

Annex E | Summary of Stage Three Research

1. Stage Three of our independent research involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative studies designed to reach the people whose views had not been gathered during stages one and two. This included the general public (people not already involved in the appointments process) and people who work in the fields of equality, diversity and governance in Scotland. This final stage of research also sought to test and fine tune our provisional recommendations, to ensure they would be practical, achievable and effective.

Interviews and discussions with key figures in the field of equality and diversity

2. In preparing the strategy we have been fortunate to have the input of a number of experts who work in the fields of equality and diversity in Scotland. We have been guided by their in-depth knowledge and are indebted to them all for their help and ongoing support.
3. We benefited from the input of the following individuals and organisations, through a combination of one-to-one discussions between April and August 2007 and through written comments on the pre-consultation strategy and recommendations:
 - Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland
 - Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations Scotland
 - Disability Rights Commission Scotland
 - Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland
 - Head of Equal Opportunities, Scottish Enterprise
 - Programme Manager for Voluntary Sector Skills Development and Equalities, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
 - Equalities and Human Rights Commission
 - Scottish Inter Faith Council
 - Stonewall Scotland

4. The input of these bodies ensured that the approach we have taken to equality and diversity in the strategy is both appropriate for achieving legal compliance and in keeping with current practice.

Discussions with other relevant organisations

5. As well as consulting equalities professionals we have spoken to bodies operating in other relevant fields such as public sector recruitment, leadership development, governance and civic participation. The purpose of these discussions has been to explore projects relevant to our work on the strategy and to ensure that our recommendations are well-informed and in line with current good practice in related fields. Again, we are indebted to these bodies for their assistance and input. The following organisations were consulted between June and October 2007:

- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Common Purpose
- Getting on Board
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
- Jobs Go Public
- Scottish Leadership Foundation
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Consultation group

Methodology

6. In June 2007, 20 individuals from equalities groups and community organisations in the public and voluntary sectors participated in a consultation group exercise as part of our qualitative research. The event was facilitated and hosted by Scottish Enterprise, from whose panel of equalities advisers many of the participants were drawn. Confidentiality was

assured to all contributors, to encourage participants to speak freely.

7. The focus of the exercise was to test levels of awareness about public bodies and the public appointments system, to obtain comments on our proposed recommendations and to explore more deeply some of the issues that had arisen during our earlier research, including the impact of remuneration and advertising. Attendees were also given copies of a standard public appointment application form and guidance notes to look at in advance; they were asked to comment on the content, layout and language of these documents.

Findings

Awareness of public bodies and public appointments

8. Almost everyone in the group had heard of both public bodies and public appointments, although this was probably due to the nature of the work or community involvement that brought them to this event. Most people were familiar with the work of public bodies, particularly in their own field of interest, although they may not be aware of the work of every public body.

Awareness of the public appointments process

9. About one third of people had not been aware that appointments to the boards of public bodies were open to members of the public. Some assumed that people were approached to apply or to be given the post. There is still a belief that it is a closed set of people who get appointed, no matter who applies.

Attracting and encouraging applicants

10. There was widespread agreement that the advertising for the posts is very poor, despite there being successful campaigns (for example for Children's Panel recruitment) from which ideas and experience could be drawn. Participants thought that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the post and of how to

apply, including using a broader spectrum of publications such as the Sun and Daily Record. Other suggestions included newspapers tailored to the communities they serve, such as the Eastern Eye. Many people do not know that appointments are open to the public and even if they do, they would think that these appointments are not for 'people like me'. The use of case studies and role models from more diverse backgrounds may help to overcome this perception.

