



Centre for Public  
Appointments

# Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan

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# Foreword

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“The role of public bodies in supporting the work of the Government cannot be underestimated and ensuring the boards of these organisations accurately reflect 21st century Britain is key to their success. That is why I fully support this Action Plan and am committed to working with my cabinet and other colleagues to increase the breadth of talent taking on these roles.”

**The Rt Hon Theresa May**  
Prime Minister, December 2017



Diversity of thought, background and experience is imperative to the success of our public services. There is no question that we need to attract the brightest and the best as we continue to build a Britain that is open, fair and works for everyone.

Diversity on the boards of the public organisations which run, regulate and support our public services strengthens them. It brings in new perspectives and constructive challenge on our approach to delivery, helps us understand our service users and provides access to knowledge and experience from sectors beyond government.

We recognise that acknowledging the benefits of diversity and actually changing the way we work to achieve diversity are not the same. We must be proactive and make ‘best practice’ common practice. To do this, we need to ensure that there is a culture shift from experience to ability and that the process is open and fair. I am determined that potential candidates should not find an insurmountable

barrier resulting from a daunting applications process.

That is why I am proud to launch this Action Plan which I know will unite our efforts as we work towards our ambitious but necessary goals. With a concerted effort, supported by this Action Plan, we can increase the pipeline of talent and continue to remove barriers. No one should feel that they are unable to aspire to serve in some of the most exciting and rewarding roles in the UK because of their ethnicity, life experience, background or gender.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris Skidmore".

**Chris Skidmore**  
Minister for the Constitution  
Cabinet Office

# Executive summary

Inclusive and diverse public boards are more effective, better able to understand their customers and stakeholders, and benefit from fresh perspectives, new ideas, vigorous challenge and broad experience.

In 2013, Government set an aspiration that 50% of new public appointments made each year should go to women. Good progress has been made – 49% of the 1,275 new appointments made in 2016/17 went to women up from 34% in 2011/12. However, up until now we have had very little data on the make

## Our ambition by 2022:

**50%** of all public appointees should be female

**14%** of all public appointments should be from ethnic minorities

up of existing bodies. This year we have established a programme of work to collate data on current public appointees, which can be used to establish a baseline, and set a forward plan to enrich the data.

As a starting point, the Centre for Public Appointments has undertaken a review of the diversity of the 5,500 public appointees currently in post. This has established that:

- 43% of appointments are held by women; and
- 10% are held by ethnic minorities.

Gender is of course only one aspect of diversity – others include race, ethnicity, faith, disability, age and sexual orientation. Some of what we have learned of the challenges faced by women in securing

public appointments mirror those experienced by other groups. We therefore plan to use the lessons we have learned on increasing the numbers of women in public appointments to other groups. The scale of the task is stretching and there is a real imbalance on certain bodies. We need to know more about what is happening in the appointment process as well as undertaking further work to deepen our understanding of some of the barriers faced by applicants and the most effective approaches to overcoming them.

Our ambition is that by 2022, 50% of all public appointees should be female and that 14% of appointments should be from ethnic minorities, bringing their representation in line with the resident population in England and Wales. Our record on attracting disabled people into public appointments is weak and we plan further work as a matter of urgency to better understand the barriers and what is needed to address these.

The Government's 10 point Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan, set out in this document, continues with some of the activities that we know are working well, and introduces new commitments to support further progress.

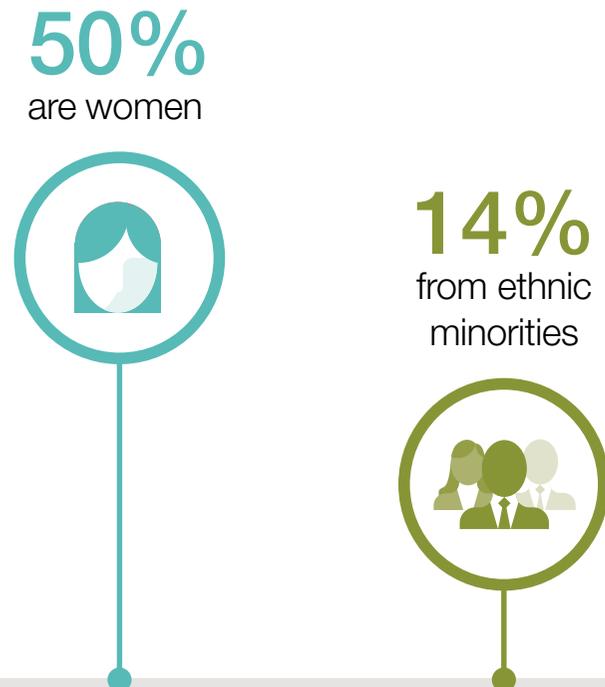
We will not stop there but will continue to explore new ways to bring in people of different backgrounds, life experience and faith into public appointments.

