



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# Women and Public Appointments in Northern Ireland

## 1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly<sup>1</sup>.

During the meeting of 4 November 2014, the Committee requested information on the breakdown of public appointments by gender and government department. It also sought information on action to attract more women into public appointments.

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<sup>1</sup> Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

## 2 Women and Public Appointments in Northern Ireland

The most recent annual report on public appointments in Northern Ireland indicates that 34% of these are held by women. This is broken down as 35% of all public appointments and 22% of chairs of public bodies<sup>2</sup>. A gender breakdown of appointments by government department is at Appendix 1. The lowest representation of women is for public appointments under the Department of Finance and Personnel (14.3%). The highest representation is for the non-ministerial department Food Standards Agency (42.9%), closely followed by the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (42.5%).

Public appointments in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM)<sup>3</sup>, but are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments<sup>4</sup>.

The Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup> does not specifically mention the appointment of women. The seven principles of the Code are:

1. Merit
2. Diversity
3. Equality
4. Openness, Transparency and Independence
5. Integrity
6. Proportionality
7. Respect

Under 'Diversity', the Code states:

*The make-up of the Boards of Northern Ireland public bodies does not adequately reflect the make-up of the population. The opportunity to appoint the best people is greatly increased when every potential applicant is attracted and encouraged to apply and when individual attributes and differences are valued. Departments should ensure, as far as possible, that Boards are balanced in terms of skills and experience, and that opportunities to apply for positions on Boards are open to the communities they serve.*

The Code states that the appointing department must prepare an appointment plan, which must include<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> OFMdfM (2013), *Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report 2012/13*, Belfast: OFMdfM, p.14: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-bodies-public-appointments-annual-report-2012-13.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> 'Public Appointments', OFMdfM website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-appointments>.

<sup>4</sup> Website of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland: <http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (2014), *Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: CPANI: [http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/cpa\\_ni\\_code\\_of\\_practice\\_jk4\\_-\\_feb\\_2014.pdf](http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/cpa_ni_code_of_practice_jk4_-_feb_2014.pdf).

*A section on diversity which sets out what steps (in outreach and process) will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees.*

The selection panel must have received training in the past 36 months, including on equality and diversity issues, and advertisements are to encourage diversity<sup>7</sup>.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments has been engaged on the issue of diversity and a Diversity Working Group met for the first time in July 2012<sup>8</sup>. A report on diversity published by the Commissioner in 2014 acknowledged that initiatives to date had had little impact on increasing diversity<sup>9</sup>. The report contains a range of recommendations to government to improve diversity on public boards. These are reproduced at Appendix 2.

While the report contains references to research that demonstrates the positive effects of having a balance of women and men on boards, there is only one recommendation that is specific to women, as part of recommendation [2], that<sup>10</sup>:

*the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.*

A snapshot of public appointment vacancies was taken on 10 November 2014. On this date, the following vacancies were advertised<sup>11</sup>:

- Chair and Deputy Chair to the Consumer Council (DETI)<sup>12</sup>
- Chair and Community Members to Board of Education Authority (DE)<sup>13</sup>
- Board Members to the Governing Body of St Mary's University College (DEL)<sup>14</sup>
- Non Executive Members to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (DRD)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp.13, 37.

<sup>8</sup> 'Diversity Working Group meets for first time', CPANI news release 17 July 2012: <http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/index/news.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (2014), *Under-representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: CPANI, pp.3-5: <http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/under-representation-and-lack-of-diversity-in-public-appointments-in-northern-ireland.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>11</sup> 'Current Vacancies', Public Appointments page, OFMdfM website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-appointments>.

<sup>12</sup> Current Vacancies GENERAL CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (The Consumer Council), accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/deti-about-home/about-public-appointments/about-current-vacancies.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Appointment of Chair and Community Members to Board of Education Authority, accessed 10 November 2014: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/appointment\\_of\\_chair\\_and\\_community\\_members\\_to\\_board\\_of\\_education\\_authority](http://www.deni.gov.uk/appointment_of_chair_and_community_members_to_board_of_education_authority).

<sup>14</sup> Appointment of Board Members to the Governing Body of St Mary's University College, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appointment-of-board-members-to-the-governing-body-ofstmarys-university-college>.

<sup>15</sup> Appointment of Non Executive Members to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (WHA), accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.drzni.gov.uk/appointment-of-non-executive-members-to-warrenpoint-harbour-authority>.

The Consumer Council advertisement contains a statement on diversity, as follows:

*People with a disability and ethnic minority communities are currently under-represented on the Board and applications from members of these groups would be particularly welcome. Note: We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in this competition for applicants with a disability.*

The advertisement also contains a statement on equality of opportunity:

*The Department is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes application forms from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants.*

There is no specific reference to the encouragement of women to apply. Currently, four of the ten members of the Consumer Council are women (40%)<sup>16</sup>.

