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Dear *R. Lord*

I am writing to you following the Question for Short Debate secured by Lord Holmes on the 24 June, with regards to action the government is taking to ensure that the boards of public bodies are fully representative of, and reflect, the society they serve.

I want to thank you for the helpful contribution you made to the debate and to follow up on some of the specific points you raised which I was unable to address during the debate.

First, as you may already be aware, the government published its response to the Lord Holmes review last month, accepting the principle of all Lord Holmes' recommendations. Many have the potential to benefit not only people with disabilities who wish to apply for public appointments, but also other groups currently under-represented in public appointments. We have therefore refreshed our Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan (DAP), which was also published alongside the government's response to Lord Holmes. Copies of both the response and the refreshed plan have been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

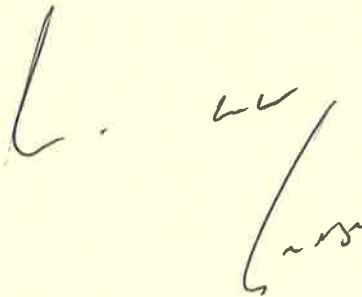
During the debate, you raised the point that candidates should be appointed to boards based on merit and the ability to understand and empathise with people, places and things with which they are not perhaps familiar. We remain committed to increasing diversity in public appointments for all underrepresented groups and to drive up the quality of public services. As Lord Holmes himself said in his review, talent exists in every corner of our society. Ministers appoint the best candidates for roles, following advice from an independent Advisory Assessment Panel, and the government wants to ensure we encourage the very best, most talented candidates to apply for these vital roles - whatever their background.

During the debate, I said I would see if more granular statistics of young people being appointed to public body boards are collected. The independent Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) publishes annual management information on its website which provides figures on appointments (both new appointments and reappointments) broken down by age categories. Specifically, it provides information on appointments and reappointments made to those who are 25 years old or younger, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, and 66 years old or older. Management information for 2017/18 has been included in OCPA's annual report for that year and, as I stated in the House, it shows that 20% of new appointments went to individuals aged 45 or younger compared with 18% in 2016/17.

I refer you to OCPA's website (<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/publications/management-information/>) where you can find diversity information for previous years. The refreshed DAP commits to a number of actions under the first objective aimed at improving the data we hold on our public appointees and those applying for these vital roles.

It is only right that the composition of boards reflect the communities they serve. Not only is this morally the right thing to do, but it brings genuine value to decision-making. Public bodies regularly face challenging decisions, so we need the best minds from our communities to help guide them. We believe the refreshed DAP will help deliver real, positive improvements in the diversity of public appointments in the future.

I hope you have found this letter helpful. A copy has been deposited in the library of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Young', written in a cursive style.

LORD YOUNG OF COOKHAM CH