To oversee delivery of these commitments at a departmental level, the Minister for the Constitution has established a network of Ministerial Diversity Champions. They will promote diversity in public appointments, and support chairs of public bodies to develop more inclusive environments on their boards. They will regularly review progress on the delivery of this action plan and publish data on progress in their departmental plans.

### 2017 at a glance



### Our ambition by 2022:



# 1 Introduction

Inclusive and diverse public boards are more effective, better able to understand their customers and stakeholders, and benefit from fresh perspectives, new ideas, vigorous challenge and broad experience.

Diversity in the public appointments we make provides access to knowledge and experience from sectors beyond Government. It also makes good sense to be drawing from the widest pool of potential talent for these demanding roles.

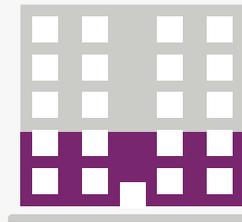
“ Good governance has to be accomplished through superior quality decision making at board level. It is therefore important that board members are drawn from the widest possible talent pools. It is critical that boards reflect and represent their customers and stakeholders. It’s also vital that different life experiences and perspectives inform board discussions and decisions. A diversity of ideas and perspectives leads to superior decision making and therefore outcomes. ”

Christian Brodie  
Chair of the Public Chairs’ Forum

## Why diversity is important: Lessons from the private sector<sup>1</sup>

Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are

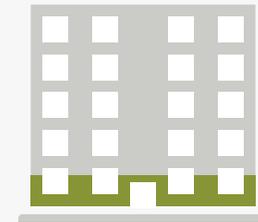
**35%**  
more likely  
to have



**above average financial returns.**

Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are

**15%**  
more likely  
to have



**above average financial returns.**

<sup>1</sup> “Diversity Matters”, Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince, McKinsey & Company, February 2015

In 2013, Government set an aspiration that 50% of new public appointments made each year should go to women. The accompanying action plan<sup>2</sup> also recognised that diversity is not just about gender, it is about drawing in talent from the widest range of backgrounds, and it made commitments to support work towards broader diversity of appointments.

Work has concentrated on raising awareness of public appointments, simplifying the application process, and moving to a greater focus on ability rather than “long standing” experience.

Good progress has been made – 49% of the 1,275 new appointments made during 2016/17 went to women, up from

34% of appointments made in 2011/12. Across Whitehall, in 2016/17, the proportion of new female appointees by department varied from 33% to 52% and representation from ethnic minorities has improved.

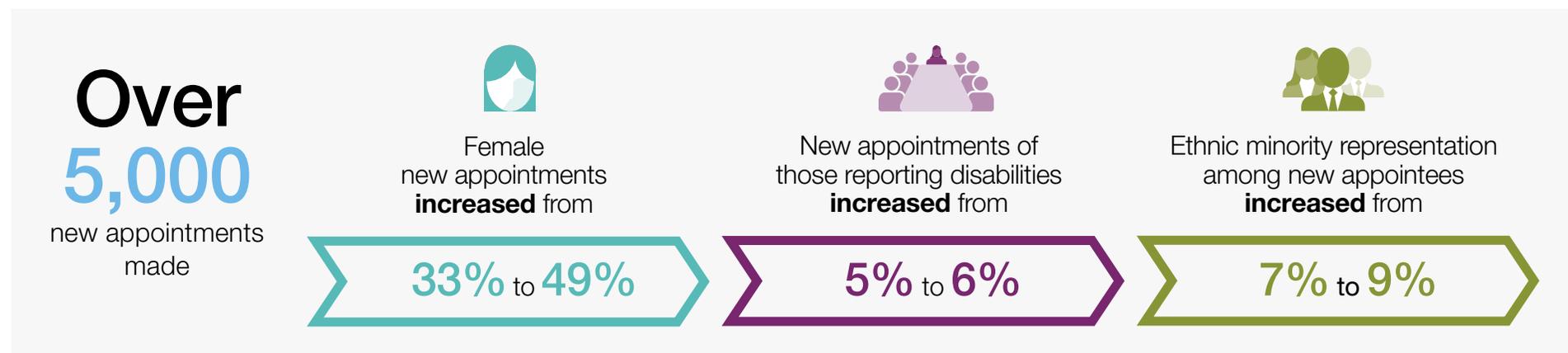


of shortlists in 2016/17 had both male and female candidates



of the 1,275 new appointments made in 2016/17 went to women

Trends over the past 5 years (2011/12-2016/17)