The Board of Education advertisement includes a statement that specifically encourages women to apply, as well as other under-represented groups:

*Applications are particularly welcome from women, people under 30 years of age, members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.*

The Board of Education is a new body and does not yet have members.

The advertisement for board members for St Mary's College includes a statement on equality of opportunity:

*The Department for Employment and Learning is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all individuals.*

There is no statement in the advertisement specifically encouraging women to apply. Currently, six of the seventeen governors are women (35%)<sup>17</sup>.

The Warrenpoint Harbour Authority advertisement does not contain any reference to equality of opportunity on the Department website version, but there is such a statement in the press advertisement, including a specific statement encouraging applications from women<sup>18</sup>:

<sup>16</sup> Member Details, Consumer Council website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/member-details/>.

<sup>17</sup> St Mary's University College Board of Governors, St Mary's College website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/general/boardofgov.asp>.

<sup>18</sup> Appointment Of Non Executive Members To The Board Of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, advertisement, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/appointment-of-non-executive-members-to-the-board-of-warrenpoint-harbour-authority-advertisement.pdf>.

*The Department for Regional Development is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to providing equality of opportunity and welcomes applications regardless of disability, ethnic origin, religion, political opinion, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not you have dependants. Applications from women are particularly welcome. Information Packs and Application Forms can be provided in alternative formats. Applicants who require assistance will be facilitated on request.*

Currently, one of the ten Board members is female (10%)<sup>19</sup>.

In this short survey of four advertisements at the time of writing, all indicated some commitment to equal opportunities or diversity and half specifically mentioned women.

In broad terms, it has been suggested that there are four methods for increasing numbers of an under-represented group on public boards<sup>20</sup>:

1. Quotas – departments are legally obliged appoint a certain percentage of a target group
2. Targets – if a certain percentage of a target group is not reached, remedial action is expected to be taken
3. ‘Tie-breakers’ – if two applicants are equally qualified, the appointment is given to the member of a target group
4. Special measures – programmes are undertaken to encourage a target group to apply

The UK Government launched a drive in 2013 to increase female representation on public boards to 50% by 2015<sup>21</sup>. This target is aspirational.

The Scottish Government has published a consultation on introducing quotas for women on public boards<sup>22</sup>. Quotas have also been considered in Wales<sup>23</sup>.

In the Republic of Ireland, Kathleen Lynch, Minister of State for the Department of Justice, has stated that she is compiling a list of eligible women that ministers can draw upon for public appointments<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The Board, Warrenpoint Harbour Authority website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://warrenpointharbour.com/the-board>.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Pinto-Duschinsky and Lynne Middleton (2013), *Reforming Public Appointments*, London: Policy exchange, pp.61-4.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Drive to increase number of women on public boards’, Cabinet Office press release 25 June 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-increase-number-of-women-on-public-boards>.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Women On Board: Quality through Diversity, Scottish Government Consultation on the Introduction of Gender Quotas on Public Boards’, press release 30 April 2014: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/04/1438>.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Legislation possible for 40% women on public boards’, *BBC News* 4 March 2013: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-21634489>; ‘Drive to get more women in public appointments’, Welsh Government press release 8 July 2013: <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/equalityanddiversity/2013/130708-women-public-appointments/?lang=en>.

<sup>24</sup> ‘State boards need more ‘awkward women’, according to Lynch’, *Irish Examiner* 9 January 2014:

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/state-boards-need-more-awkward-women-according-to-lynch-254719.html>.

Appendix 1: Departmental Public Bodies by Gender<sup>25</sup>**Department of Agriculture & Rural Development****Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013****Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members**

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	6	5	1
<b>Members</b>	54	42	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13</b>

**Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration**

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	3	3	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	1	1
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	22	17	5
	Unpaid (expenses only)	31	24	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13</b>

**Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure****Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013****Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members**

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	8	7	1
<b>Members</b>	88	66	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>23</b>

**Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration**

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	6	6	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	1	–	1
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	25	18	7
	Unpaid (expenses only)	63	48	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>23</b>

<sup>25</sup> This information is derived from OFMdfM (2013), Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report 2012/13, Belfast: OFMdfM: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-bodies-public-appointments-annual-report-2012-13.pdf>.

