Access to Public Appointments Board Shadowing Pilot Project

Evaluation Report

Inclusion Scotland

Disabled People's Organisation

Our voices ■ Our choices

The Scottish Government

Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Access to Public Appointments Board Shadowing Pilot Project
Funded by The Scottish Government and delivered in partnership with Inclusion Scotland

Report by Inclusion Scotland
Charity number: SC031619 | Company number: SC243492
 | Published January 2021

Contents

1: Introduction

The Access to Public Appointments pilot gave six disabled people the opportunity to shadow six regulated public body Boards in Scotland over twelve months. This evaluation report shows the process, impact, and outcomes of that pilot. Access to Public Appointments was funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership with Inclusion Scotland.

This pilot achieved its intended outcomes. Six disabled people shadowed Scottish public body Boards over a twelve-month period. Boards, Board mentors, and shadows developed productive working relationships with one another. Shadows developed substantial experience of the work undertaken by public bodies and their Boards. Boards and public bodies gained significant insight into disabled people's lived experiences, and into how disabled people can be active, valuable, and valued contributors to Boards' work.

The pilot and this report highlight the talent of participants currently underrepresented in public life in Scotland. Disabled people can consider facts, evaluate information, and provide constructive and creative ideas and solutions as well as any other group, and have done so throughout this project. Disabled people are not alone in their underrepresentation and the learning from this pilot, with adjustments, can benefit similar future projects not just for disabled people but for other protected characteristic groups.

This report lists eight recommendations to address disabled people's lack of balanced representation in the public appointments process and on public body Boards in Scotland. This includes the retention and expansion of Access to Public Appointments, using the framework and learning developed during this pilot.

2: Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Boards should be required to develop reasonable adjustment guidance, recognise reasonable adjustments as part of their standard working practices, and implement them as soon as possible when requested.

Recommendation #2: To remove financial barriers faced by disabled people and others, Boards should be required to either advance expenses payments or book services for Board members directly (for example, travel, accommodation, or support for reasonable adjustments.)

Recommendation #3: All public body Board members should be required to undertake Disability Equality Training at least once during each term. This should be a mandatory element of all new Board members' on-boarding processes.

Recommendation #4: Public appointments vacancies should be publicised on standard employment websites, disability jobs boards online, and to disabled people's organisations such as Inclusion Scotland who can forward these opportunities to their partners and members.

Recommendation #5: Develop and publicise case studies championing disabled people as effective Board members, highlighting the value their lived experience brings to the Boardroom.

Recommendation #6: Disabled applicants meeting the minimum criteria should be progressed to the interview stage for public appointments

vacancies, and unsuccessful applicants should receive personalised, constructive feedback.

Recommendation #7: Any follow-up project should develop greater interaction between shadows, public Board members, and other decision makers, to promote disabled people's lived experiences and to implement change to make public appointments more accessible and more representative.

Recommendation #8: Access to Public Appointments should expand to run over a longer period or on an ongoing basis, utilising the framework and learning developed during the pilot.

3: Pilot Summary

Pilot Project Brief

At present disabled people are significantly under-represented in applications and appointments to regulated public body Boards in Scotland[1]. Public bodies are missing a potential pool of talent and experience because of this under-representation. Attempting to reduce the barriers that disabled people face, Inclusion Scotland and the Scottish Government delivered a Scottish Government funded shadowing placement pilot project, Access to Public Appointments, from September 2019 to September 2020. This allowed six disabled people the opportunity to shadow six regulated public body Boards.

The Boards approached were unanimously positive about participating. While the pilot originally intended to pair five Boards and shadows, one Board not contacted during initial outreach subsequently requested to take part. Therefore, the pilot expanded to six pairs of Boards and shadows.

Intended Outcomes

Six intended outcomes were identified during pilot planning:

1. At least five disabled people will have shadowed a public body Board with mentorship from a specific Board member.
2. At least five disabled people will have increased their capacity to apply for a public appointment through experiential and practical training.