<sup>2</sup> “Increasing Diversity In Public Appointments”, Cabinet Office, December 2013



Increasing diversity in appointments to the boards of public bodies is central to sustaining confidence in the system. Not only should the public feel that bodies responsible for a wide range of public services are run by people with whom they can identify, but demonstrating that there are no barriers on grounds of gender, ethnicity or disability is crucial to encouraging more candidates from currently under-represented groups. Research shows that diversity also produces better functioning and more responsive boards. ”



Considerable progress has been made in recent years in appointing women candidates; with steady but still insufficient increases in candidates from ethnic minorities; but the record is so far generally inadequate for those with disabilities. There is also a need to show that appointments are not just for the London-based and the so-called ‘good and the great’, but that there is a wide social and geographic spread, as there is for many appointments in the NHS, and for bodies involved with prisons and parole.

As Commissioner for Public Appointments, I don’t appoint but can encourage greater diversity by highlighting good practice and reporting statistical trends each year. Ambitious targets as set out in the Diversity Action Plan, which I welcome, provide a focus for departments, but the key is ensuring that more diverse fields of applicants are encouraged to apply. This is partly a matter of networks and information but also of support and mentoring for candidates and board members. Undoubtedly, delivering greater diversity also requires sustained will on the part of Ministers, departments and public bodies, and I welcome the publication of the Diversity Action Plan as an important sign of that commitment.

**The Rt Hon Peter Riddell  
CBE, Commissioner for  
Public Appointments**

# 2 Diversity in Public Appointments Today

The data collected on new appointments has been helpful. However, this has not been able to tell us where we are today or indeed where we have come from in relation to existing appointments.

Therefore, this year we have established a programme of work to collate data on current public appointees, which can be used to establish a baseline, and set a forward plan to grow the data.

As a starting point, the Centre for Public Appointments has undertaken a review of the diversity of the 5,500 public appointees currently in post.<sup>3</sup>

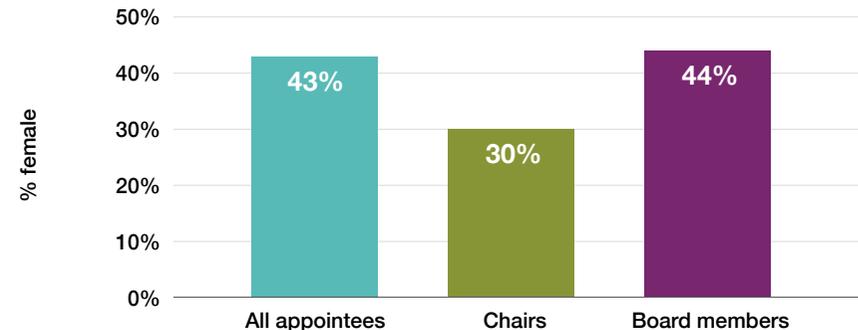
Our analysis shows that of these appointments:

- 43% are held by women; and
- 10% are held by ethnic minorities.

## Gender balance

The results on gender balance are encouraging – there are over 2,300 women holding public appointments – but there is clearly still some way to go. Proportions of female appointees in post varies from 21% to 50% across Whitehall. Looking at the data we can see that in departments where female representation is not so strong new appointments going to women should start to impact on these figures. Our research also shows that 30% of chairs are female which is lower than we would wish to see. This will be a particular focus for Government departments over the coming reporting period.

