitioners
- Strategic leads
- Managers
- Stakeholders
- Trustees

Background

Participate By Right!

The Participate By Right! team are a part of KCFN based in Ashford, Kent. We are a charity funded by Kent County Council and other partners within the children's workforce. Since 2005 we have worked with a variety of partners across Kent, providing support, facilitation and training to children & young people as well as practitioners.

We wholly support the nationally and internationally recognised notion that children & young people are experts in their own lives, and participation is at the forefront of all of the work we do. We believe that if given the appropriate support, training and information, children & young people are able to make important decisions about issues that affect them

The Participate By Right! team work to turn complex subjects such as the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process into an informative and engaging activity. In turn we aim to enable all children & young people to be involved and included in the projects, services and matters that affect them.

Local and national objectives, initiatives, standards and legislation

Involving children & young people in decision-making is supported by various pieces of local and national legislation, including:

- The minimum requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

"Children & young people have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account. This gives children & young people the right to participate in the process of decisions that will be made and that will directly affect them, such as the recruitment and selection of staff."

UNCRC, ratified by the UK Government in 1991

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2009 General Comment on the child's right to be heard:

"12. The views expressed by children may add relevant perspectives and experience and should be considered in decision-making, policymaking and preparation of laws and/or measures as well as their evaluation."

"13. These processes are usually called participation. The exercise of the child's or children's right to be heard is a crucial element of such processes. The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives."

Fifty-first session, Geneva, 25 May-12 June 2009

- Key elements of **Every Child Matters** (Subsequently renamed by the coalition government 'Helping children achieve more')
- The Government's **Aiming High for Young People** Strategy
- The Children and Young Person's Policy Unit's **Learning to Listen guidance**
- The **National Service Framework for Children**
- Key elements of **The Children Act** (1989)
- Paragraph 3.10 of the **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice** (2001)
- The **Childcare Act** (2006)
- Key Aspect 2 of the Ofsted **Joint Area Review: Youth work - a framework for inspection** (2007)
- The Social Care Institute for Excellence **Involving children and young people in developing social care** guide, part of the Department of Health **Quality Protects** initiative for looked-after children and young people.
- Priority 7 of the **Kent Children & young people's plan** (2008 – 2011)
- The **Kent Children's Trust Framework for Participation**

By involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process your organisation will be compliant with these legislative directives and contributing to the statutory requirement for participation.

Benefits for services or organisations

There are endless benefits in involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process, both for the organisation and for the children & young people who use the services.

The benefits experienced by organisations include:

- That they will be meeting the rights of children and young people
- Organisations and strategic bodies will be assured that they are recruiting the right people for roles that that affect children and young people
- That it adds an extra dimension to the process providing a 'seal of approval' from children and young people themselves
- Increased number of staff that are able to relate to children and young people
- More effective services
- Long term cost saving through improving the sustainability of people in roles.
- Enhanced credibility & reputation.
- A positive and meaningful experience for staff
- That it gives a valuable sense of learning for those taking part
- Sends a message to potential staff that you are committed to participation from the outset
- Helps build capacity and sustain the organisation

Put most simply organisations can be more confident about picking the right person for the job. In most cases children & young people will have already acquired direct experience of the sort of worker that they respond well to and equally the sort of worker who they do not respond so well to.

Benefits for children & young people

The benefits of involving children & young people in decision-making are not limited to the organisations and services they are engaged with; the children & young people themselves can benefit from the experience.

Some of the benefits experienced by children & young people might include:

- A sense of achievement which can build on their self-esteem to develop their sense of emotional wellbeing.
- Developing confidence and becoming more assured in sharing their thoughts, ideas and values.
- Developing new skills such as the ability to negotiate, share ideas, democratic decision-making,
- Interview techniques for their own future by seeing the process from a different angle,
- Personal presentation, communication, group work skills and a knowledge of keeping themselves safe from harm and equal opportunities.
- Meeting and making friends with new people by being involved in such processes.
- Children & young people will feel that they can trust the service or organisation
- Children & young people learn that the service is focused on what they want and how to meet their needs
- Children & young people who are directly involved will feel valued and be more likely to continue to engage with the service or organisation as they will feel a sense of ownership

