Lord Holmes Review

Opening up public appointments to disabled people

Thanks and acknowledgements

This Review would not have been possible without the support of the people and organisations below. I am especially grateful to the members of the public and public appointees who gave freely of their time and shared experiences with us which, in some cases, they had previously not shared with anyone else.

Disabled Peoples Organisations

who made submissions to the Review, met with the Review or both:

Action on Disability, British Deaf Association, The Business Disability Forum, Disability Rights UK, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Mencap, Royal National Institute of Blind People, Scope

Members of the public and public appointees

The 116 people who responded to our online Call for Evidence

The 35 individuals who sent in email and phone contributions in response to the Call for Evidence

The 50 people who attended our four regional workshop events in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and London

The 12 people who gave in-depth interviews about their experiences of the public appointments process

Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt MP

Minister of State for Disabled People, Sarah Newton MP

Civil servants and senior public appointees

John Manzoni, Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office and Chief Executive of the Civil Service

Richard Heaton, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice

Sue Owen, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Civil Service Diversity Champion

Philip Rutnam, Permanent Secretary of the Home Office and Civil Service Disability Champion

Christian Brodie, Chair of the Public Chairs Forum (and his team)

Baroness Dido Harding, Chair of NHS Improvement

Dame Anne Owers, Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards

Liz Sayce, Social Security Advisory Committee

Keith Richards, Chair of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee

Jean Andre Prager and Sheridan Westlake, Special Advisers to the Prime Minister

Civil Service HR team

The Office for Disability Issues in the Department for Work and Pensions

The Government Equalities Office

Public Appointments teams from across the Whitehall departments

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Commissioner for Public Appointments Peter Riddell and his team

Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public life for Scotland, Bill Thompson and his team

The academics of Disability@Work, particularly Vicki Wass of Cardiff University

Our case studies

Llinos Bradbury from Social Care Wales, Dan Brooke from Channel 4, David Chrimes from the Crown Prosecution Service, Martina Milburn and Rachael Millar from the Social Mobility Commission, Pippa Britton, Matthew Campbell-Hill, Carly Jayne Jones MBE, Grace Quantock

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Amy Cochrane

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Graeme Whippy

Inclusive Boards

More United

And finally, Cabinet Office Minister for Implementation Oliver Dowden MP both for inviting me to undertake this work and for the loan of dedicated staff.

Foreword

What's a public appointment?

A very fair question, one I certainly asked when, some seventeen years ago, someone suggested I should apply for such a position. And yet thousands of these roles exist with governance and oversight responsibilities for some of the most important areas affecting our lives.

In the intervening seventeen years I have been honoured to serve on several boards of public bodies responsible for sports, equality and broadcasting. These appointments gave me the opportunity to be involved in decisions regarding, not least, high performance funding for our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, to enforce equality legislation and ensure sportsgrounds, air travel and rail are more accessible and to promote diversity in UK TV.

Over 6,000 appointments dealing with all aspects of our lives from education, health, prisons and our great cultural institutions. These roles play an essential part in shaping our society but currently just 3% are held by disabled people. Parlous by any measure and what I consider much more than a Public Dis-Appointment.

I agreed to lead this independent review to uncover the reasons for this shocking statistic. To discover and fully expose the barriers, blockers and bias but, most importantly, to set out ambitious but achievable recommendations to make long-overdue change.

The core principle underpinning the review is talent; talent in its broadest most brilliant form, not just that of a tiny elite. How can we as a country not seek to enable and empower all of our talent, not least that held by disabled people across the nation, talent that is all too often sadly wasted.

Government departments, chairs of public bodies, recruiters, executive search firms, all of us need to look harder and look further for that talent. This includes how public bodies communicate and connect, the mechanisms used to search, the criteria to assess candidates and more.

Opening up public appointments to disabled talent is not looking to give anyone an unfair advantage. An equitable, inclusive, fully accessible and positive process puts everyone on the same start line. It allows everyone to run whatever race they choose with fairness, dignity and respect throughout. A guaranteed interview is not a leg up, it's a tool to allow someone with valuable lived experience to get in front of an interview panel. Offering alternative ways to apply is not giving a neuro-diverse person an edge, it may well be the difference which enables someone to apply at all.

The recommendations are focussed on increasing the number of disabled applicants, interviewees and appointees. However, I believe that they could have general applicability and benefits in many situations, across public appointments and to all talent acquisition and recruitment practices.

Positive change requires leadership, culture and innovation and I am convinced that substantial, sustainable change is possible. It will not be easy but it is absolutely achievable. Currently, talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. I hope this review and its recommendations will play some part in addressing this avoidable failing.

I express my sincere thanks to all those who contributed to this review. I am especially grateful to our case studies, both individuals and organisations. They show that there are pockets of good practice out there, and as public appointees Grace, Carly, Mat and Pippa are demonstrating the impact that talent makes. They show that what this review recommends can be done – and why it's so important.

And so, I look forward to significant change over the coming months. I look forward to seeing boards of public bodies that better reflect and represent the communities they are established to serve, not least in respect of the tremendous talented disabled people across the UK.

Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE

> **“Positive change requires leadership, culture and innovation and I am convinced that substantial, sustainable change is possible”**

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Executive summary

Current state of play

- In 2018 and 2017, **5% of existing public appointees who reported their disability status reported that they are disabled**. This means that those who reported they are disabled made up just 3% of the total public appointee population in both years. This compares poorly with Scottish public appointees (7.9%), the UK's working age population (18.3%) and the UK's economically active population (12.9%).
- In both 2017 and 2018, the **disability status of 35% of existing public appointees was unknown**.
- In 2017/18, **6.8% of candidates who reported that they were disabled made it from application to appointment, compared to 8.1% those who reported they were not disabled**. This is an improvement on 2016/17, where the differential between disabled and non-disabled candidates was wider at 9.3% and 12.8% respectively.

Data collection and transparency

- **Existing disability data** is collected at application through a diversity monitoring form. Reporting rates improved for new appointees in 2016/17 and 2017/18, but issues remain: appointees are seldom asked again, the form is inconsistently used, there is no mandation and there is imperfect accessibility.
- The review suggests retaining the self-identifying **disability question**, but adding a list of example conditions and a definition.
- **Reasons why applicants may not share disability data** included: stigma of labelling, fear it prejudices applications, mistrusting confidentiality, conflation of monitoring with interview schemes, that the information is irrelevant, and concern about data usage.
- The review notes that poor data quality drives the current lack of **transparency**. This should be remedied once the data improves.

Attracting and nurturing talent

- Public appointments over-rely on the Centre for Public Appointments website, **appealing to a self-selecting group**.
- The review considers **options to look further and harder for disabled talent**, and combat the perception that public appointments are **"not for people like them"**.

Application stage

- Most applications are **submitted via email**, or sometimes less accessible **third party online portals**. Not all packs offer **alternative application methods**.
- **Selection criteria** favour experience, sector and seniority, with less emphasis on skills, output and lived experience. This counts against many disabled peoples' **non-standard CVs**.
- Not all packs expressed **openness to disabled applicants**. All offered **adjustments, but the language and approaches were inconsistent**.
- Contributors to the review expressed **scepticism of Disability Confident**, but many agreed it is **"vastly better than what we had"**.
- The **Guaranteed Interview Scheme** attracted mixed feedback. Anecdotes from appointees and panels and recent market research suggest it has had a material impact, but there is work to do to ensure its successor scheme under Disability Confident is used consistently.

Interviews and beyond

- Most appointments rely on one-off panel interviews, judged by the criteria noted above. This can **embed disadvantage for disabled applicants**.
- **Alternative approaches** are crucial to allow disabled people to show the skills they have developed and impact they can have.
- Examples **of poor adjustments, interview etiquette and feedback** suggest low **disability awareness** and **lack of disabled representation on panels**.

Retention

- While beyond scope of this review, contributors shared concerns about **retention** of disabled public appointees.
- These were based on: **a lack of adjustments** to accommodate new disabled members, **access** issues, **unconscious bias**, and pressure to **represent 'the disabled'** on their committee.
- The review urges Government to examine retention statistics and consider if further work is needed to render board culture and practice more disability-friendly.

Remuneration

- While out of scope of this review, contributors shared consistent messages about expenses and remuneration.
- A **lack of expenses or funding for adjustments** adversely affected applicants and appointees, and unremunerated posts were more likely to **exclude disabled applicants**. The review urges Government to examine the outcome of GEO's Access to Public Office scheme.
- Remunerated posts **interacted adversely with the benefits system**. The review urges Government to produce advice about this.

Summary of recommendations

1. Data collection and transparency

1.1 Government to set an interim target of 11.3% disabled public appointees by 2022, for review end of 2019.

1.2 Government to undertake a one-off exercise to improve data and an annual diversity data stocktake.

1.3 Government to take medium-term transparency measures, published by department.

1.4 Government to explore a central public appointments application portal.

2. Attracting and nurturing talent

2.1 Government to showcase role models on a rolling basis.

2.2 Government to establish a mentoring programme to support talented disabled candidates.

2.3 Government to use multipliers, connectors and conduits to promote opportunities more widely.

2.4 Government to provide executive search guidance; all suppliers to sign up to the Business Disability Forum's Charter for Disability Smart Recruitment Service Providers.

2.5 Government to gauge interest in a cross-public appointment Disability network and provide secretariat if sufficient interest is expressed.

3. Application packs and job descriptions

3.1 Government to develop accessibility and openness standards for application packs.

3.2 Government to commission, analyse and publicise pilot recruitments.

3.3 All bodies making public appointments to be Disability Confident by summer 2019, and all public bodies to offer interviews to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria and wish to be considered for an interview.

