

Public involvement in interviews at the Institute of Mental Health

At the Institute of Mental Health, we want to involve public, patient, carer, and service user involvement wherever we can in the work that we do. By making sure we involve people from outside our research bubbles we can try to make what we do work better in the world outside the Institute.

When we recruit staff to work within the Institute of Mental Health we want new colleagues to know how importantly we value public involvement, so our first introduction is by having public contributors sit on interview panels and be one of the first people they meet at the Institute. We also want to make sure candidates for roles are the best candidate for the activities they will carry out, having a wider panel for this process helps challenge our own team biases we may have.

However, we know for people unaccustomed to Public and Patient Involvement this can sometimes feel complex or feel like it takes longer to get something done. It might feel like that or including others in conversations might take longer than going it alone, but it is an investment worth making if we are truly committed to public involvement.

Guiding the process

This guide is not a barrier to making decisions for yourself in the process or choosing the best route for what involvement feels like for the recruitment you are doing. However, we hope this makes the starting, managing or administering a little bit easier. Offering information in the form of guidance also prevents obstacles which can be encountered when adhering to a process of a single employing organisation.

We have public contributors already registered with the Institute who have carried out panel interviews and we also have public contributors who have not, but once they are:

- Registered on our volunteer portal so they are connected to us formally
- Have time invested in them to explain the process
- Receive good communication from you; and
- Are provided with one to one support to take part

we believe being in interview panels and helping with the recruitment within the Institute is something that can be carried out by any of our registered contributors.

Step by step process as carried out May 2021:

What	Who's involved	When
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Recruitment discussed internally & public involvement coordinator contacted with the opportunity	Lead recruiter, operational manager, public involvement coordinator	Early – before the role is advertised
Dates & requirements discussed including reimbursements	Public involvement coordinator & operational manager	Prior to advert
Opportunity created & shared OR Public Contributor within the project invited to be involved first	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter operational manager public contributor	Prior to advert
Deadline set for responses to the opportunity (give 7 working days or more for public contributors to respond to an opportunity)	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter operational manager public contributor	Prior to advert
Public contributor offered opportunity & introduced to recruitment team – confirm schedule (reimbursements, dates, support, papers etc.)	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter operational manager public contributor	Prior to advert / as advert opens
Portal registrations checked/record created for confidentiality and IG -discussed with public contributor	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter operational manager public contributor	Whilst advert is open
Dialogue with public contributor for any support, requirements to do this comfortably and confidently – (practical, technical, coaching etc.)	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter public contributor	Whilst advert is open
The public contributor is updated on recruitment process and anticipated timeline to documents and interviews - recruiting team manage process paperwork, schedule etc directly with public contributor as part of the team	Public Involvement Coordinator lead recruiter operational manager public contributor	As advert closes

Public coordinator in background to support contributor as required - throughout the activity		
Shortlisting	Staff panel with TRAC access	Once advert has closed
Pre-interview plan and information shared	Whole panel including public contributor	Pre interview (on the day)
Interviews carried out	Whole panel including public contributor	Interview
Post interview wash up meeting	Whole panel including public contributor	Post interview
Reimbursements made	Public Involvement Coordinator / administrator	Post Interview
Experience is evaluated for future improvements in a "how was it for you?" which is completed by both contributor and recruiting team lead	Public contributor / public involvement coordinator	Post interview

Useful considerations for working with research contributors in interview processes and panels

Budget recommended:	£150 per day of interviewing plus up to 2 hours preparation time with the recruiting panel. This will amount to £200 in reimbursements to the public contributor. The budget is usually from the recruiting team or project team. Please check where this might be charged from to make things happen smoothly. When projects are costed this is highlighted as a project cost within pre-application PPI conversations to ensure it is included in a budget. If teams do not have budgets and would still like to involve volunteers from the Trust in their interviews, then this might be something that might be considered through the volunteer team at Notts HC.
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	NB There also may be public contributors who wish to be involved without reimbursements but don't allow this to be a "back door" approach that could take advantage of public contributors' goodwill.
Information Governance and Confidentiality:	Public Contributors on interview panels can see confidential information of candidates and therefore we do require that they are registered as volunteers on the Notts HC portal. We also ask that they are introduced to the Volunteer policy that covers their registration as volunteers at the Trust. Other training is available to the registered public contributor including safeguarding, information governance, data awareness and a full National Volunteer Certificate of learning. Where interviews are conducted virtually there may be a need to print documents to aid reading, interviewing, and scoring candidates. Doing all this through one screen is not easy and reasonable adjustments such as printing should be available. How printed materials will be supplied and disposed of after the process should be discussed and agreed upon in line with good 'Information Governance' processes. Remember, these are the personal details of the candidates and robust confidentiality should be a standard for the candidates.
Support, safety, and comfort:	It is important that any contributors involved in interview processes have a named contact within the panel. This will be their contact for difficulties on the day (e.g. virtual access) or guidance and advice within the panel. The IMH public involvement coordinator remains an ongoing contact for the public contributor as part of their available support. Telephone numbers in addition to email contacts should be supplied.
MS Teams specific guidance	MS Teams invites for the interviews: there must be two invites for each interview, one for the candidate and staff on the panel and one for the public contributor. This is because you cannot 'blind copy' on Outlook invitations so to protect the email address

	of the public contributor from staff members and candidates, they have to have a separate invitation. Therefore, the Appointing Officer should be mindful that extra time and care should be taken including careful double checking that the correct link has been copied and pasted between the two invitations so that everyone joins the correct interview at the correct time. Accessing candidate application forms: Staff members on the panel can access the application forms on TRAC, public contributors cannot. This means having to download certain parts of the application form only (training and work history) and email them to the public contributor. Printing may also be necessary depending on the circumstances. Emailing documents: to protect the privacy of the public contributor's email address, separate emails to send the questions and presentations out to the panel are required. The Appointing Officer should be mindful of any extra time that is needed. It may be possible that the public involvement contributor would be willing for their email address to be shared with interview panel members, but this should always be checked with them first.
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Feedback from previous experiences (Interviews in May 2021)

Public contributor

Being involved made me feel very welcomed. I felt part of the team and at ease. I felt comfortable in coming from a different perspective and talking and giving a different opinion. In my role on the panel I looked at the candidates from the perspective of the betterment of mental health. I was looking for the genuine interest of the candidates and in their abilities to bring warmth and care to people in the role. I would do it again and I felt my input was valued.

Appointing Officer (administrative lead for interviews)

It is especially helpful when you are interviewing internal candidates who you have known for many years, but the Public Contributor sees everyone with a fresh pair of eyes.

It is also useful to get a different perspective on candidates from someone not employed by the organisation and who may not have been on many interview panels, i.e. this is a fresh experience for them.

From a practical perspective, the Appointing Officer should be mindful of any extra time required to complete additional work tasks so having guidance created by those going through this experience should help overcome some of this and is very helpful.

Hiring manager / project lead

The 2 public contributors I have been involved with for interviews have been excellent to work with. They have been integral to the panel, insightful and articulate in making their views known.

They offered the process a new perspective, they offered useful insights, particularly where applicants were known to me – it allowed me to see them through fresh eyes. They offered objectivity, they enabled me to question and challenge my opinions and therefore make the process more robust. As we are working with the public, it is really important that there is a representative who can assess the applicant from a potential participant viewpoint.

The impact of having them involved in the process offered another dimension to the process: a more balanced approach that values the potential participant experience as well as the knowledge and skill set.

This guidance has been created with:

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