## Department of Education

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	8	6	2
<b>Members</b>	367	221	146
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>148</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	7	5	2
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	2	1	1
	Less than £10,000	5	2	3
	Unpaid (expenses only)	360	218	142
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>148</b>

## Department for Employment and Learning

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	13	11	2
<b>Members</b>	362	235	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>129</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	4	3	1
	Less than £10,000	2	2	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	6	1
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	250	156	94
	Unpaid (expenses only)	112	79	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>129</b>

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	4	4	–
<b>Members</b>	39	30	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	4	4	–
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	11	10	1
	Less than £10,000	28	20	8
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>

## Department of the Environment

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	7	6	1
<b>Members</b>	59	39	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>21</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	2	2	–
	Less than £10,000	2	1	1
	Unpaid (expenses only)	3	3	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	58	38	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>21</b>



## Department of Justice

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	11	7	4
<b>Members</b>	68	44	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>28</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	6	4	2
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	4	2	2
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	17	10	7
	Less than £10,000	12	8	4
	Unpaid (expenses only)	39	26	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>28</b>

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	3	3	–
<b>Members</b>	11	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	2	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	4	4	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	5	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

## Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	15	11	4
<b>Members</b>	138	77	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>65</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	13	9	4
	Less than £10,000	2	2	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	123	72	51
	Unpaid (expenses only)	15	5	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>65</b>

## Department for Regional Development

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	5	5	–
<b>Members</b>	47	39	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	5	5	–
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	23	20	3
	Less than £10,000	17	14	3
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	5	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8</b>

## Department for Social Development

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	4	4	–
<b>Members</b>	18	11	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	2	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	12	7	5
	Unpaid (expenses only)	5	3	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

## Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	8	4	4
<b>Members</b>	56	34	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>26</b>

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	7	3	4
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	1	1	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	23	12	11
	Less than £10,000	25	18	7
	Unpaid (expenses only)	8	4	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>26</b>

## Food Standards Agency

### Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	1	–	1
<b>Members</b>	6	4	2
<b>Total</b>	7	4	3

#### Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
<b>Chairs</b>	£10,000 or more	1	–	1
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
<b>Members</b>	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	6	4	2
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
	<b>Total</b>	7	4	3

## Appendix 2: Recommendations of the Commissioner for Public Appointments to Increase Diversity in Public Appointments<sup>26</sup>

### Strategic recommendations

[1] Make board diversity public policy and set measurable goals: - Specific public policy should be developed on board diversity, together with an overall framework for action by the Executive and Departments, and this should be articulated to the public, monitored and reported on annually.

[2] It should be made clear to Departments and the public that the intention is to change the culture of the public appointment process with the aim of improving diversity and eradicating under-representation on public boards. Also, the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.

[3] The recently created inter-departmental 'Public Appointments Forum' [the Forum] provides capacity for issues of under-representation and lack of diversity to be addressed across the N.I. Civil Service rather than on a departmental basis. The Forum should be tasked with ensuring that the new policy and framework at [1] above is articulated and disseminated across all Departments and it should be sufficiently resourced to carry out its work. It is also recommended that 'Diversity' should feature as a standing item on the agendas of the Forum.

[4] It is considered that the Forum might benefit from the inclusion of a challenge function, provided by an external member or members. This should be examined.

[5] It is believed that the establishment of diversity targets, set at overall and departmental levels, will lend focus and rigour to the diversity initiative. Work should begin on establishing such targets.

[6] Departments should conduct a statistical analysis of applications after each recruitment competition, to discern progress towards greater diversity. The departmental analysis should then be pooled for an overall picture. These analyses should inform the on-going development of policy and practice.

<sup>26</sup> Reproduced from Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (2014), *Under-representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: CPANI, pp.12-16.

**Awareness-raising recommendations**

[7] Mechanisms for raising awareness of public appointments are fragmented. Consideration should be given to a more centralised approach, perhaps using the NI Direct website. Vacancies should also be publicised through the public libraries network, which has proved successful in recent competitions. The nature of public appointment advertisements should be reviewed as they are seen by many to be unattractive to people outside the ‘usual circle’ of applicants. The imaginative use of technology should be more fully explored in the task of raising awareness.

[8] The use of case studies should be developed, portraying successes by individuals from under-represented groups who have gained places on public boards.

[9] All information on public appointments, e.g. ‘Make your Mark: A Guide to Public Appointments in Northern Ireland’, should be revised, in conjunction with CPA NI, to reflect the new policy and framework at [1] above, and should portray a proactive and focussed approach by Government to addressing under-representation and lack of diversity, whilst honouring and protecting the principle of selection on merit.

[10] A pilot project to raise awareness amongst potential applicants/interested parties is currently being considered by CPA NI and a Department. The results of this pilot should be disseminated across the Departments.