[1] In 2019, 12.9% of all applicants and 11.9% of successful applicants to Scottish public body Boards identified as disabled. 7.2% of all current Scottish public body Board appointees identified as disabled, whereas 19.6% of the total Scottish population identified as disabled. (Pages 7 and 10 of Ethical Standards Commissioner Annual Report on Public Appointments 2019-20.)
https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ESC%20Annual%20Report%20on%20Public%20Appointments%202019-20.pdf

3. At least five Boards will have received Disability Equality Training and be able to demonstrate that they have built capacity and learning to be more inclusive.
4. A proportion of the Boards and participants will be located in rural and remote areas.
5. An evaluation report will be produced, providing recommendations based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected.
6. To support public body Boards to achieve aspects of the expectations on them in the Scottish Government's guidance on succession planning in being more diverse and representative of the wider Scottish population.

Commitment from Boards

- To have a disabled person shadow their Board for a period of up to a year.
- To appoint a mentor from the membership of the Board for the shadow.
- That the relationship between Board and the shadow participant will be person-centred, with a focus on removing potential barriers to participants' involvement in Board activities as well as gaining learning on accessibility and inclusiveness going forward.
- To provide ongoing feedback on the progress of the placement.

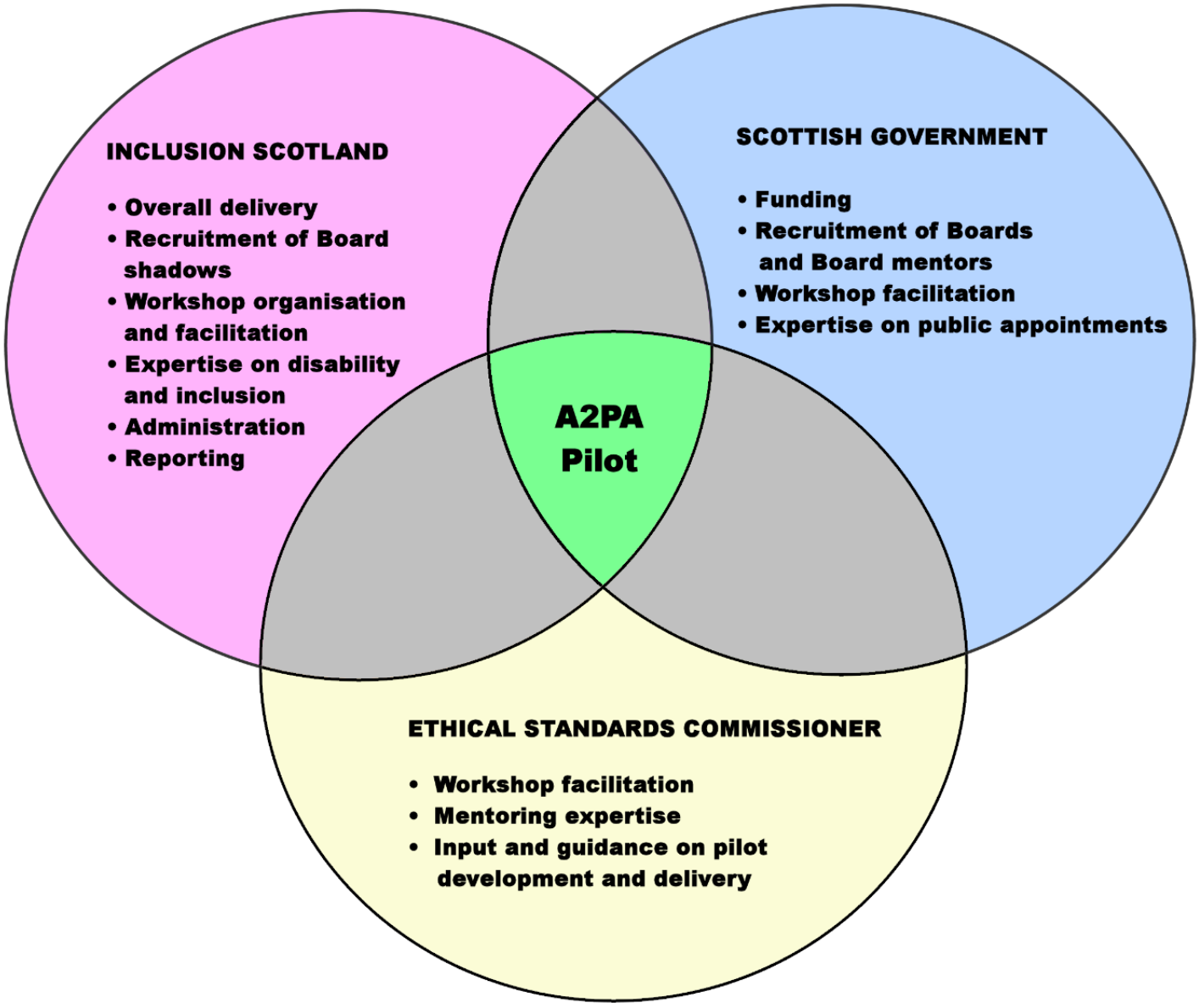
Commitment from Shadows

- To agree to shadow a public body Board for a year.
- To agree to attend three peer networking/training/monitoring and evaluation meetings within the year.
- To provide monitoring and evaluation feedback throughout the year.
- To be willing to act as an ambassador for Public Appointments after their year on the scheme is completed.

4: Delivery and Costs

Delivery

Inclusion Scotland, the Scottish Government, and the Ethical Standards Commissioner worked in partnership to deliver the Access to Public Appointments pilot. Each organisation had responsibility for specific areas of the project. All were involved in the selection of Boards, Board mentors, and shadows and all partners engaged actively with participants throughout the pilot.



Substantial development work took place in 2018-19 and pilot delivery began in April 2019. A letter from Christina McKelvie MSP (Scottish Government Minister for Older People and Equalities) was sent to a pre-selected range of public body Boards across Scotland that would have a reasonable amount of interaction with disabled service users. Five Boards were recruited, and an additional Board approached the Scottish Government's Public Appointments Team requesting to join the pilot. The six Boards participating were:

- Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board – Ayr
- NHS Golden Jubilee (formerly known as Golden Jubilee Foundation) – Clydebank
