

WOMEN'S LIVES LEEDS

Empowering Women and Girls in Leeds

Community Development and Complex Needs Workers Recruitment Process Evaluation

1. Statement of Purpose

This report is an evaluation of the recent recruitment process undertaken by Women's Lives Leeds (WLL). As outlined in the Big Lottery bid, the process was a joint exercise by all partners to employ six Complex Needs Workers (CNW) and four Community Development Workers (CDW).

2. Introduction

This report will outline the recruitment process implemented and used by WLL; the numbers of applicants and candidates; consider the participation of service users in the process; and highlight feedback from service users, candidates and WLL partners. It will then present the key findings, and make recommendations to inform future recruitment processes.

3. Methodology

This section clearly defines the methods used to carry out this evaluation of the recruitment process. It gives a clear explanation of the information and data for each of the steps taken in the process to support an objective evaluation.

Promotion and Advertising

The CDW and CNW job vacancies were advertised on the Doing Good Leeds and Leeds City Council websites. These websites were chosen as they are well-established and get a lot of diverse traffic. Leeds Women's Aid advertised all of the vacancies and WLL partners advertised the vacancies that they would be hosting. The adverts were posted for a period of 4 weeks.

Short-listing

Short-listing was a joint exercise by all of the 12 WLL partners. Each partner was required to provide 4 candidates in order of preference to the Project Manager. The number of candidates to be shortlisted was agreed by all partners previously: 10 for CDW and 14 for CNW.

Interview Process

Applicants were invited to interview during a 2 week period. Partners were invited to sit on all appropriate interview panels, but some requested if possible if this could be minimalised due to other commitments they had. As a result of these conversations the Project Manager then devised a schedule that cross referenced the candidates preferences against organisations and specifics of the roles. A schedule of

interviews was sent to all partners to agree before implementation. The schedule ensured that at least 3 WLL staff/partners sat on each interview panel.

Interviews for the 24 candidates took place over a 2 week period. Partners from organisations who would be hosting the CDW or CNW sat on the panel where possible; when this was not possible another partner stepped in. Service users joined staff members in interviewing candidates, the involvement took 2 formats: a separate service user panel held before the interview with staff; and service users sitting on the interview panel with staff.

Once interviews were completed WLL partners and the Project Manager made a decision on which candidate to appoint for each role. Chosen candidates were then contacted with a job offer.

4. Service User Involvement

With aims of achieving true co-production and ensuring women and girls are empowered to influence service design, development and delivery at the heart of WLL, it was essential that service users were involved in the recruitment of the CDW and CNW, who would be working closely with women and girls across the city.

It was at the interview stage that service users were invited to join WLL and get involved in the recruitment process. Partners were asked to identify any service users who may be interested in participating. This was supported by the Peer Support & Participation Worker who visited most of the partner organisations to meet with partners and interested service users. The worker also arranged to meet with service users outside of organisations e.g. in cafes, to meet and build relationships to give service users the confidence to get involved in the process. There were 10 women who were identified and showed an interest in partaking, 5 women attended the interviews.

All 5 service users who took part in the recruitment process completed the feedback form about the process. This table presents 'Agree' and 'Agree Strongly' only as service users chose only these 2 options.

Statement	No. Of services users ticked <i>Agree</i>	No. Of services users ticked <i>Strongly Agree</i>
I enjoyed participating in the recruitment process	3	2
I received enough information about the day	2	3
I felt confident when talking to applicants	3	2
I felt valued during the recruitment day	2	3
I felt as though my opinion was listened to	2	3
I would like to be involved in another recruitment process	3	2
I would like to be involved further with Women's Lives Leeds	3	2

Service user comments

“I felt very involved in this line of work, a real eye opener. I have a passion for women’s empowerment. Thank you for involving me.”

“I enjoyed the day and have been inspired and come away with more knowledge.”

Candidate comments

We asked successful candidates to comment on their experience of the recruitment process to get feedback from the other side of the table.

“I thought the interview process was great, especially having service users on the panel and giving them the opportunity to ask questions.”

5. Key Findings

This section will explore the key findings of the recruitment process. It will follow the sub-headings used in the Methodology section of this report. Due to its importance, service user involvement will be considered separately.

Promotion and Advertising

Challenges

- Of those who completed the Equality Questionnaire (20% of all applicants) - 67% were White British; 13% Bangladeshi; 6% Pakistani; 6% Caribbean; and 6% White & Black Caribbean.
- Of those who completed the Equality Questionnaire (20% of all applicants) - 80% were heterosexual; 6% homosexual; 6% not stated; and 1% other.

These figures suggest that the vacancies were not advertised in areas that would in particular attract candidates from BME communities.

Positives

- We received a total of 28 applications for the CDW role, and 47 applications for the CNW role. We also received a number of applications after the deadline (4 for CDW, 8 for CNW) these applications were not considered.
- 35% of applicants for the CDW role were shortlisted; 30% of applicants for the CNW role.

Short-listing and Interview Process

Challenges

Positives

- Partners were trusting of each other to appoint the most suitable candidates for the roles, particularly when partners were unable to attend the interview for their member of staff.

Service User Involvement

Challenges

- Some partner organisations had more well-established structures to encourage service user participation in the recruitment process.
- A tight time frame of the Peer Support & Participation Link Worker being in post less than two weeks before the first day of recruitment
- The lack of lead time meant that relationships could not be built between the worker and the service users who had volunteered from specific organisations. It became apparent that the involvement of service users generally depended upon the level of support offered by their own organisation as to whether they felt able to attend, due to differing availabilities, skills and experiences, the nature of the service user involvement varied.
- Some panels had experienced service user interviewers alongside panel members and another day had a wider selection of service users who held a separate service user interview, which was its own learning experience.
- Service user involvement took place, however due to lack of formal agreement from partners around the structure and weight of their involvement it was not as effective as it could have been had good practice guidelines been in place.

Positives

- 50% of women who showed an interest in participating in the recruitment process actually took part; this was heavily due to the presence of staff/managers familiar to them
- All those that partook said they enjoyed it and would like to be further involved with Women's Lives Leeds.

The key positive take away from the recruitment was that service users were involved in the process.

6. Recommendations

The following suggestions are recommended actions to be taken based on the findings. If implemented, these recommendations will improve the recruitment process for the future. Recommendations will follow the same sub-headings as outlined in Methodology and Key Findings.

Promotion and Advertising

- Advertise job vacancies in area/community-specific areas and publications to encourage candidates from BME communities and those with lived experience to apply
- Make application more accessible to those with lived experience – make lived experience Desirable in person specification and equated with work experience

Short-listing and Interview Process

- Partners agree on the weighting of service users involvement and who has ultimate say on whether a candidate is appointed.

Service User Involvement

- Ensure that learning from this process is taken into consideration and implemented for the remaining CNW post for Shantona.
 - a. Advertise in areas appropriate for Shantona post – job advertised with Leeds BME Hub and Migrant Access Network
 - b. Service user involvement good practice guidelines to be agreed and implemented
- Good practice guidelines for service user involvement in recruitment to be written and agreed by the partnership. *NB. A first draft of good practice guidelines have been developed – see attached.* This is a strategic commitment from all partners and includes agreements on:
 - a. Involving service users from initial stages of recruitment e.g. job design and adverts, to short-listing, interviewing and finally decision-making
 - b. Weight of service user voice in decision-making
 - c. Format(s) of service user involvement at all stages
 - d. Channels to collate service user feedback
 - e. Providing training and information prior to involvement
 - f. Service users to be reimbursed for travel and lunch costs, where appropriate
 - g. Encouraging service users to develop their own questions