

Shaping the boards of tomorrow

Encouraging diversity through mentoring schemes

“ Public bodies need to consider the types of people that sit on their boards, and whether they are representative of the wider society that they serve.

Not being 'board ready' can often be a barrier to appointment. Mentoring schemes provide an excellent opportunity for talented individuals to progress towards being ready to serve on a board. ”

Rt Hon Peter Riddell CBE

Commissioner for Public Appointments

In 2017/18:



10% of new appointees were from a BAME background.



7% of new appointees declared a disability.

As an advocate for diversity, the Commissioner asks boards to consider:

- Does your board represent 21st Century Britain?
- Are you missing out on talent in those people who are not currently 'engaged' in the Public Appointments process?
- Would providing opportunities to underrepresented groups benefit public bodies?

Benefits of mentoring schemes for boards

- Having greater diversity of thought
- Building a pool of future appointees, aiding succession planning
- Promoting the role of public bodies to a wider audience
- Encouraging organisational development and innovation
- Securing talent, not losing it
- Gaining a different perspective by attracting new and different experience and backgrounds
- Having the opportunity to collaborate and partner with other public bodies running similar schemes

“ It is as much about building confidence and realising aspirations as it is about developing new skills. ”

“ Being on a board is a great opportunity to influence and make change in a positive way. ”

“ I feel I've grown in confidence and that I've engaged and met with some inspirational, fantastic like minded people. ”

What do individuals gain from mentoring schemes?

- The chance to develop confidence and build on existing skills
- A greater understanding of how boards operate
- Achieving personal development, both mentors and mentees
- Having the chance to learn from sharing experiences and offering guidance.
- Being better equipped to become a future board member

Key questions to consider when starting a mentoring scheme



1. Is your board on-board?

Organisations must be open to nurturing talent and encouraging diversity.

2. How will you attract candidates?

- Using partnerships with other organisations and diversity groups to attract candidates.
- Deciding on a selection process.

3. Can you offer participants a 'hands on' experience?

It is vital to offer good quality mentoring, where participants are offered the opportunity to share their views and provide challenge.

4. Can you manage expectations?

Schemes are not a guarantee of appointment but provide opportunity to learn and develop.

5. Have you considered confidentiality?

Being able to balance giving participants as much access as possible while maintaining board confidentiality where necessary.