4. Interviews and beyond

4.1 Government to commission, analyse and publicise open, innovative pilot assessment processes.

4.2 Government to provide good practice guidance on how to provide adjustments efficiently and effectively.

4.3 Appointing departments to provide disability training and awareness for board members and panellists.

4.4 Appointing departments to recruit and train more disabled independent panellists.

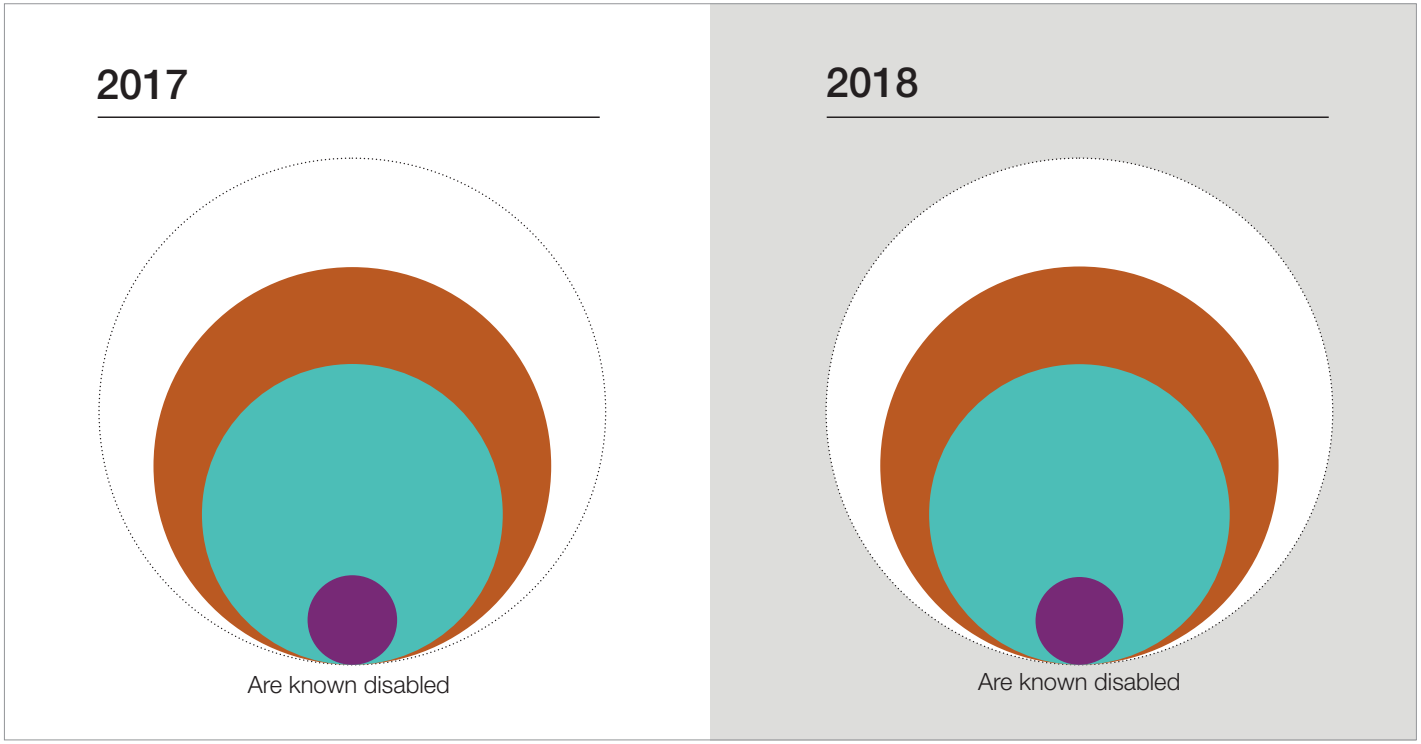
The current state of play

Public appointments data pointed the review to three main lines of questioning:

- **Why is the percentage of disabled appointees so low?** In 2017 and 2018, we can infer from published statistics that 3% of existing public appointees reported that they are disabled.
- **Why do we not know the disability status of so many public appointees?** In 2017 and 2018, the disability status of 35% of existing public appointees was unknown.
- **Why are proportionally fewer disabled candidates making it through to appointment than everyone else?** In 2017/18, 6.8% of candidates who reported that they were disabled made it from application to appointment, compared to 8.1% of those who reported they were not disabled.

EXISTING PUBLIC APPOINTEES

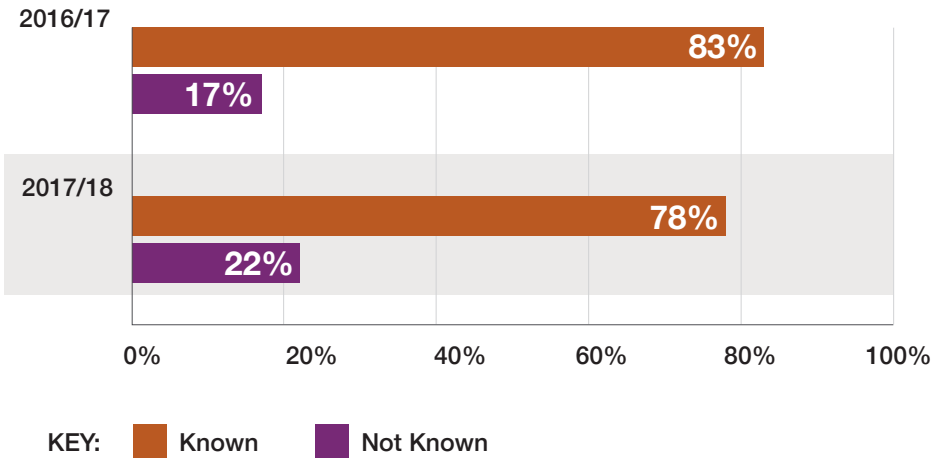
Public appointees by disability status



In 2017 and 2018, 5% of those who reported their disability status reported that they are disabled. We can infer from published statistics that this means 3% of all existing public appointees reported that they are disabled.[1] This compares unfavourably with the population at large, where disabled people make up 18.3% of working age people and 12.9% of the economically active population.[2]

APPOINTEES WHOSE DISABILITY STATUS IS UNKNOWN

Known / not known disability status for all new appointees by year



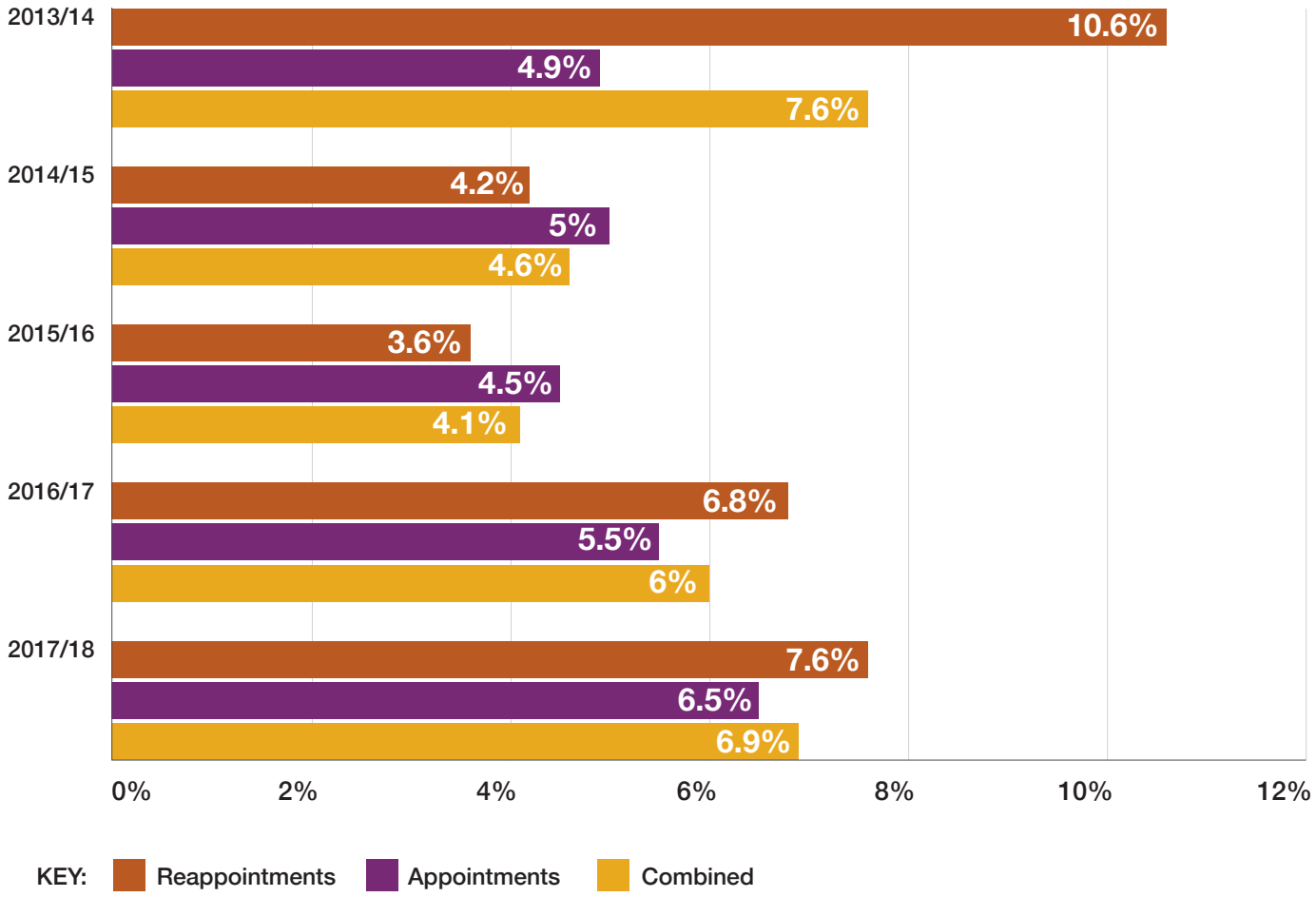
* Note – that this includes those who completed the diveristy monitoring form and ticked, yes, no or prefer not to say and all of those for whom their disability status is unknown because they did not complete the form

In 2017 and 2018, 35% of existing public appointees' disability status was unknown. This includes both those for whom Government holds no data and those who elected to tick "Prefer Not to Say" (PNS) on the form. This makes it difficult to assess the actual percentage of disabled public appointees.