Female Public Appointees in post (March 2017)

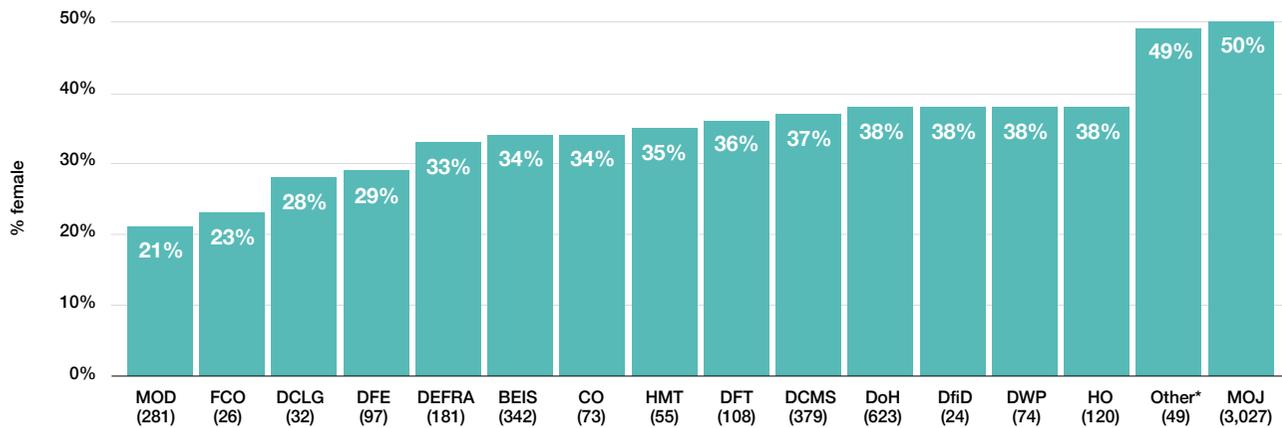


There are over **2,300** women holding public appointments

Proportions of female appointees in post varied from **21% to 50%** across Whitehall

<sup>3</sup> Public Appointments data is from March 2017. Reporting rates on gender is high (97%), but lower on ethnicity (80%), and disability (66%). Graphs in this document include only those people who report on protected characteristics.

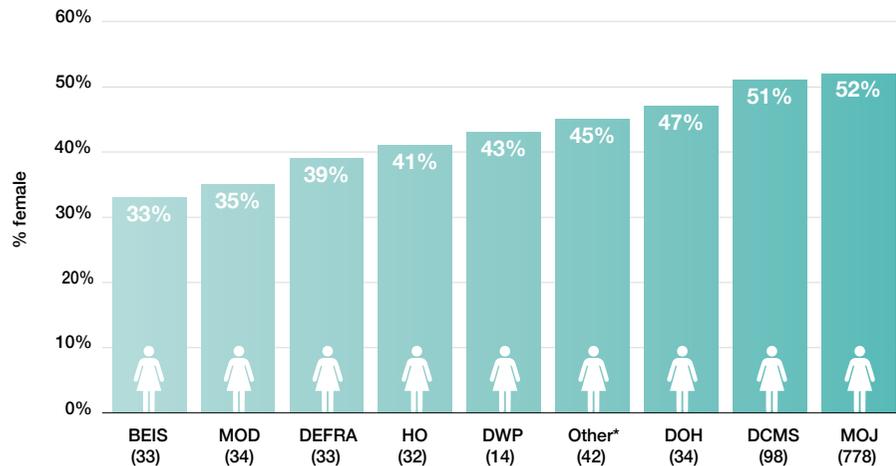
## Female Public Appointees in post by department (March 2017)



(Total appointments shown in brackets including those whose gender is not known)

\* Other includes Attorney General's Office (AG), Department for International Trade (DIT), Northern Ireland Office (NIO), and Scotland Office (SO).

## New Public Appointees who are female by department (2016/17)<sup>4</sup>



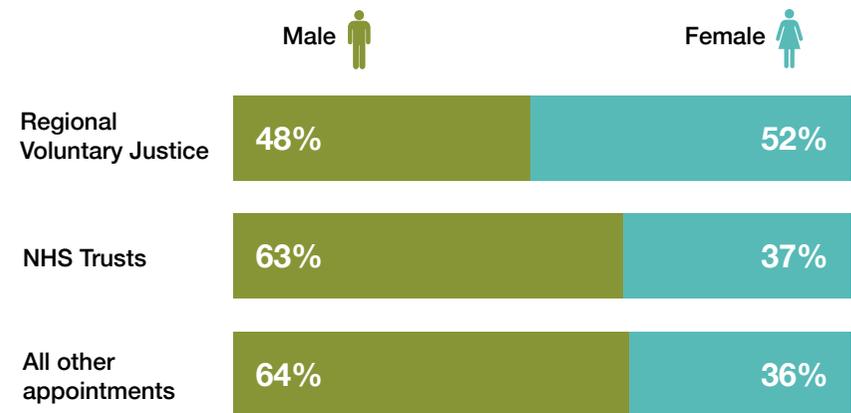
(Total appointments shown in brackets including those whose gender is not known)

