

## **Service User Involvement Partnership – Tip sheet No 3**

### **1.0 Involving Service Users in Staff Recruitment**

1.1 This paper gives tips and examples of how service users can be involved in staff recruitment.

### **2.0 Planning to involve service users in the recruitment process**

2.1 Practical questions for service to consider:

- What impact will involving service users in the recruitment of staff have?
- Do you need to let your funders or commissioners know?
- Is the organisation/service prepared for service users to have a say in defining the roles of the staff?
- What is a realistic timescale for this process? *Involving service users in the recruitment process may take longer, especially if it's the first time for the service or the service users.*

### **3.0 Next**

- Invite service users to get involved, only involve those who are interested and feel it's relevant to them.
- A dedicated person should be appointed to support service users throughout the process.
- Be clear from the start about the range and extent of the role service users will play – communicate this clearly to the service users, other staff and anyone else involved in the recruitment process.
- Reassure service users that it is not their sole responsibility to decide who gets the job; the decision will be made by a combination of people. Staff and service users are working as a team throughout the process.
- Training should be provided for service users involved in the process, particularly on boundaries, confidentiality, short-listing and interviewing.
- It would be helpful to give service users written information on the recruitment process, their role within the process and the support available to them which they can take away, or go over with a support worker, peer mentor or trusted person. This will help them make informed decisions about whether they want to be involved or not.
- Make the process interesting; remember the service user will be volunteering their time.

**Once you have decided that you want to proceed with involving service users in staff recruitment and have taken the planning into consideration, there are a variety of methods that you could consider for involving service users in staff recruitment.**

**SUIP would recommend that you give consideration to involving service users in these first few examples before moving on to involving service users in the interview panel.**

## **4.0 Job Description and Person Specification**

### **4.1 How can service users be involved?**

- Working with service users to develop and write a job description is a great way to engage service users early in the process. You could use group discussion to identify and explore the different roles and responsibilities that are undertaken by the staff in your service and ask for feedback or comments on the various job descriptions.
- When considering the person specification, you could ask service users to think of and describe a time when a staff member's attitude or experience in the job has made a real difference to them. This could be done in a group setting or on a one to one basis.
- You can help service users to think about the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience that a person needs to undertake the job by getting them to talk about what they see as beneficial in an addiction worker. For example would they need to be chatty, a good listener, good at filling in forms? Then ask service users to turn their attention to the job which is being advertised, and ask them to decide on the qualities that they believe are essential and desirable to fulfil the role.
- It is important to explore with service users why they feel certain qualities and skills are important. At this stage you may sometimes find that service users say they want to work with someone who has 'been there and done it'. This can be important but it is useful to explore why they feel like this. For example, is it empathy they are looking for, trust, being non-judgmental etc?
- At this point it could be useful to have a discussion about discrimination, particularly with regards to whether a job applicant should have to disclose whether they themselves have experienced problems with alcohol and/or drugs.

## **5.0 Advertising the vacancy and application forms**

### **5.1 How can service users be involved?**

If you are going to involve service users in the recruitment process, it is important to ensure that applicants are aware that this will form part of the selection process. This information could be included in the job advert and/or the job application information and as far as possible, should inform applicants on how service users are involved.

### **5.2 There are a few options available for involving service users in the application process:**

- Involve service users in reviewing your existing application form or creating a new one. This can be particularly useful for ensuring that you are avoiding jargon or language that might not be understood by service users involved in the short-listing process.
- You could ask applicants to complete an additional short form, with questions posed by service users.
- You could ask service users to be involved in writing information about the project for applicants to go into the job application pack.

## **6.0 Short-listing**

### **6.1 How can service users be involved?**

If you are planning to involve service users in the short-listing process, it is important that training and support is provided to ensure they are comfortable with the task. Some things to consider when planning training and support for this activity:

- Consider the paperwork used for short listing – ensure that it is in plain English and that it is easy to understand. Time could be spent with service users working through the form to ensure they are clear on what they are looking for and how to record their views.
- To help service users get the hang of short-listing they could review applications with a worker to begin with, see how it is done, then start again and rescore candidates themselves.
- Reading the application forms could be done together or separately.
- It can be of benefit but not compulsory if the service users that have been involved in designing the job description and person specification are also involved in the short listing because they will understand the job.

## **7.0 The interview stage**

There are a number of different ways to involve service users in the interview stage.

### **7.1 The walk around/meet and greet**

- Many services have a version of a meet and greet or walk around. This can be used rather than service users being involved in an interview panel. Service users volunteer to meet candidates on arrival to provide them with a tour of the service and/or to have an informal chat with them.
- It is important to be clear about what influence this activity has in the selection process to both service users and candidates:

Service users could be asked for feedback on each candidate.

The interaction between candidates and service users could be observed by a member of the interview panel.

- If candidates are going to be marked at this stage make sure that you let them know that.
- If it is going to be marked how is this going to be done?
- It is important to let the candidates know before they come in for the interview that they will be getting assessed at this stage too.

### **7.2 Submitting questions for the panel to ask**

- Service users could be asked to suggest questions that they would like to be asked by the interview panel, along with suggestions on what answers they would be looking for.
- Service users could be given sight of the questions that the panel plan to ask and have the opportunity to make comments or suggestions on the types of answer they would look for.

- Service users could be invited in to the interview at a specific point to ask questions of the candidate. The panel could observe the exchange.

### **7.3 Involvement in the interview panel and scoring**

You could consider holding a pre-interview briefing so that staff and service users (the recruitment team) can have a final chance to review the questions, re-affirm who is asking what, and make sure everyone is comfortable. It would be helpful to ensure that the briefing takes place far enough in advance of the interviews to allow the service users to become familiar and comfortable with the questions they are to ask, and with the process in general.

- It may be the case that service users will get cold feet at this stage. It should be a positive experience for them so it is important to support them with whatever decision they make.
- It may be useful to have a contingency plan in place to ensure the interviews can run smoothly if there is a last minute drop-out by any member of the panel
- Use a venue for the interviews which service users are comfortable in. If you use a new venue visit it with the service users first so that they are familiar with the venue and comfortable
- It is helpful if interviews are scheduled at times which are suitable (evenings and weekends for example) for service users to be involved.
- It may be helpful preparation for the service users to encourage them to participate in mock interviews prior to meeting the candidates to build their confidence and get them used to the interview format.

### **7.4 A debrief session should take place after the interviews are complete**

Have an immediate chat with service users how they felt about the process. This will help to ensure that the service user does not go home worrying or unsure about the outcome of the experience. If you do not have time to do a full debrief immediately after the interviews, you could still have a quick conversation but set a date and time to have a full debrief session as soon after the interviews as possible.

**7.5 Evidencing** Whatever form the service user involvement in recruitment takes, make sure that all aspects of its activity are clearly recorded, perhaps in a service user involvement file. It is advisable where feasible to keep two copies one for display and one to be kept in the office. It may also be important to keep copies of anything that is appropriate and connected to personal development to be kept in individual service user files. Examples might include, records of attendance at relevant training or meetings (staff and service users), minutes of meetings, copies of training and staff service user development activity undertaken, copies of contribution to job spec, advertisement, short listing, interview questions, meet and greet –checklist if used, debriefing issues- raised (particularly important for any future involvement), and if it is felt that this impacted on the selection process.

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