

# Guidance for hiring managers

Involving children and young people in recruiting new colleagues to the charity\*



\*Adapted with consent from 'The Recruitment Pack' (Save the Children and Together Scotland, 2005)

# At Barnardo's...

We believe that children and young people should have opportunities to have their voices heard and be taken seriously in decisions that affect them.

We recognise this is their right under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we believe this leads to better decision-making and improved services.

Our corporate [Voice and Influence Strategy](#) lays out our vision that...

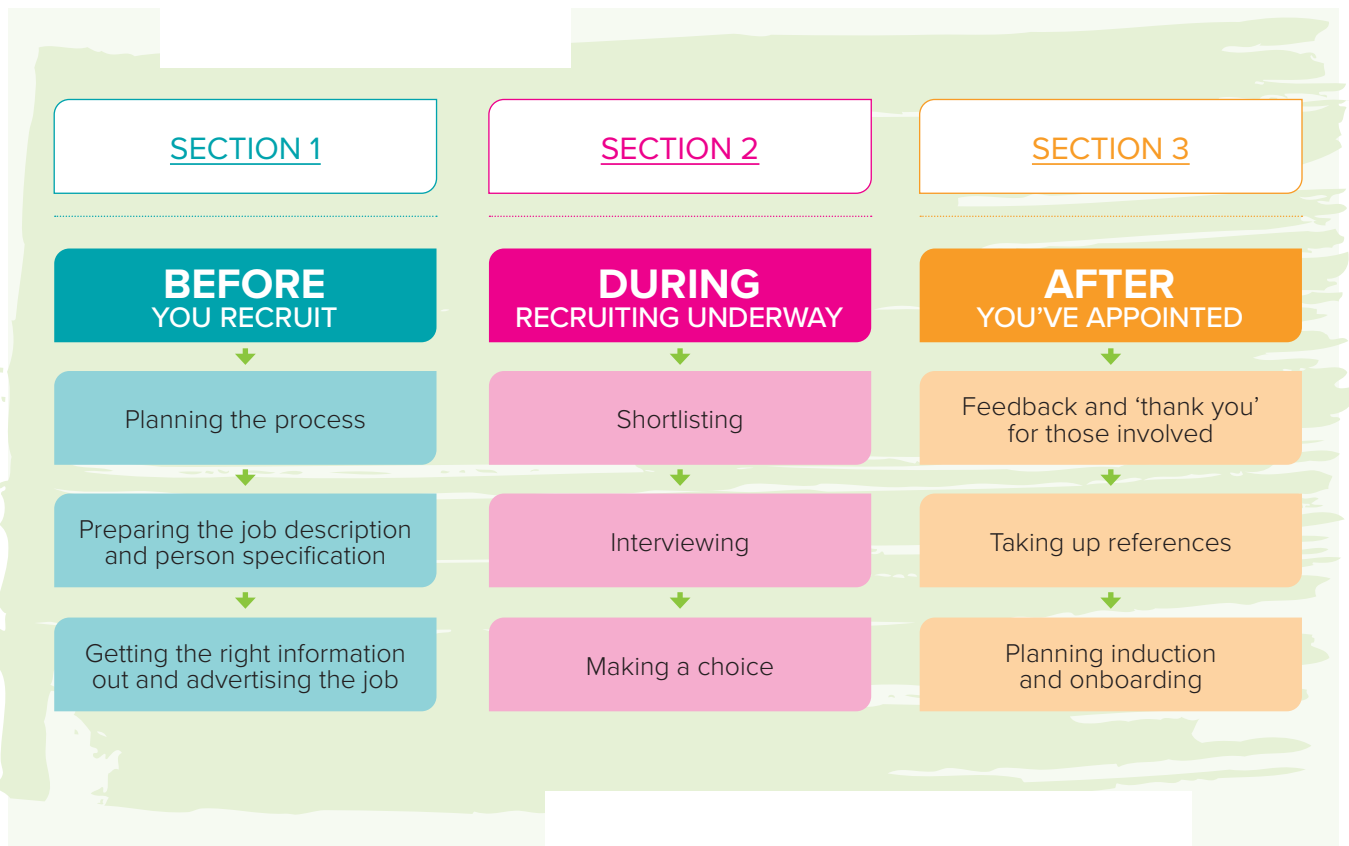
the voices and lived experiences of children and young people inform, shape and influence what we say, how we work and the decisions we make in every part of our charity.

