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24<sup>th</sup> July 2019

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 wanted 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.

Firstly, you will be aware that, last month the government published its response to the Lord Holmes review, accepting the principle of all Lord Holmes' recommendations. Many of Lord Holmes' recommendations 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 government's response to Lord Holmes and the refreshed DAP have been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

I note your points about representation. I agree that it is not only morally right to ensure greater participation from people from all walks of life, but evidence suggests that it leads to better decision-making which means improved services for all. That is why the refreshed DAP contains detailed actions to remove barriers and to further open up public appointments to all underrepresented groups.

The refreshed DAP reiterates the government's ambitions that half of all public appointees will be female and 14 percent of appointments will be made to those from ethnic minorities by 2022. These are stretching ambitions and, whilst we have made some progress, the refreshed DAP recognises that there is more to do. It sets out the steps that we will be taking under four key objectives:

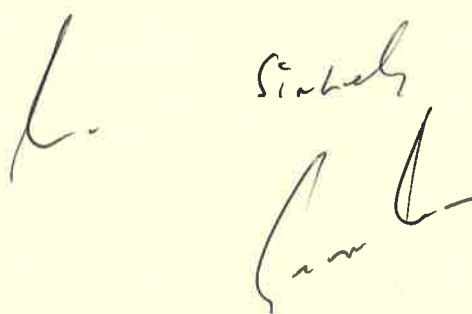
1. Improving data and reporting on diversity
2. Raising awareness and tapping into talent
3. Improving the public appointments recruitment process

The Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town  
House of Lords

#### 4. Supporting and developing public appointees

Finally, I have noted your comments on Sir Gerry Grimstone's review. Political activity is not a help or a hindrance to getting a public appointment. All candidates are appointed on merit. All campaigns are run in accordance with the principles set out in the Governance Code for Public Appointments and regulated by the Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments. Our focus is on getting the brightest and best minds to help shape public service delivery, regardless of political affiliation or background.

I hope you have found this letter helpful, a copy has been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. Young', with the name 'Young' written in a cursive script below it.

**LORD YOUNG OF COOKHAM CH**