

How to ... Involve Stakeholders in a Selection Process

Engaging relevant stakeholders can enrich a selection process, help to build positive relationships and can be considered good practice by some professional bodies. Stakeholders can provide an insight into how the successful candidate may impact on them, bringing a different perspective and an opportunity to reflect their needs and priorities. Each service area should determine where involvement of stakeholders may be appropriate when recruiting to specific vacancies.

Stakeholders may be involved in selection activities such as a group discussion with each candidate but should **not** directly contribute to the decision-making process, which is the responsibility of the selection panel, unless the stakeholder is part of the selection panel in which case they play an equal part e.g. parent council members are actively involved in the selection process for Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher appointments, as contained in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. Any involvement of stakeholders should add value to the selection process.

Stakeholders may include service users, internal customers, members of the school community (pupils, staff, parent council etc), relevant community groups/third party organisations, or team members who can participate in a variety of ways such as:

- Provide their unique perspective, knowledge and expertise
- Identifying key qualities, they would like to see in the successful candidate
- Giving a tour of the work area e.g., school, care home, office building
- A group of stakeholders having a short interaction with each candidate e.g., asking set questions with each candidate, see examples below.
- An opportunity for candidates to meet service users with their interaction observed

Note:

It is important to implement appropriate safeguards when involving stakeholders in the selection process, particularly where individuals lack prior experience in the field and may seek involvement for personal benefit. To mitigate this risk, recruitment advertisements should not disclose that stakeholders will participate in the selection process

Stakeholders involved in selection activities should be representative of the group. An individual (not necessarily on the selection panel) should be nominated to be responsible for liaising with the selection panel and supporting the stakeholders. This could be a team member, Education Officer supporting pupils interacting with Head Teacher/Depute Head Teacher candidates, etc.

The individual should support the stakeholders in their **preparation** by:

- providing a clear brief on the purpose of the activity and the stakeholders role.
- ensure stakeholders understand the principles of fair recruitment and selection and have an awareness of relevant legislation and their unconscious biases, see **Appendix 1** for guidance. If internal to PKC and additional information is required, stakeholders can be encouraged complete the Recruitment & Selection e-learning.

- support to prepare for the activity e.g., preparing questions, bullet points for interaction.
- explaining the need for the experience to be the same for each candidate.
- highlighting the importance of interacting with candidates in an open and friendly manner.

During the selection activity, the individual should:

- make notes of candidate responses.
- provide support to stakeholders, as required
- Provide the opportunity for post activity or interview discussions to ensure the stakeholders views are heard and considered

At the **end** of the selection activity, the individual should, where appropriate, gather feedback from the stakeholders and provide feedback to the selection panel.

Some Suggested Questions for Stakeholder Interaction

Questions should not be the same as those on the application form or likely to be used during the selection process.

- What makes a good Social Care Officer/Headteacher/.... and why?
- Why do you want to be part of our team/leader/....?
- What ideas do you have to?
- One of PKC's values is ambition/compassion/integrity, what does this mean to you? Can you describe how you used this in your current or a previous role?
- How will you help us to improve?
- What is your opinion on?
- How would you improve our service user/customer's experience?
- We think our care home/school is very special – what do you think makes an excellent?
- What ideas do you have for helping us improve?

Principles of Fair Selection

Fair selection in recruitment is essential to ensure equal opportunity, uphold integrity, and secure the best candidate based on merit rather than bias or undue influence. Key principles include:-

- Be familiar with the Council's [Recruitment and Selection policy](#) and guidance.
- Clear selection criteria should be set based on the skills, abilities, and behaviours essential for the role, as outlined in the advert text and role profile. Ensure the activity can assess the identified criteria.
- Set a clear time scale for activity taking place.
- Ensure the assessment of each candidate is consistent and evidence based.
- Be aware of the dangers of unconscious biases.
- Ensure accurate, factual notes are taken throughout the process and relate to the evidence obtained during the selection process.

Key Legislation

There are a number of key pieces of legislation that help to ensure a fair selection process. The recruiting manager should ensure that where stakeholders are involved, they are aware that:-

- No candidate is disadvantaged, directly or indirectly, by the activity as the [Equality Act 2010](#) protects people from discrimination, victimisation, harassment or any other detriment because of a [protected characteristic](#).
- The confidentiality of the process and all related information is maintained at all stages. Disclosure of any information and a breach of confidentiality will result in removal from participation in PKC selection processes and may lead to further action.

Unconscious Bias

Ensuring diversity of traits within recruitment processes is fundamental to fostering an inclusive and high-performing workforce. A diverse range of skills, experiences, and perspectives enhances organisational resilience, promotes innovation, and supports balanced decision-making. By valuing and integrating varied attributes, the organisation strengthens its capacity to respond effectively to complex challenges and better reflect the communities it serves.

There is a risk that unconscious bias can mean we see some groups of people as being more suitable for some roles than others. This can result in communities and organisations are not making full use of the talent and diversity available to them and to worsen the prejudice and discrimination that groups of people experience because of their age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and/or race.

As humans, we naturally gravitate towards those we share things in common with – potentially triggering unconscious bias – such as physical appearance, accent etc. This is called **Affinity bias** and is also known as ‘like me’ bias. It is about being unconsciously drawn to people we perceive to be like ourselves. It is bias towards someone we have an affinity with, for example, because we come from the same place, we have the same skin colour, we support the same team, or we follow the same religion. It can lead to the practice of hiring and promoting in our own image.

Another consideration is the impact of stereotypes. The way people are represented in the world around us – on television, newspapers, training materials, in meetings – creates common patterns of association in our minds and stereotypes. When we meet people, and they appear to present a characteristic we have experience of this can trigger unconscious **Confirmation bias**. This refers to the tendency to only look for confirmation that our opinion is correct and to ignore evidence to the contrary. It occurs when we only pay attention to (or remember) information that confirms what we already believe. We overlook information that contradicts our beliefs.

To mitigate the risk of forming judgments within the first 30 seconds of an interview, structured assessment methods and standardised scoring criteria should be applied consistently throughout the process to ensure fair selection.