\* Other includes AG, CO, DCLG, DfE, DfID, DfT, DIT, HMT, NIO and SO. Figures for these departments are combined in line with data protection obligations. FCO had no appointments.

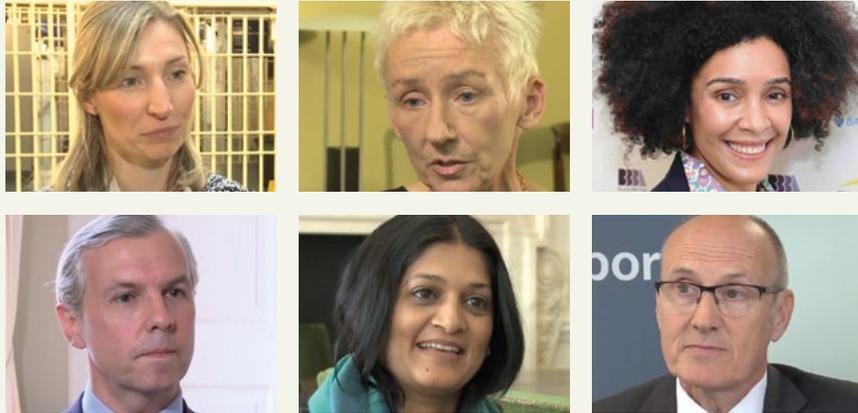
<sup>4</sup> Provided by Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments

There is a growing pool of female talent taking up public appointments. We will seek to encourage this growth by continuing to monitor the number of re-appointments and appointments going to those who already hold multiple public positions. Our research shows that females are represented in greater proportions among Regional Voluntary Justice appointments (e.g. Independent Monitoring Boards of Prisons) than in other types of appointments. These locally based public appointments provide valuable board level experience for new public appointees who may then go on to take other or additional roles. We are committed to doing more to support those interested in public appointments by providing mentoring and peer-to-peer support to new and developing talent.

## Gender balance by type of appointment



## Case Study: Raising awareness of Public Appointments



The Centre for Public Appointments (CPA) has launched a new communications campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of being a public appointee among those who have the potential and the aspiration, but are not currently aware of the opportunities available. The campaign aims to increase diversity on public boards by adopting role models to encourage a diverse range of people to apply. As part of this campaign, the CPA has created video and social media content showing individuals currently

serving on public boards, sharing their experiences. The CPA has also launched a LinkedIn page to provide a new avenue for those interested to understand more about the opportunities available, and will launch a refreshed website in the new year to support this work.

To learn more register on our website [publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

You can also follow us on [in](#) and [@publicappts](#)

## Ethnic minority representation

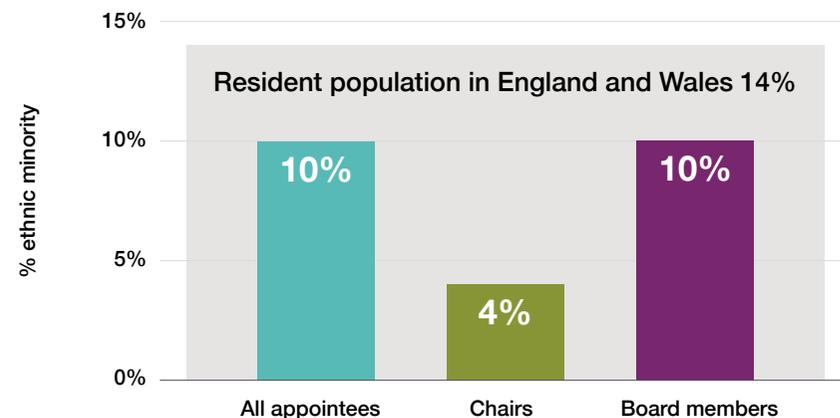
Ethnic minority appointees now make up 10% of the total number of appointees, closing the gap towards the 14% of the population who are from ethnic minorities<sup>5</sup>, however only 4% of chairs are from an ethnic minority background.

