

Staffordshire and Jacaranda **Social Pedagogue recruitment - Sharing innovative practice**

Staffordshire County Council and Jacaranda recently broke the mould in recruiting Social Pedagogues to work in residential child care.

Applying learning from previous experiences and thinking out of the box led to an assessment process that was well-rounded, fun and fruitful.

Staffordshire have been on a journey exploring and developing Social Pedagogy for several years. Managers of homes were keen to recruit Social Pedagogues to work in their teams to support, underpin and challenge their social pedagogic practice in working with children and young people. By including Social Pedagogues in teams, staff have a point of reference on a day-to-day basis; someone with whom they can share ideas, reflect and enhance their growing understanding of Social Pedagogy.

Staffordshire is taking part in the [Head, Heart, Hands](#) programme, introducing Social Pedagogy in foster care. The programme is led by the Fostering Network. Social Pedagogues recruited for the programme were actively involved in the design and facilitation of the residential recruitment. Opportunities for networking in the future and co-operation enthuse everyone involved.

Applicants had a chance to get to know the people with whom they would be working, met young people at a visit to a children's home – and were welcomed in no less than five languages by a young person who had enthusiastically prepared for the visit.

Group work, individual impromptu presentations, pre-prepared presentations and panel interview were the methods used to assess applicants.

One exercise asked what personal and professional dimensions applicants would bring to their work with young people to help them reach their potential.



We learned about the creative, outdoor, sporting and domestic skills of applicants, as well as seeing how Social Pedagogues apply theory to their practice. Music, importance of education, support, walking side by side with the young person, stepping into the river of life, taking small steps together, working with art, cooking, enabling, empowering, humour and laughter and relationships were just a few of the themes that were drawn out in this exercise.

How does this differ from recruitment practice and why is that important?

The process provided space and time for dialogue, with applicants and interviewers exploring together the meaning and context of the work with young people.

Opportunity was provided for candidates to share something of their Personal (not Private) selves, as well as their Professional self. Offering an applicant coloured pens and a flip-chart page creates a space different to verbal communication which draws out more than can be assessed by the question and answer format of an interview.

Using social pedagogically inspired and underpinned methods progressed us through the stages of group formation and put people at their ease.

Applicants came from all corners of Europe: Poland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Italy.



Interviews are intense and nerve-wracking experiences for most people. It is testimony to the passion and enthusiasm of these applicants that they expressed themselves so well in English, enhanced by a supportive process.

“By creating an environment that is welcoming, nurtures creativity, values diversity and is still rigorous, we have a genuine chance to see the best of people, over a period of time. In turn, by providing them with a chance to get a flavour of the culture, values and aspirations of the organisation, we provide them with a chance to make an informed decision about accepting a job. This kind of reciprocity underpins good practice in social pedagogic recruitment”, says Abby Ladbrooke of Jacaranda Development.

“This was a really positive experience for us. It’s such an excellent way to get to know the people applying for these vital roles with our most vulnerable children and young people. By using this approach we were able to create better opportunities to see the ‘person behind the professional persona’. This enabled us to explore a range of criteria that was far broader and deeper than our traditional approaches to recruitment.”

Placement Service Manager, Staffordshire County Council

“Meeting all the people who were involved was really a pleasure and helpful. Everybody could relax a little bit. We weren’t competing. I enjoyed the possibility of seeing how others sparked in their creative way of doing the tasks. I saw so much potential in each applicant that I had absolutely no idea who would be successful. It was a pleasure to meet colleagues from other countries.”

Applicant

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