This includes in the recruitment of our colleagues!

This guide talks you through how children and young people can be involved in the recruitment process here at Barnardo's.

## The recruitment journey

This guide will follow the recruitment journey, identifying the ways children and young people can be meaningfully involved in the process.



## Section 1 – Before you recruit

### Planning the process

#### ***Should I involve children and young people?***

There's no hard-and-fast rule about roles to involve children and young people in recruiting to. You could consider involving them in any recruitment.

But, it's important to consider the extent to which children and young people's involvement is **meaningful**.

At Barnardo's, our practice is that **any role that meets one of the following criteria should involve children and young people**:

#### **1. Roles that will work directly with children and young people**

These roles are likely to be in our frontline Children's Services, including those in Family Placement, ETS and across our Strategic Partnerships.

Some roles will need individual consideration, based on their function and the extent to which they will work directly or have contact with children and young people. For example, those in administrative or more 'back-office' roles.

#### **2. Roles that will have contact with children and young people**

These roles are likely to be in some of our corporate and development and innovation departments, including those in Innovation Lab, Policy and Public Affairs, Research and Evaluation, and External Communications and Engagement.

Some roles will need individual consideration, based on their function and the extent to which they will work directly or have contact with children and young people – for example, roles in our Health, Business Development, Brand and Marketing, Internal Communications and Corporate Inspection teams.

#### **3. Roles that make decisions about services children and young people access and/or how the charity operates.**

These roles are usually those which make up our Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Corporate Leadership Group (CLG) and Children's Services Management Team (CSMT). In the main, these are 'Directors' by designation.

This means a large number of roles are unlikely to be appropriate to involve children and young people in recruiting – **and that's OK!** These roles will likely include the majority of those in Business Services and Barnardo's Trading Companies.

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### ***I've determined I do need to involve children and young people. What now?***

The sooner you involve children and young people the better! They get to see the whole process working and understand why, where and in what context their input matters. It is important to be clear about the role they will play.

It's really important to identify a **dedicated member of staff** who can support young people throughout the process. This will depend on the role:

- For roles that meet **criteria 1** above, this staff member is **usually** a project worker or manager in the recruiting service or team.
- For roles that meet **criteria 2**, this staff member is **likely** from the centralised UK Voice and Influence Team; but not always – it could be a project worker, officer or manager from the recruiting service or team.
- For roles that meet **criteria 3**, this staff member is **usually** from the centralised UK Voice and Influence Team (with some possible exceptions).

### ***Dedicated staff member identified! What next?***

It will likely be this member of staff that recruits the children and young people, and will therefore 'hold' the relationships with them.

It's important that children and young people feel fully prepared, supported and enabled to take part in the process. So make sure the process is interesting and relevant to the children and young people who will be involved.

The same group of children and young people should be involved throughout the whole process, though we recognise sometimes this may not be possible.

Introductory written information which young people can take away, or go over with a supportive adult, will help them make informed decisions about being involved or not.

At the start of any recruitment process, it's best practice to get your children and young people together, to 'train' them in recruitment skills, and to give them a space to ask questions, have some discussion and share any worries.

### ***What parts of the process can children and young people be involved in?***

It is possible to involve young people in all aspects, to some degree – as this guide lays out. You need to consider what the hiring manager/service is looking for from children and young people's involvement.

This will help to explain and encourage young people to get involved, and ensure adequate information, training and support is available at whatever parts of the process where there is young people's involvement.

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### ***What training will children and young people need?***

Every part of the recruitment and selection process, as described earlier, will mean that those involved will have a need for information, training and support.

It might be worth drawing a table for yourself which identifies the stages of the process, and which give you the space to identify who might take part, where and what they would need to take part in terms of each.

The key elements you should include in any training are:

- writing adverts, job descriptions and person specifications
- how to shortlist
- interview and question techniques; looking at what we want from the candidate
- using score/recording sheets
- listening skills
- how confidentiality works
- equal opportunities
- making decisions.

