

Guide to involving patients in the interview and recruitment process

1. Doing your (internal) prep

Why involve patients, people and community representatives?

Having people, patients and community members as part of our staff recruitment (interviews and appointments) process is important because patients are the recipients of our services. Patients can offer a non-organisational perspective about prospective Solent staff. They will be able to give an honest opinion as to how well they feel the candidates will have a good rapport with patients.

Who should you ask?

You can ask patients who have received care, are having ongoing care or who are associated with your service e.g. community groups or carers. It's a good idea to ask the patients who know the service best. These patients are normally near the end of care or have accessed the service for some time and may have seen multiple health professionals. Although this is not essential. Many patients want to share their experiences and make a difference by 'giving back' to the NHS, so helping with interviews can be an option for this. It doesn't need to be someone with experience of sitting on an interview panel as you can support them to be involved in the process.

How could you ask patients?

Face-to-face is often the best way to ask, especially if this is how you usually see your patient. You can also ask via email, phone or letter. Give patients time to consider and ask you questions about being involved. There are no set rules for how to ask a patient and it is dependent on the service. Most importantly, clearly outline what is expected of them and provide support to enable them to be involved. Ask them what they feel they need to know and provide this in good time.

How do I reimburse and recognise the patients' involvement?

You must reimburse travel expenses (eg. parking and mileage) and provide/reimburse for refreshments and food, especially if the interviewing includes lunch time. Follow the NHS England Guidance on '[Reimbursing expenses and paying involvement payments](#)' to pay for people's involvement.

For more support and guidance, please contact involvement@solent.nhs.uk

2. On the interview day

How can you help your patient be part of the interview process?

Give patients plenty of notice of when the interview will take place (ideally at least 2 weeks). Let them know all the logistical information in writing, by email or post – whichever is their preference. This should include the interview date, timings, location, where to park, reimbursement details and any other travel information.

What can the patient do in the interview/recruitment process?

- Welcome the interviewee and show them around the department
- Have an informal chat with interviewees prior to their formal interview (this could include an overview of their patient journey with the service, if applicable)
- Sit on the interview panel, observing and/or asking the questions

- It may be a good idea to think about which interview questions you may give your patient to ask the candidate. Your patient may want support to practice reading the questions prior to the interview.
- You could consider sharing the interview questions with your patient helper beforehand to ask their thoughts and check their understanding of the questions and their purpose.
- Offer for you patient helper(s) to come up with the own question(s) to ask. Two is usually plenty. If you have more than one patient helper, encourage them to share their ideas and work together to create suitable questions. Depending on their skills and experience, they may need your support in final phrasing of the question(s) they've come up with.
- You shouldn't expect your patient to make notes in the way you do as their notes do not contribute to the HR/People service record. They can jot some ideas down if they wish and if this is something that they want to do, provide a suitable template for them.
- Important! Be open and honest about how much their input will influence and carry weight in the decision making for the appointment. If the staff on the panel are going to have the final say, this need to be made clear.

Any other thoughts or queries? Contact involvement@solent.nhs.uk.

Top tip! At every stage think – how could I include them in the planning, preparation and execution of these interviews?

How will you need to adapt their involvement under distancing guidelines during COVID-19?

Considerations – will it be safe to hold the interview in person and appropriate to invite a patient on site when not treatment related? Would virtual involvement be possible and more suitable? For example, using MS Teams or zoom. The Academy of Research and Improvement has run interviews in this way.

3. After the interview

What should you do after the interviews?

Thank your patients and let them know that you value their input and opinion. Let them know that you considered their input and opinion in the decision making for which candidate to appoint and give an overview of how you reached your conclusion.

You may even consider your new team member meeting with the patient to explore their patient journey and experience of using the service.

How can you get support for involving and working in partnership with patients, people and communities?

There are a huge number of options for continuing patient involvement. See the Academy of Research & Improvement's toolkit on SolNet for more ideas. Contact involvement@solent.nhs.uk for more information and guidance.