

Members discussed the latest developments in the public appointments process with the Commissioner for Public Appointments as his five-year term draws to close. The following are recommendations he and our members make for areas to drive improvement.

Key recommendations by area:

Working through Covid-19

- In the short term, it's vital to **progress appointments** as much as possible to prevent a logjam; acknowledging that appointments are likely to take longer. [More in Peter's blog.](#)

Reforming the process – what you can do

- Organisations should take the initiative to offer schemes such as **mentoring and shadow boards** to widen the talent pool and instill confidence in future candidates. There are already many exemplary schemes to use as templates for example [Boardroom Apprentice](#).
- A strong **outreach plan** is essential to ensure your competition reaches a diverse audience. There must be a willingness to take **broader life experience** into account on CVs.

Long term progress – external factors

- The pace of appointments continues to be slow, with many taking longer than three months. It is therefore vital that **communications with candidates** are strong, especially during the ministerial sign-off phase as lack of updates leads to candidates presuming rejection and moving on.
- All questions of **due diligence** should be covered at interview stage to allow candidates the opportunity to respond. Without this, we risk losing candidates with diversity of thought without well-established reasons.
- There needs to be a **concerted push from the centre** to improve diversity. While robust and well-evidenced diversity action plans are in place, ministerial turnover has led to a loss of momentum and accountability. Ministers must be further incentivized to deliver.
- What makes a candidate **'risky'** should be reviewed, appreciating that social media has transformed the way people share content. People who have previously held/perceivably demonstrated opinions should not be excluded if they take restraint in future. There's a distinction between before and after appointment, though media comment may not reflect this.
- The blanket ban on **search firms** should be reviewed, as whilst a legacy cost-saving measure that attracts a lot of interest, there is sometimes no other way to access talented individuals who are out of your network.
- **Departmental performance** is inconsistent, since some run competitions regularly and others rarely – the latter departments having no institutional memory for how competitions should be run. Cross-departmental knowledge sharing is therefore key.

Areas for further study:

- **Diversity** progress is patchy and with virtual recruitment, there are concerns that it's harder to reach out and attract a wider range of candidates.
- The impact of **remuneration** on diversity must be fully understood, which we will be covering in a thematic out later this year.

PCF will also be conducting research in this area to explore the value of personal objectives; equal merits; remote working; outreach and language/placement of job adverts on diversity.