The unknown rate for incumbent appointees should improve incrementally over time, as the percentage of appointees whose disability status was unknown for appointments made in 2016/17 and 2017/18 was 17.1% and 21.7% respectively.[3]

RATES OF APPOINTMENT FOR DISABLED APPLICANTS IN RECENT YEARS

Public appointments and reappointments made to people with a disability (where declared)



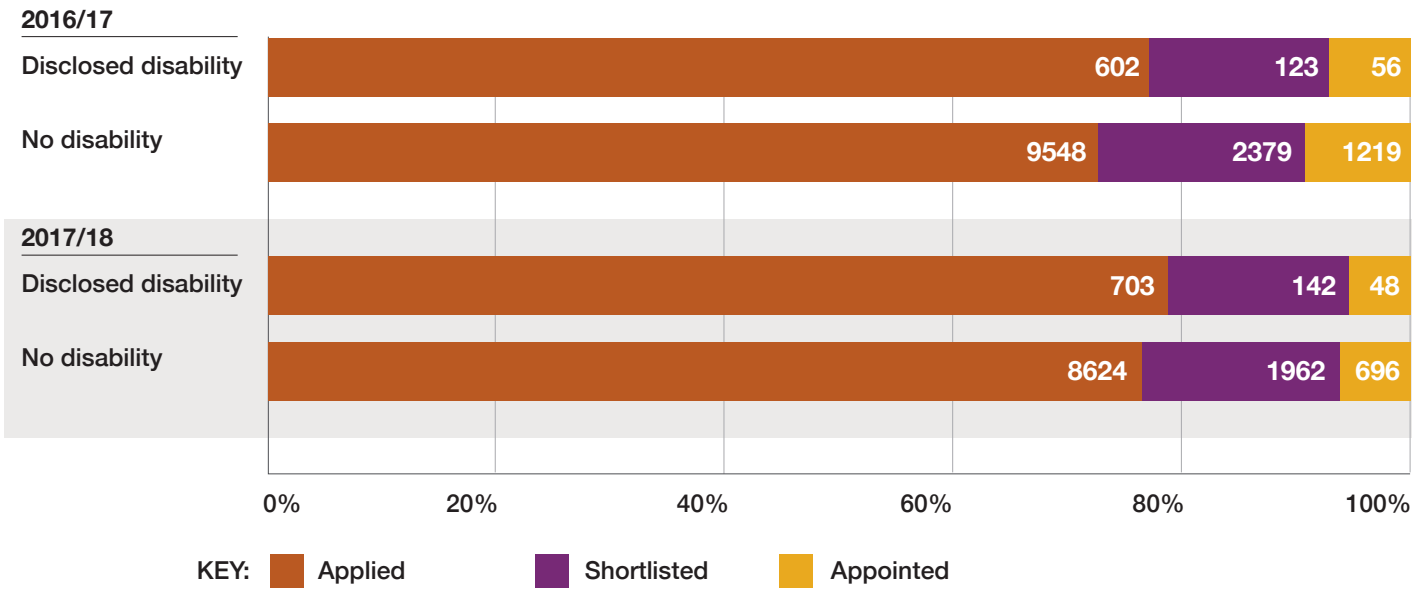
Of those who reported their disability status, in 2017/18 disabled people made up 6.9% of all appointments and reappointments combined. This is up from 6% last year and the highest rate since 2013/14. This progress is welcome, but as this translates to just 48 appointees and the overall number and percentage of incumbent public appointees who report a disability have dropped, so these gains should be kept in perspective.[4]

* Note - this statistic only includes those for whom their disability status is known, e.g. they ticked yes or no on the diversity monitoring form

DISPROPORTIONATE DROP OFF FOR DISABLED APPLICANTS

Extrapolating the data in chart 3, 6.8% of disabled applicants went on to be appointed, compared to 8.1% of everyone else. This is better than 2016/17, where the difference was 9.3% to 12.8%. Despite progress, it remains a concern that something is happening between application, sift, interview and appointment that disadvantages disabled people.[5]

Disability status by competition stage (where declared)



* Note – this statistic only includes those for whom their disability status is known, e.g. they ticked yes or no on the diversity monitoring form

Disabled employees and appointees: How do public appointments compare to other organisations?

Organisation	% of disabled employees and appointees
Channel 4^	11.5%
Civil service (all grades)	10%
Crown Prosecution Service*	10%
Scottish public appointees	7.9%
Senior civil servants	3.8%
Public appointees	3%

^See page 16 * See page 31

1 Data and transparency

How and when data is collected

Disability data of prospective and successful public appointees is collected through the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointment's (OCPA) diversity monitoring form. OCPA have recommended all appointing departments use a version of this form since around 2011. It is a Microsoft Word document, separated from the application form but attached to application pack. The form is usually printed, filled out by hand and scanned. An introductory paragraph explains its purpose in the context of the Equalities Act 2010, that the information is confidentially held and never shared with interview panels.

OCPA's suggestion in recent years that all appointing departments adopt this form has started to move the dial for new appointees. As outlined on page 8, where we only know the status of 65% of existing appointees in 2017 and 2018, for new appointees we now know 78.3%. This trend was reflected in our call for evidence: 78% of the disabled respondents told us they would share their disability status when applying for a public appointment (45 out of 58, see page 43).

However, process issues do hamper effective data collection.

> "In our call for evidence: 78% of the disabled respondents told us they would share their disability status when applying for a public appointment"

- **Data is usually only requested at application.** Appointees are rarely asked for their data again, and certainly not systematically. Appointees serve for two to 10 years, so this data may quickly become outdated for some.
- **Application packs are inconsistent.** In a dip sample of 20 packs, two included no diversity monitoring form and three had a modified version of OCPA's form. Some packs proactively encouraged applicants to complete the form, others did not. Only two included notes from senior departmental figures explaining what the data was for and why it is needed.
- Although applicants can tick PNS, **completion of the form is not mandatory**. Of all new appointees in 2017/18, 2.8% chose not to say, but 18.9% submitted no form or did not respond to the question.[6] By comparison, the online application portal for Scottish public appointments mandates applicants to tick yes, no or PNS to proceed. Thanks to this, 96% of Scottish public appointees' disability data is known.

The disability question

The wording of the disability question was hotly debated by disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and those who contacted the review. The question matters. Its wording and framing cause big data shifts, even in longitudinal surveys like the Labour Force Survey (LFS).[7]

For public appointments, the question is 'Do you consider yourself to be disabled?'.

The self-identifying nature of the question is aligned with the social model of disability.[8] The majority of the DPOs we met with, and disability advocates who attended our workshops, agreed that a question rooted in the social model will yield the best results.

Alternative ways of asking the question tend towards a medical model or legalistic model. For example, the LFS asks two long-winded questions based on whether someone has a long-term health condition and if it affects their daily life, from which it extrapolates if someone is disabled. The legalistic model leans on framing the question in the context of 'disabled as per the Equality Act 2010'. The Business Disability Forum (BDF) noted in their submission to this review that the legalistic model is featured in many packs. They stressed that overly detailed questions or a reliance on the legal model have in their experience put disabled people off answering the question.[9]

Nonetheless, self-identification can cause other problems. BDF's submission noted that, "people who have a disability ... do not often consider themselves 'disabled' even if they have a condition which is automatically covered in the [Equalities] Act". For example, one contributor noted "I am borderline disabled … I do not always declare … as I am not sure I would be seen as disabled by all".[10] Based on information in later correspondence, it became clear that the LFS would record this person as disabled, even if they did not self-identify as such in applications.

Why do so many 'prefer not to say' or decline to complete the form?

A survey for Secrets and Big News of 2,500 disabled UK employees found common themes for why disabled people may hesitate to share this information with employers. 60% were worried it may have 'repercussions', 27% said the label feels negative, and 53% did not understand how the information might be used.[11]

Submissions to the review showed that public appointments have similar issues to the rest of the UK labour market in this area. Contributors' reasons included the following:

- Issues around labelling yourself as disabled.
  - "to label yourself as disabled, there remains a big issue about that"
- Sharing could be prejudicial to an application.
  - "in my experience, interviewers literally run a mile once they hear the D (disability) word"[12]
  - "some disabled people's experiences [are] very negative if you disclose"[13]
- Mistrust about confidentiality.
  - "I had a few cases where I informed [about disability] … I was always unsuccessful in those interviews"[14]
- Applicants regularly conflated the monitoring form and Guaranteed Interview Scheme tickboxes (see section 3, page 26).
  - "I don't want people to think I'm angling for a guaranteed interview"[15]
  - "the only benefit seems to be guaranteed interview…so why bother?"
- Disability is not relevant to the role.
  - "it's very situational. I am 'able' in some circumstances, but I can be 'un-able' in others"[16]
- Why is this information needed?
  - "the context of why you're asking is very important"[17]
  - "needs to be a far greater level of clarity on what the purpose is"[18]
  - "I'd ... fill it in after the appointment…I don't think it needs to be done at application"[19]
- Some had access issues. One contributor with partial vision and physical disabilities noted that he could not have completed the form without the aid of a carer. Another who uses a reader was neither able to read it easily, nor complete it digitally.

> “I am borderline disabled … I do not always declare … as I am not sure I would be seen as disabled by all”

Use of data and transparency

A senior public appointee and a senior civil servant independently reflected to the review that senior public figures sometimes consider ‘diversity’ to be gender and ethnicity. One confessed they had not considered disability when making diversity plans in the past. With the current set of data, this is not surprising. While disability is measured for public appointments, it is not yet robust enough to publish data by department. If the data were to improve, this level of public scrutiny may kick start a more concerted departmental response to tackling underrepresentation.

The review heard from some involved in recruitment that they felt the diversity of ‘appointable’ candidates recommended to ministers was not reflected in final appointments. There remains a perception that ministers lean towards individuals who are ‘known’ or from known organisations. Few cited specific cases and it is important to stress this was mostly a perception. In addition, the Governance Code on Public Appointments prohibits the perceived practice many at the workshops worried about – that ministers pick whoever they want. This would constitute a breach of the code, any exceptions to which are reported annually by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.[20]

There is no data for the above, plus the review cannot verify specific incidents. The reason to raise this issue is that at present, diversity data on the lists of appointable candidates sent to ministers is not published, though the data is known and could be centrally collated. To present this information publicly would either show the extent of the issue to address, or dispel the perception that the ministerial role in this process works against diversity.

A target for disabled people in public appointments?

It is tough to benchmark what an achievable but stretch target should be for public appointments, as the points of comparison are limited and existing data is patchy.

Nonetheless, it is important that disability is aligned with the other protected characteristics, for which targets were set in the Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan in 2017.[21] A clear target for disabled people in public appointments would provide a focus for the wider transparency measures proposed in this report.

