

Press release: Review launched to encourage more disabled people to take up high profile public appointments

The review will be led by Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE and is expected to report in, later in 2018.

The review will explore why the proportion of applicants for public appointments who declare a disability, is low compared to the UK population as a whole. It will also explore how the process could be improved, to encourage more applications from disabled people.

It is part of the Government's Diversity Action Plan which also includes an ambition that by 2022, half of all public appointees should be female and 14% should be from ethnic minorities, bringing representation on public boards in line with the wider population of England and Wales.

Public appointments are high profile and influential positions on boards of public bodies which run, regulate and advise our public service. These can include Chairs and other senior non-executive positions and range from Court Visitors to Commissioners and Ombudsmen.

Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden said:

It is essential that public appointees are truly representative of the society they serve. Diverse public boards are more effective, benefiting from fresh perspectives, new ideas, vigorous challenge and broad experiences. It is both morally right to ensure greater participation from disabled people but I also believe it will lead to better decision-making.

I'm thrilled to announce that Lord Holmes will be leading the review. He combines expertise in accessibility, diversity and inclusion, as well as a wealth of personal experience on public boards.

The Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE said:

I'm delighted that the government is looking seriously at this issue. Public appointments play a fundamental role in shaping society as well as within the organisations themselves. I look forward to working with the government to better understand and improve the recruitment process so that we can address the reality that whilst talent is everywhere, opportunity is not.

Today's announcement was made at the Public Chairs' Forum Diversity, Inclusion and Equality for Boards event, where the Minister spoke to Chairs of Public Bodies about his ambition for diversity in public appointments. It follows a commitment made in the Government's Diversity Action Plan, launched in December 2017, to commission a review into the barriers facing those with visible and non-visible disabilities when considering public appointments.