

Increasing Diversity in Public Appointments

Strong and diverse fields of applicants bring a wealth of talent and a broad range of perspectives to the Boards of Public Bodies.

The Government has an aspiration that by 2015 half of all new appointees will be women. This is not just about gender; diversity is about encouraging applications from candidates with the widest range of backgrounds.

This action plan identifies potential barriers to appointments and puts in place a number of actions to overcome them.

The Centre for Public Appointments:

- The Government has established the Centre for Public Appointments (CPA) in the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate across Government and promote roles on Public Boards to a range of candidates with diverse skills and backgrounds.
- The CPA is also working with the Commissioner for Public Appointments who is committed to increasing the diversity of appointments through his role as regulator and his work with Public Appointments Assessors.

Raising Awareness:

The CPA is encouraging applications from candidates by:

- contacting potential candidates about suitable opportunities;
- advertising all opportunities on the public appointments website, Twitter and distributing a fortnightly newsletter on upcoming appointments;
- simplifying adverts and using language which will encourage candidates to apply;
- working with both the executive search industry and representative networks to encourage prospective applicants from diverse backgrounds;
- providing a dedicated resource to help potential candidates understand and prepare for the application process; and
- raising awareness of public appointments by hosting events and raising the profiles of existing role models.

Job adverts and specifications:

In order to make job adverts and specifications clear, concise and accessible, the CPA is ensuring that:

- job adverts and specifications use plain English and avoid jargon to appeal to the widest field of applicants;
- job adverts and specifications promote diversity by emphasising, where possible, a candidate's ability rather than previous experience;
- job specifications should focus on key skills and should not rule out or deter potential candidates by being too restrictive in the criteria; and
- applications must request CVs and supporting statements rather than lengthy forms;

Diversity within the recruitment process:

In order to reinforce the need for diversity throughout the process, the CPA is ensuring that:

- Ministers are aware of the diversity of the existing Board at the start of a campaign;
- Ministers meet with those involved in the campaign, including the Chair of the panel and executive search firm (if used) to ensure that all parties are clear on the requirement to find a diverse field of candidates;
- Ministers see details of the field before competitions close, to decide if they are content with the diversity of applicants;
- Ministers are reminded of the diversity of the existing Board when given details of all candidates who were deemed appointable at interview;
- Ministers agree panels with independent panel members who will provide an external perspective;
- feedback is provided to candidates
- strong candidates who are not appointed are encouraged to apply for other roles; and
- reappointments are the exception rather than the rule, to encourage greater diversity in new appointments.

Monitoring progress

We are monitoring our progress by:

- publishing six monthly reports on Departments' performance on appointing women to public appointments.