



Fact Sheet CSS2 – Involving Children and Young People in Recruitment Activities

The following Child Safe Standards apply to this fact sheet:

Child Safe Standard 2 – Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.

Child Safe Standard 5 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Every organisation that provides services to or for children and young people has a responsibility to uphold their rights and keep them safe from harm.

Being a child safe organisation means you are actively managing your staff recruitment and selection processes to identify the most suitable people to work with children and young people.

This fact sheet aims to assist organisations to explore the suitability of involving children and young people in staff recruitment.

Stages of Recruitment

At minimum, recruitment processes for staff and volunteers generally include advertising, selection activities (e.g. interviews), and background checking. To be a child safe organisation, practices that seek to protect the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people should be embedded in all stages of recruitment and selection.

Involving young people

All organisations providing services directly to or for children and young people should consider the appropriateness of involving children and young people in recruitment activities. For roles that involve direct engagement with children and young people, it is good practice to have a service user or lived experience perspective contribute to the process in some way.

Children and young people have a different perspective from adults, and their views, often based on 'gut instincts' can assist recruitment panels to question unconscious bias and support more robust decision making.

However, deciding whether and/or how to involve children and young people in recruitment processes should be a conscious decision, and is unlikely to be appropriate for all roles.

There are several things your organisation will need to consider when deciding how best, and/or whether it is appropriate, to involve children and young people in your recruitment processes.

KEY POINT – Involving children and young people in staff recruitment could be used as an example of your organisation’s commitment to Standard 2 – *Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.*

1. Genuine Participation

First and foremost, organisations should consider whether the involvement of children and young people can be genuinely and authentically accommodated and, if so, the best way to go about doing so. Importantly, organisations should consider the extent to which they feel able to provide for the views of children and young people to influence the process. For example, if you decide to involve a young person on an interview panel, what will you do if the young person has a different view to the adults on the panel, and how will the views of the young person be weighed against the views of the adult panel members? Genuine engagement would allow for equally weighting the views of all panel members (regardless of age) with in-built processes to support decision-making in circumstances where the views of panel members do not align.

Leaders in the organisation should communicate their support for children and young people meaningfully participating in organisational processes, including through clear guidance about when and how to involve children and young people in recruitment processes. This should include policies and procedures about when this is appropriate, how to ensure children and young people can participate safely, and what will be communicated to staff and candidates.

KEY POINT – Having organisational leaders endorse the participation of children and young people in recruitment processes may demonstrate commitment to Standard 1 – *Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture* and Standard 10 – *Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.*

2. Training and Support

For children and young people to make a meaningful contribution through their participation in recruitment and selection processes, it is important to think about the type of training and support they may need. This training should reflect relevant considerations for their age and stage of development and be provided in appropriate formats so that they understand how to participate effectively in these processes. Examples of the types of support a child or young person may need include:

- Understanding what their role and responsibilities will be in the process
- Active listening, how to relate interview questions to the requirements of the advertised role, and how to ask follow-up questions if an interviewee's response to a question would benefit from further detail
- What information should be kept confidential, and what to do about conflicts of interest
- How to assess the candidates' skills and qualities against the requirements of the role
- How to communicate their assessment to the other panel members.

Further guidance on supporting children and young people to participate in recruitment processes can be found [here](#).

KEY POINT – When organisations provide suitable training for everyone participating in recruitment activities, including children and young people, this supports your organisation's commitment to Standard 6 – *Through ongoing education and training, staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe.*

3. Scope of Participation

It is also important to think about whether to involve children and young people in all stages of recruitment or only some, and what type of contribution they might be able to make. For example, children and young people could provide advice about what is most important to them for people working in certain roles, and this could be factored into the position description.

Another option might be to have children and young people contribute to the writing of interview questions, and letting interviewers know the things they should be listening out for in the interview.

If you plan to involve a child or young person in selection panel processes, you will need to think about what role they can take. While being an equal panel member may be appropriate in some instances, other options might include having a young person involved as a scribe or observer. Doing so can assist them in learning important skills about interview processes, while also assisting the panel to obtain the views of the young person about each of the interviewees.

When considering the involvement of children and young people in selection panel processes, factors such as the location and timing of interviews (e.g. outside of school hours) and the amount of time that will be required for the end-to-end process will need to be taken into account.

For some roles, it may be appropriate to have interviewees engage in an activity involving children and young people as part of the recruitment process. This could take many forms and would not be appropriate for all roles, but if your organisation needed to assess how capably an applicant can establish rapport with children and young people in a short time, observing them interacting with children and young people can be effective. Any children and young people who were involved can then be asked their views about the applicant afterwards.

Importantly, if such an engagement activity is factored into interview processes, your organisation will need to consider where in the process this might be appropriate, and how to undertake this safely. Including an activity such as this should never be the first stage in the process. At minimum, where considered appropriate, this might occur after initial interviews and be a secondary stage in the recruitment process. Other relevant considerations include ensuring the interviewee has a current WWVP registration and undertaking referee checking *before* allowing a candidate to access children and young people. Consent should also be sought from parents/carers (unless working with a group of older young people who can give their own consent), and consideration must be given to any potential vulnerabilities of those children and young people who may participate in the activity to ensure that doing so won't increase risk.

Maintaining the safety and wellbeing of any child or young person is the utmost priority in considering their involvement in recruitment processes, and any activities must be undertaken under strict supervision and controls. A risk assessment prior to undertaking these types of activities may assist to identify any particular risks that may be present in your organisational context.

4. Debriefing

Following any recruitment process, it is important to follow up with children and young people who have been involved to get their perspectives on what went well, what additional support would have been helpful, and what could be done differently.

Developing a short participation survey may be useful, particularly if your organisation will provide opportunities for several children and young people to participate in recruitment processes, or you are progressively developing processes over time. This will assist you to compare children and young people's experiences and collate their ideas for process improvements.

Follow up discussions may also be useful in talking through why a particular candidate was offered the job over others, especially if the child or young person had differing views to other panel members and/or if there were particular considerations that may not have been sufficiently explained to the child or young person prior to the process commencing.

5. Finalising the process

After you have completed the recruitment process, it is also important to recognise the child or young person's contribution by sharing the outcome of the process, once the information can be publicly shared. Your organisation should also thank any children or young people for their contribution by formally acknowledging their participation. Your organisation may have processes in place for this, such as thank you letter templates and participation certificates. You may also like to consider remuneration depending on the extent of involvement that they have had.

Finally, you may also wish to collect this information for annual reporting or reporting to your sector regulator how you are implementing Child Safe Standards 2 and 5.

Acknowledgements:

The ACT Children and Young People Commissioner acknowledges

- Youth Affairs Council Victoria, Youth Engagement Resource Platform, ([Youth Affairs Council Victoria | Including young people on interview panels](#))