

**COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, 25 October 2000
<b>Time:</b>	2.00pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

**Title: REPORT ON PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS**

The attached report has been submitted to the Committee by Wendy Morgan, Senior Personnel Officer, BBC Cymru Wales.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Draft**

**2 October 2000**

**Report for the National Assembly for Wales**  
**Equal Opportunities Committee**  
**on Public Appointments to**  
**Assembly sponsored Public Bodies**

**Wendy Morgan**  
**Senior Personnel Officer, BBC Wales**

**Draft report for the National Assembly for Wales, Equal Opportunities Committee on public appointments to Assembly sponsored public bodies**

Introduction 2

- reflecting and serving the communities of Wales
- active citizenship
- fitness to serve
- not a quick fix

Executive summary 4

Recommendations for positive action 6

Defining the job 11

- core competencies
- specialised skills
- corporate governance

- realistic assessment of commitment

### Attracting candidates 13

- adverts are not the only way
- understanding the motivation
- searching for the talent
- nurturing and training
- partnerships and specialist input
- adopting innovative methods and sharing best practice
- fair selection

### Recruiting candidates 16

- interviews are not the only way
- the recruitment process
- fair selection and equality training for the interviewers
- objective testing
- timetabling

### Retaining and developing people 18

- feedback to successful and unsuccessful candidates
- training and induction
- appraisal and performance review
- home/work life balance

### Job evaluation and remuneration 19

## Publicity 20

- UK Public Service Week in November
- Find out about public service
- the longer term strategy in Wales

## Active citizenship 21

- the personal and social education curriculum
- public service in the trade unions and the public, private and voluntary sectors

## Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness 22

## Acknowledgements and references 23

## **Introduction**

The terms of reference for this report are *'to advise on a programme of action designed to achieve applications for public appointments which are broadly representative of the Welsh population, particularly in respect of gender, race, disability; and which enable appointments to be made so that public bodies better reflect the communities they serve.'*

The National Assembly for Wales and the United Kingdom Government rely on a wide range of bodies to help deliver policies. The involvement of people, from different backgrounds and with different life experiences, in public bodies enhances accountability and provides expertise. It offers the opportunity to play an important and constructive part in local communities as well as contributing to the government process. Such work is generally part-time and usually unpaid although some appointments are paid.

The National Assembly for Wales has responsibility for nearly 600 appointments to 143 public bodies, ranging from the Boards of NHS Trusts and Health Authorities, major Assembly sponsored public bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Sports and Arts Councils for Wales and the Welsh Language Board, to a wide range of advisory and smaller bodies such as the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales and Community Health Councils.

Whilst the number of women holding public appointments in Wales is rising, the target is to secure a year-on-year increase from the current figure of 31% to 40% in the year 2003 and to work towards a broadly equal representation of men and women in public appointments on each body. As of 1999, around 30% of applicants were women and the aim is to increase this to 50% by the end of 2001.

In 1999, 1% of appointments were held by members of the black and ethnic minority communities. The target is to increase this and in the case of those public bodies that directly serve communities with a high proportion of black and ethnic minorities, to reflect the proportions in those communities.

The proportion of applicants with a self-reported disability will be monitored with the aim of securing a year-on-year increase to 5% by the year 2003.

The age and occupation (or otherwise) of applicants and those appointed will be monitored with a view to ensuring a wider cross section of people are appointed.

For a variety of reasons, some people may not feel ready to give the necessary and regular time commitment to serve on a National Assembly for Wales sponsored public body but still have a desire and a willingness to 'do something for the community'. There are many opportunities for taking on a voluntary role in the public sector, including becoming a school governor, a magistrate or a member of a Local Authority or Police consultative group. Many skills used in these roles are transferable to public bodies. Other skills, learned in work, as a parent or carer, an active trade unionist or member of a political party, or as a voluntary worker, also add value to serving on a public body. There are many active citizens who are unaware of opportunities to make more of a contribution and many others who view the appointments to public bodies with scepticism. Some are actively hostile to the concept, seeing it as a way of appointing political place men and adding a class of non-elected representation.

Transparent, fair and open competition for appointments, made on merit and based on equality of opportunity, will ensure those serving on public bodies in Wales not only have the skills and specialist experience needed but clearly demonstrate they have the selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership to behave ethically and responsibly when delivering services to and for the people of Wales through the National Assembly.

The culture of active citizenship, as a way of contributing to and enhancing communities and ensuring public accountability, is not yet embedded in the democratic life of Wales and it will take time, first for behaviour to change and later, attitudes.

## **Executive summary**

This report describes the present situation with regard to public appointments in Wales and makes recommendations for action that are by no means exhaustive. Given the time constraints, it was not possible to carry out detailed research in all areas; so an indication has been given where further work may be necessary or desirable.

There are talented people in Wales, who have the experience for public service.

The challenge is to attract, recruit and once appointed, retain and develop them.