The review’s recommendations on data should improve the statistics over the course of 2019. In addition, the recent proposals for Disability Confident employers to voluntarily publish their data will provide more comparators in the coming year. As such, any target the government sets should be kept under review in a year’s time.

Channel 4's "Tell Us" Campaign

Dan Brooke, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer and Board Champion for Diversity, Channel 4

In 2016 Channel 4 launched an internal 'Tell Us' campaign to encourage staff to share their diversity data, particularly disability. We knew that the number of disabled people an organisation employs reflects both their ability to attract, recruit, and retain disabled talent, and their culture and whether staff feel comfortable disclosing a disability.

We explained to staff why sharing their disability status was important to help us determine how we were doing on disability and how to improve. We raised awareness of the range of conditions included under the definition of a disability, and because some find 'disclosure' off putting, the campaign's language talked about 'sharing'. We reassured staff about confidentiality or how their data would be used.

The campaign's centrepiece was a series of 'This Is Me' videos where disabled staff and their managers shared their stories. Our senior leadership team launched these videos at a staff session where we showcased our Year of Disability strategy, giving important wider context. The videos were incredibly powerful and helped to create a culture of openness.

Within two weeks 90% of employees had uploaded their diversity data and the percentage sharing a disability increased from 3% to 11.5%. Some staff were

sharing this information with colleagues and managers for the first time. Suddenly our disability data told a more complete story and we were in a better position to support our staff and ensure they could excel. Staff not only benefited from more active support, but were released from the burden of keeping their disability secret at work, making them happier and more productive.

Within in **two weeks** **90%** of employees had uploaded their diversity data

and the percentage sharing a disability **increased** from **3%** to **11.5%**

Pippa Britton

Board member,
UK Anti-Doping Authority

Board member, Sport Wales

I am a double Paralympian in archery, who made the podium at 6 consecutive World Championships and achieved 24 medals from 24 International events. I have also represented the Welsh able-bodied archery team on more than 20 occasions and have broken many world and national records. I was born with spina bifida, but developed scoliosis as a teenager and my archery career was punctuated by two periods of major spinal surgery.

After retiring from competing, I wanted to use my experience of high performance and achievement, and my background in crisis management, to give something back to sport.

I volunteered for sports boards to gain some experience in non-executive governance roles.

With a blend of understanding around equality and diversity and always working with fair play at heart, I applied to the board of the UK Anti-Doping Authority. It was a really positive experience for me, with the CEO's assistant calling me in advance to discuss what I might need in terms of any additional access requirements. Having the contact upfront allayed any fears I might have had about attending the interview and I was really delighted to gain a place on the board.

I really enjoy working at board level. You have a real opportunity to work with others to set the strategic direction of an organisation.

It's a blend of working with a team, supporting the executive staff and trying to raise new ideas or tackle challenges.

There may be issues to resolve, or praise to be given, but I always feel that I have the opportunity to make a difference to the people who are the end users of the service that the organisation oversees.

I feel very privileged to be able to be in this position and never lose sight of the people that our decisions may affect.

"I really enjoy working at board level. You have a real opportunity to work with others to set the strategic direction of an organisation"

Recommendations

1.1 Government should adopt an interim target of no fewer than 11.3% disabled public appointees by 2022, to be reviewed by the end of 2019.

This target has been chosen to align public appointments with civil service targets for senior civil servants by 2022.[22]

1.2 Overhaul the collection of disability data at application stage and initiate an annual stocktake to ask existing appointees for their data.

This will improve data quality and normalise the discussion of disability across public appointments.

1.2.1 Government should establish consistent positive language to flag the diversity monitoring form within application packs. Ensure the form is accessible with assistive technology and can be completed electronically.

1.2.2 Government should retain the disability question's social model alignment, but make the wording more inclusive, open and aligned with best practice in industry. This review recommends adopting 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long-term condition (such as dyslexia, diabetes, arthritis, a heart condition or mental health condition, for example)?', based on BDF's advice from its members' experience of what works.

1.2.3 To help those who remain unsure, and to avoid making the question overly long or legalistic, Government should provide a suggested definition and list of conditions via a link to a page on the CPA or OCPA website.

1.2.4 Government should also explain what the different requests for disability information are for. Draft text for application packs to explain how diversity data is used and that it is confidential should be provided for departments. A subtitled and British Sign Language translated video should be created to explain the difference between the diversity monitoring form, adjustments and the successor to the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (see Section 3).

1.2.5 Government should shore this up with visible senior buy-in. The information and video recommended in 1.2.4 should be recorded by a senior public appointments decision maker to underscore the importance sharing this information has for Government.

1.3 Medium-term transparency measures, once data has been improved from 2019

1.3.1 Government should publish public appointments disability data, split by sponsoring department.

1.3.2 Government should collect and publish disability data for appointable candidates submitted to ministers by recruitment panels.

1.3.3 Government should add diversity statistics for departments' public appointment to Permanent Secretary dashboards.

1.4 Government should explore creating a single online application portal for UK public appointments

This would improve diversity data quality and ease of data analysis, but has wider policy implications beyond this review's scope.

2 Attracting and nurturing talent

Current approach

The current approach relies heavily on the Centre for Public Appointment's (CPA) website, Twitter feed and newsletter. Some public bodies have their own websites and their parent departments will advertise roles through their departmental websites. As one submission to the review noted, "reliance on the Cabinet Office website and newsletter ... runs the risk of creating a self-selecting process".[23] The call for evidence points to a 'reliance' on the CPA website, as 57% of all respondents (36 of 63) and 56% of disabled respondents (18 of 32) had found the appointment they were looking for on the website (see page 43).

Use of multipliers, connectors, conduits and social media

If the CPA website and newsletter do not penetrate communications channels and networks that potential disabled candidates and other hard to reach groups are likely to use, this limits the pool of talent considering and applying for these roles.

DPOs and attendees at our workshops were mostly of the view that it is crucial to turn to influencers and multipliers to reach disabled candidates. These organisations have a wide reach (one we spoke to had 1.4 million website hits annually, tens of thousands of regular downloads of its information packs and 70,000 twitter followers), and crucially what they share is trusted by the communities they serve.

Page 23 features a case study from the Social Mobility Commission. This may not be disabled applicant-specific, but it's a good example of an organisation setting itself goals for what sort of applicants it wants to attract and proactively setting out a strategy to find them and convince them to apply. Their use of a variety of networks and communications channels, particularly targeted use of social media, is an instructive and cost effective way for other public bodies to follow.

"The challenge is reaching people who feel it's 'not for them'"[24]

We had insights from the call for evidence and workshops on why even those with an interest in public appointments are held back from applying: "didn't think I was the right type of person" or "I felt like my disability precluded me [from applying]".[25]

> "I felt like my disability precluded me [from applying]"

A common suggested solution was that "more role models with disabilities [are] needed".[26] There was broad agreement that identifying and publicising existing appointees who are disabled people would help demonstrate that public appointments can be for anyone. One workshop attendee, who was in public life but yet to apply for a public appointment, told us that if they saw some strong case studies they would think, "they are looking for someone like me, so why should I not apply?"[27]

Related to Section 1, our Channel 4 case study as well as some academic evidence suggests that successful disabled role models within a given group will encourage other disabled people to share that information with their employer.[28] This is something the review could deliver on straight away. We have included four case studies of role models in this report, and the review met other equally accomplished examples.

"Could there be a 'virtual' tap on the shoulder?"[29]

There was a perception in the workshop groups that there was a risk that disabled underrepresentation would be self-perpetuating because "people tend to be tapped on the shoulder by people who look like them, act like them, are educated like them".[30]

To combat this, all of the DPOs we met supported a more structured, proactive approach to target, support and nurture talented disabled candidates. One call for evidence contributor suggested that "a version of public appt [sic] work experience or mentoring as a bridge to readiness to apply" would help.[31]

The insightful Carly Jayne Jones case study on page 22 shows the power of proactively reaching out to hard-to-reach constituencies at every opportunity.

Another approach the review looked into was targeting hard-to-reach groups whose representation you want to improve by creating shadow or advisory boards. For example, building on the outreach work outlined in the case study, the Social Mobility Commission set some of their 14 appointments aside specifically for Youth Commissioners. Mencap has pioneered a Voices Council, made up entirely of Mencap's service users with learning disabilities. Spokespeople from the council subsequently attend the Mencap board meeting to advise and guide members on their priorities and decisions.[32]

Executive search and disabled candidates

At present, when executive search firms are used to find candidates for public appointments, the sponsoring Whitehall team is strongly encouraged to insert some conditions in the terms about securing a diverse field of candidates. There is, however, no standard wording or specific mandatory clause to target disabled candidates.

Anecdotally, a few individuals we interviewed who had considerable experience of applying for public appointments felt there was a lost opportunity here. One disabled candidate with 20 years of industry experience looking to build a public non-executive portfolio told us: "I saw all of the top 5 firms that work on non-executive work ... Not one of them ever followed up with me, and yet my CV is very strong on governance and board work". It is difficult to read too much into anecdotal evidence, but this and other stories like it suggest if ministers are serious about recruiting more disabled appointees, this criterion should become a priority when commissioning executive search firms.

> "People tend to be tapped on the shoulder by people who look like them, act like them, are educated like them"

Carly Jayne Jones MBE

Member, Community and Voluntary Services Honours Committee

As a smartly dressed and well-spoken campaigner, it's not immediately obvious that I was once a homeless teenaged mother who left school with no GCSEs. Nor is my disability. My autism makes me anxious over unpredictability, I struggle with eye contact and understanding sarcasm or if people are being honest. On the upside, my autism makes me blinkered and passionate on topics for years or decades at a time.

I was diagnosed as autistic aged 32, having had three daughters – two of whom are autistic. Focused on wanting a better future for them, my life took a new, faster pace into campaigns and activism.

I had never heard of public appointments when I was invited, at an event for recent MBE holders, to think about applying for one.

The process was autistic friendly. There was little unpredictability – the website showed the role, timeline of dates and steps to follow. My CV shows voluntary and unpaid work, the skills I've gained, and the campaigns I've worked on that have reached Parliament, the UN and Cambridge University. Normally this expertise of 10 years is not taken seriously as my CV still states 'no GCSEs', but this time I was given an interview.