Achieving ethnic diversity on individual boards is more complex and challenging than achieving good gender balance. Public Boards on average have 8 or 9 members, meaning that having just one member from an ethnic background can improve representation.

However, this fails to ensure good representation from the plethora of ethnic backgrounds which enrich our society.

Our focus therefore must be on ensuring we develop the breadth and diversity of talent across all public appointments rather than at individual board level. We need to continue to raise awareness of public appointments and ensure the recruitment process does not act as a barrier to talented candidates from a wide range of backgrounds applying for public appointments. We will also do more to support chairs in creating an inclusive environment on their board and undertake succession planning.

### Ethnicity of Public Appointees in post (March 2017)



<sup>5</sup> UK Census 2011, Office of National Statistics

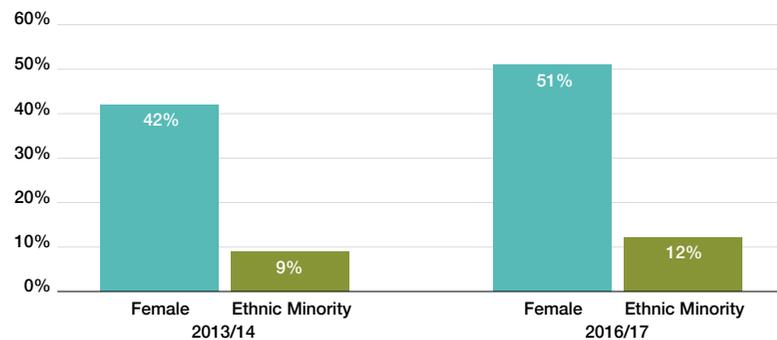
## Case Study: Reaching out to new talent

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport holds regular events to promote public appointments and reach out to new candidates. Current appointees speak about their experiences and share information on the appointments process.

These events are well attended and have enabled the department to make new connections with individuals who go on to be appointable candidates.

The department also creates bespoke advertising plans for each appointment campaign, targeting under-represented groups and involves their public bodies in promoting opportunities widely via their communications and stakeholder channels. Candidate care ensures those with potential are engaged and encouraged to apply for suitable roles.

DCMS new public appointees from under-represented groups



## Representation of those with disabilities

Our data review revealed that departments hold disability data on only 65% of public appointments (compared with gender data on 97% of appointments). Often this is because, historically, departments have not asked appointees for this information.

We also know though that even when asked, individuals are less likely to declare whether or not they have a disability than their gender or ethnicity. Just 5% of those who provided data recorded a disability. This falls well below the UK's working age population, of whom 18% record a disability.

However, the low declaration rate hampers our understanding of what stands in the way of more disabled people becoming public appointees. Our main focus here must therefore be to deepen our understanding of the issue and the most effective approaches to increasing the proportion of disabled appointees. We will therefore as a matter of urgency commission a review into the barriers facing those with visible and non-visible disabilities entering public appointments to report during 2018.

# 3 Our Ambition and 10 Point Action Plan

## Our key goals

- 1 Increase overall diversity
- 2 Attract and support new talent
- 3 Enable diverse talent to flourish
- 4 Improve our data and reporting on diversity

**Our ambition by 2022:**  
50% of all public appointees should be female

14% of all public appointments should be from ethnic minorities

## Increasing overall diversity

Our data shows that we have achieved some success so far but there are still underrepresented groups at all levels.

The data we have compiled this year on the diversity of appointments, sets a baseline from which we will seek to continue to improve. Work to increase female representation on boards in the private sector has shown that setting targets and reporting against them works.<sup>6</sup>

**We are therefore setting an ambition that 50% of all public appointees are female and 14% are from ethnic minorities by 2022.**

Our record on attracting those with disabilities into public appointments is weak and we plan further work as a matter of urgency to better understand what is needed to turn this round. **We will therefore commission a review of the barriers preventing disabled people taking up public appointments to report in Summer 2018.**

We will not stop there. We will continue to explore new ways to bring in people with different backgrounds, life experiences and faiths all of which provide important insight to the work of public appointees.

## Attracting and supporting new talent

We have sought feedback from current appointees and prospective candidates, as well as recruitment experts, on the best ways to attract and support new, diverse talent to public appointments.