There is no quick fix and a longer term strategy must be planned

The recommendations for action are based on best practice fair selection and the report is heavily weighted towards defining the job (for that is what a public appointment is) attracting and recruiting candidates. There is the opportunity to take action which is pro-active, imaginative, widens access and closes the knowledge gap.

Equality of opportunity must be mainstreamed into all the working practices and equality of output evaluated.

One of the dangers in a report such as this, is the expectation that it gives all the answers.

The reality is that there are numerous partners, with whom the Equal Opportunities Committee works, in the government of Wales who are more than happy to share knowledge and information and to give advice. Ask them, ask the civil servants and ask others. They have more ideas than I.

## **The big idea**

The recommendations for positive action look onerous but by working with partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors, the trade unions and others it is possible to tap a virtually 'free' resource.

Use the partners for specialist input into appropriate and lawful positive action e.g defining jobs, core competencies and drafting adverts using inclusive language; advising on skills training and access to that training.

Draw on the expertise of the Assembly sponsored public bodies (WDA, NHS Equality Unit) and other public bodies in Wales, such as academic institutions, the Local Authorities, particularly Education and Lifelong Learning, BBC Wales. Involve the TUC, WEA, charities and the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action. Large corporate organisations, the IWA, the CBI, Independent broadcasters, Business in the Community, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation may all have a valuable contribution to make.

Use the Wales Assembly of Women, National Wales Women's Coalition and Chwarae Teg. Much information may be gained from the experiences of the Scottish and Northern Ireland Executives and the UK Public Appointments Unit.

In the same way as BBC Wales has facilitated my secondment to the National Assembly for Wales, others may be asked to do so. Do not underestimate the mutual benefit and the feeling that it is 'good for the organisation, good for the Assembly and good for the individual'.

I have made suggestions that are by no means prescriptive.

The same care for equality of opportunity must be shown for secondments as for public appointments and they should be monitored.

By working through the actions in the way suggested, not only will public appointments better reflect the communities they serve but those involved will become part of the active citizenship - of which public service is but one element - that is essential for living in a devolved, culturally diverse, democratic Wales.

## **Recommendations for positive action**

*Partners/further work shown in italics*

### **Defining the job**

- Define the relationship between the Chair and other non-executive members of the public body and between the appointed members and the Chief Executive.

*Janet Trotter, an academic and Chair of NHS Trust for South and West Wales is putting together a national training pack for non-executive members. Teresa Brooks, also of the NHS and based in London, might be asked to contribute her expertise on training in the working relationship between a Chair and a Chief Executive of a public body.*

- Draw up accurate job and person specifications, which define the core competencies, specialised skills and essential experience, using clear, inclusive, realistic and unambiguous language.

*Bring together small teams consisting of the current Chair and Chief Executive of the public body, a member of the public appointments unit, an external professional with skills in job definition ( Local Authority or recruitment consultant) and an equality specialist (EOC, CRE, DRC, academic, or public sector) to facilitate a brainstorming session, based on a National Assembly brief for the sponsored public body.*

- Develop a working definition of Corporate Governance.

*Use existing information from the UK Public Appointments Unit. Try a short swap between London and Cardiff.*

- Make a realistic assessment of the time commitment for the public appointment, ask how many days a month are required, not only for board and committee meetings but for background reading, preparation, travelling, meeting members of the public. Consider ways of working 'smarter'.

*Ask the existing members, not only how much time they spend individually and collectively but also how they would like to work and what ways they can think of for reducing the time whilst maintaining or improving their effectiveness. This could be a research project for an undergraduate taking a Business Studies degree at a Welsh University and might be a vacation internship with the public appointments unit.*

## **Attracting candidates**

- Jazz up the adverts, making them clear, inclusive and straight forward.

*Brainstorm, using the job definition information, one or two adverts. Use a journalist, advertising agency, a public appointments person and an equality specialist and follow up with paired secondments; so, for example the public appointments person may spend a day a week for 4 weeks with an advertising agency and vice versa.*

- Be imaginative with the print medium, using press releases, articles, news and human interest stories associated with the public body, in support of the advertisement. Use alternative publications and media (radio, television, the internet, leaflets, flyers and posters).

*Pull in marketing and press experts from the public body whose job is being advertised to advise on a marketing campaign. Ask the voluntary sector or a charity with a high publicity profile to share their experiences. Ask the equality partners for their advice on what publications should be targeted.*

- Find out what motivates people to apply for a public appointment

*Pilot research in Wales on what motivates women to apply for a public appointment, to take up a post and to continue with it; what puts women off applying. This should be combined with finding out where people expect to come across information on public appointments.. This research might be commissioned from a University in Wales (Prof. Terry Rees in Cardiff or Dr Julia Edwards, Glamorgan) with a post graduate or PhD course. Follow up the pilot with other*

*under represented groups*

- Search for the talent in the community and go out and meet people already contributing to public life.