11. People with visual disabilities cannot access traditional methods of advertising. Alternative routes would include RNIB publications, talking newspapers, announcements at football matches, online shopping websites, supermarkets, radio, leisure centres, sports clubs and voluntary organisations.
12. Concern was expressed, however, that members of minority groups are often encouraged to apply for posts and then rejected at the first stage. Anonymising the application process for public appointments has removed some of the immediate bias because the applicant's gender, age, ethnicity, name and so on are not given to the selection panel. However, there will inevitably be information within the answers given on an application form that will still reveal certain facts about an applicant from which prejudicial judgments can be made.
13. There was widespread agreement that advertising in the recruitment sections of newspapers restrict applicants to those who are actively looking for a job. Public Relations companies and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) might be used to reach a more diverse audience, as might a regular slot on television, perhaps after the news.
14. Development is needed for those people administering the appointments process, to tackle discrimination and to develop people's skills. These should feed into any existing action plans within public bodies for meeting their equality duties.
15. One group member's first-hand experience of the Scottish Government's board shadowing scheme would suggest that

some improvements are needed to make the scheme more effective and supportive.

16. No one in the group had applied for a regulated public appointment¹. Two people had applied for unregulated appointments. Suggestions to attract more applicants included encouraging people to ask their employer for public service leave and promoting the opportunity for personal development/fulfilment that a public appointment can offer, rather than promoting it as an opportunity for 'public service'.
17. Some of the reasons why people had not applied included:
 - a belief that public bodies do not understand the barriers facing minority groups
 - a belief that they were not suitably qualified or experienced
 - concern that they may simply be appointed as a token member of a minority group and that their contribution to the board would not be valued.

Effect of remuneration and expenses

18. There was unanimous agreement that remuneration, and the capacity to claim expenses in advance, are crucial in encouraging more people to apply. Expenses will be a particular issue for those who have to travel some distance to attend meetings. Even small expenses that cannot be claimed in advance can be a barrier to people on benefits or low incomes.
19. The impact of remuneration on benefits is a major issue for some sectors of the community, particularly people on disability benefits.
20. The group felt that only people who have a good income can afford to do unremunerated work. Offering little or no remuneration for a role sends the message that the person's contribution is not valued.

¹ Public appointments which are regulated by the Commissioner and must follow her Code of Practice

Content and language of application packs

21. The current form is difficult to use for someone with a visual impairment using a screen reader. When completing the form online the boxes expand and it is unclear which parts of the form are questions and which are guidance notes. Several versions of the form would be useful.
22. The statement “we welcome applications from a diverse background” could be changed to simply “we welcome applications from everyone”.
23. Some of the criteria on the sample form were viewed as potentially discriminatory, for example, a requirement to explain decisions both orally and in writing.
24. The groups thought that the standard form is poorly laid out and is a barrier for those with even minor learning difficulties. The language is typical of the public sector and needs to be simplified. The form starts off by asking for certain details which appear negative or discouraging, for example, whether you have ever applied before and whether you hold other public appointments. Using an application form does provide a level playing field for the assessment of all applications and improvements need to be made to the current format.

Board culture

25. As well as improving the process, it will also be necessary to change the board culture. Legislation alone will not change attitudes and an individual’s experience on a board is shaped by the attitude of existing board members.

Feedback on applications

26. Making all applicants aware that feedback is available, and actively encouraging them to ask for it, will be crucial to

encouraging people to apply again and to helping them present their skills successfully.

ICM telephone poll

Methodology

27. Between 7 and 14 August 2007, ICM Research conducted a telephone poll of a sample of 1046 adults in Scotland on behalf of the Commissioner. The poll involved eight questions about awareness of, and attitudes towards, public appointments. The responses were available sub-divided by gender, age bracket, social class and region.
28. Data were weighted to the profile of all adults aged 18+ in Scotland. Data were weighted by gender, region, age and social class. Targets for the weighted data were derived from the 2001 census.
29. Within each Scottish region a random sample of telephone numbers was drawn from the entire BT database of domestic telephone numbers. Each number that was selected had its last digit randomised so as to provide a sample including both listed and unlisted numbers.