We know that longer search periods, role descriptions which focus on ability rather than “long standing” experience and improved feedback on unsuccessful applications can all help improve the diversity of those applying for public appointments.

<sup>6</sup> “FTSE Women Leaders”, Hampton Alexander Review, November 2017

**We will continue to work with departments across Whitehall to improve the recruitment processes and maximise opportunities for candidates from the broadest range of backgrounds.**

Feedback gathered told us that what attracts talented diverse candidates most is a recognition that people that they see as being like them hold public appointments. We also know the application and interview process can appear intimidating to those who lack prior experience of senior public sector positions. We will continue to promote public appointments to new audiences and ensure the recruitment process does not act as a barrier to attracting successful new talent. **We will increase the visibility of appointees from underrepresented groups through outreach, events and social media and develop networks through which we raise awareness of public appointments and provide support for candidates.**

**To support this, departments will continue work with chairs to improve succession planning.**

Executive search firms who support departments to find public appointees also need to ensure they are working hard to reach new diverse talent. The work of the Davies Review<sup>7</sup> into gender diversity on FTSE100 boards and the subsequent Hampton-Alexander Review<sup>8</sup> showed the important role executive search firms play in ensuring a diverse pool of candidates are seen for board level roles. In response, executive search firms developed an Enhanced Code of Conduct<sup>9</sup>, which sets stringent targets to ensure they are attracting and supporting diverse talent into board level roles. Where executive search firms are used, **for public appointments we will encourage the use of firms accredited under the Enhanced Code of Conduct, where appropriate. We will also consider whether further guidance is required for government departments who use executive search firms for public appointment campaigns.**

<sup>7</sup> “Women in Boards”, Lord Davies of Abersoch, CBE, Feb 2011

<sup>8</sup> “FTSE Women Leaders”, Hampton Alexander Review, November 2017

<sup>9</sup> The Enhanced Voluntary Code of Conduct for Executive Search Firms: Davies Review Accreditation, Sept 2014

## Case Study: Developing our pool of talent

**Ministry of Justice is a significant recruiter of public appointees, with over 3,000 posts across the department.**

To help ensure our public bodies fully represent the communities they serve, we have been working to attract a range of candidates and develop a diverse talent pool. These are potential appointees with whom we can work to identify appointments for which they may be suitable. To build our talent pool, we approached applicants from previous campaigns whom panels identified as having excellent potential. We have also engaged with networks and organisations such as *Women on Boards* and the *Reach Society* to identify new potential candidates.

We are using social media such as Twitter (@ MoJPublicAppts) to reach a wider age range and running awareness raising events. We are giving further consideration to how we can engage most effectively with those in the pool and are bringing together a focus group of potential applicants to test the helpfulness of our candidate materials.

We are using social media to reach a wider audience

 @MoJPublicAppts

## Enabling diverse talent to flourish

Recognising and developing existing talent on our public boards is as important as finding new talented individuals.

**We will work with departments to establish a group of mentors, by Spring 2018 who will provide peer-to-peer support for new and high potential candidates, particularly those already serving on boards of local bodies.**

Achieving diversity does not stop at the moment someone is appointed or attends their first board meeting. It is about creating a culture where diverse talent can thrive and recognises the value they bring regardless of their gender, background, sexual orientation or disability. We will work with chairs and their boards to create an inclusive environment at board level and provide mentoring support for new and developing talent. **We will develop and implement an Inclusive Boards Charter which will set standards for inclusive Chairs and their boards, with a supporting toolkit, by Autumn 2018.**

## Case Study: NHS Improvement's NExT Director Scheme

The NHS derives great benefit from its diverse workforce. It stands to reason that it would also benefit from the leadership of diverse chairs and non-executive directors, yet a recent survey of members of NHS provider boards revealed that fewer than 37% are women and fewer than 8% are from ethnic minorities. NHS Improvement is working hard to identify more diverse pools of candidates for these important roles but also to develop the chairs and non-executive directors of the future with its NExT Director Scheme.

Running across the Midlands, East of England and London, the NExT Director Scheme supports 55 women and people from ethnic minority communities who are nearly ready make that final step into the boardrooms of the NHS. Each specially selected NExT Director has an agreed placement in a local NHS organisation, which provides them with an experienced non-executive Director as a mentor, access to a range of committee and board meetings, and the opportunity to learn first-hand about governance and leadership in some of the largest and most complicated organisations in their area.