*This is a big piece of work that needs more time spent on it. Consider a secondment. Seek the help of Assembly partners in identifying organisations and individuals. Try using Recruitment Consultants. Apply equality of opportunity.*

- Train those with potential in the core competencies and give the opportunity for others with the competencies to gain relevant experience.

*Ask the DRC about positive action training in core competencies to overcome the double deficit experienced by many disabled people. Ask Chwarae Teg on understanding business and finance, about the experience of women returners and the Springboard programme. Use the EOC Equality Exchange model. Discuss with the CRE the needs of black and ethnic minority women in MEWN Cymru. Talk to the TUC about representational and negotiating skills. Encourage broadcasters to share presentation skills.*

## **Recruiting candidates**

- Plan the process

*Discuss with Assembly Secretaries the possibility of staggering the end of the period of office for those appointed to public bodies. This would need to happen only once. Edwina Hart in Cabinet.*

*Further work should be done to set up one central recruitment centre offering professional advice, consistency and adding value to the process.*

*Rather than being task oriented, a unified Wales Public Appointments Unit should learn from best practice in other areas, work 'smarter' and have greater concern for the quality and equality of output. This is a major piece of work that is outside my remit.*

*Public appointments staff should book the interview date in advance and put it in the advert; so candidates have a clear idea of the timescale.*

- Prepare a selection pack for candidates, giving clear, unambiguous information that is inclusive and allows an individual to make an informed decision whether s/he satisfies the criteria for the job.

*Include the job/person specification and the core competencies and specialised skill/experience. Emphasise the value of difference. Make it clear that candidates need not satisfy all the criteria and that selection is aimed at achieving a balance of the competencies and the range of specialised skills and experience across the team, specifying those that can be learned or developed. Explain the timescale and the methods of selection. Devise a clear and straightforward application form that is based on evidence of competence as opposed to biographical data and is consistently applied. Make the information available in different formats and languages. Tell people how long the process will take, keep them informed at every stage and specify how feedback will be given. Indicate where further information is available e.g. Internet, electronic form of info pack, e-mail, publications. Applicants need to know that being encouraged to apply for a public appointment, being written to and invited to apply or being offered training as a positive action is not an indicator for definite appointment. They will be subject to the same rigorous and fair selection process as everyone else.*

*This work lends itself to a secondment, either as one piece of work or as topics, drawing on best practice across Wales. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has an excellent library. Students of the CIPD studying and working across Wales are always looking for good projects. The UK Appointments Unit has experience and there is advice available from the EOC, CRE and DRC.*

- Fair selection and equality training should be a pre-requisite for everyone involved in the recruitment process, not only the interviewers but Chairs of Public Bodies and civil servants.

*There are many organisations both public, private, trade union and voluntary agencies that offer this training. The EOC Equality Exchange runs courses; so does the BBC and the NHS Equality Unit. Ask for a place(s) to be made available for individuals to attend as guests. This may make it easier to accommodate the large numbers involved and diminish, though not obliterate, the need for bespoke training. The committee of a public body should make this training an objective. Monitor the attendance.*

- Use the job definition/person specification to devise appropriate methods of testing competencies.

*Whether applying objective skills and ability testing, work sampling or observed exercises, use only trained British Psychological Society Certificated testers and test administrators.. Consider training staff in-house or borrowing qualified people from partner organisations, swapping staff where possible. These actions are not as expensive as using consultants.*

- Build a talent database, with sophisticated interrogation, that is kept updated. Add competent people who already been tested and satisfy the core criteria but may

otherwise be lost to the system.

*Further work to be done here. The skills should be found within the Assembly.*

## **Retaining and developing people**

- Provide training and induction for all those newly appointed to public bodies.

*See suggestion made under 'defining the job'. Also use the public body training expertise.*

- Carry out appraisal and personal performance review.

*This is part of the normal business of Chairs and Committees, to develop members of public bodies. It affords the opportunity of finding out why people stop wanting to serve on a public body and choose to leave.*

- Mainstream equality into the working ways of the committees.

*Due regard should be given for the individual and collective needs of those serving on public bodies; so there is a balance between home and working life. Committees should consider family friendly ways of working and Chwarae Teg and the EOC have a wealth of information and advice to give, as have the CRE and the DRC, especially on access.*

## **Job evaluation and remuneration**

- Although not strictly part of my remit, there is an equal pay question concerning remuneration for serving on a public body.

*Further work should be undertaken on job evaluation of all public appointments and the attendant remuneration.*

## **Publicity**

- Public Service Week in Wales might usefully target Llais Ifanc, a diverse group of young men and women from across Wales and in the future, shadow suitable role models in public bodies and report to the Assembly Equal Opportunities Committee on their shared experiences. Support with press releases, photo opportunities and radio and television exposure. Add it on-line to the Assembly web site.