I was offered an interview in the office or over the phone. The interview style was professional yet approachable, friendly yet firm. The questions allowed me to reflect on my own experiences of being told I don't look like the sort of person to have an MBE.

> **"The process was autistic friendly"**

I was elated to be chosen for the committee. It's rewarding to be valued and considered equally able as other stellar committee members. I will make sure that others from a diverse background have someone 'like them' looking out for their achievements in years to come.

Social Mobility Commission board recruitment

Rachael Millar, Head of Secretariat, Social Mobility Commission

With the task of recruiting a completely new commission to join our new chair, Dame Martina Milburn, the Social Mobility Commission set out to bring on board diverse and new perspectives. We knew that this required a proactive approach, as those new voices would not be searching for public appointments or be known to the government. We set about reaching a wide audience by:

- releasing a news article calling for diverse voices – it encouraged people to come forward even if they didn't think a public appointment was for them, focusing on the opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives
- emailing our stakeholders with this message, encouraging them to reach out to their networks, including targeting young people through The National Citizenship Service and the Prince's Trust
- working with HuffPost who released an article with a call to their readership to consider the appointments
- using our 7,000 Twitter followers to reach a wider pool of people

In all these channels, we found that saying we were looking for people who might not think a public appointment was for them helped to connect with hard to reach groups.

We received 306 applications, around six times more than predicted. Nearly one-fifth of the applications were from people who were 35 or younger, with a spread of regional applicants and a depth of diversity of backgrounds.

We are proud to have announced our new commissioners on 31 October. Of the 12, two are under 23, one has cerebral palsy, five are based outside London and the South East, and we represent a range of backgrounds. All bar one have never held public appointments before. Not only are they not the usual suspects, they are passionate, inspiring, and will bring fresh new solutions to issues around social mobility.

Social Mobility Commission

"All bar one have never held public appointments before. Not only are they not the usual suspects, they are passionate, inspiring, and will bring fresh new solutions to issues around social mobility"

Recommendations

2.1 Government to showcase role models on a rolling basis.

Show that public appointments can be for ‘people like me’ by regularly publicising good role models.

2.2 Government to proactively target talented disabled candidates to join a mentoring programme for future board members and explore the potential of shadowing and advisory boards.

Build a pipeline of disabled mentees to join the Cabinet Office’s proposed public appointment mentoring scheme. Government should commission pilots to explore the value of alternative board structures (associate members, observers, shadow members, shadow boards and so on).

2.3 Government to make better use of multipliers, conduits and connectors, and strategic collaboration with DPO communications channels.

Centrally, Cabinet Office should lead a coherent stakeholder communications strategy for promoting public appointments by engaging the Disability Charity Consortium. Appointing departments and public bodies should draw up stakeholder plans focused on sector-specific groups and professional networks of disabled people.

2.4 Government to provide mandatory text to include in all commissions for executive search firms.

Government should issue best practice text on instructing executive search firms to identify disabled candidates in long and shortlists as a condition of payment. Demand all suppliers have signed up to the Business Disability Forum’s Charter for Disability Smart Recruitment Service Providers.[33]

2.5 Government to create a disability network (or ‘NEDwork’).

Networks are most sustainable and effective when sustained from within. Government should gauge interest from the existing body of disabled public appointees to create a cross-public appointment network for disabled public appointees. If there is sufficient interest (10 or more people, to form a reasonably sized committee), Government should provide secretariat to establish the network. This could continue the engagement begun by the review’s workshops and act as a sounding board for developing ideas post-review. The network could support the role model and mentoring schemes.

> “More role models with disabilities [are] needed”

3 Application process

> “The process should be made more accessible especially as regards to peep [sic] who have ... a sensory condition”

Application pack format

There is limited consistency to how application packs for public appointments are presented. All opportunities are published on the CPA website. The majority of packs are in Word document format, split into as many as five documents. Some roles redirect the applicant to a departmental online application system, others to the online portal of a recruitment consultant.

Regarding accessibility, the call for evidence found that 31% of disabled respondents found packs ‘not easy to use’ (11 of 35), compared to 6% (2 of 34) of non-disabled respondents. One workshop attendee said the “application was not disability friendly, could be a lot clearer”. Another felt that “the process should be made more accessible especially as regards to peep [sic] who have ... a sensory condition”.[34]

Other disabled applicants, by contrast, praised how easy to use some packs were: “Quite honestly brilliant ... usually there’s a lot of jargon ... but the packs here had the dates for application, submission, interview. You know where you are.” Indeed, our case studies show that there are pockets of open, accessible practice at application stage within the system.

Means of applying

While it is not consistent, most appointments require a statement or letter and CV. Some require this in addition to competency-based questions. To apply, applicants mainly send completed word documents to specified email addresses. For some appointments, the applicant is directed to a third party recruiter’s website. BDF’s submission to the review noted that when they tested some of these third parties, “the websites of these providers were inaccessible”, which would have stopped some applicants from continuing.[35]

The DPOs we spoke to were clear that offering and being open to alternative format submissions is vital if public appointments are not to exclude potential applicants at the first hurdle. The existing process can be viewed as fairly rigid. The dip sample of 20 packs showed that only 9 of 20 offered a point of contact or spelled out specific options for applicants who wanted alternative means of submission. Furthermore, BDF’s submission to the review found that where alternatives were offered, some packs offered outdated formats like CDs and others offered only a phone number, meaning those who could not use the phone were excluded.[36]

Selection criteria and lived experience

Whether the pack is competency or statement-led most roles are tied to a set of "essential criteria". There was a perception from many we spoke to that these lists often include academic qualifications, particularly degrees, and specified lengths of service in a particular sector. In fact, none of the dip sample of 20 included any of these criteria, which suggests progress is being made in this area. Nonetheless, it is interesting in itself that this perception persists. In addition, it is still common that these lists are long, focused on industry or sector knowledge and experience, and experience at a specific level of seniority.

All of the DPOs we met stressed that essential criteria like these, as opposed to criteria focused on skills, potential and outputs, are an immediate barrier because disabled people are more likely to have **"non-standard CVs and education histories"**.[37] Living with and managing disabilities, and unconscious bias or discrimination on the part of employers, may dictate that careers and CVs for disabled people become fragmented.[38] As one interviewee starkly put it, "I spent my early and mid-twenties trying not to die, so I was quite busy".[39]

In all of our workshops, there was agreement that **"lived experience itself ... is a talent"**, and should be taken into account as a selection criterion at application. Contributors wished that recruiters "[understood] that wider experiences disabled [people] have ... are crucial to boards, particularly problem solving and the willingness to think ... laterally". Discounting lived experience "exclude[s] those who may have the aptitude and ability [but not] ... extreme lengths of service".[40]

We came across notable exceptions that prove the rule on rigid criteria. Our case studies show that where essential criteria focus on skills, output and impact, a different range of candidates can attain interview and appointment.

Openness to disabled applicants and adjustments

There was inconsistency concerning statements welcoming disabled applicants and how to access adjustments. Positively, all 20 packs in our dip sample had some reference to offering adjustments to attend interviews. Adjustments and positive statements featured for some in the 'what worked well' section of the call for evidence: "asking in advance if any adjustment needed to participate is good", and "says applications from disabled people welcome."

However, there was no standard way to offer adjustments in the dip sample, and some practices were identified as problematic by BDF's submission to the review. Several packs mentioned 'specific requirements' or 'special adjustments', both of which are outdated and have "the effect of 'othering' disabled people's needs as different".[41] Some packs were unclear about how an applicant should make these requests, who would consider them and what information is needed.[42] The lack of clarity about whether (and if so, which) costs would be met and whether adjustment requests would be honoured played on the minds of some of our contributors: "it's tiresome to apply not knowing if you're going to get the adjustments you need".[43]

However, others noted that the lack of a welcoming statement for disabled applicants was off-putting. As a pointer for improvement on the process, suggestions such as "making it clear that disabled applicants will be equally considered" and "demonstrate a genuine welcome to candidates with disabilities" were common.

Disability Confident

In workshops, interviews and DPO meetings, Disability Confident's perceived impact and the presence or absence of the logo on packs came up often. The reaction was broadly sceptical when it came to content. Stakeholders with knowledge of how the scheme worked felt it was toothless and too reliant on self-assessment. A surprising number of disabled

appointees and applicants had not heard of it. One DPO with knowledge of how assessment worked noted that it was possible for an employer to become a level 3 Disability Confident Leader without employing a single disabled person. The name itself was often controversial, and the most challenging reaction to the name the review heard was, "How would everyone feel if we had a scheme called Black Confident?"[44]

Nonetheless, one experienced public appointee captured the mood: "I don't like the term ... why should you need to be 'confident' around any group of people? That said, it's vastly better than what we had."[45] Another appointee who had supported an organisation to roll it out was supportive: "I like it, I think it's a got a role to play."[46]

Market research published recently suggests that Disability Confident is having some measurable impact for the nearly 10,000 participating employers. 88% had taken up at least one new inclusive activity since joining the scheme, most commonly training staff in disability awareness. 91% of employers would recommend getting Disability Confident status, and 32% wanted to progress up the levels next year. Crucially, 49% of employers had employed at least one disabled person because of the scheme, rising to 66% for large employers.[47]

When pushed in roundtable discussions at the workshops, attendees generally agreed that it was better for an organisation to have a Disability Confident rating prominent in job packs than not. It shows that the employer has engaged with the issue on some level and wants to display this to potential candidates. One contributor noted that they would apply and share their disability information only "if I knew [the] organisation were Disability Confident [or] aware".

And yet, in the dip sample of 20 application packs, just two included a Disability Confident logo or reference to the scheme.

> **"I don't like the term ... why should you need to be 'confident' around any group of people? That said, it's vastly better than what we had"**

Interview schemes for disabled applicants

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) was offered in 14 of 20 of our dip sample of packs. This name and scheme is now obsolete, as GIS has been subsumed into Disability Confident. Nevertheless, under Disability Confident, where a disabled applicant ticks a box to request it, Disability Confident employers and leaders (levels 2 and 3 of the scheme) should offer an interview where a disabled candidate has met the essential criteria at sift. Consequently, the review wanted to consider the use of GIS in public appointments, applicants' experience of it, and what to recommend in the future.