Findings

30. Throughout the findings, where no comment is made about the variation of answers between different demographic groups it is because no significant observations were made, or because it was not possible to draw conclusions from the data available.
31. When given a list of six organisations, only 4% of people correctly identified that only one, a health board, was a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). The bodies included in the list were: a school board, a Community Health Partnership, a health board, a local council, the Scottish Executive and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

32. Respondents were asked which of the various options given best described how people become members of NDPBs. 32% thought that they are invited to join; 21% thought they are given these posts as rewards for other work they have done. 32% correctly identified that they reply to an advert and are selected if they have the right skills and 8% thought they became members in some other way.
33. Overall, 30% of the sample was aware that the process of recruiting board members to public bodies follows a Code of Practice, which is regulated by the Commissioner to ensure a fair selection process. This figure was slightly lower among the under 35s (24% of 18-24 year olds and 22% of 25-34 year olds were aware of the regulated process). There was a 10% difference between the responses of people in the highest social classes (AB, 37%) and people in the lowest classes (C2, DE, 27%). There was also some regional variation in this question, with 43% of people in Lothian and Borders being aware of the regulated selection process, compared to only 23% of respondents in the Highlands and Islands and 24% in Dumfries.
34. There was overwhelming agreement overall (81%) that the process of appointing board members should be regulated. This figure was slightly higher for women than men (86% compared to 75%) and slightly lower for under 35s (68% for 18-24 years olds and 69% for 25-34 year olds). In contrast, 90% of people aged between 45 and 64 thought that the process should be regulated.
35. Respondents were given various examples of methods that might be used to publicise vacancies for public appointments. They were asked to indicate how likely each method of advertising would be to reach them.
36. The least popular choice was the supermarket information board, with only 21% of the overall sample saying this would be likely to reach them. There was no significant variation between age groups or genders for this choice. The biggest regional variations were in the Central region (15%) and in Dumfries

- (29%). Respondents from social classes DE were the social group most likely to be reached through this method (28%).
37. Posters on local buses or at bus stops would be likely to reach 38% of the overall sample, but the figures were higher in the younger age groups (52% of 18-24 year olds and 43% of 25-34 year olds). There were no significant differences between social classes or genders, but some regional variations could be seen. People from the Central region were the least likely to see these adverts (30%), compared to 46% in Dumfries.
 38. Posters on trains or at train stations were likely to reach 33% of people overall. Again, this figure was higher for the 18-24 age group, at 49%. People in the Central region were the most likely to be reached by this method of advertising (44%) compared to people from the Grampian region who were the least likely (29%).
 39. An advert in the jobs pages of national newspapers brought a positive response from 72% of the sample. However, further research would be necessary to establish whether people would still see an advert here if they were not actively looking for a post. Also, this question did not distinguish between different publications, so further research would be needed to discover which groups might be reached through which newspapers.
 40. Posters in doctors'/dentists' surgeries would be likely to reach 56% of people. The age group least likely to be reached in this way is the 18-24s (46%).
 41. Local radio adverts would be likely to reach 63% of the sample. There were some variations between age groups; the figures were higher for 25-34 years olds (71%) and 35-54 year olds (67%). The group least likely to be reached in this way was the 65+ group, at 49%. This option was particularly popular in the Central region (76%) and was least popular in Grampian (58%). There was a slightly higher success rating among social class C2 (71%) than the other classes, which all averaged around 60%.

42. Adverts in local free papers were likely to reach a similar proportion of the overall sample as local radio adverts (63%). There were slight regional variations for local free papers, the highest figure being Fife (72%) and the lowest Grampian (54%).
43. Adverts in professional or trade magazines would be likely to reach 47% of our sample. The figure was higher among the social classes AB (60%) compared with 42% of classes DE.
44. The most popular option was a slot after the TV news, with 78% of people saying this method of advertising would be likely to reach them. Responses were similar across all age groups, genders, social classes and regions.
45. Survey respondents were also asked to imagine that they were applying for a role with a public body which involved working for one day each month. They were asked to indicate how important it would be that they were paid for their time. 40% of the group overall said that it would be important that they were paid. The figures dropped from 47% for ages 45-54 down to 34% for 55-64s and to 30% of people aged 65+. At the other end of the age scale, the figure was 43% for 18-24 year olds, 45% for the 25-34s and 39% for 35-44 year olds.
46. There were no significant differences between social classes, but there was some regional variation. The areas with the highest proportion of people for whom remuneration was important were Dumfries (50%) and the Highlands and Islands (47%). The lowest figures were for Lothian and Borders, Strathclyde and Fife at 38%, 37% and 37% respectively.
47. Finally, the survey respondents were asked whether they had ever applied for a public appointment, and if not, why not. Only 7% of the sample had applied for an appointment. Of the people who had not applied, 39% cited lack of interest in applying for a post and 11% did not believe they had the necessary skills. 9% had not applied because they had not known that appointments were open to members of the public,

