



Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
Welsh Parliament

21 December 2021

Dear Russell,

Public appointments process

I write in response to your letter of 22 November 2021 sent following the scrutiny session with Emrys Elias, Interim Chair of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, on 4 November.

I share the disappointment of the Committee in attracting individuals of a high calibre to apply for these very important roles which has led, in this case, to an interim appointment.

The need to ensure successful recruitment is even more important as the NHS continues to face the challenges presented by Covid-19. Action being taken in response to the Committee's observations and recommendations are outlined in the attached annex.

Yours sincerely,

Eluned Morgan AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Annex: Response to follow up questions after scrutiny session with the interim Chair of Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB on 4 November 2021.

Public appointments process

In March 2020, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Fifth Senedd held a pre-appointment hearing with the Welsh Government's preferred candidate for the role of Chair of Swansea Bay UHB. In its subsequent report, the Committee expressed disappointment that the advertising process for such a prominent position had needed to be re-run due to a lack of suitable candidates. It recommended that the Welsh Government should consider expanding the range of platforms or outlets with which notices were placed in an attempt to reach a wider audience and potentially attract a more diverse field of candidates.

- 1. An interim arrangement has been needed on this occasion because the substantive process failed to identify a suitable appointee to the Chair of Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB. We would therefore be grateful if you could outline how you will ensure in future that similar roles attract a diverse range of high quality candidates, including what contribution will be made by the Welsh Government's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments in Wales.*
- 2. We would also welcome further information on the Welsh Government's approach to succession planning for senior leadership positions in the NHS in Wales.*

Response

Question 1

- The Welsh Government is committed to undertaking public appointment exercises through fair and open competition in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The Welsh Government has taken steps to extend the reach of public appointment publicity activity including targeting and engaging with diverse audiences. Public appointments are routinely advertised through online diversity platforms, and publicity is agreed with the Health and Social Services Group and tailored to an appointment campaign. All public appointments are shared with a diverse range of stakeholder organisations and individuals including those who informed the Welsh Government Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments. In addition, for some of the most significant chair appointments, the merits of using Executive Search consultants with experience of engaging with a wide and diverse field of candidates continues to be explored, and has been adopted for some recruitment exercises over the last 12 months.
- Executive Search consultants will be engaged to assist with the campaign for the Chair of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, commencing early in the new year. The brief will require them to identify suitable candidates, paying particular attention to the Welsh Government's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments. The effectiveness of this approach on the quality and quantity of candidates who subsequently apply for the role will be evaluated to help inform whether this approach should also be followed when recruiting future Chair's to NHS bodies in Wales.

- To further ensure the standards within Governance Code is maintained, at the beginning of 2021, the Welsh Government recruited a cohort of Senior Independent Panel Members to join the recruitment panels of the most significant public appointments. Members are drawn from a range of backgrounds, including protected groups - they have been invaluable in sharing their skills and perspectives on a number of recruitment campaigns this year.
- In early 2022, following a commitment to the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments, two development programmes will commence initially aimed at disabled people and people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic communities. This will include a Near Ready Leadership Programme and a Leaders of the Future Programme. The programmes are aimed at showcasing public appointment opportunities along with developing and supporting individuals to apply for public appointments.

Question 2

I recognise the need to do more in relation succession planning for senior leadership positions and have agreed a Task and Finish Group, chaired by the Mark Polin, Chair of Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board, be established. The remit of the Group includes the arrangements for public appointments to Boards, development of public appointees and succession planning. The group has representation from NHS Wales Independent Members and Welsh Government officials and will hold its first meeting in January 2022. The Group will be time-limited and recommendations will be made within 6 months of establishment.

Interim appointments

- *Whilst the Committee has no formal role in respect of interim public appointments, we would nevertheless welcome further information about how the Welsh Government makes such appointments, including how decisions are taken on the specification and duration of the role, and what factors are taken into account when identifying interim appointees.*

Response

- The Welsh Government makes 'interim public appointments' without competition as a last resort in the majority of cases. These appointments are made by exception, under section 3.3 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments and must be agreed by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and Welsh Ministers. The appointments are most often made where it has been challenging to identify a suitable candidate through an open recruitment exercise, or where specific knowledge and expertise is required. Any consideration of the most suitable candidate will vary in order to reflect the nature of the appointment and the skills and expertise being sought. Appointments without competition are made for no more than 18 months, with a commitment to running a full and open recruitment exercise thereafter.

- When seeking an interim appointment the role specification is consistent with that of a substantive appointee. For this particular appointment the person specification and role profile had been agreed prior to advertising the role.
- When identifying potential appointees the Minister will take account of advice from officials on the required skills , experience and availability to take up the post.
- Prior to agreeing the duration of an interim appointment it is necessary to consider a range of factors such as, the need to ensure stable leadership, the availability of the interim appointee and the time required to run and plan a successful campaign. As indicated above appointments without competition are made for no more than 18 months.