- Independent Living Fund Scotland – Livingston
- Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority – Balloch
- NHS 24 – Edinburgh and Glasgow
- NatureScot (formerly known as Scottish Natural Heritage) – Inverness

Inclusion Scotland advertised Board shadowing positions to a wide audience of disabled people across Scotland through its members, networks, and social media platforms. At the end of May, twelve applicants (from a total of seventeen) were invited to attend an introductory workshop and informal interview. Six were chosen to participate in the pilot and matched with Boards. There was no difficulty recruiting qualified applicants – with more time and more Boards several of those interviewed but not selected would have made excellent Board shadows. Advertising the pilot more widely and for a longer period would likely have generated an even greater number of high standard applications.

In June 2019, shadows and Board mentors attended an induction workshop, where they had the opportunity to meet each other for the first time. Discussions included:

- A brief introduction to the project.
- The skills and contributions required of Board members.
- How to get the greatest benefit from Board shadowing (for shadows, mentors, and Boards) and identifying opportunities.
- Developing a learning plan.

Each shadow and Board mentor met independently before attending their first Board meeting. Due to Boards participating in the pilot having different meeting schedules, shadows started at different points between July and September 2019. Inclusion Scotland kept in touch with all participants during this time to ensure initial interactions went smoothly, and to assist with any problems that arose. Throughout the pilot, shadows and Board mentors had access to named individuals in Inclusion Scotland and Scottish Government to discuss their experiences and seek support where required.

At the end of November 2019, shadows and Board mentors attended a second workshop. Discussions included:

- What was working, not working and what they had learnt over the first three months.
- The skills each shadow wished to develop as Board members.
- The Public Appointments application process and preparing an application.
- A personal perspective of being a Board member from Bob Benson, an NHS Tayside Board member.

At this stage, one shadow left the pilot as a move into full-time employment reduced their capacity to continue shadowing.

Shadowing continued into 2020 but was disrupted due to the emergence of

COVID-19 and the subsequent restrictions on in-person working. This delayed the third workshop, originally scheduled for May 2020. The main concern during this period was that lockdown would negatively affect the shadowing process. Most shadows and Boards adapted to using remote participation methods (which are often beneficial for disabled people's access) but this was of significant detriment to one shadow, for whom remote participation was problematic due to a lack of reliable internet access.