**See our associated Training and Activity Guide for activities and training on these key elements.**

### ***How many children and young people should I involve?***

This depends on which stage of the process is being considered.

If you are involving children and young people throughout the process then a small group should be recruited to follow it through, from planning and writing the job description through to the induction of then new starter!

However, at certain stages, for example in developing the job description or person specification, you could involve larger groups in creative, fun activities where they talk about the skills, knowledge or experience required for the job.

### ***How do I recruit children and young people to take part?***

This is normally something the **dedicated member of staff** handles, as they are likely to have existing relationships with children and young people, or services that work with directly with them.

Consideration should be given to which children and young people would be appropriate to take part. For example:

- How old might they need to be?
- What previous or lived experience would be useful?
- Do they need to be in a particular geographic area?
- Do they need to have used the service you're recruiting to?

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These considerations will also help determine the extent to which children and young people can be involved in the process meaningfully, the support needed, and the approaches used.

For example, you might not want to involve 5 year olds in a formal interview panel, but you could certainly involve them in talking about and developing the person specification.

As much as possible, the children and young people involved in the recruitment and selection process should be the same age the applicant will be working with.

To help the **dedicated member of staff** identify appropriate children and young people, we strongly recommend [completing/sending them this form](#).

### ***What happens if everything happens on weekdays?***

Standard Barnardo's practice is that children and young people's involvement should be out of school or college hours, wherever possible. You should consider undertaking the process in school breaks, in the evenings and/or at weekends.

Where this cannot be arranged, permission needs to be sought from parents/carers, who in turn need to seek agreement of the school or college.

If young people have to take time out of paid employment, they should be supported to negotiate this with their employer. If they lose wages, you should consider reimbursing these for the time the young person is working with you.

### ***What if the children and young people know a candidate? (For example, if the candidate is internal).***

Candidates should be told that they must not discuss the process at any time with children and young people involved.

They should know from the outset that before, during and after the recruitment and selection process any questions about the process should be directed to the named adult contact.

Children and young people should be similarly supported to understand that they should not discuss the recruitment process with a candidate and why this is important. They should also be given the right information, training and support needed to enable them to undertake such processes without bias and influence.

Training and ongoing support will help young people understand that all decisions should be based on what the candidate has said in their application or in the interview situation, not on what is known about them from other sources or situations.

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## Preparing the job description and person specification

At Barnardo's, we use a standard template for our job description and person specifications – and it's totally possible to involve children and young people in producing both!

Children and young people can contribute their ideas about the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience that a person needs to undertake the job, as well as identifying the sorts of responsibilities the person might have or activities they might need to undertake to be successful in the role.

For some roles, there may be an 'Additional Information Sheet'. This is another opportunity for children and young people to contribute their ideas. In fact, better yet, they could write the Additional Information Sheet themselves, in their own words!

## Advertising the job

The job advert is an important opportunity to 'sell' the job to potential applicants. It's what applicants see on first sight of the job posting.

Using their contributions and building on their thinking from previous section, children and young people can now help craft the advert, deciding on the qualities that they believe are essential and desirable to fulfil the role.

For example, they could:

- Write a letter addressed to potential applicants about why the role is important and why they should apply.
- Produce a short video clip about the role and the wider service, and what an 'average day' might look like.

Children and young people could also help you decide where to promote the vacancy, such as specific websites, community venues or local shops.

## Getting the right information to applicants

There is a 'standard' job profile that is uploaded to our online recruitment system. This includes:

- the job advert
- the job description and person specification
- our safeguarding policy (including the recruitment of ex-offenders)
- our standard "About Barnardo's" statement, including our basis and values.

Our online recruitment system asks for 3 standard personal statements in response to each section of the person specification.

This means that there is currently not an opportunity for the applicant to provide a written response directly for children and young people to consider, but this is being explored.