*Others are working on this. Find some best practice examples of people performing public duties amongst public service organisations, trade unions, the voluntary sector and private*

*business and promote them. Christine Lewis and Enid Rowlands have had very good experiences of public appointments. Ask Assembly members for other names, reflecting the communities across Wales.*

- Public Appointments Day is just the beginning. The next stage of a longer term strategy to 2003 would be for Wales to have its own campaign to help people find out about public bodies.

*This would be a separate piece of work outside the remit of this report.*

*One suggestion is to commission from BBC Wales Education, with joint funding and possibly TEC money for Lifelong Learning, a series of television programmes with a back up pack and video, available in English and Welsh. In the same week as transmission, activities would be arranged across Wales and given news coverage. BBC Radio Wales has a campaigns producer who would help co-ordinate coverage across the channel and link to Radio Cymru. There would be opportunities for exposure on the Sarah Dickins programme and phone ins on other programmes. The BBC might set up an on-line forum. This needs further discussion.*

## **Active citizenship**

- Revisit the personal and social education curriculum to include more on active citizenship and public service, possibly using work experience.

*Work of the Assembly pre-16 Education committee and the Equal Opportunities committee.*

- Audit the situation on paid time off in the public sector.

*Further research needed on this. Encourage the take up of this statutory right within the public sector in Wales, in partnership with the trade unions.*

## **Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness**

Further work needs to be done to devise the short, medium and longer term strategy, determining the timescale and agreeing the planned actions against which progress may be measured. Targets in respect of gender, race and disability and collecting data are straightforward. Some of this is being done but needs analysis. More difficult is evaluating what difference these actions will make to the effectiveness of public bodies in the long run in terms of equality of output.

## **Defining the job**

The key documents for the whole of the recruitment, objective setting, training and

development, performance review, job evaluation and remuneration processes are the job description and the person specification. They define the role, the responsibilities and the competencies needed for the person appointed to succeed.

They should be clear, realistic and unambiguous so potential applicants are able to make a rational decision as to whether to return an application form. They define the relationship between the Chair and other non-executive members of the public body and between the appointed members and the Chief Executive.

The **core competencies** (not an exhaustive list) include

- representing the views of others
- having a well informed opinion
- articulating arguments
- questioning and scrutiny
- working collectively (teamwork/committee experience)
- presentation skills
- report reading and summarising
- taking responsibility and calling others to account
- planning and action
- effective communication and interpersonal skills
- leadership
- promoting equality of opportunity

The **specialised skills** may be specific such as a recognised qualification in finance or personnel. Applicants may need to demonstrate a clear interest in or background relating to a particular subject area that they have pursued either professionally or privately. A public body may require experts in a particular field, or a chair or vice-chair with experience of operating at a senior management level. They may need a spokesperson with particular skill in handling the media.

What puts people off applying, particularly women, is the assumption that all the specialised skills and all the competencies are needed. It should be made clear that the committee of the public body is made up of a range of abilities and experience, combining to be greater than the sum of the individual parts.

**Corporate governance** is a phrase that needs explanation. It is not readily understood as a phrase but is easy to understand in a common sense way.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life set out 'seven principles of public life', to which public office holders should adhere. They include, for example, accountability, which means that you are willing to give an account of your collective decisions and activities and submit yourself to personal scrutiny; integrity, which includes declaring (and if necessary giving up) certain private interests; and selflessness, which means taking decisions solely in the public interest. Does it mean declaring that conviction for drink driving 6 years ago or having a County Court judgement against you for not paying a £150 debt on a storecard? People need to know.

**A realistic assessment of the commitment** of time and effort for public appointments should be made. Potential applicants need to know how much time they will have to spend on a public body, whether they be employed, self-employed or unwaged. How much time will be spent on committee work/meeting the public/reading papers and preparation/away from home? Does the time expand in relation to the time available or the perceived importance of the body or the personality applying male values to self assessing a 'big' job? Are members of the body, individually and collectively, able to work smarter? Who is measuring the quality (and equality) of the output?

## **Attracting candidates**

Why would you look at the jobs pages in the Western Mail, or any other newspaper, if you weren't looking for a job?

**Advertisements are not the only way** of attracting candidates. They are just one of a number of ways and when used, should be done so to the greatest effect. At present, the uniform advertising style of the National Assembly for Wales makes it almost impossible to distinguish between public notices, employee recruitment and public appointments. The layout and close, small type may be cost effective in terms of space but is not easy to read nor decipher and makes a poor impact. There is no textphone number, although they carry the 'two ticks', Positive about Disabled People logo. The negative impact has the effect of being unapproachable, isolated and insulated and already stitched up, reinforcing the impression that public appointments are political appointments of the great and the good, who just wait for the tap on the shoulder to be asked to take on a particular role.