In June 2020, shadows and Board mentors attended a rescheduled third workshop, held online. Due to this format, the workshop took place over three hours rather than a whole day. Discussions included:

- How shadows and mentors managed their work during lockdown.
- Participants' feedback and evaluation of the pilot to date.

Over the summer, Inclusion Scotland contacted Board mentors to discuss their experiences of the pilot and how they felt the shadows and Boards had benefited one another. Evaluation questionnaires were sent to all participants, to be completed by shadows and mentors together during their final sessions.

In September 2020, shadows and Board mentors attended a final online workshop. Also attending was Helen Miller (Head of Improvement and Outreach, Scottish Government Public Appointments Team) who spoke with shadows about the Public Appointments applications process. Shadows and Board members were asked to consider their views on how the Scottish Government can address problems disabled people encounter with the current Public Appointments application system. Discussions also included:

- Feedback on the pilot and participants' experiences.
- Bringing the pilot to a conclusion, and next steps.

Following the final workshop, evaluation discussions with Board mentors have continued. Inclusion Scotland, the Scottish Government, and the Ethical Standard Commissioner have developed recommendations arising from the pilot and worked together on this evaluation report.

Costs

Inclusion Scotland – Staff Costs – £31,151.40

This represents two staff members each working on the pilot for an average of two days per week over a period of eighteen months. These costs are participant neutral – if the pilot were repeated over the same period with a greater number of Boards and shadows, staff costs would be expected to remain broadly the same.

Ethical Standards Commissioner – Consultative Services – £1,725.00

The Ethical Standards Commissioner contracted a consultant to assist with pilot delivery and evaluation.

Shadows' Travel and Accommodation Expenses – £3,095.50

Inclusion Scotland covered all shadows' expenses for the duration of their shadowing. The onset of COVID-19 meant that travel costs for attending Board meetings and workshops were non-existent for the second half of the pilot.

Shadows' Assistive Technology – £449.92

This is a relatively low amount. It should be noted that budgets for reasonable adjustments which are set before participants' needs are known often require a wide latitude, as costs can vary. If the pilot had recruited different shadows with different access requirements, these costs could have been substantially greater.

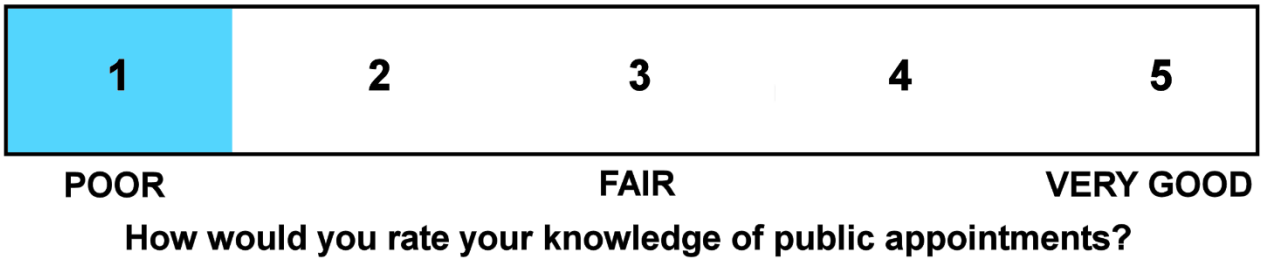
At the time of publication staff costs for the Scottish Government and the Ethical Standards Commissioner were not available. Excluding these, the total cost of this pilot was **£36,421.82**.

5: Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation Questions

We asked shadows **How would you rate your knowledge of public appointments?**

At the start of the pilot, most shadows said their knowledge of public appointments was poor.

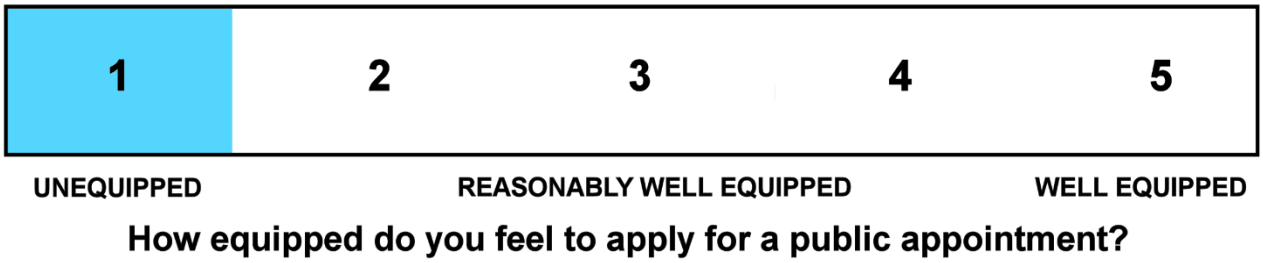


By the pilot's midpoint, most shadows said their knowledge was fair or good.