GIS was closely debated and inspired strong emotions. Broadly speaking, views on GIS fell into four camps:

- **Rejecting its premise, wanting to get an interview on merit alone.**
  - "I think people should take me on merit for who I am"[48]

- **Distrusting the scheme, or a fear that ticking the box actually reduces one's chances.**
  - "there is a fear that organisations use it to sift people out"[49]
  - "every time I have applied via Guaranteed Interview Scheme I have not had an interview, but every time I don't mention it, I do"[50]
- **GIS promotes tokenism.**
  - "I don't want to be there as someone ... to make up the numbers"[51]
  - "[it] always seem[s] to be a token gesture which does not lead to more disabled representation, so why bother?"[52]
- **Those supportive of the scheme.**
  - "I always tick ... I have more of a shot of showing what I can do ... by getting an interview"[53]
  - "I think it's important to have as an option … [it] means I can at least get myself in front of those people"[54]
  - "what we are talking about here is equity"[55]

Feedback at application was an issue. Where the candidate is judged not to have met the minimum criteria, they are refused an interview. Several applicants expressed frustration at having ticked the box, not got an interview, and not known why. One panel member felt this meant both sifters and applicants are therefore often "wasting their time", if it's not possible to explain why an applicant is off the mark.[56]

On outcomes, there is no data or statistically-based research tracking GIS' success across public bodies. Anecdotally, several officials and chairs told the review that they had appointed applicants who would not have made it to interview without GIS, and some of our case studies ticked the GIS box.[57]

> **"Our case studies show that where essential criteria focus on skills, output and impact, a different range of candidates can attain interview and appointment"**

Matthew Campbell-Hill

Non-executive director, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

I'm a specialist consultant in novel technology adoption and complex communications, a World Cup medal-winning athlete in wheelchair fencing and co-owner and director of a virtual reality solutions company. I have worked across the public, private and third sectors in marketing, sales, media and technology and, shortly after my injury in 2009, I took up my first of many board roles in public life.

Since this time, I have been successful in building my non-executive career across a variety of roles. People who have worked with me on boards are very positive about my skills and invite me to work on other projects. Yet, at application and in interview, I often find I have to explain that while I do not have a 'normal' experience and CV over the last decade I do have the skills and experience required of a board member. I have also had some frustrating experiences with poor access and a lack of understanding.

> **"They were open to my unconventional CV and the interview style enabled me to show what skills and experience I could bring"**

When I was offered the non-executive role at DCMS to support their digital and sport agendas, it was a coup for me. By contrast to some of my earlier recruitment experiences, their process was very well set up. They were open to my unconventional CV and the interview style enabled me to show what skills and experience I could bring. The main difference was how accessible it was – they called me to discuss access, expenses all paid, no issues.

The other non-executives I've met on the board are brilliant. It's clearly not a problem to them that I am disabled, nor that I'm the youngest person in the room.

> **"It's clearly not a problem to them that I am disabled, nor that I'm the youngest person in the room"**

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) changes to recruitment practice

David Chrimes, Chair, CPS Disabled Staff Network

In 2013, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) produced an 'Equalities in Employment' report, which revealed that around 5% of CPS employees were disabled, approximately 10% of job applicants were disabled and only 5% of those successfully getting a job were disabled.

As chair of CPS' Disabled Staff Network, I enquired about the proportion of our interview panel members who were disabled. This statistic was unknown, but it was thought there were 'hardly any'. I worked with the CPS HR team to recruit and train more than 10 new disabled recruitment panel members in disability awareness issues. Since this time, the percentage of disabled panellists is now monitored. The most recent data shows that approximately 10% of CPS panel members are disabled.

As part of this process, I became involved in sifting and interviewing. It became clear that panel members could see if an applicant had ticked the GIS box. There was a significant drop-off between the proportion of applicants who were disabled and the proportion of successfully proceeding to interview. Therefore, I suggested the application forms be changed so that the GIS box was not visible to sifters.

Since these dual interventions, the proportion of successful disabled job applicants has risen substantially. The proportion of disabled staff overall in the CPS has doubled to 10% since 2013. As a result of these reforms, the proportion of successful disabled job applicants has increased and there is less fall-off in this percentage at sift and interview stages. This improvement in recruitment has also led to a measurable rise in the engagement of disabled employees in the CPS in the staff survey, and it also helped the department to be one of the first in the Civil Service to secure Disability Confident Leader status.

> **"This improvement in recruitment has also led to a measurable rise in the engagement of disabled employees in the CPS in the staff survey"**

Recommendations

3.1 Government should produce standards for all public appointments packs on accessibility and openness to disabled applicants, which both appointing departments and third party recruiters must adhere to.

3.1.1 Use online tools and toolkits to ensure packs are accessible. Appointing departments should test packs against existing free-to-use tools on GOV.UK related to WC3 standards, openness to neurodiverse candidates and free online guidance on making applications accessible.[58]

3.1.2 All packs should be offered in multiple alternative formats. Short videos from senior figures in the public body explaining each role should be posted with the job pack or on social media.

3.1.3 Positive and purposeful language on inclusion and adjustments. All appointing departments to review the language used in packs to weed out outmoded or overly legalistic text concerning disability. Government guidance should include standard language for packs to use on openness to disabled applicants and positive language around adjustments.[59]

3.2 Appointing departments should be open to alternative means of application and assessment.

Government should commission, analyse and publicise pilot recruitments innovations including:

3.2.1 Alternative means of application. Ideas to pilot could include video or audio submissions, short pre-interview phone discussions, free-form submission in any text format.

3.2.2 Moving 'essential' criteria towards skills, output and potential. All appointing departments should review job descriptions to sense-check if essential criteria from the last recruitment can be pared back. Government should commission pilots to test CV-free, strengths-based applications[60], selection criteria that explicitly weigh lived experience equally to other experience[61], and skills-based selection frameworks.[62]

3.3 All public bodies should aspire to a Disability Confident rating and retain the principles of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme. The review acknowledges the strength of feeling these schemes elicit, but concludes that benefits of their consistent use outweigh the drawbacks.

3.3.1 All appointing departments should have a policy to offer interviews to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria, and elect to be considered for this scheme. As ticking this box is optional, and a large minority of those we spoke to valued GIS highly, its successor should be offered across the board. However, it is essential that retention goes hand-in-hand with changes outlined in 3.2 regarding 'essential' criteria. Appointing departments should consider offering feedback to GIS applicants who do not get an interview and ask for feedback.

3.3.2 All bodies should be Disability Confident by summer 2019. All should have a Disability Confident level and display this on their websites and application packs and have a clear pathway to progress up the levels. Departments should consider how to support the smaller public bodies they sponsor to meet this goal. Progress and levels should be monitored annually.

4 Interviews and beyond

The experience-focused, competency-based panel interview

A panel-based interview focused on sector-specific experience and competencies can embed disadvantages into the process for some disabled applicants at the assessment stage in the same way that CV-heavy selection criteria can at the application stage.

This disadvantage generally might take three forms. First, the 'non-standard' nature of many disabled people's CVs may mean that candidates will simply not have much experience of presenting themselves in this way. One eventually successful appointee told us that in their first board appointment interview: "I was very intimidated."[63]

Second, the format can be especially challenging for candidates on the autistic spectrum who may experience problems with communication, social interaction and changes in routine, as well as for BSL users in terms of communication. Some of this disadvantage can be mitigated with adjustments, but as we will explore this is often not undertaken or panels do not know what adjustments might be needed.

Third, just as in the application process, basing interviews around sector knowledge, long experience and competencies will put many disabled candidates at a disadvantage as these three unsuccessful candidates attest:

- "I felt that too much emphasis was placed on what I now know to be fairly detailed sector knowledge … [rather than] the ability to master the complex brief of a NED"
- "asking for extensive previous public appt [sic] experience is a barrier"
- "panel can be too focused on the agreed questions, and not explore issues and abilities more"[64]

Allowing disabled candidates space in the process to show what skills they have developed and impact they can have is crucial. A rigid panel format can stymie this: "I remember one interview for a public appointment, I wanted to tell them about my lived experience ... but there was no opportunity to do this."[65]

There was anecdotal evidence that where disabled candidates were able to non-standard experiences into interviews, these examples were not always valued. One interviewee told us about a role where they used an example from a sporting context in response to a competency-based question. In the room, the panel told them this was a good answer; in feedback, it was deemed "weak" and one of the reasons they did not get the role.[66]

> "Asking for extensive previous public appt [sic] experience is a barrier"

Alternative approaches

It's important to note the review does not recommend the end of the panel interview for public appointments. After all, three of our four individual case studies were recruited at a panel interview. As well as more root and branch alternatives, some simple steps can be taken, as outlined in the recommendations below, to make this process more equitable.

The key is embracing approaches that emphasise what skills and abilities a candidate can demonstrate through doing. This is more likely to yield good outcomes for disabled people.

The review's case studies show what can happen with a more open selection process. Social Care Wales, the Social Mobility Commission and the Honours Committee, featured on pages 37, 23 and 22, had very different processes to one another. What they did have in common was a willingness to ask output-oriented, open questions. It is striking that all three of these recruitments were bulk recruitments, from taking on several people at once to an entire board. The outcomes suggest that such recruitments may give public bodies latitude to take on a more diverse range of appointees.

> "Access is not just physical, it's emotional and attitudinal"

Adjustments in practice

Applicants and appointees alike stress that access is about more than physically getting into a room: "Access is not just physical, it's emotional and attitudinal."[67]

The gold standard is to have "direct communication with the candidate ... how best to meet the[ir] needs ... as soon as the candidate is shortlisted, not in the same week as the ... interview".[68] Ultimately, "they [the panel] are not experts in my condition, I am". It is key to gauge what 'access' and 'adjustments' mean for each individual, acknowledging this can vary from person to person.

Multiple contributors explained that if "you arrive and the adjustments aren't what you expect them to be, this is a bit of a body blow" before you even start.[69] One wheelchair user was interviewed having not been able to find an accessible toilet, in a store cupboard so small they could not get their wheelchair under the table, shake hands with the interviewers nor "get any kind of normal engagement".[70]

Non-visibly disabled applicants also shared difficult experiences. One said they have arrived at interview to find adjustments had "not been put in place ... or the panel misunderstand the reason or requirement. This is particularly true of adjustments that are not related to physical access."[71] Another felt the "panel were quick to dismiss my disability as it isn't physically obvious."[72]

A good counterpoint is what happens when adjustments are successfully provided, as the case study of Pippa Britton shows on page 17.