Wider benefits

There are some benefits which apply not just to the organisation/service or children & young people but also have a wider effect. These benefits can include:

- Empowering children & young people as members of civil society and encouraging them to become active citizens – fulfilling the coalition government's commitment to the 'Big Society' agenda
- Increased visibility of children & young people's issues, ensuring that they are given a greater weight in socio-economic agendas and formal political processes which children & young people are excluded from
- Children & young people can more effectively hold organisations to account, increasing democratic involvement and encouraging the development of good governance

Evidencing the success of involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process

"I am allowed to have a say in things that happen to me, I thought I had to be older than 18."
Young person

"We are the experts in our own lives!"
Young person

"I feel happy because people listen to me, I feel proud if I can change something for someone."
Young person

Employee's feedback on the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process

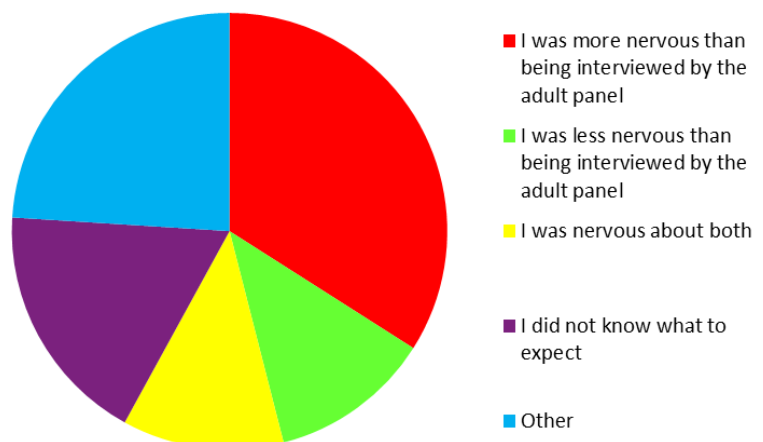
In order to better understand the employee's experience of the role children & young people can play in the recruitment and selection process, KCFN surveyed employees who had undergone a recruitment process involving participation from children & young people.

Employees were asked for feedback on three areas. The areas were as follows:

- Initial thoughts on being interviewed by children & young people.
- The questions asked by the children & young people.
- The conduct of the children & young people.

"What were your initial thoughts on being interviewed by children & young people?"

- A large number of respondents (34%) felt more nervous about this process than being interviewed by a panel of adults, whilst 12% were nervous about both.
- 12% of respondents were less nervous about the process than being interviewed by a panel of adults.
- 18% did not know what to expect.

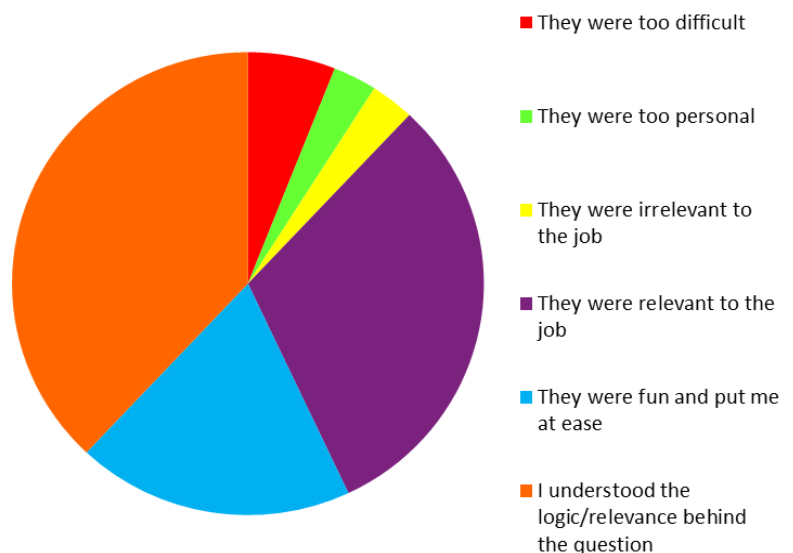


Analysis:

The results gathered from this question indicate that, overall, candidates were more nervous about the process of being interviewed by children and young people. It is therefore important to ensure that interviewees are informed of the participation of children & young people beforehand.

