



Staff recruitment toolkit: involving people affected by homelessness



Registered Charity No. 1062674

About

Co-production has been at the heart of the Booth Centre since we opened in 1995. Now, we endeavour to reach out and work with more organisations that share our values. We have produced a series of good practice guides and toolkits that document our approach. These include our approach to partnership working, supported volunteering, working with the media, recruitment and use of language. We hope these toolkits can easily be adapted for use in your service, if you would like to discuss or if you have any questions please email charlotte@boothcentre.org.uk



A vertical mosaic strip on the left side of the page. It features a building with a red roof and a window, and two figures below it, one in a dark suit and one in a white shirt. The mosaic is composed of various colored tiles in shades of blue, red, white, and grey.

Two stage interview

Stage 1

Candidates spend a morning in the Centre; taking part in activities and having a brew at break time.

During this stage candidates will have an informal interview and discussion with a group of people who access the Centre.

Stage 2

Formal interview with CEO and Trustees.

These 2 stages are given equal weight in terms of making the decision about who to employ.

How does stage one work?

On the morning of the interviews or the day before we ask 4/5 people if they would like to help us to recruit the new worker.

We have an informal meeting where we explain what the post is that we are recruiting for and that we want help to find the best person to employ. We ask people what they think are the important things for that role. For front line workers we usually hear the most important things are:

Empathy

People want someone who will be able to relate to their situation. This doesn't necessarily mean that the person has experienced homelessness – they may have a friend or family member who has experienced similar or could just be keenly aware of what it means to face such challenges.

Approach

Is the candidate a good listener and would they support people to get the change in their life that they want to achieve.

The ability to cope with confrontational situations

People really value staff being able to help keep them safe and the service calm. We usually ask people to think of a scenario that they could put to the candidate to see how they would deal with the situation.

We then support the group to formulate a set of open questions using their own words and not using the usual interview jargon. They agree between themselves who is going to ask what questions and how they will introduce themselves etc. The group then conduct the whole interview which usually develops into a discussion at the end.

A worker from the stage 2 interview panel sits and make notes but doesn't form any part of the interview or discussion. After each interview/discussion the staff member will ask people for feedback around the main issues that they have identified. We don't ask people to score the interviews or to make a decision about which candidate they think should get the job, instead we record the positives and negatives about each person in each area.

Selecting the candidate

After the formal interviews with the CEO/staff and Trustees the staff member (usually the CEO) who has been in the informal interview feeds back about what the group have said and this information is considered alongside the formal interview responses.

We have never employed someone where the feedback from the informal interview was negative. When people perform equally then the feedback from the informal interview will be the deciding factor.

After the person is appointed we tell the people who did the informal interview and explain how their views were taken into account and thank them for taking part and then ask them to help with the induction for the new worker.

We vary the approach a bit in different circumstances. For example when we recruit art tutors then we only have the informal interview and they make the decision, guided by a worker who sits in on the interview.

This approach allows us to involve a group of people who better represent the range of people who use the Centre, rather than just having one person on a formal interview panel. We can include people with multiple and complex needs, including people who are currently rough sleeping and people who have literacy or language issues etc. and they can ask the questions which are important to them, rather than us asking them to ask our questions.

The group don't need to have access to any confidential information e.g. the candidate's addresses, phone numbers, work histories, criminal records etc. – as this isn't needed for what they are wanting to do.

This approach takes a bit of extra time – as we are conducting 2 sets of interviews and need to prepare and feedback to the informal panel but the benefits far outweigh the extra time that we need to spend.