4% thought that 'public appointments are not for people like me' and 28% had some other reason for not applying.

Survey of members of the Scottish Women's Convention

Methodology

48. In August 2007 we accepted an offer by the Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) to conduct a survey of the members of their database. As members are predominantly female this enabled us to repeat the questions used in the ICM poll with a large sample of women, to further identify any gender specific issues.
49. Most SWC members were invited to participate by email. Those members without email addresses were sent a hard copy of the survey by post. All recipients could choose whether to respond electronically or in hard copy and alternative formats were offered. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and monitoring information provided in confidence enabled the responses to be cross referenced by gender, age and ethnicity. A total of 147 completed questionnaires were returned, 99% of which were from women.
50. The survey was followed up by personal contact with many of the respondents at a meeting in September 2007, to draw out more qualitative evidence around the responses.

Findings

51. The proportion of people correctly identifying the one NDPB on the list was higher than in the ICM poll of the general public. The figure here was 17%, compared to just 4% in the ICM poll.
52. When asked how they thought people become board members of public bodies, 41% thought they were invited to join, 20% thought they were given the roles as rewards for other work done, 4% thought some other method was used and 4% said they did not know. 47% correctly identified that people reply to

an advert and are selected if they have the right skills, however, a further 28% selected this answer and another answer as well. This may indicate that despite being aware that an open application process is used, there is a belief that other factors still impact on the decisions about whom to appoint. Alternatively, it could simply indicate a belief that more than one method is used to appoint board members, which is not the case.

53. A much higher proportion of the sample in this survey (64% compared to 30% for ICM) was aware of the Commissioner and the regulated process, possibly because many of the SWC members are already active in civil society so may be more aware of the regulatory and public sector landscape. The support for the process being regulated was even higher here than in the ICM poll, with 94% of respondents agreeing that it should be regulated.
54. Similarly to the ICM poll, the supermarket information board was the advertising method least likely to reach people and the slot after the television news was again the most likely.
55. Remuneration was important to 57% of people in this survey, higher than the 40% in the ICM poll.
56. A higher percentage of this sample had applied for a public appointment (24% compared to 7% in the ICM poll). Of those who had not applied, a much higher percentage (27%) said they did not believe they had the necessary skills. Given that the sample was almost entirely female, this may be seen to support the findings of other studies, that women are less confident in their own abilities (see Section Four of the main strategy document). 22% of our sample said they did not know that public appointments were open to members of the public, 7% thought they were not for 'people like me' and 7% said they had not applied because they were not interested.
57. A substantial number also indicated that there were other reasons why they had not applied. Qualitative comments made it clear that the time commitment required to be a board

member, and the working patterns of most boards were common reasons for women not applying for public appointments.

58. The SWC members were asked one further question in addition to the ICM poll questions. They were given a hypothetical situation - to imagine that a role which interested them was being advertised. They were asked to indicate at which point they would consider applying if there were 6 essential criteria and 4 desirable criteria.
59. Six percent of respondents would only apply if they had all the desirable criteria as well as the essential criteria, however, this figure was slightly higher (11%) among women in their 30s and as high as 18% for women in their 60s. Seventy seven percent would apply if they had either just the essential criteria, or the essentials and some of the desirables. While this figure is fairly high, it does suggest that nearly a quarter of female potential applicants would be unlikely to apply unless they matched the whole person specification (even those parts that were not absolutely necessary for the role) fairly closely.