Tips for recruiting peer researchers

Being part of Leeds City Council, we follow its recruitment procedures, which can seem a little formal and perhaps daunting to someone who has not been through something similar before. However, we tried to make it as accessible and friendly as we could. Here are some tips based on our experience:

- **Promote job adverts as widely as possible through your networks**

We shared our adverts in the migrant sector and via social media, to try to reach people who wouldn't necessarily check the Leeds City Council website.

- **Consider creating a short video to share on social media**

We created this video with the aim of making the process seem friendlier and less impersonal. We also wanted to draw attention to an important aspect of completing the application form: that

it’s crucial for candidates to evidence how they meet each of the essential criteria in the job description. We felt that applicants unfamiliar with UK recruitment processes might not realise the importance of this, and that people with relevant skills and experience may therefore not score as well as they deserved. (In future we would try to ensure a wider reach by linking it to the advert on our website and LinkedIn page).

- **Ensure that job adverts and job descriptions are clear and straightforward to read**

We found this more challenging with the job descriptions, where we were constrained by a set format. We seemed to be constantly trying to strike the balance between making our information accessible, without being patronising. A conversation with one of the Community Researchers subverted our expectation that informal and friendly is best – their expectation was for something formal which implies a measure of seriousness. A mix of informal and formal adverts may be the best approach.

- **Offer full and part-time roles to provide flexibility**

We found that most researchers preferred to work part-time due to other commitments such as study, other work, and family, but offering both options provided greater flexibility.

- **Personalise the process as far as you can**

For example we sent individual emails to candidates not shortlisted for interview instead of the standard corporate emails generated by the recruitment system, and offered feedback. We phoned unsuccessful interview candidates to tell them the outcome instead of sending the standard corporate email, and again proactively offered feedback.

These final tips are based on our reflections on what we might do differently next time:

- **Recruit as early as possible**

For various bureaucratic reasons the researchers were not recruited until several months into the project – if they had been in post earlier there would have been more opportunities for them to be involved in research design, which would have meant the research more truly being co-produced.

- **Consider running an information session for interested candidates**

With hindsight, among other things this could have emphasised the importance of applicants addressing each element of the person specification, and evidencing how they met it. There were some applicants who had relevant experience, but we couldn’t shortlist them because they hadn’t explicitly addressed each point on the specification, which was frustrating. This made us reflect that for people not used to the UK job market, perhaps coming from a context where you would submit a CV rather than complete a form, there needs to be really clear guidance on what is expected.

- **Define what you mean by lived experience of migration**

We didn’t want to be in a situation where we were judging some experiences of migrating to the UK to be more relevant than others, but we hadn’t foreseen some possible scenarios (for example, people applying who planned to migrate to the UK in the near future, who no longer remembered living outside the UK, or whose knowledge was based on close family members’ experiences of migration). Our job opportunities were aimed at people whose direct and fairly recent experience of moving here would arguably give them greater understanding of the experiences of research participants.

- **Anticipate and resolve human resources issues such as to do with references**

It was unclear as to whether Migration Yorkshire staff could provide references for applicants who had worked for us previously. We felt that advice not to do this did not recognise the fact that applicants new to the UK are likely to have very limited options in terms of possible referees.

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/tips-recruiting-peer-researchers*