> "You arrive and the adjustments aren't what you expect them to be, this is a bit of a body blow"

Is poor interview etiquette a lack of disability awareness?

Evidence received by the review suggests that the common thread between poor adjustments and poor interview etiquette is a lack of basic disability awareness.

One BSL user told us how one interview "broke his confidence" to apply again. The panel asked him to book his own translator as they did not know how. They used a lot of jargon in the interview that the translator struggled to relay and "attitudes were negative ... they were looking all around the room and not at me".[73]

Other applicants were asked direct questions in interview about their disability, even where "my disability was irrelevant to my capacity to do the role".[74] For example, one interviewee who told the panel about their chronic illness was asked whether they might find the role "'too exhausting' ... a reasonable statement but a judgement for me to make".[75]

There was a regular complaint in the workshops that "9.9 times out of 10 you don't see yourself reflected on the panel".[76] There was agreement that more disabled panellists could alleviate awareness issues, increase the chances of disabled people making 'appointables' lists and bolster the confidence of disabled applicants.

Feedback and the influence of GIS

Once the process is finished, several unsuccessful candidates who went through GIS reported feeling that they had not received genuine feedback. One disabled person who has been on both sides of the interview table said that "there's a culture of fear around what to say to people who come through on GIS". They recalled one disabled candidate being told that there had simply been a strong field, when in fact he assessed they were "10 to 15 years off being ready".[77]

On the candidate side, this breeds suspicion and a feeling that the process may be pointless: "I could get called to interview and do all the prep, but they never wanted to interview me anyway".[78]

> **"Will they meet my needs? Will there be any people there like me? Once you've tried a few times and don't get through, it's tough to keep trying"**

Social Care Wales' innovative recruitment process

Llinos Bradbury, Governance Senior Officer, Social Care Wales

With Social Care Wales coming into existence on 1 April 2017, we needed to recruit a new board of up to 14 members – plus a chair.

With our sponsor department and the Welsh Government's public appointments unit, we attracted a diverse field of candidates through:

- an extensive communications and engagement strategy, including engaging with people at public events
- a page on our website with information about the recruitment campaign
- producing video clips for our website and social media of the Care Council's (our predecessor organisation) board members talking about their experience of being on the board
- encouraging people to attend a board meeting before submitting their application to give them an idea of what was involved
- including the board secretary's contact details in the application pack so prospective applicants could contact her with questions
- effective use of Twitter to raise awareness of the campaign

When it came to the assessment stage, we introduced a values-based workshop element. Shortlisted candidates were invited to take part in a roleplay discussion about Social Care Wales, and a board meeting. We held the workshops and final interview stage at our offices, giving candidates a feel for the organisation and a chance to meet our staff.

We received positive feedback about the process from candidates.

The diversity of the resulting 15-person board was striking – 57% women, people in their thirties to their seventies, and three disabled members.

The diversity of the resulting 15-person board was striking

57% women, people in their thirties to their seventies, and three disabled members

Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

Grace Quantock

Board member, Social Care Wales

Deputy chair, Regulation and Standards Committee

I am a psychotherapeutic counsellor, award-winning social entrepreneur, writer, and speaker. I read history at the University of Reading, specialising in gender studies. I am living with multiple autoimmune conditions and mobility impairments.

I became involved in public body work after a Kitchener moment and responded to a job advert asking 'Are you a woman, disabled, under 30, LGBT, BAME?'. I thought, 'I am many of those things, can I contribute my systemic, inclusive and lived experience to good use here?'

My interest in the intersection where health, housing and social care meet and my personal experience there motivated me to apply for the Social Care Wales (SCW) board.

Many public bodies seek corporate, financial sector or senior executive backgrounds in board recruitment. Beginning in public office, I felt very aware of not having such a background. Structural and psycho-emotional disablism can create fragmented CVs and curtail career building. SCW were refreshingly comfortable with this and innovative enough to see value outside traditional career paths.

The application process was oriented to lived experience and getting the right mix of people around the table who could complement each other's areas of expertise. The interview process was multi-layered with both written applications, workshop-style exercises, a mock board meeting and formal panel interview.

Interviews are often competitive, focusing on elimination. I appreciated that in the SCW interview process, the intention was to create a collaborative board culture capable of offering robust challenge and to figure out where best to deploy the resources of the

applicants – whether on the board, in stakeholder groups or in the wider community.

In my board work, I find seeing the concepts come into action most rewarding. It's the moment where policy meets people.

My work has always been about people: their narratives, needs, restoration, resources and potential for change. I'm continuing that work at SCW and I hope to contribute my unique lived, governance and professional experience.

Recommendations

4.1 Appointing departments should consider more open and innovative selection processes than one-off panel interviews.

Government should commission, analyse and publicise pilot selection processes.

Proposed alternative methods could include:

- job trials
- mock board meetings
- extended shadowing of the board or the whole organisation
- board paper exercises (shared in accessible formats in advance)
- multiple two person interviews
- considering applications with equal weight to interview
- offering phone or online video calls as standard

4.2 Appointing departments and public bodies should be aware of the impact of poorly administered adjustments.

Government to provide good practice guidance on how to provide adjustments efficiently and effectively.

- Be proactive – if adjustments have been requested, contact the interviewee in advance to plan ahead.
- Be guided by the individual – do not make assumptions about what adjustments they need.
- Consider that access is more than physical – is the room or alternative facility appropriate and giving the candidate the same opportunity as everyone else?
- Costs – it is a statutory requirement to offer reasonable adjustments. Public bodies and their sponsor teams in Whitehall must plan and budget for the potential costs.

4.3 Better training and awareness for boards and panels.

Issues around interview practices, unconscious bias and poor application of adjustments could be addressed through better awareness or training. Public bodies and appointing departments should offer disability awareness courses and the Civil Service Disability Confident Manager course to their chairs and panellists. This should be monitored. Training should include awareness on effective use of Disability Confident's successor to GIS. Training and promotional material should be drawn up and shared to reflect what happened in the pilots proposed in 2.2, 3.2 and 4.1 above.

4.4 Recruit and train more disabled independent panellists.

Departments should proactively recruit more disabled people to become independent panellists. This should be measured and monitored.

> "There's a culture of fear around what to say to people who come through on GIS"

5a Retention

While beyond the scope of the review's recruitment remit, concerns about retention came up throughout evidence-gathering.

One senior public appointee told us they were convinced there is a "two-year drop off" of a sizeable minority of appointees who do not see out their term (though no data is maintained in this area). They were concerned that disabled people were most likely to be overrepresented in this group.

The review team subsequently heard concerns along these lines from disabled appointees.

Several felt **boards they had joined made few adjustments to accommodate their new disabled member**. For some, meetings presented barriers: "No change of culture … no sense of if disabled people are joining the board, what can I do differently?"[79] One appointee felt there was a lack of awareness among board members: "actually helping people engage in the meeting … is very difficult. People want to be supportive … but don't know how."[80] One visually impaired appointee had difficulty with papers: "board papers are very hard to access. Even with all my tools, it's very sink or swim."[81]

Other concerns were **superficially about access, but disabled appointees feared may be about board attitudes and unconscious bias**. One appointee with mobility issues recounted several occasions where they travelled to meet a senior figure in the public body, for the meetings to be cancelled on arrival: "there's a confidence issue. Am I being excluded because I'm disabled?"[82] Another felt "excluded from boards sometimes, because you feel slightly in the way. I have to say thank you all the time, come in the back entrance."[83]

Several believed their **appointment was focused entirely on their disability, and therefore they were under pressure to represent 'the disabled':** "you're in a double bind. I want to help disabled people and improve their lives, but I don't want to be pigeonholed as the disabled person … [and] be dismissed when I'm talking about something that is not disability-related."[84]

Ultimately, it is important to avoid a boost in applications and appointments in the wake of this review only for the issues above to push new joiners away further down the line.

The review urges the Government to study retention statistics, and consider if further work on public board culture, practice and disability awareness is required.

> "People want to be supportive … but don't know how"

5b Remuneration and expenses

Though beyond the scope of the review, remuneration and expenses came up consistently during evidence-gathering.

We heard from some disabled applicants, particularly but not exclusively those with mobility issues, that any role that did not explicitly offer travel expenses were out of bounds.[85]

Even where expenses are offered, we heard about poor processes. One appointee found that although his role offered travel expenses, the public body had no mechanism to pay them. The assumption was that appointees would not claim. A system to reimburse them had to be established from scratch.[86]

Some unsuccessful applicants, particularly BSL users and their DPO representatives we spoke to, suspected that the ongoing expense of their involvement tipped the scales against them at interview (though it is not possible for the review to prove this).

Worse, one former appointee was informed during feedback that her mobility-related adjustment was too expensive and consequently they were offering the role to someone else.[87] This issue is likely to be most acute for unpaid appointments, where Access to Work funding is not available. This can stop disabled people who require such funding to take up an unpaid post – preventing them from building the CV they need to take on other, remunerated board positions.[88]

The Review urges Government to follow the evaluation of the Government Equalities Office's Access to Public Office fund and consider whether a pilot Access to Public Appointments Fund may help alleviate the problems above.

Concerns that inconsistent remuneration across public appointments may exclude some from applying is not unique to disabled people, but there was consensus across our workshops that this is a particularly high barrier for disabled people.

This concern was expressed in two ways. First, many disabled people have to manage their condition and negotiate multiple barriers "just to keep on top of the day to day", which means they "haven't got much bandwidth … in terms of public life".[89] Therefore, to fill "posts that are in the main quite time consuming … when one is managing a disability as well as holding a job down, it is quite an ask to give your time without recompense".[90] Secondly, as one experienced public appointee put it, "the vast majority of disabled people are not in a position to do things for free … so that expectation is a bit offensive, actually."[91]

Even where payments are offered, there was anecdotal evidence of pressure to perform duties for free. One disabled appointee, for whom non-executive appointments are their principle income source, recounted "the finance director told me, 'Most non-execs don't take their fee.' I said, 'Well that's fine, but I'm taking mine.'"[92]

The review heard various concerns about public appointment payments and benefits. For some, there was nervousness that the public body in question offered no advice on how payments would interact with benefits. Others recounted experiences where reimbursed expenses counted as 'income', leading to reduced welfare payments. "It almost put me off. You're doing this wee bit of work, but why are you doing that when you could just be sitting at home and not losing any [benefits] money? It's such a disincentive".[93]

The review urges Government to consider the interaction between remuneration and benefits payments for potential public appointees, and draw up guidance to help public appointees to negotiate this process.