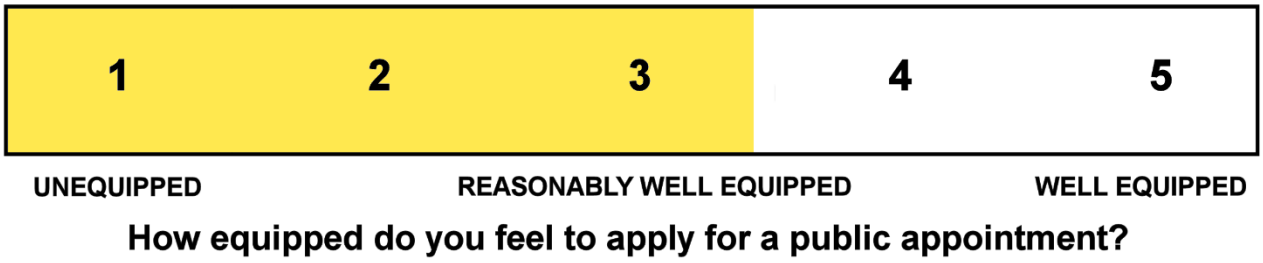
By the end of the pilot, most shadows said their knowledge of public appointments was good or very good.

We also asked shadows **How equipped do you feel to apply for a public appointment?**

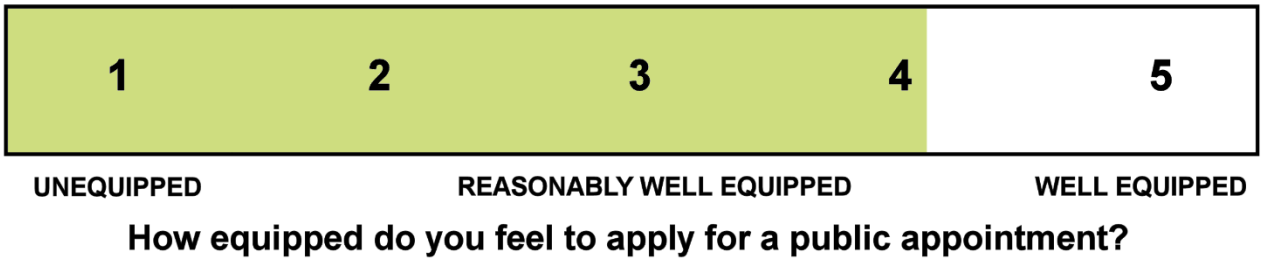
At the start of the pilot, most shadows felt unequipped to apply for a public appointment.



By the pilot's midpoint, most shadows felt reasonably well equipped.

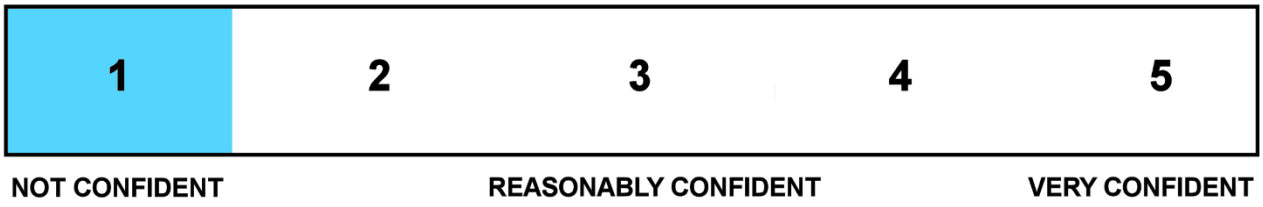


By the end of the pilot, most shadows felt well equipped to apply for a public appointment, with some still feeling only reasonably well equipped.