In advertisements, use language that is inclusive. Be aware of phrases and descriptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against women, disabled people or black and ethnic minority people. That fluency in Welsh is an essential requirement for all public appointments. What about 'flyers' in other languages such as Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Chinese and Punjabi? Adverts with fewer words in a bigger type are easier to read. Are audio cassette or braille versions available?

The desire to put as much information in as possible is understandable but there are more punchy, attractive ways of doing this that still retain the essence of the job. Working to the core competencies, specialised skills and a brief statement of context would be a start. Some of the language used is not inclusive. What is meant by 'an energetic, thrusting leader with vision' and what image does it conjure up in the mind? Is there an age limit and can that be justified?

More imaginative ways, still using the print medium, have recently been used for the appointment of Magistrates. In the Pontypridd Observer recently there was an article about the job of a magistrates clerk, told through a local man's personal story. There were all the 'Just look who's been in Court' pieces scattered about other pages (aren't we all nosy?) and turning the page was an eye catching advert 'You too could be a Magistrate'. Most people would have formed an opinion of the work of a Justice of the Peace by the time they reached the advert.

Find out where people would expect and do look for public appointment adverts and notices. Which newspapers and publications are read by whom and what are their circulation figures? Where would women, black and ethnic minority people and disabled people expect to come across information on public appointments? Carry out the research and ask National Assembly Partnership Agencies for their opinions and experience.

Use different publications (local papers, free papers, women's magazines, 'red top' daily newspapers, charity publications, the Big Issue Cymru, Trade Union newsletters, Local Authority staff magazines, the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association Newsletter, The Voice and more), press releases and colour reportage to grab people's attention and point them in the direction of an information line, web page or advert.

Advertise on the Internet - 69% of young people aged 16 -24 surf the web; nearly half the adult working population surfs the web but nearly a third of people in the UK take no interest whatsoever. Use hot links from the main Assembly sites and links from other official sites such as News and Current Affairs (BBC Wales, HTV, S4C) and keep them topical.

It is important to **understand the motivation** behind public service. What makes people want to take up a public appointment?

Some suggestions are:

To give something back to society; for those who have left paid employment after a long career, to continue to use their skills and expertise; to gain personal and public kudos or power; because someone important has encouraged them to get involved; because they have a personal axe to grind.

There is little point in just waiting for likely candidates to respond to an advert.

You have to go out and **search for the talent**.

There are many talented people in Wales already contributing to public life, (serving as governors, active in the PTA, running football, rugby, netball or swimming teams, organising fund raising events for charities and village fetes, organising the celebration of religious festivals, sitting as a Town Councillor, being a trade union representative, a student union officer, being the local correspondent for the weekly newspaper, being the treasurer of the allotment society, the volunteer organiser in a Bank, retiring from General Practice and many, many more) who, with encouragement might wish to transfer their existing skills and experience to a National Assembly for Wales sponsored public body and with training, learn more skills.

Find out where people meet in the community and how they may be contacted directly. Use flyers, talks, presentations, 'Any questions?' sessions. Put up displays in Libraries, at venues wherever and whenever the Assembly meets across Wales. Go to the Women's Institute, the Students Union debates, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Community Centres. Try press releases.

Do interviews and phone-ins on Radio and think about a television promotion around the Assembly coverage (adverts are very, very expensive!)

Use the assembly website to explain about public appointments. Close the knowledge gap with information - Frequently Asked Questions, demystify the terminology, a website guide, a chat room with public figures and politicians, leaflets, library material - consultation and feedback using an e-forum, navigate your way to the public appointment posts currently vacant, fill in a questionnaire to see what experience you need, complete an application on-line. Keep up to date and keep going back.

The Appointments Unit circulates adverts to a long list of diverse organisations but there is no feedback from the names on the list nor monitoring to determine which applications came from contacts on that list.

Look for the unusual. For example, during the fuel blockade, Wales Today interviewed the spokesperson for the petrol retailers association, who was an Asian man and the spokesperson for the protesting truck drivers, a white man. Both were articulate, well informed and presented their views cogently and forcibly. Think about the Welsh Diaspora and

individuals who wish to come home again to Wales. There is a shortage of G.P.s. in parts of the South Wales Valleys as doctors who came to Britain from the Asian sub continent years ago reach retirement age. What will those doctors be doing in their retirement? They have many transferable skills that could be used in public service and some of them are probably doing so already in their communities. This is only one of many untapped sources of talent.

A longer term strategy of **nurturing and training** will be needed to tap other sources of talent and to grow people who have some of the core competencies, have the potential to acquire or learn more but do not have the experience and are not yet ready to compete for and take up positions in National Assembly sponsored public bodies. Identify and nurture those who are already serving on public bodies such as school governing bodies, community councils; so they gain confidence and experience and are trained in core skills.

There is a linked trajectory to equip individuals to compete for public appointments.

For example, where a woman is vice-chair of a school governing body, she might be encouraged to stand for chair, having received the appropriate training in chairing committees, through the Local Authority Governor training scheme. She would gain both the skills and the confidence to apply for a public appointment, once her term of office as parent governor ends with her child leaving that school.

