

# **Public Appointments Race Equality Action Plan**

**2019 – 2022**

**October 2020**



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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## **What's our vision?**

The regulated ministerial appointments to the boards of Scotland's public bodies are effective and reflective of the diversity of Scottish society.

Through this action plan we want to do more to encourage people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to apply for public appointments, for those applications to be successful in a fair, transparent and merit-based system, and for the conditions to be right for people to be able to give their best when they are on a board.

## **What is a public appointment?**

'Public appointments' are usually appointments by Scottish Ministers to the boards of Scotland's public bodies; these are sometimes called 'non-executive directors'.

## **What is a public body?**

A public body is an organisation that is arm's length from central government. Public bodies carry out statutory, regulatory and advisory functions. Public bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes and include organisations such as the NHS, Skills Development Scotland, and the Cairngorms National Park.

The four main functions of the board of a public body are:

- to ensure that the public body delivers its functions in accordance with Scottish Ministers' policies and priorities
- to provide strategic leadership
- to ensure financial stewardship
- to hold the Chief Executive and senior management team to account.

A guide to being on a board is here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/board-guide-board-members-public-bodies-scotland-april-2015/>

The board focuses on strategy, performance and behaviour. The Chief Executive advises the board on all matters and is solely responsible for operational issues. Board members have no authority to instruct the Chief Executive or any member of staff on operational matters.

## **Regulated public appointments**

There are currently around 700 regulated public appointments. A 'regulated public appointment' means that the process of appointing someone is carried out by the Scottish Government according to a Code of Practice that is issued by the Ethical Standards Commissioner. The team in the Scottish Government that oversees all the appointments is called the Public Appointments Team. The Ethical Standards Commissioner is appointed by the Scottish Parliament and is independent of the Scottish Government.

## Public appointments and diversity

The Scottish Government collects data on public appointments and diversity. The figures from 2019 are as follows:

2019	December
Number of Members	619
Number of Chairs	85
Total Appointees	704

All Appointees	As at December 2019	
Protected Characteristic	No	%
Women	352	50
Age Under 50	126	18
Black and Minority Ethnic people	20	3
Disabled People	51	7
Sexual Orientation other than heterosexual	36	5

## The plan

### What do we want to take action about?

That people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds are under-represented in regulated ministerial appointments; that the contribution of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds is important if public bodies are to meet the needs of the communities they serve; that lack of representation is morally unjust.

### What are our assumptions that are guiding what we propose to do?

- That there are people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds who will make a great contribution to the boards of public bodies but who have not applied.
- That there are people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds who will make a great contribution to the boards of public bodies and who have applied but have not been successful.
- That systemic discrimination in society means that people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds may be less likely to have had opportunities to acquire the experience and networks that present them as 'board ready'.
- That bias affects all of us as individuals and as part of systems, which will likely impact negatively on the success of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds being selected for a public appointment.
- That people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds should be part of the power structure as well as 'recipients' of actions.
- That people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds are integral to the success of this action plan.
- That black and ethnic minority groups are not homogenous – disadvantages and complexities experienced by racial and ethnic groups will be varied.
- That small changes in the profile of appointees, and small changes to the system, have the potential to make a big difference because the overall scale of public appointments is relatively small (currently around 700 appointees).

## What are our constraints?

The turnover in public appointments (c.120 appointments per year, of which c.10 to 14 will be chairs) means that change will be small scale.

We may not always be able to identify a causal effect in our work.

In common with other parts of the public sector we have resource constraints.

## What's our strategy?

- To understand and use our data to create data-led action planning to address any barriers or discrimination.
- To work with current public appointees from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to learn from their experiences of applying for and being on a board, and to ask and understand what other actions we should consider to attract talent.
- To capitalise on existing relationships based on previous outreach work with people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, with the aim of promoting and providing opportunities. This means that we will aim initially to draw people from cohorts that have previously had an interest in public appointments, and trial actions.
- To raise the profile of current public appointees from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to demonstrate that public body boards value diversity and that board members reflect all of society.
- To provide boards with access to 'critical friends' to identify and help address barriers and increase the attractiveness of public appointments to diverse communities, and to enhance conditions in boards for people to give their best.
- To affect the power structures.
- To provide action to support people in presenting their current skills and experience as board ready.
- To provide opportunities to acquire experiences and networks that support people to be board ready.
- To provide opportunities for support to new appointees.

## How was this developed?

We developed some actions with staff from the Ethical Standards Commissioner's office and asked race equality intermediary organisations for comments on those. The feedback was mixed: organisations wanted to be sure that we were using our data, taking evidence-based action, and monitoring what we do; they were concerned that we were using a deficits model; they were keen that there were opportunities to further develop talent, such as through mentoring. We worked with that feedback and with input from discussions with individuals to develop this plan. We anticipate that this will continue to be an iterative process.