We also asked shadows **How confident do you feel to apply for a public appointment?**

At the start of the pilot, most shadows did not feel confident to apply for a public appointment.



How confident do you feel to apply for a public appointment?

By the pilot's midpoint, most shadows felt reasonably confident.

How confident do you feel to apply for a public appointment?

By the end of the pilot, most shadows felt very confident to apply for a public appointment.

How confident do you feel to apply for a public appointment?

We also asked additional questions in the final evaluation questionnaire.

We asked shadows **How would you describe your working knowledge of what being a Board member of a public body entails?**

Most shadows described their working knowledge of what being a Board member of a public body entails as excellent or very good.

How would you describe your working knowledge of what being a Board member of a public body entails?

We also asked shadows **How would you assess your knowledge of the skills Board members require?**

Most shadows assessed their knowledge of the skills Board members require as excellent or very good.

How would you assess your knowledge of the skills Board members require?

We also asked shadows **Do you feel you know how to get the most out of the diversity of perspective across a Board?**

Most shadows said they did not know, or were unsure, on how to get the most out of the diversity of perspective across a Board.

Do you feel you know how to get the most out of the diversity of perspective across a Board?

Based on these responses, expanded upon in verbal and written feedback, shadows have gained substantial knowledge of Board activities through this pilot, and confidence in their own abilities to participate in these. However, full inclusion of disabled people's perspectives and lived expertise remains a challenge and expanding disabled people's participation in public body Boards will continue to be a work in progress.

Shadows' Learning

Shadows' feedback shows their experiences were generally positive. Some felt more confident than others at the start of their experience. One shadow commented, "I find the role quite strange, I'm in the room observing, but goodness knows what they make of me." Another felt "comfortable in taking part and was able to observe and look to understand behaviours that Board members display. All were nice to me and were interested when I talked about my own career. They felt I could bring an experienced level of debate."

One shadow was particularly grateful to be able to attend "the full range of meetings and committees that the board covers so that I could put together

the whole governance function – planning, audit and risk, access, and delivery." Another shadow enjoyed "learning about the size and scale of Boards within the public sector and the work Boards do, given a personal work background that is very much embedded within the third sector."

Shadows found having Board mentors allowed them the "opportunity to develop skills and to improve the skills required of Board members, along with the opportunity to ask for advice from a current Board member." Shadows felt the support offered was essential to the success of their experiences:

> "Being able to discuss papers in advance was a huge benefit and it helped me to know I was reading and understanding the papers well. It also enabled me to ask about the aspects of the papers which enhanced my understanding of both the paper and the organisation."

Shadows identified their key learning from the pilot as:

- Developing an understanding of Board and public body structures and procedures.
- How to prepare for Board meetings.
- How to analyse papers, absorb and evaluate technical information.
- Developing a focus on strategic governance issues.
- How to ask strategic and relevant questions.

Reasonable Adjustments and Barriers

With shadows requiring reasonable adjustments, Boards had to adapt first to providing reasonable adjustments themselves. This was not easy – as one shadow experienced, "the way the Board papers were issued was very

confusing and hard to follow using screen reading software". The Board concerned was quick to resolve this by changing how documents were sent to the shadow. Due to lessons learnt from this pilot, one Board now asks all individuals (including guests and members of the public) if any adjustments are required and which adjustments they know will work for them (rather than making assumptions for the individuals concerned.) This was something not previously considered as possibly presenting a barrier to individuals' full participation in the work of the Board. One Board mentor was:

> "Pleased that the Chair and secretariat of our organisation has responded very positively to ensuring that our shadow had the practical support required with meeting arrangements, participating during the meeting, papers, etcetera. As a non-exec I would have had limited influence over this had this not been the case (although it would have been important feedback for the organisation!)"

