



Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government



CabinetOffice

**Public Appointments:
Opening Doors –
Increasing Diversity**
A Cross-Government
Action Plan

June 2009

Foreword

Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP
Minister for Women and Equality

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Minister for the Cabinet Office



Last year, we announced the intention to set new Government wide targets to improve the diversity in public appointments. Our vision is for fair and equal representation for all sectors of society on the boards of our public bodies. Women, disabled people and ethnic minorities are under-

represented in public life in Britain today. This is not only a travesty for these particular groups whose views deserve better representation, but it is a loss to society as a whole.

Greater diversity is fundamental to ensuring public services that better meet the needs of the people they aim to serve.

We need the brightest and best people from across society participating in public life regardless of gender, ethnic background or disability. To squander the wealth of talent and experience diverse groups can bring to public appointments is simply unacceptable.

The Government has long been committed to increasing diversity in public appointments. Much has been achieved, but we must keep up the momentum and that is precisely why we are now setting out a far-reaching plan of action designed to step up the pace of change.

Our Cross-Government action plan co-led by the Government Equalities Office and Cabinet Office sets out our commitment to attracting more women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups to public appointments and to ensuring we develop the potential of those who do put themselves forward. It details clear targets for new appointments and comprehensive new measures designed to ensure those targets are met.

This action plan complements the aims of the Equality Bill which is strengthening and streamlining legislation to ensure equal opportunities for all. In particular it introduces wider positive action provisions which public authorities will be able to use to address under-representation and disadvantage.

Diversity brings fresh perspectives, new ideas and broader experience on which to draw and ensuring diverse groups play an active role in public life enriches democracy. We all stand to benefit from better representation in public life and the improved decision making that can come from a wider range of contributions.

It is an ambitious and exciting plan, designed to drive real and lasting change. We look forward to working with our partners and stakeholders to ensure its delivery.



Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP
Minister for Women and Equality



Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office

Executive Summary

The Government has long been committed to increasing diversity in public appointments. Our action plan, which we are delivering over the next year, to make public bodies better reflect and serve society details a far-reaching set of measures. We want to see more applications from and more appointments of people that are under-represented on our public bodies. These measures will increase the visibility of the appointments system, ensure transparency and accountability and tackle head on the barriers that too often women, disabled people and ethnic minorities face in putting themselves forward.

Key measures include:

- New **Government wide targets** on gender, disability and ethnicity for new appointments regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.
- Regular **monitoring of targets** and publication of performance to increase transparency. This will be supported by work to improve the accuracy and integrity of diversity data.
- **Rapid sharing of best practice** across departments to help drive improved performance across government.
- **Cross departmental communications events** supported by a **regional outreach campaign**.
- New **awareness raising materials** to promote public appointments to a wider range of people, and specifically targeted at attracting under-represented groups.
- A **stakeholder engagement programme** at a national and regional level, developed and delivered in partnership with stakeholder organisations which will focus on awareness raising and training.
- A fresh **media campaign** to underpin the national and regional events and further promote opportunities to participate in public bodies.
- Better use of **the internet and new technologies** to raise awareness of public appointments.
- A new **leading edge mentoring scheme** to work with high potential applicants, building on the experience of the FTSE 100 Cross Company Mentoring scheme and other similar initiatives to increase the number of women on private and public sector boards.
- A **stronger evidence base** on the barriers faced by under-represented groups applying for appointments, and their experience of the appointments process; and what will work to increase the quality and quantity of applications from diverse groups.

Our Commitment

Ensuring greater diversity and better representation in public life is a priority for government. More women, ethnic minorities and disabled people on public bodies makes not just for a fairer society, but also ensures public services and initiatives that better serve society. We must engage the rich perspectives, experiences and ideas that diverse groups bring to public life.

Our commitment is underpinned by **new targets** for departments overseeing new public appointments. We are working with the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) and other equality leads across Government on an innovative programme of action to break down the barriers to change. We make no apology for the ambition of these targets or for our call for real action to help reach them.

To ensure recruitment of the brightest and best candidates from across the whole of society, all new public appointments regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) will be subject to challenging targets on gender, disability and ethnicity so that by 2011, across government as a whole, our aim is for **50 per cent** of new appointments to be women, **14 per cent** to be disabled people and **11 per cent** to be people from ethnic minorities.

It is important that the case for greater diversity and challenging targets to bring about real change is widely made. We will run a series of events for government departments actively promoting these new targets. These will be complemented by a series of regional outreach events, supported by Ministers. Wider knowledge and greater understanding will help galvanise action, increase transparency and ensure we are held accountable.

Greater accountability will be extended to all those involved in the recruitment process for public appointments, including recruitment and executive search agencies so we achieve a diverse range candidates for public posts of the highest calibre.

We will work to improve our **data collection**. We will collect six-monthly data for performance reports which will help drive performance and increase transparency and accountability. This will be supported by work to improve the accuracy and integrity of diversity data, ensuring we are better able to measure and report progress.

Raising Awareness

Reaching the widest possible audience is pivotal to attracting a diverse pool of candidates for public appointments.

We will develop and deliver a programme of events and initiatives specifically designed to raise the profile and increase understanding of public appointments, and how the system works. To ensure we do this as effectively as possible, we will work in partnership with stakeholder organisations working with under-represented groups, all of whom have the knowledge and networks to help make sure we deliver the change we seek.

We are encouraging departments to use a range of channels to increase awareness of opportunities for appointment to public bodies and connect a more diverse range of people to the appointments process.

We will develop **new promotional materials** to attract new talent to public appointments, again in partnership with key stakeholders. We want to make sure under-represented groups understand how public appointments work and the benefits of holding public posts, along with how to apply or find out more.

We will make better use of the **internet and new technologies** to raise awareness of public appointments and to improve the accessibility and visibility of information about current and forthcoming vacancies.

This extensive programme of events, stakeholder and online activity will be underpinned by a **regional media campaign**. This will be designed to promote opportunities to participate in public bodies to the widest audience and, in particular, to generate interest and discussion about public appointments among all groups and particularly among women, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

Developing Potential

We know that the image of public bodies is daunting to many people. It can be particularly intimidating to groups who are currently under-represented in this area where there may be fewer role models and sources of advice. For this reason, we will implement a series of measures to make public appointments more attractive and accessible to under-represented groups.


Case studies of successful applicants from diverse groups will encourage new applications and there will be clear signposting to sources of information and support for applicants.

A leading edge **mentoring scheme**, delivered through a third party organisations with particular expertise in this area, will offer opportunities for development to high potential candidates and 'near hits' who are not appointed at their first attempt. Candidates will get help accessing the training or other support they may need to help future applications. This scheme will draw on the experience of existing schemes that have already successfully helped to increase the diversity on public and private sector boards and in public life more generally.

We will also undertake further **research** to help us better understand the pathways people take into public appointments and how we can further breakdown the barriers faced by under-represented groups. This stronger evidence base, both of the barriers faced and people's experience of the appointments process, will inform new policy development.

Where new and existing policies are seen to be working well, we will support the rapid **sharing of best practice** across departments and the devolved administrations to help drive performance across government.

New practical support for candidates will be complemented by ongoing **outreach work** to develop the talent pool of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people putting themselves forward for public appointments. We will continue to strengthen community links and build on, and learn from, the successes of other civic participation projects such as the important work undertaken by the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors Taskforce, which is taking action to increase the number of BAME women local councillors.



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