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24th July 2019

I am writing to you following the Question for Short Debate secured by Lord Holmes on the 24 June 2019 with regards to action the government is taking to ensure that 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, and as you may already be aware, last month the government published its response to the Lord Holmes review, accepting the principle of all of 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 response and the refreshed plan have been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

During the debate you made some interesting points on the culture and governance of boards, including monitoring how well new appointees are integrated and how well they are functioning on public sector boards. Last month we published an enhanced Code of Conduct for Board Members that sets out expected standards of behaviour of board members with regard to their treatment of the public and staff. The Code encourages behaviour that helps create an environment where different perspectives and backgrounds are encouraged, ultimately promoting an inclusive and diverse culture.

In addition to this, we have committed to the following actions in the refreshed DAP:

- delivering induction training for new non-executive directors, launching in April 2020;

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House of Lords

- setting up a pilot in April 2020 to arrange for new board members to have a one-to-one session with an experienced Chair or board member; and
- setting up an online peer-run network by the end of 2019, which is open to all public appointees, but specifically aimed at newly appointed non-executive members, to connect and build the community.

You also asked if we will work with Inclusive Boards to develop standards for inclusive governance and culture within boards. In the refreshed DAP we have committed to working with all key partners, including sponsor departments, public bodies, networks, membership groups, and the voluntary sector to create an Inclusive Boards Charter by June 2020.

You raised the point of public appointments statistics being collected on people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) community, different social classes and people from the full spectrum of diversity. The refreshed DAP sets out measures that will not only help to open public appointments to disabled people, but to all under-represented groups. This includes women, those from ethnic minorities, different faith perspectives, those who identify as LGBT+ - as well as individuals from different social-economic backgrounds and all regions across the UK.

As set out in the refreshed diversity action plan, we will take forward actions to improve the quality and the consistency of the data we hold. For example, we will improve the diversity monitoring form by standardising the language used and building a stronger case for its completion; trial ways of increasing completion rates; and explore the introduction of a single online application portal.

You also raised questions of how we reach out to non-traditional economic backgrounds, to people from diverse backgrounds in the broadest sense, and how are we using social media. Since 2017, we have been taking steps to open up public appointment opportunities to those from under-represented groups - in particular we have:

- developed a HM Government Public Appointments LinkedIn page and we continue to look at how best we can use this to grow our network and attract new diverse talent;
- run a series of events hosted by the Minister for Implementation and senior officials to promote opportunities to the widest possible audiences, including those from ethnic minorities, faith and regional communities; and
- issued guidance to departments about the use of executive search firms to ensure diversity is a key outcome.

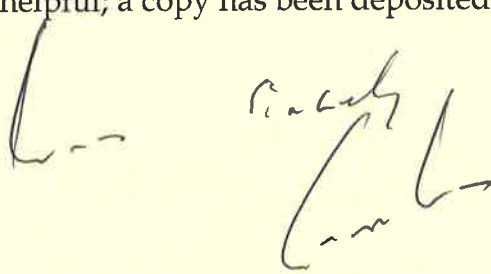
Specifically on your point regarding social media, we continue to work collaboratively with sponsor departments to promote opportunities and raise awareness of public appointments roles through Twitter (@publicappts), as well as sharing information on ministerial events on opening up public appointments. We also work with a range of existing public appointees to actively promote public appointments to their networks and

support our awareness raising approach.

Recent examples include filming "talking head" videos showcasing diverse appointees and their experiences, and promoting these through social media. As part of the refreshed DAP we will continue to use and showcase role models to help us reach under-represented groups.

Finally, you made some interesting suggestions on how processes and systems within boards can be improved. I have asked officials in the Cabinet Office to note these. The refreshed DAP also sets out that, once data and reporting on diversity has improved, we will consider how to test improved succession planning models and how better management and sharing of talent pipelines across government may increase diversity in public appointments.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lord Young of Cookham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "Y".

LORD YOUNG OF COOKHAM CH