By using the **partnerships and specialist input** that already exist within the Assembly Equal Opportunities Committee, valuable insights may be gained. The Equal Opportunities Commission has a wealth of information on sex discrimination in advertising, the Commission for Racial Equality knows the profile of professionals and entrepreneurs from the black and ethnic minority communities in Wales, the Disability Rights Commission will explain the culture of learned helplessness acquired through bad experience and segregation for many of the 400 to 600 thousand people in Wales affected by disability. These partners will advise on appropriate and lawful positive action that equips people to compete on equal terms for public appointments. Other organisations with a specialism that would input into the process of attracting candidates are other public bodies. Expertise exists within the Assembly itself. There will be expertise in the private and voluntary sectors to be exploited. Use search agents from the private sector to add to the pool of applicants.

In addition to advertising, there are ways of attracting candidates by **adopting innovative methods and sharing best practice**. These involve being pro-active and going out into the community and targeting people and groups directly, where they are and where they meet. Methods should be used that do not exclude sections of society.

Whatever traditional or new methods are used to attract candidates, they must be fair, open and promote equality of opportunity. It is vital that all those involved in public appointments are trained in **fair selection** and that every part of the process complies.

## Recruiting candidates

The present system relies on an application form, upon which shortlisting decisions are made and an interview that may last only 40 minutes.

**Interviews are not the only way** of recruiting people but they do have face validity; you expect to be interviewed. Interviews are effective if carried out fairly, consistently and with as little subjectivity as possible, by trained and experienced interviewers.

Responsibility for **the recruitment process** rests with at least two areas. There is the main public appointments unit in Cathays Park, with the NHS appointments unit in the adjacent corridor. I suspect there are small recruitment units in each of the subject areas. It is difficult to pinpoint where the professional responsibility lies for the recruitment and selection for public appointments in Wales. From my limited exposure, there appear to be different ways of doing things, with little or no cross over. There is little consistency in application forms. There is consistency in the advertising style - all dull. Although not questioning the dedication of the staff in getting the task done, some of the methods appear inefficient, administratively burdensome and demanding of both time and resources. Like waiting for a bus, nothing comes along for ages and then three arrive together; so it is with public appointment vacancies. The jobs seem to come up for renewal in bunches. Lessons may be learned from best practice elsewhere, including other parts of the civil service in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the UK public appointments unit. The aim is to appoint the best and the most talented people to public appointments in Wales and this may have been lost in the desire to get the job filled. By staggering the ends of periods of office for those appointed to public bodies the workload would be more spread more evenly. Not only does that make room for improvements to the recruitment process but more importantly, it means there is less overall disruption to the working committee of the public body. Automatic renewal of appointments might be deemed unfair and consideration must be given to introducing a policy of re-application.

Not only should there be **fair selection and equality training for the interviewers** but for everyone, including Chairs of Public Bodies, independent assessors and civil servants, involved in the selection and recruitment process.

Quality selection depends largely on the amount of objective information that may be used to assess candidates' skills, abilities or potential to fulfil the competencies required to carry out the job. **Objective testing** gives a bank of information upon which, together with the information on the application form, shortlisting decisions may be made. It will also make the interviewing process more focused, concentrating questions on competencies that do not lend themselves to objective testing, such as experience, effective verbal communication and interpersonal skills. The skill for the personnel professional is to use reliable and valid tests, based on the competencies, that add value. Looking at the list of core competencies, it would be feasible to devise a work sampling observed group exercise to test 'working collectively' and 'planning

and action'. Another piece of work that could be done by candidates at home, reflecting the reality of the job, would be to read a report, summarise the main points and prepare questions for scrutiny. Presented in a written form would also test written communication skills. The appointments unit would be in a strong position to present interview panel members with a recommended shortlist, based on objective information. Experience has shown that the quality of candidates put forward for interview is improved whilst the quantity reduces. That means less actual time but more quality time for Assembly Members and others spent on interviewing, which should make it easier for civil servants to organise dates and co-ordinate diaries.

One word of caution here. Tests should only be used where they are inclusive and do not favour one gender over another, one race or culture over another or make it difficult for someone with a disability to take part. The same should be applied to the interview and access to the interview.

At the moment there does not seem to be the time to do all this 'extra' work and get the jobs filled. There is understandable apprehension among civil servants that widening access will increase the number of applicants and put an intolerable burden on them. Add the need to overhaul the system and the staff may feel overwhelmed at the prospect of change. Better **timetabling** of vacancies, through improved planning and staggering the ending of periods of office, together with a longer term plan to 2003, would give the necessary space to work on improving the recruitment process.

The bank of information should not be wasted. There will be **competent people who have already been tested** who may have training and development needs or lack relevant experience for a particular body. These 'also suitables' or fast track candidates should not be lost to the system. There is an existing database but has insufficient detailed updated information for sophisticated interrogation.