## The Action Plan

The actions in the action plan will be reviewed annually, in order to assess and understand progress, and added to or removed as progress and resource constraints allow. **The process needs to be iterative, building on progress, on findings from discussion group sessions, and what monitoring tells us. That means that the actions below are not 'the final version' through to 2022.**

**September 2020 update: We have had to delay a number of planned actions because of the impacts of COVID-19: we are considering how to take forward the actions in different ways.**

Action	19/20	20/21	21/22	Status	Notes
<b>Data</b>					
1. Scottish Government (SG) to <b>monitor and evaluate actions</b> in this plan for effectiveness, over 3 years.	X	X	X	Ongoing	Need more than 1 year to generate a large enough data set.
2. SG to continue to <b>analyse application and appointment rates</b> , including the through rate from applications. Where the data sets allow, undertake intersectional analysis. Try to identify barriers.	X	X	X	Ongoing	Need large enough data sets.
3. SG to <b>analyse sift data</b> , if possible, to check effect of sifting by anonymised applications.	X	X	X	IP	Need large enough data sets.
4. <b>Understand pathways into public appointments</b> for people from a minority ethnic background – qualitative research with successful applicants/ the discussion group on their pathway(s) and if there are pathways that are underutilised; respond to findings where appropriate.	X	X		NYS	Meeting in February 2020 touched on this but further exploration is needed.
<b>Reference Group</b>					
5. <b>Working with current appointees from black and ethnic minority backgrounds:</b> Convene a discussion group to learn from people's experiences  Over the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss potential role as a reference group.</li> <li>• Seek volunteers to be role models for speaking at events (including events focussed on applications).</li> </ul>	X	X	X	IP	1 <sup>st</sup> meeting of the group February 2020

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek volunteers to be mentors in talent development.</li> <li>• Seek volunteers from experienced appointees to mentor new appointees.</li> <li>• Seek volunteers for Independent Panel Member training.</li> </ul>					
<b>Promotion and outreach</b>					
<p><b>6. Promoting opportunities:</b> capitalise on existing networks, and access the role model cohort, to hold targeted sessions to promote public appointments and discuss work undertaken in this project so far.</p> <p>Outreach and engagement activity with professional groups and voluntary organisations to attract people from a minority ethnic background to apply for appointments.</p>	X	X	X	IP	<p>Ongoing contact with race intermediaries to promote vacancies and host workshops.</p> <p>Workshop with PATH Scotland February 2020.</p>
<p><b>7. Raising the profile:</b> ‘talking heads’ of not-the-usual-suspects on the Appointed for Scotland webpages.</p>	X	X		IP	<p>Refresh as appropriate over 3 years.</p> <p><a href="#">Videos</a> for our <a href="#">social media</a> completed Oct 2019.</p> <p>Gathering case studies of current appointees to use in social media.</p>
<p><b>8. Raising the profile, breaking down barriers:</b> upgrade Appointed for Scotland web pages, put on there and on social media a diagram of a typical board structure</p>	X	X		IP	<p>Part of website upgraded in March 2020</p>

(including in relation to executive team and Ministers) and a ½ page narrative of what a board does.					
<b>Building the pipeline</b>					
<b>9. Board ready (talent development):</b> Identify a pilot group. Trial a workshop session on what makes a successful application and the interview process. Trial 2 x 1:1 sessions with a current appointee. Discuss mentoring compact and the mentoring pyramid, to 'pay forward'.	X	X		IP	Initial workshop discussion affected by COVID-19: to be rescheduled when appropriate and possible.
<b>10. Board ready (pipeline development):</b> must be discussed with reference group.  Suggest initially: volunteers from a pre-existing cohort as a pilot, then skills and experience audit (1:1); exposure to 2 board meetings in different sectors with a fellow buddy in the pilot; shadow a board member for a fixed length of time (6 months).		X	X	NYS	Need conditions to be supportive, therefore time this for <i>after</i> the power structures elements.
<b>11. New appointees support:</b> must be discussed with reference group.  Supporting successful applicants from the talent development and pipeline development cohorts, draw on the experienced appointees' volunteer group to provide mentoring support to new appointees from the cohorts.			x	NYS	Need conditions to be supportive, therefore time this for <i>after</i> the power structures elements.
<b>Address power structures</b>					

<p><b>12. Critical friends?</b> Discuss with the reference group: understand and scope a critical friend role; understand the boundaries; identify potential critical friends; make the offer to boards.</p> <p>Consider support to the critical friends.</p>		X		NYS	
<p><b>13. Independent Panel Members:</b> Independent Panel Member (IPM) training session for c.5 to 10 appointees from an ethnic minority background.</p> <p>Seek volunteers for the session. Run training course Undertake evaluation of training. Promote IPM bank. Monitor uptake of individuals as IPMs. Analyse data to see if there are any differences when this IPM cohort is used</p>		X	X	IP	<p>It's likely to be difficult to see any statistically significant changes, as the numbers are small i.e. volume of rounds and then the likelihood that one of the new IPMs will be on the panel; we will therefore need to seek to draw conclusions only after a number of years. We may not be able to isolate the effect.</p> <p>IPM training session planned for Spring 2020 delayed until further notice because of COVID-19.</p>

**Acronyms used in the Action Plan:**

SG = Scottish Government

IPM = Independent Panel Member. IPMs are usually part of the 'selection panels' that assess people's applications for each public appointments and undertake other assessments, like the interviews.

NYS = not yet started

IP = in progress

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