Non-Executive Appointments
Diversity Action Plan
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Diversity Action Plan

Prepared by DH Appointments Team
DH Diversity policy

The Department of Health (DH) values and promotes diversity in both its public appointments and other non-executive appointments and is committed to encouraging applications from all sections of the community, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

DH will work closely with both the Centre for Public Appointments within Cabinet Office and the Commissioner for Public Appointments to attract a strong and diverse field of candidates to public appointments.

In line with the Civil Service Talent Action Plan: Removing Barriers to Success, the principles of the Commissioner for Public Appointments’ Code of Practice and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC) guidance, DH, whilst promoting diversity in all areas will place a focus on improving representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people on boards. In 2014/15 33% of new DH public appointments made were given to women, 4% of new appointees were from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and 0% declared a disability.

Context

DH is responsible for making public appointments and other non-executive appointments to a range of public bodies and expert committees. DH public bodies include Executive and Advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Special Health Authorities. Public appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Health and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Appointments to expert committees are made by the Senior Responsible Officer within DH. They are not subject to regulations set by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, but we apply the same principles of fairness, openness and appointment made on merit to these posts in line with CoPSAC and the Commissioner for Public Appointments’ Code of Practice.

DH Actions to improve diversity in 2015/16

DH will keep diversity in focus throughout the appointments process and will take forward the following actions to improve the diversity of public and other non-executive appointments:

Planning

Engagement with Senior Sponsors within DH and Chairs:

- DH will make Senior Sponsors and Chairs aware that they should ensure boards are diverse and reflect the community they serve, by for example, considering diversity during succession planning and in planning for a recruitment campaign.
- At the outset of a campaign, the Appointments Team will have discussions with the Senior Sponsor to ensure both the DH panel Chair and Chair of the body are aware of the importance of considering diversity throughout the campaign.
• Together with the Sponsor and Chair, we will consider the Board profile to establish how best to address any imbalance in terms of diversity and skills.
• We will encourage the Sponsor and body to utilise a range of networks, both existing and new, to identify and reach a wider field of potential applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.
• We will assist in the development of the specifications for new roles so that they reflect a broader focus on the transferable skills required, rather than simply relying on previous experience e.g. previous board-level experience. We will also share specifications with Cabinet Office to ensure we are following best practice advice across Government.
• In discussion with the Sponsor and Chair, we will, avoid single gender selection panels.
• We will advise all DH panel member that the Permanent Secretary requires them to undertake Unconscious Bias training before sitting on Appointments panels.
• We will highlight consideration of the time commitment and location of appointments to ensure greater flexibility/access.

Engagement with DH Ministers:
Ministers will be involved throughout the process. They will be:

• Involved in the development of the role and person specification to ensure we attract a diverse field of applicants.
• Invited to make suggestions of potential applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds who are suitable for the role.
• Invited to comment on the expertise, experience and skills of applicants at the outset and again at the long-listing and short-listing stages.
• Provided with diversity information regarding candidates at each stage of selection.
• Advised of the Board profile when they are asked which candidate(s) they wish to appoint.

Search Strategy
• Where Executive Search companies are used, we will ensure that they are fully briefed on current diversity requirements and that they are aware that they must approach/attract a diverse range of candidates. We will ensure that this is built into their contracts and activity, which will be monitored on a regular basis.
• Maintain a list of near miss candidates, taking into consideration expressions of interest and ensuring we are live to underrepresented groups.

Advertising Strategy
• Ensure adverts and role and person specifications are inclusive by using simple and concise language, working with the Centre for Public Appointments who will provide guidance and support on making advertisements and role and person specifications more accessible and drawing upon the advice of specialist advertising and recruitment expertise.
• As part of agreeing the advertising strategy, consider options to attract a wide range of diverse candidates. This will include seeking advice from our advertising provider as to the best options for an individual campaign.
• Move away from the traditional hard copy advertising in for example, The Sunday Times, The Guardian and medical publications and instead utilise a range of online options. These will include:
- website advertising which may include online versions of newspapers and websites such as “Diversityjobs.co.uk”
- establishment of a Twitter account (@appointmentsDH), subsequently linking with others and acquiring key followers
- Liaison with organisations such as “Women on Boards”, an enterprise aimed at attracting women onto public boards in the UK
- exploring networks on LinkedIn
- publishing vacancies to a wider voluntary sector audience, through a weekly bulletin.

- Place all public appointment adverts on the Cabinet Office website and liaise with the Centre for Public Appointments who will alert people to upcoming public appointments through fortnightly emails and social media to reach a wide potential field of applicants.
- Link closely with Other Government Departments to reach out to their networks, such as BIS contacts with the Private Sector, and tweeting/re-tweeting OGD vacancies on our twitter feed.

**Application process**

- Make appointments processes accessible by ensuring criteria reflect broader competencies, transferable skills and relevant experiences.
- Request CVs and personal statements, as opposed to lengthy forms, as evidence suggests this can put some candidates off applying.
- Ensure recruitment processes cater for those with special requirements, including providing assistance with application forms and at interview, as necessary
- Operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme whereby we guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the post

**Working with others**

- For public appointments, inform the Centre for Public Appointments on progress at all stages of a competition to ensure we encourage a representative field and seek their views on the experience and diversity of those who have applied for other posts.
- Work with the Centre for Public Appointments to offer advice and guidance to those individuals interested in applying for posts, including what is required at the application and interview stages and to keep them informed of upcoming appointments.
- Establish links with a range of diversity networks to promote DH appointments and encourage applications, working with the Centre for Public Appointments, the Commissioner for Public Appointments and other government departments.
- Work closely with the Centre for Public Appointments and the Commissioner for Public Appointments to share best practice and learn from other government departments.
- Engage with the Centre for Public Appointments on the use of development schemes to prepare board-ready candidates from underrepresented groups for future roles.
- Work closely with Other Government Departments to benchmark data and share best practice.

**Monitoring**

- Regularly review recruitment processes taking into consideration any feedback from candidates or others on how to improve processes, e.g. advice from peers in other
government departments, and working with Cabinet Office and The Commissioner for Public Appointments on challenges/barriers.

- Monitor our progress on diversity and build in regular reporting linked to Cabinet Office and The Commissioner for Public Appointments’ collection and publication of statistics.
- Update DH monitoring forms and in-house database to ensure we fully capture appropriate diversity information and in order to inform future action.

**Re-appointments**

- Consider re-appointments on a case by case basis, with recommendations based on an objective assessment of performance and a review of the board composition and current board responsibilities. Ministers will also take into account the diversity of the board when considering any re-appointment recommendations.

*The Department of Health values and promotes diversity and is committed to encouraging applications from all sections of the community.*