**Recruitment-process recommendations**

[11] Departments should include, in the 'Appointment Plan' which they produce for every public appointment competition, a section on diversity which sets out, for the Minister's approval, what steps [in outreach and process] will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees. CPA NI will include this requirement in the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

[12] The public appointment process has a tendency to be 'generic' in nature, i.e. focussed on making a 'public appointment' as opposed to appointing an individual to the board of a specific organisation, with its specific requirements of board members. Many examples have been cited, by panel members, of experienced candidates using 'stock answers' which they have developed to answer the commonly used questions in most public appointment competitions. Departments should focus the recruitment process more on the requirements of the particular organisation and its board.

[13] Departments should examine the opportunity to reduce the number of statutory nominations to the boards of their arms-length bodies, opening up positions for a wider range of applicants.

[14] Departments could consider interviewing a larger number of applicants where is appropriate to do so.

[15] Departments, in populating boards, should be 'building teams' rather than 'filling slots'. This will lead to such measures as:

- conducting an audit of board skills and planning to recruit against identified needs, including the types of community-based skills and perspectives that are not well reflected in the standard set of competencies typically used in current public appointment processes.
- if necessary creating different categories of board member, with specific application form questions and interview questions.
- looking critically at job descriptions and person specifications to reflect this approach and widen the range of potential applicants.
- looking critically at the criteria and not sticking to the 'tried and tested' criteria used frequently across public appointments.
- changing the written / verbal balance of the process where appropriate, e.g. it might be better, on the 'communication' criterion, to require the candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities throughout the interview or by means of a presentation rather than providing a written 'stock answer' on the application form.
- avoiding the clichéd questions; developing questions that draw out a proper demonstration of competency.
- reducing the number of selection criteria where appropriate, or asking applicants to fulfil some, not all, of the criteria, on the basis that the board does not need one omogeneous group of board members who replicate each other's skills and abilities.
- reviewing the use of 'knowledge' criteria, in which there are many examples of candidates 'cutting and pasting' website answers; instead make these criteria such that candidates have to give short presentations at interview.

**Analysis recommendations**

[16] ‘Multiple appointments’ [when one individual is appointed to two or more boards] have been cited by consultees as reducing opportunities for others to secure public appointments. The statistics on multiple appointments should be examined and policy developed that will guide Departments and their appointment panels on how to handle the issue. Some restriction on multiple appointments would be seen, by many, as evidence of the culture change that is sought in public appointments.

[17] Succession planning for board membership has been patchy in many Departments and arms-length bodies and should be improved. Recent CPA NI audits have highlighted this requirement. This work by Departments should include consideration of diversity and how succession planning can incorporate diversity planning.

[18] Remuneration of board members does not exhibit consistency, with some board members being unremunerated. This is believed by many to be a disincentive to potential applicants. An audit should be conducted across the Departments to determine the full facts, and guidelines produced to assist Departments in dealing consistently and fairly with the matter.



**Outreach recommendations**

[19] Departments should specifically encourage applications from ‘nontraditional backgrounds’; they should include this in the application form and should target interest groups and sectoral groups.

[20] Departments should consider use of the ‘Guaranteed Interview’ scheme which has had some success in bringing forward for interview candidates with a disability who demonstrate in the application form that they have the basic competencies for the board position. Also, with regard to applicants in receipt of various disability benefits, guidelines should be developed to address the problem of potential applicants being dissuaded from applying for remunerated posts because of the potential disruption to their benefits.

[21] Departments should consider using a variation of the welcoming statement commonly included in advertisements for public appointments, to ensure that it is clear they are seeking the widest range of applicants, including applicants from the private and third sectors.

[22] The content, language and style of candidate information packs should be reviewed, with input by CPA NI, in line with the new policy and framework at [1] above.

[23] More support should be provided for individuals who are considering applying for public appointments. Short seminars and / or papers could be prepared to help potential applicants understand what public appointments are, how they get to know what opportunities are being advertised, how to understand the competency-based selection process and what panels are looking for, how to deal with the application and interview process and how to portray their skills and abilities as added value to the board.

[24] Very few younger people have been able to secure Board positions; senior officials and recruitment panels have often expressed reluctance to take the risk they see attached to placing relatively inexperienced people on boards, even when the skills and perspectives of a younger person might add value to the board of a particular organisation. A range of possibilities exist, for introducing younger people to ‘board life’, including ‘Shadow boards’, mentoring relationships for young board members, and internships. Departments should consider developing such schemes, perhaps initially on a pilot basis.

**CPA NI action recommendations**

[25] The audits of CPA NI, which include examination of departmental efforts on diversity in each competition, should include examination of how the competition arrangements fulfil the requirements of the new policy and framework.

[26] CPA NI should ensure that Independent Assessors are trained and enabled to challenge pre-conceived ideas as to what is required of potential appointees and encourage recognition, at appointment panel level, of the benefits of diversity.