

Citizens' Assembly of Scotland: Recruitment of Assembly Members

Project inception meeting 1 August 2019

Notes of meeting

Attendees:

Ian Davidson (currently Scottish Government)
[Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Ensuring the independence of the recruitment of Assembly members and the role of the Advisory Group

- [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)] will be the Project Manager for this work, as a Scottish Government official, updating Scottish Ministers on progress as appropriate.
- Ian Davidson explained the governance of the Citizens' Assembly, explaining the role of the Conveners and the Secretariat. Ian will shortly officially become Secretary to the Assembly. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)] will also be joining the Secretariat. It is in this capacity that they are members of the Advisory Group, rather than as Scottish Government officials. They will provide the link to the Assembly Conveners, keeping them up to date on progress and ensuring their input into the project as appropriate.
- [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)] are Scottish Government and National Records of Scotland statisticians respectively. They will provide technical advice.
- The project will operate transparently, with plans to publish the target membership profile, the achieved membership profile and the recruitment methodology employed as soon as possible for each.
- All discussions and decisions will be recorded.
- Whilst the contract is let by Scottish Government significant decisions relating to recruitment, notably to agree the final approach to stratification, will be taken by conveners.
- The media commentary about the contract and wider political controversy about the Assembly was noted. Attendees agreed that, given the sensitivities, it would be important to publish information about the approach at the launch of recruitment, including covering stratification and recruitment methods, as well as producing a report at the conclusion.

Timetable

- The timetable needs to be amended to reflect the later than planned completion of the procurement process. It was agreed that a 3 week preparatory period remains essential
- Recruitment in the field will begin 22 or 23 August 2019.

- A target membership profile needs to be agreed by then.
- The date for delivery to the Secretariat of the names and contact details of recruited members needs to remain 2 October 2019.
- This means a five week fieldwork recruitment period.

Eligibility for Assembly membership

- It was agreed that it is not meaningful or possible to exclude representatives and officials of relevant advocacy groups as originally set out in the specification of requirements because the topics of deliberation of the Assembly are not yet known. It would therefore be impossible to identify relevant groups.
- A general declaration of interest question will be asked, either as part of the recruitment questionnaire or afterwards, to allow individuals to declare specific interests. It was agreed that it is important that members understand that they will participate in the Assembly in an individual capacity rather than as a representative of any group.
- The contractors recommended that to be eligible for Assembly membership, members of the public should not have participated in social/market research more than once in the past 6 months. The Citizens' Assembly is an opportunity for participation of those who would not usually engage or participate in such activity.

Action Point: Contractor to design an eligibility question/criterion to establish people's participation in recent research exercises for inclusion in the recruitment questionnaire.
[Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Approach to stratification

- It was agreed that a target profile would be designed, with quotas for the relevant stratification criteria. Narrow quotas are proposed for criteria such as age, gender, ethnic group, political attitudes and wider quotas for further criteria such as disability and educational qualifications. This will enable the recruitment of a broadly representative Assembly, and ensure the representation of groups that are less likely to participate. Setting a larger number of narrow quotas carries the risk of failing to recruit the target Assembly membership as quotas fill.
- Any one individual can fit within a number of quotas as long as that fits in within the overall number of targets we have for each variable. BUT some quotas should be thought of as interlocking. For instance, we will want men and women of all age groups represented.
- It was also agreed that a wider quota for disability/limiting long term illness will be included to reflect the Scottish Government commitment to ensuring the inclusion of disabled people in the Assembly membership. (This will also be enabled by ensuring the accessibility of the Assembly itself and the support available to disabled people to participate). It would be important to engage with relevant 3rd party experts in considering relevant issues e.g. Inclusion Scotland.

- Questions relating to all the stratification criteria will need to be included in the recruitment questionnaire but it is important to balance the need for information to ensure a broadly representative membership with not over-burdening potential members with too many questions.
- It was agreed that the three broad measures of political attitudes suggested in the tender are useful stratification criteria and in principle that approach would be recommended to conveners. If there are too many criteria overall, we may need to re-visit whether we need all three of these, however. Consideration of relevant data sources would be important as well
- Information about stratification and data sources will be published at the start of recruitment period as noted above (as well as at the end).

Action point: Scottish Government to provide national data on the agreed socio-demographic and geographic stratification criteria from key official statistics sources in order to support the development of the target profile and for discussion at the next meeting. Before 8 August. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action point: Contractor to identify national data on the political attitudes (covering attitudes to Brexit, the constitution and voting intentions) as proposed for discussion in the tender. Before 8 August. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action point: Contractor to develop a draft screening questionnaire. Before 8 August. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Ensuring the inclusion of additional social groups

- It was agreed that the inclusion of people with caring responsibilities should be ensured. Being able to explain the offer of care costs at the point of recruitment is important. But an exploration of the profile of the recruited membership will be important in establishing whether people with caring responsibilities are adequately included.
- Additional recruitment of people with caring responsibilities may then be necessary.
- A question on caring responsibilities will need to be included in the recruitment questionnaire.
- It will also be important to check membership representation from the Scottish islands.

Action Point: Scottish Government to establish national figures on adults with caring responsibilities. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action Point: Scottish Government to consider whether the recruitment approach as agreed here meets its duty under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Approach to random selection

- It was agreed to use the 8 parliamentary regions as the geographic sampling unit.

- Within this the postcode address file will be sorted by island/mainland location, urban/rural classification and SIMD quintiles.
- A number of postcodes will be selected at random assuming 1 postcode per participant required from each region.
- Within each region (strata) a random number generator will be used to select a random starting point and select 1 in n postcodes.
- Interviewers will be sent to these postcode areas/locations to recruit participants within households.
- At the household level, the interviewer will prioritise hard to reach groups or those aged 16-29, to speak to in the first instance.
- If the above is not possible, they will ask how many people live in the household and use a kish grid to randomly select the individual that they should interview.
- Participants will be recruited to the agreed demographic and attitudinal quotas.

Recruitment information

- The contractor highlighted the importance of being able to provide as much information as possible to potential members at the point of face-to-face contact in the field.
- It was agreed that there could be a 'soft' media launch with the Assembly Conveners. Fieldwork interviewers might be interested to attend.

Action Point: Contractor to 'brainstorm' all the questions that recruiters may be asked on the doorstep by members of the public. Before 8 August. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action Point: Scottish Government to pull together all available relevant information and to highlight where details are not yet known and when they will be. Before 8 August. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action Point: Scottish Government to explore possibility of media launch. [ID]

Possible member 're-fresh'

- It was agreed that it may prove necessary to recruit new Citizens' Assembly members during the life of the Assembly. The assembly Secretariat will keep this under review.
- The contractor agreed that, assuming available capacity, they would be willing to undertake this work.

Data protection

- It was agreed that the data protection implications of this contract are significant and that these will be considered in an ongoing way.

Action Point: Scottish Government will complete and publish a data protection impact assessment for the project before recruitment begins and will keep the contractor updated on data protection decisions/actions. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Action Point: Contractor will develop a specific data protection strategy for this project. [Redacted S.38(1.)(b)]

Next meeting

- To take place Thursday 8 August 2019.