“How did you feel about the questions that the children & young people put to you?”

- 31% of respondents said the questions were relevant to the job, compared to just 3% who felt the questions were irrelevant.
- 38% said they understood the logic behind the questions.
- 19% responded that the questions were fun and put them at ease.
- 6% found the questions too difficult.
- 3% felt they were too personal.

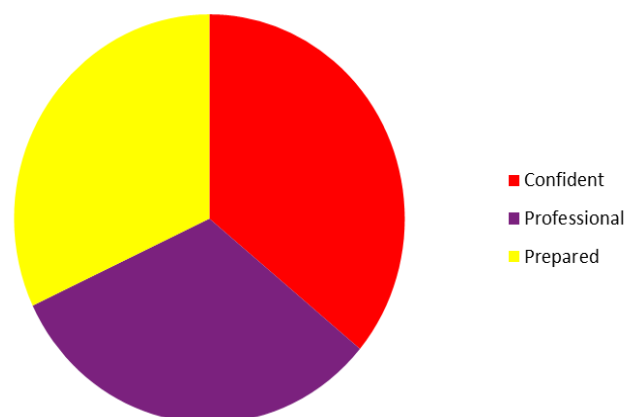


Analysis:

This indicates that a majority of interviewees felt positively about the questions asked by the children & young people, and felt that they were relevant to the interview process.

“How did you feel the children & young people conducted themselves during the interview?”

- All participants felt positively about the conduct of the children & young people during the interview process.
- 32% felt the panel were prepared.
- 36% found them to be confident.
- 32% felt that the children & young people behaved in a professional manner.



Analysis:

This clearly indicates that employees came away from interviews with children & young people feeling positively about the conduct of the panel during the process.

Initial questions to ask yourself

It is important to lay the groundwork for involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection. By asking the following questions you can improve the effectiveness of your planning, implementation and on-going monitoring & evaluation of this process.

There are a few things that need to happen to ensure that the process of involving children & young people has real value. Firstly you need a 'buy-in' from all adults involved with the process.

Below you will find a planning table to record the stages of this process.

Stage 1: Planning - Policies and procedures					
Question to ask	Response	By when?	Are there policies and procedures in place?	If no, when do you hope to achieve this?	Who is responsible for this?
1.1 Has this been agreed by H.R. and management?					
1.2 Has a policy been put in place for the involvement of children & young people?					
1.3 How much of the recruitment and selection process will the children & young people be involved in?					

Guidance notes on completion of table

Stage 1: Planning - Policies and procedures

1.1 Has this been agreed by H.R. and management?

As mentioned earlier in this guide, in order for the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process to be embraced and fully succeed, all staff particularly managers and strategic leads, need to be fully on board. This is reflected in the [NSW Commission for Children & Young People's Guidance on Participation](#) (2004) which states:

"For participation to be effective, it needs to be part of the belief system of the organisation."

For this to begin, all key members of the organisational team must in agreement and fully comprehend the facts, including:

➤ What is Participation?

Learning that working *with* instead of just working *for* children & young people brings about beneficial change. Children & young people will have a deeper respect, commitment and a sense of ownership to the service through their participatory involvement.

➤ What are your aims and objectives?

Discuss and record what you hope to achieve through the involvement of children & young people in the recruitment and selection process. For example will children & young people's involvement in the recruitment and selection process enhance the worker's knowledge of their role? Will children & young people gain an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the worker, the experience they bring and some of the challenges they may face in the role? How will you measure success?

➤ What are the benefits and relevance

What benefits will there be to your organisation, and what benefits will there be to the children & young people who use the service? (Local and National guidelines and legislations should be used as terms of reference, particularly the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.)

➤ What are your expected outcomes

Promoting the active roles and influence of C & YP. Evaluation and on-going Monitoring are an important part when involving children and young people in any participatory

practice, for example: continuous feedback from staff, interviewees and the C & YP themselves before, during and after their involvement in the process will help you measure the change against your expected outcomes.

As Cutler (2003) suggests;

“Any system of standards must require evidence to demonstrate that the standard has been reached.”