### **Retaining and developing people**

It is important for the credibility of public appointments that there is a mechanism for **feedback to successful and unsuccessful candidates**.

Many people are bruised by the long, drawn out process. Their experience is of little contact with the system, they do not know how far the application has progressed and they feel let down and rejected at the end of it. There is nothing more disheartening than being told, 'You did a good interview but somebody did better on the day'. Even when successful, candidates get no feedback on the harrowing experience.

In a public service, the public has the right to be treated better.

The objective information that will be amassed during the selection process makes feedback

easier to give in a sensitive and constructive way, with the opportunity to suggest other ways of making a contribution to public life. It adds value.

Positive actions, including training, to equip potential applicants to compete for jobs have already been mentioned. Once appointed, people will need **training and induction** in the new rôle. Information from the recruitment process, together with the job and person specifications will form the basis for identifying the training needs. A good induction programme into the work of the public body and the committee will assist newly appointed people to make an early contribution.

Defining the job accurately and honestly will make **appraisal and performance review** of the individual straightforward. Everyone wants to know, 'How am I doing?'

It helps grow people not only in the present rôle but for future public service. This should be normal business for chairs and committees and is another way of mainstreaming equality of opportunity into public service. It is also important to find out why people stop wanting to serve on a public body and leave.

Some people give up public service because of the difficulties in managing the **home/work life balance**. This could be expanded to home/work/public service/caring/get a life balance. It does not just mean providing crèche facilities for young mothers. It means taking due regard for the individual and collective needs of those serving on public bodies. Planning the length of meetings, where, when and how frequently they are held, travelling time, support for carers, length of time away from home or overnight are all contributory factors. Just as few meetings are held on a Sunday and (never?) on Christmas Day, recognise and respect that other religious groups have their day of prayer and religious festivals. Find more effective ways of communicating e.g. e-mail, video conferencing, personal computers and IT support.

### **Job evaluation and remuneration**

*Gendering gravitas - a serious job is very important, should be paid more and no one's going to take it seriously if it's done by a woman.*

Representation of women at the highest levels in public bodies, just as it is in employment, is low; women tend towards the lower profile jobs, are paid less or are not paid at all. There seems to be a pecking order, with wide ranging payments and for no obvious reason.

There are also concerns about paid time off to serve on public bodies especially where colleagues have to cover or where the work is left, awaiting your return. For those who are working pro bono and the self employed, the loss of income may not compensate sufficiently for the time expended. Although a few may make public service a career and see public service remuneration as earnings, there has to be some definition as to what is reasonable

reimbursement. Employers and Small and Medium sized Enterprises would welcome a financial contribution to offset paid time off.

## **Publicity**

### **UK Public Service week begins on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November**

The aims are:

- To raise public awareness in relation to the framework of public appointments which affect local, national and regional communities;
- to give members of the public the comfort and confidence in the appointment process and its regulation
- to recognise, respect and honour those individuals who undertake these roles; and
- to encourage a wider and more diverse interest in future applicants.

Wales's contribution will be on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, with an event in Cardiff Bay for year 12 and 13 pupils and a seminar in North Wales on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November. Other people are working on and planning this but it should reflect the diversity across Wales that public appointments aim to achieve. A longer mentoring programme would not be appropriate without training for the mentors and those being mentored but should not be ruled out for the future.

Whatever happens, full media coverage is needed and at this stage, the mission to explain must be stronger than the message to apply for appointments.

The system will not be ready to handle a large influx of speculative applications. To raise expectations amongst those interested in serving on public bodies and then be unable to follow this up with realistic opportunities will defeat the whole object of the exercise.

The next stage in widening access and closing the knowledge gap is to help people in Wales **find out about public service.**

There need to be plans in place to roll out information and make a big impact in Wales that will explain what action the National Assembly is taking and to have in place positive action training, talks, presentations and publications in support of this, the administrative systems and processes to manage enquiries and jobs that are vacant or will become vacant shortly. The UK Public Appointments Unit has an excellent pack that could be adapted for use by the National Assembly for Wales, prepared in Welsh and other formats. More media coverage and on-line support will be needed.

**The longer term strategy in Wales** will take 3 -5 years to achieve. The temptation to go for a quick fix, get a few more women in and a couple of black or Asian faces may make ticking

boxes easy but it will not secure the real changes necessary. Further work, building on the Public Service Week. One suggestion is for Wales to have its own Public Appointments event in 2001 to coincide with the UN year of Volunteering. This would be a separate piece of work outside the remit of this report.

## **Active citizenship**

It is at school that pupils first learn about and understand government and begin to put into practice some of the skills needed for public service. Delivering **the personal and social education curriculum** has started to address this, whether it be organising a Christmas lunch for old age pensioners, having a non-uniform day for a charity or sixth formers being paired with Year 7 pupils to help with reading. How the curriculum can engender an ethos of public service needs re-visiting.