Recognising that the NExT Directors will also learn a lot from each other, NHS Improvement is providing them with the opportunity to learn together either virtually or in person.

It is also clear that the host organisations are already benefiting from the arrangement, with many of them reporting that the new perspective provided by their NExT Directors is giving fresh insight into the challenges they face.

This is just the start of the NExT Director Scheme in the NHS; NHS Improvement expects to expand the scheme to other organisations and areas in the coming months. For further information contact [janice.scanlan@nhs.net](mailto:janice.scanlan@nhs.net)



**Pallavi Bradshaw**  
placement with Kingston Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust



**Natalie Edwards**  
placement with West Hertfordshire  
Hospitals NHS Trust



**Catherine Waller**  
placement with West Suffolk  
NHS Foundation Trust

**37%** of NHS provider boards members are women

**8%** of NHS provider boards members are from ethnic minorities

“  
Until we know where we stand and how we are performing today, it is impossible to define and deliver real progress. No company’s commitment to diversity and inclusion can be taken seriously until it collects, scrutinises and is transparent with its workforce data.”

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith<sup>10</sup>

## Improving our data and reporting on diversity

The work we have done to understand the current diversity of public appointments is a further step towards achieving increased representation from under-represented groups. Our action plan extends activities we know are working well and introduces new commitments to support further progress.

**To monitor progress, we will continue to improve the way we gather and report on diversity data each year. Departments will also report on the diversity of their regulated public appointments in their annual departmental plans.**

**To oversee delivery of these commitments at a department level, the Minister for the Constitution has established a network of Ministerial Diversity Champions** who will promote the importance of diversity in public appointments and play a key role in promoting public appointments to new audiences. They will also work with the chairs of public bodies to develop an inclusive boards culture. These Champions will work with the chairs of public bodies they sponsor to support their work to develop inclusive boards and play a key role in promoting public appointments to new audiences. They will meet regularly as a group to review progress of delivery of this action plan, set priorities for next steps and share good practice across government.

<sup>10</sup> “Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review”, Feb 2017

# 4 Summary

## The Government's 10 Point Action Plan

### We will continue to:

- Increase the visibility of appointees from under-represented groups through outreach, events, a refreshed CPA website and social media;
- Develop the networks through which we raise awareness of public appointments and provide support for candidates;
- Improve the recruitment process to maximise opportunities for candidates from the broadest range of backgrounds;
- Work with chairs and their boards on succession planning; and
- Improve the consistency of how we collect, monitor and report on diversity data.

### In addition we will:

- Work with departments to **establish a group of mentors**, by Spring 2018 who will provide peer-to-peer support for new and high potential candidates, particularly those already serving on boards in their local area;
- **Commission a review of the barriers preventing disabled people** taking up public appointments to report in Summer 2018;
- Develop and implement an **Inclusive Boards Charter** which will set standards for inclusivity for chairs and their boards, by Autumn 2018;
- Where executive search firms are used we will encourage departments to **use firms accredited under the Enhanced Code of Conduct**; and
- **Ministerial Champions will oversee delivery of this plan and report on progress** on the diversity of their regulated public appointments in their annual departmental plans. CPA will report on progress across government annually.

# About the Centre for Public Appointments

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The Centre for Public Appointments (CPA) in the Cabinet Office supports Government in the appointment of individuals to the boards of the public bodies which run, regulate and advise our public services. It also support a wide range of other types of public appointment, from Court Visitors to Commissioners and Ombudsmen.

The CPA provides leadership and guidance to departments on the appointments process, supporting them to operate in line with the Governance Code, and work hard to increase the quality and diversity of candidates applying for and successfully taking up appointments.

The Centre for Public Appointments also has responsibility for:

- promoting public appointments
- developing policy, including the Governance Code
- identifying and supporting talented, diverse candidates.

The CPA also works closely with the Commissioner for Public Appointments who regulates appointments made by government, ensuring they are in line with the Code. The Commissioner also has a role in promoting diversity within public appointments.

Public Appointments for all Government departments are advertised on our website alongside further information about the Public Appointments process and insights from public appointees. You can also register to receive the fortnightly newsletter and alerts about public appointments of interest to you.

✉ [publicappointments@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:publicappointments@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

in [www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com)

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