You should always state if children and young people are involved in the recruitment process and in what ways, so they know what to expect as part of the process – even if you simply use the following standard line:

**Children and young people will be involved in the recruitment of this role. Further information will be provided if you have been shortlisted for interview.**

## Section 2 – Recruiting underway

### Shortlisting

Unfortunately, our current recruitment process doesn't enable children and young people to be formally involved in shortlisting. This doesn't mean it's impossible, but it will be a bit more time-consuming.

We recommend as best practice:

- The hiring manager does an initial sift of applications, eliminating applicants that do not meet the essential requirements for the post.
- For candidates who meet the essential requirements, a short summary of their career history along with their personal statements are produced in accessible format for the children and young people you're working with.
- Shortlisting itself can either be:
  - Done together, agreeing who to shortlist.
  - Done separately, and then sharing their decisions and reasons why, negotiating who is on the final shortlist.

Alternatively, we recognise sometimes the recruitment timeline may not accommodate children and young people's involvement. This is fine, so long as you're upfront and honest about this with the children and young people involved.

It may be that the hiring manager (and others) assess applications and decide on a shortlist of applicants they feel meet the essential criteria or are appointable.

If this is the case, we would recommend the hiring manager produces a short summary of each candidate, so the children and young people who are involved are able to understand a bit more about the candidate before they are interviewed.

### Interviewing

Once you shortlist your applicants, you'll invite them to attend an interview. In this invitation, you must inform them that children and young people will be involved in the interview process, and in what capacity.

Before embarking on the interviews, you should determine the role and **weighting** children and young people will have in the final decision-making. This will likely be dependent on the role you're recruiting to, but it should always be transparent.

Ideally, you would take account of two factors:

- a. **The numerical scoring** from children and young people – you may wish to determine that these make up a certain % of the candidate's overall score.
- b. **Verbal and observational feedback** from children and young people about how the candidate interacted with them, or answered particular questions.

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## **What happens if everything happens on weekdays?**

In terms of interview panels specifically, there are **two** approaches for involving children and young people – both with benefits and drawbacks.

The hiring manager, with guidance from the pre-identified dedicated staff member, should make this determination based on both the role being recruited **and** the children and young people you're working with.

### **Approach 1: Children and young people (CYP) are represented on an interview panel alongside adults, including the hiring manager.**

This is more likely to be appropriate for frontline workers and service managers.

<b>Some of the benefits</b>	<b>Some of the drawbacks</b>
CYP have told us they feel a sense of equity, that they are on the main decision-making panel as adults.	CYP have told us they sometimes feel uncomfortable or anxious on a panel with adults they don't know.
CYP and adults get the same experience of the candidate.	You may not get a rounded sense of the candidate as a person.
CYP and adults hear the responses to the same set of questions.	There may be specific technical or specialist questions that are inaccessible or sensitive for CYP.
The hiring manager is the Chair and handles the 'housekeeping' and welcomes the candidate.	CYP don't have the opportunity to 'lead from the front' in the interview, except when they ask their question.

### **Approach 2: Children and young people (CYP) are represented through their own panel that sits in parallel to an adult panel.**

This is more likely to be appropriate for senior management roles (e.g. directors).

<b>Some of the benefits</b>	<b>Some of the drawbacks</b>
CYP have told us they feel confident asking questions they wish to ask without adults present.	CYP have told us they sometimes feel their views are not taken seriously if they are a separate panel.
You may get a more rounded sense of the candidate as a person.	CYP and adults could get different experiences of the candidate.
CYP can ask questions that mean something to them.	CYP and adults hear different responses to different questions.
Adults can ask specific technical or specialist questions that may be inaccessible or sensitive for CYP.	
CYP have told us they could feel more at ease, less anxious and more able to be themselves.	CYP have told us that 'being alone' in a panel with a candidate might be more stressful and anxiety-inducing.
CYP would have to Chair their own panel, welcoming the candidate themselves.	

In this second scenario, the pre-identified dedicated staff member would sit in the panel with CYP for safeguarding reasons and risk and behaviour management.

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## **Interview content**

In either approach, children and young people will be involved in writing and agreeing the questions that are asked. This is important because they will feel more comfortable asking questions they want to ask and will also be better placed to gauge the appropriateness of the responses.

It also makes the experience more authentic; rather than children and young people reading pre-scripted adult-written questions!