## **Public service in the trade unions and the public, private and voluntary sectors**

Most public service organisations, including the BBC, have a particular responsibility to contribute to the life of the nation, local communities and society. They actively encourage and support staff in formal roles and informal activities. The motive is a mix of corporate altruism, the need for a public service organisation to demonstrate its social responsibilities to the communities it serves and statutory rights. There are certain public duties for which staff have a statutory right to time off such as:

- Justice of the Peace;
- A member of a local authority;
- A member of a statutory tribunal;
- A member of a National Health Service Trust;
- A member of a board of visitors for prisons;
- A governor of a grant maintained school, LEA school or other educational establishment.

Many large private sector companies, members of Business in the Community, charities, as well as most public service bodies and local authorities will have a community involvement policy that builds links with local communities. This policy could involve contributing expertise or equipment to encourage young people to participate in the community, creating opportunities for individuals who would not normally have access to opportunity and taking initiatives that promote responsibility within the community.

Employees may be granted 18 days a year for attendance as a Magistrate, 6 day a year for a school governor so long at it does not conflict with normal duties.

The true reflection is that having the right to paid time off for public duties does not equal the reality: A General Practitioner would have to find and pay for a locum; a school teacher would have to be covered by a supply teacher and paid for out of the schools budget; a charity shop relies heavily on volunteers; colleagues would have to be willing to cover for a journalist when a news story breaks; a local authority training officer carries the workload and returns to it after the time off; a self employed entrepreneur loses money. The same applies to paid time off for trade union officials for work related union activities let alone public service.

It would be useful to find some best practice examples amongst public service organisations, trade unions, the voluntary sector and private business and promote them. Growing people who already have some of the skills and experience by serving on local bodies is an important way of encouraging active citizenship. Public service should be mainstreamed into the excellent School Governor training organised and run by Local Authority Education Departments.

Companies who run pre-retirement courses or out placements for those facing redundancy and Department for Employment and Education Job Clubs could mainstream public service into their syllabuses.

## **Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness**

The terms of reference for this report are *'to advise on a programme of action designed to achieve applications for public appointments which are broadly representative of the Welsh population, particularly in respect of gender, race, disability; and which enable appointments to be made so that public bodies better reflect the communities they serve.'*

Further work needs to be done to devise the short, medium and longer term strategy, determining the timescale and agreeing the planned actions against which progress may be measured. Targets in respect of gender, race and disability and collecting data are straightforward. Some of this is being done but needs analysis. More difficult is evaluating what difference these actions will make to the effectiveness of public bodies in the long run in terms of equality of output.

There are discussions going on in the UK as to whether to have an Independent Commission for Public Appointments. That seems like one step removed from what is happening in Wales where politicians are held accountable to the public for the National Assembly for Wales sponsored public bodies.

## **Acknowledgements and references**

Helen Mary Jones AM, Kirsty Williams AM, David Melding AM.

Professor Teresa Rees, EOC Commissioner for Wales

Dr Mashuq Ally, Head of the Commission for Racial Equality in Wales

Kevin Fitzpatrick, Disability Rights Commissioner, Wales

Mike Harper, Lindsay Hollies and colleagues from the National Assembly for Wales Public Appointments Unit.

Julie Bragg, Roger Thomas and Steve Phillips.

Dame Rennie Fritchie and staff at the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Philip Collcutt, Cabinet Office, General Secretariat, Public Appointments Unit

Philip Westwood, Wales representative on the Board of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation.

A special thank you to Edwina Hart. AM, Finance Secretary and Chair of the Equal Opportunities Committee of the National Assembly for Wales and Menna Richards, Controller, BBC Wales for making the secondment possible.

## References

National Assembly for Wales adverts and candidates selection pack

Cabinet Office documentation and information packs on Public Appointments

in the UK

‘How to improve the gender balance of a public body’ EOC

BBC guidance on public duties, special leave and conflict of interest

Advert, and ‘Applying to become a Magistrate’ information pack and application form

‘Women in Public Life Today: A guide’ Women’s National Commission

Wales Council for Voluntary Action, extract from guidance on the management role of a charity trustee.

Wales Labour Party pack on the selection of prospective candidates for the National Assembly for Wales

Governor Training in Rhondda Cynon Taff

The National Assembly for Wales website

[www.Scotland.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.Scotland.gov.uk/consultations) - Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland:

Modernising the System: Consultation paper

[www.cabinet-office.gov.uk](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk)

[www.guardianunlimited.co.uk](http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk) - 'Government accused of cronyism in the NHS.'

[www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk) - Select Committee on public administration

[www.swiftwork.co./ezine/vocation\\_skills](http://www.swiftwork.co./ezine/vocation_skills) - 'Going Public - why working for free can help your career.'

[www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com) - the Recruitment and Employment Confederation's Code of Good recruitment Practice