Online call for evidence: summary

Purpose of the call for evidence

The purpose of the online call for evidence survey was to explore why applicants to public appointments may or may not share their disability data and to gauge their views on the application process and interviews. The call for evidence offered multiple opportunities for qualitative input from respondents. Quotations from these contributions have been included in the body of the review and two-page summary published alongside the review.

Quantitative analysis

There were 116 respondents to the online call for evidence. Of the 116 respondents 58 stated that they identified as disabled, 50 people stated that they did not identify as disabled, and 8 recorded a nil response to this question. We have not included people that put a nil response on whether they identify as disabled or not in the quantitative analysis. However those 8 responses were still considered in the qualitative data of the report.

Table 1 – Respondents who identified as disabled

Q2.Do you identify as disabled?	Yes	No
	58	50

Informing prospective employers or public bodies

From the 58 respondents that identified as disabled, 39 (or 67%) respondents stated that they would inform their employer of their disability when applying for a job, this being any job in any sector. This is compared to 45 respondents (or 78%) who stated that they would report their disability when applying for a public appointment. This sample size is too small to make concrete assumptions, but this shows that our group of respondents were more willing to share their disability for public appointments than they were for employment.

Table 2 – Would respondents who identified as disabled share this information with a prospective employer or public body?

	Q4. When applying for a job, do you inform prospective employers of your disability?	Q6.Would you record that you had a disability if you applied for a public appointment?
Yes	39	45
No	19	13

Age

From the breakdown of age, we saw that three out four respondents who were from the age range 35 and under would inform of their disability status, compared to 18 out of 23 respondents in the age range of 46 to 55. The sample sizes are very small for each group, so it is hard to make direct comparisons or solid conclusions, but broadly speaking the table below does indicate that older people are slightly more likely to report their disability. However, respondents from the 36 to 45 age range can be seen as an exception where 4 out of 10 respondents would not share this information.

Table 3 – Disabled people who would and would not share their disability information broken down by age

	Q.6 Would you record that you had a disability if you applied for a public appointment?	
Q.1 How old are you?	No	Yes
35 and under	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
36-45	4 (40%)	6 (60%)
46-55	5 (22%)	18 (78%)
56-65	3 (20%)	12 (80%)
66 and over	0	5 (100%)

Finding out about public appointments

Of the 108 respondents, only 63 individuals reached this stage of the online survey and answered the question 'How did you find out about the public appointment that you applied for?' Of these 63, including both respondents who identified as disabled and those who did not, 36 (57%) stated that they had found out about their public appointment from the Centre for Public Appointments website. This is compared to only 13 respondents saying that they had found out about the public appointment they applied for through the website of the public body itself. There was almost no difference between how disabled and non-disabled applicants found the public appointment they had applied for.

Table 4 – How disabled people found out about the public appointment they applied for

	Q. Do you Identify as disabled?		
Q.12 How did you find out about the public appointment that you applied for?	Yes	No	Total
Centre for Public Appointments Website	18(56%)	18(58%)	36(57%)
Departmental website	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	4(0.36%)
Recruitment consultant	4(12.5%)	6(19%)	10(15%)
Website of the public body itself	9(28%)	4(12%)	13(20%)

Ease of use of application packs and job descriptions

Of the 108 respondents, only 69 individuals reached this stage of the online survey and answered the question 'How easy to use and accessible did you find the application pack and job description?' Of the 35 respondents who identified as disabled, 11 respondents (or 31%) stated that the application pack and job description for these roles was not easy for them to use.

Of the 34 respondents that did not identify as disabled, only two respondents (or 6%), found that the application pack and job description was not easy to use. This suggests that ease of use of the application packs and job descriptions could potentially be a barrier for some disabled people.

Table 5 – Ease of use of application packs and job descriptions broken down by disability status

Q.2 Do you Identify as disabled?	Q13. How easy to use and accessible did you find the application pack and job description?	
Yes	Not easy to use	11
	Easy to use	20
	Very easy to use	4
No	Not easy to use	2
	Easy to use	23
	Very easy to use	9

Endnotes Section

1 Statistics published by the Cabinet Office show that in 2017, 35.3% of public appointees' disability status was unknown, and 4.8% of those who had shared their disability status were disabled. From this we can infer that 3.1% of the total population reported that they were disabled. Statistics published by the Cabinet Office show that in 2018, 35% of public appointees' disability status was unknown, and 4.4% of those who had shared their disability status were disabled. From this we can infer that 2.9% of the total population reported that they were disabled.

2 See Office for National Statistics Table, Labour Market Status of Disabled People, https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08

3 Data provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

4 Data provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

5 Data provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

6 Data provided by the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

7 Professors Wass and Jones (Disability@Work and Cardiff University) highlight the importance of the definition and measurement of disability in surveys on estimates of the prevalence of disability among the UK population. Together with colleague Dr Baumberg of the University of Kent, they emphasise the impact that the wording of survey questions has on self-reporting disability rates in time series.
Fevre, R., Foster, D., Jones, M. and Wass, V. (2016). Closing disability gaps at work: deficits in evidence and variations in experience. Cardiff University. Pages 9-15.
Baumberg B., Jones M., and Wass, V. (2015) Disability and disability–related employment gaps in the UK 1998-2012: Different trends in different surveys? Social Science and Medicine.

8 A short video and helpful definition of the social and medical models of disability can be found here: https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/our-brand/social-model-of-disability

9 Business Disability Forum's submission to the Review.

10 Email submission.

11 Kate Nash, Associates (2014), Secrets and Big News, The Research Findings, pages 5-6.

12 Call for evidence submission.

13 Workshop attendee.

14 Call for evidence submission.

15 Call for evidence submission.

16 Workshop attendee.

17 Workshop attendees.

18 Quote from interviewee.

19 Quote from interviewee.

20 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-code-for-public-appointments point 3.3 https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Annual-Report-17-18-2.pdf pages 14-15.

21 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-appointments-diversity-action-plan

22 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-diversity-inclusion-dashboard

23 Submission from Inclusive Boards.

24 Call for evidence submission.

25 Call for evidence submissions.

26 Call for evidence submission.

27 Workshop attendee.

28 Von Schrader, S. Malzer, V, Erickson, W & Bruyere, S (2010) Emerging employment Issues for People with Disabilities: Disability Disclosure, Leave as a Reasonable Accommodation, Use of Job Applicant Screeners. Their work suggests that 49.9% of disabled workers in the US who were surveyed cited 'knowing of other successes' as a factor for sharing their disability information with their employer.

29 Workshop attendee discussing accessing hard to reach groups.

30 Workshop attendee.

31 Call for evidence contributor.

32 https://www.mencap.org.uk/voices-council

33 https://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media_manager/public/261/Charter%20for%20disability-smart%20recruitment%20service%20providers.docx

34 Workshop attendee, call for evidence contributor.

35 Business Disability Forum's submission to the review.

36 Business Disability Forum's submission to the review.

37 A Business Disability Forum guide to recruiting and retaining disabled people https://memb ers.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media_manager/public/86/Resources/Retention_Toolkit_Teaser_FINAL.pdf, page 6.

38 Reeve, D. (2012) Psycho-emotional disablism in the lives of people experiencing mental distress in Anderson, J, Sapley, B and Spandler, H. Distress or Disability? Proceedings of a symposium held at Lancaster Disability 15-16 September, 2011, Lancaster: Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University, pages 24-29. http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/69661/1/ReeveChapter2012a.pdf

39 Interviewee.

40 Call for evidence contributors.

41 Call for evidence contributors.

42 BDF submission to the Lord Holmes review.

43 Workshop attendee.

44 Workshop attendee.

45 Workshop attendee.

46 Interviewee.

47 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755667/disability-confident-scheme-summary-findings-from-a-survey-of-participating-employers.pdf Pages 2-3

48 Interviewee.

49 Interviewee.

50 Call for evidence contributors.

51 Workshop attendee.

52 Call for evidence contributor.

53 Interviewee.

54 Workshop attendee.

55 Interviewee.

56 Interviewee.

57 Interviewee, workshop attendee.

58 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs and https://www.autismandneurodiversitytoolkit.org/government-department See https://members.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media_manager/public/86/Resources/Retention_Toolkit_Teaser_FINAL.pdf, pages 4-5 and https://members.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media_manager/public/86/Resources/Disability-smart%20recruitment%20charter%20for%20employers.docx

59 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability, Cabinet Office can also refer to the suggestions and recommendations made in this area in the Business Disability Forum's submission to the review.

60 An example of this kind of application process as run by disability recruitment specialist firm Even Break can be read about here: https://www.evenbreak.co.uk/blog/evenbreaks-own-recruitment-process/

61 All Scottish public appointments are made on the basis of the Board Members Core Skills Framework, which includes criteria for life and community experience. http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org/media/37883/board-member-core-skills-framework-november-2016.docx

62 Civil service HR is developing a skills-based framework to replace the competency framework currently used for civil service recruitment. Cabinet Office should base any public appointment pilot on this developing framework

63 Interviewee.

64 Three call for evidence contributors.

65 Workshop attendee.

66 Interviewee.

67 Workshop attendee.

68 Call for evidence contributor.

69 Workshop attendee.

70 Interviewee.

71 Call for evidence contributor.

72 Call for evidence contributor.

73 Workshop attendee.

74 Call for evidence contributor.

75 Call for evidence contributor.

76 Workshop attendee.

77 Interviewee.

78 Interviewee.

79 Workshop attendee.

80 Workshop attendee.

81 Interviewee.

82 Interviewee.

83 Interviewee.

84 Interviewee

85 Multiple workshop attendees across more than one workshop.

86 Interviewee, current disabled public appointee.

87 Interviewee, former public appointee.

88 Business Disability Forum's submission to the review.

89 Workshop attendee, former disabled public appointee.

90 Interviewee, current disabled public appointee.

91 Workshop attendee, current public appointee.

92 Interviewee, current disabled public appointee.

93 Workshop attendee, current disabled public appointee.