We would always suggest both young people and adults know each other's questions. This is important to make sure each have a clear role and focus in the interview process, and means you can explore all 'sides' of a candidate sufficiently.

A variety of approaches can be used in an interview from straightforward question and answer format to presentations or activities with candidates. This will be for the hiring manager to determine.

For example, for frontline project workers, it may be appropriate to ask them to deliver a short session with a group of young people, or facilitate a play session with a group of children; while for those in management roles, it may be more appropriate to request a presentation or a more role-specific task or assessment.



## **Interview pragmatics**

As a general rule, you should use a **venue** that young people feel comfortable in – especially if the role is one they will have direct and regular contact with.

To fully enable children and young people to be involved, we suggest you **schedule** interviews during school breaks, in the evenings (after 4pm) and at weekends. Normal working days may work for some services where young people are not of school age.

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Before any interview process, you should always have a **briefing session** with all the children and young people **and** adults involved. This also helps with children and young people's confidence, comfort and reassurance. It also enables them to understand who else is involved in the process and why.

It might help to undertake some 'mock interviews' too – to give them a bit of a rehearsal. This might help with their nerves and boost their confidence!

We recommend that during this briefing session you share:

- The Job Description and Person Specification – or, even better, a slimmed down 'young-person friendly' version.
- A short summary of each candidate, to help give the children and young people involved a bit of background.

### **Interview conduct**

Ideally, all panellists – whether together or separate – should use the same marking and scoring criteria. This is important as it makes it easier when discussing after the interviews, in terms of what each person thought of each candidate.

At Barnardo's, we use a standard interview recording sheet. This may be appropriate for some children and young people, but not all. A simplified, accessible or easy-read version may need to be produced if required.

As above, if the children and young people have formed their own, separate panel, it is useful to select a young person to 'Chair' the panel, to introduce the panel and welcome the candidates prior to the interview starting.

## **Making a choice**

Once all the candidates have been interviewed, it is time for the people involved in the interviewing to talk about how they have rated each candidate. Following discussion, a decision can be made.

It's at this point the **weighting** described earlier becomes important. A number of questions might arise: *Who makes the final decision? Are young people equal? Is their role advisory? Is the decision shared?* This is why it's really important to establish clarity from the outset.



## Section 3 – After you've appointed

### Feedback to unsuccessful candidates

It is considered 'good practice' to communicate the decision as soon as possible by phone, with the option of more detailed feedback if candidates want it. Only the hiring manager should undertake this particular process.

In this feedback, it's important to incorporate the feedback from children and young people in what you share with the candidate – not explicitly separate out the feedback from children and young people, and the adult panel.

For example, did the children and young people have a particular insight that may help the candidate in future interviews? Or was there an answer they felt didn't hit the mark?

### Feedback to children and young people

Like all voice and influence work, this is the bit about 'closing the loop'. Children and young people who have been involved should be told who was offered the role, and the reasons why. This is particularly important if their top candidate wasn't selected.

Confirming that a successful candidate will take up a post can take some time, so it is important to keep in touch with young people who have been involved and explain any delays. This ensures their input and contribution remains valued and respected.

They should also be supported to feedback to all young people engaged in the service those involved could write a short bulletin or newsletter about the process and what decision was made.

It is also recommended that for every interview process, there should be a short evaluation exercise, asking what went well and what could be done better next time.

**It's about collaboration!**



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## Saying 'thank you' to children and young people

Children and young people should always be acknowledged and recognised for their involvement in recruitment.

To determine what might be appropriate, please refer to our Recognition, Reward & Remuneration Guidance.

## Planning their induction

While there is a 'standard' induction checklist for all new starters at Barnardo's, children and young people could be involved in identifying what they think are the most important things this person needs to know, who they think they need to meet and how they think the worker can be supported.

They could also identify where they would like to have a role in this process.





## Questions, need additional support or advice?

Get in touch with the UK Voice and Influence Team, who'll be able to help:

[voiceandinfluence@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:voiceandinfluence@barnardos.org.uk)

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children  
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Barnardo's Registered Charity Nos.  
216250 and SC037605 23602H22

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