Without reviewing participation within an organisation, there is no documented evidence that children & young people have been actively involved, contributed to change or stimulated improvement within services.

Like any other standing policies and procedures, the involvement of children & young in developing organisational structures must be consistently monitored and reviewed by all policy makers, funders, H.R. and the children & young people who have been involved.

1.2 Has a policy been put in place for the involvement of children & young people?

In some cases establishing clear policies for the involvement of children & young people will be a necessary first step. If these policies already exist within your organisation then this stage of the process could be geared more towards compiling a best practice guide to be used alongside your existing policies.

As part of the policy procedure you may wish to look at establishing budgets to be set aside specifically for children & young people’s involvement in the recruitment and selection process. Robson et al’s (2003) study of user involvement in voluntary organisations found that “a specific budget for user involvement activity clearly enabled change.”

1.3 How much of the process will children & young people be involved in?

By looking at your organisation’s recruitment and selection policy with policy makers and the children & young people, you can begin to discuss and agree which areas of the process children and young people are happy to be involved in. Remember that children & young people might not want to be involved in all aspects of this process and you may cause disillusionment if you attempt to over-burden them. Allow children & young people the freedom to make their own decisions about their involvement and be realistic and open about what the children & young people will be involved in.

A further step to this process is to ensure that children & young people are aware of which parts of the process they will be involved in before any training is held. Maintain a free flow of information with the children & young people so they are always aware of what they will be involved in and how the process will map out.

Next steps

We hope that this document has sparked your passion for involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process, as well as making you aware of some of the key legislative imperatives surrounding participation both nationally and in Kent.

In order to support practitioners in implementing the policies and procedures suggested in this document, Participate By Right! have created an accompanying toolkit detailing good practice as well as practical guidance for involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process. Copies of this toolkit can be downloaded from the KCFN website www.kcfn.co.uk or you can request a copy by emailing participatebyright@kcfn.co.uk.

By utilising the guidelines and resources detailed in the toolkit your organisation can begin to build an approach to involving children & young people that is meaningful and relevant to your organisational needs. The toolkit will detail checklists covering every aspect of the process to ensure you have pleasant and straightforward experience, training materials for children & young people as well as information on safeguarding and maintaining security and confidentiality. We hope that this information will empower your organisation to embed the participation of children & young people in your recruitment and selection processes.

We have also included a resources and links section at the end of this document containing some further information on successfully involving children & young people in the recruitment and selection process.

The Participate By Right! team wish you the best of luck in embarking on this exciting chapter of your organisation's development!

Links & References

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[The UNICEF rights overview](#) - a useful document summarising each of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

[The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2009 General Comment on the Child's right to be heard considers the meaning of participation](#)

Some more information on [Participate By Right!](#)

[Building a culture of participation](#) - a research report from ncb.org.uk

[Aiming High](#) - The Government's aiming high for Young People' Strategy Empowerment: Giving young people and communities real influence

[Every Child Matters](#) (Subsequently renamed 'Helping children achieve more')

The Children and Young Person's Policy Unit's [Learning to Listen guidance](#)

The [National Service Framework for Children](#)

[The Children Act](#) (1989)

Paragraph 3.10 of the [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice](#) (2001)

The [Childcare Act](#) (2006)

Key Aspect 2 of the Ofsted [Joint Area Review: Youth work - a framework for inspection](#) (2007)

The Social Care Institute for Excellence [Involving children and young people in developing social care](#) guide, part of the Department of Health [Quality Protects](#) initiative for looked-after children and young people

Priority 7 of the [Kent Children & young people's plan](#) (2008 – 2011)

The [Kent Children's Trust Framework for Participation](#)

[NSW Commission for Children and Young People's Guidance on Participation](#) (2004)

[Safe Network](#) - A good example of involving children and young people in helping carry out a risk assessment

Cutler, D. (2003). Standard! Organisational standards and young people's participation in public decision-making, London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Cutler, D. and Taylor, A. (2003). Expanding and sustaining involvement: A snapshot of participation infrastructure for young people living in England, London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Kirby, P. et al (2003). Building a Culture of Participation: Research Report, London: Department for Education and Skills.