COVID-19 restrictions forced public bodies and others to adapt to holding meetings online. Ironically, this has mainstreamed accessible working methods that disabled people have often struggled to obtain previously, and in the future many organisations, including public body Boards, may move towards a blended model of in-person/online working. One shadow stated, "it has been remarkable how things have changed and how we have all adapted to new ways of working online. I enjoy Zoom rather than face-to face-meetings, which can be intimidating." In the words of one Board mentor, "the transition to working online has been really smooth, with people pulling together and being adaptable to this new way of working and conducting Board business remotely." One shadow found the time and energy saved from no longer commuting allowed them to attend sub-group meetings and contribute their experience and expertise in a forum they would have

otherwise been unable to access. However, as one Board mentor also acknowledged:

> "We have found that it is not so easy to pick up and pause and check the fatigue of individuals remotely. Organisations need to be mindful of people working at home and the impact that remote working may be having on individuals and their relationships with others. Therefore getting to know people and being able to identify the warning signs is important."

While remote participation is generally beneficial to disabled people's access, what is accessible for one disabled person is not necessarily accessible for all. This is not always impairment related. One shadow found their limited broadband connectivity to be detrimental to their access when Board meetings moved online. They had to dial into meetings via phone but found they had difficulty contributing due to a poor connection and felt excluded from visual presentations they obviously could not access. Any mainstreaming of blended in-person/online working models should be from an inclusive perspective providing flexible options to all participants, and not substitute disabled people's exclusion with other barriers.

For public body Boards to become fully inclusive a range of options for reasonable adjustments should be available to all Board members (particularly disabled people) as standard. This should include:

- Assistive technology (for example, laptops, screen reading software)
- BSL interpreters / Palantypists
- Board papers and other documents in Large Print
- Flexible meeting formats (for example, extra breaks to allow for fatigue)
- Remote participation options

Boards should develop guidance on these reasonable adjustments and any other adjustments they feel would be beneficial, recognising these as part of their standard working practices and implementing them as soon as is practicable whenever requested. This guidance can form a vital element of Boards' succession planning, thereby retaining positive learning throughout their changing membership. There should also be a budget allocation for assistive technology purchases and the hire of BSL interpreters, palantypists, and other support on a per session basis.

Guidance on providing reasonable adjustments can never be exhaustive and everyone's requirements are different. This does not negate Boards' responsibility to investigate and provide for other reasonable adjustments when needed.

Recommendation #1: Boards should be required to develop reasonable adjustment guidance, recognise reasonable adjustments as part of their standard working practices, and implement them as soon as possible when requested.

During the pilot Inclusion Scotland (through Scottish Government funding) reimbursed public body Boards for expenses related to shadows' participation in Board activities (for example, travel and subsistence costs for attending Board meetings). Most public bodies cover expenses incurred by Board members but often do so in arrears, creating another barrier to disabled people's participation. Disabled people in Scotland are more likely than non-disabled people to be living in poverty or with low incomes[2]. They may have

[2] In 2015-18, the poverty rate after housing costs for people in families with a disabled person was 24% (440,000 people each year). This compares with 17% (600,000 people) in a family without a disabled person. https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-income-inequality-scotland-2015-18/pages/10/#:~:text=Disability%20and%20poverty,-

little-to-nil disposable income and cannot afford to sacrifice this for repayment on a quarterly basis. To alleviate this, Boards should either pay Board members' costs directly, or advance payment of regular fixed expenses (such as travel costs) to ensure Board members are not out of pocket.

Recommendation #2: To remove financial barriers faced by disabled people and others, Boards should be required to either advance expenses payments or book services for Board members directly (for example, travel, accommodation, or support for reasonable adjustments.)

Some issues arose that were outside Boards' control. One shadow encountered discriminatory attitudes which created a barrier to accessing a Board meeting:

> "I got to the right floor but there was no public entry, so I had to wait to be let in by one of the cleaners. When I eventually found the reception desk, staff made it quite clear that I must be in the wrong part of the building… When I said I was supposed to be in the Board meeting, they were doubtful to say the least and it needed an 'official' non-disabled person to convince them otherwise… [The organisation] needs a bit of gentle exposure to radical thinking when it comes to considering disabled people as anything other than passive service consumers."

No Boards took up the offer of Disability Equality Training made as part of this pilot project. One Board is known to already provide Disability Equality Training for all staff and board members as part of their induction. Disability

Chart%2017.&text=In%202015%2D18%2C%20the%20poverty,family%20without%20a%20disabled%20person

Equality Training provides information on reasonable adjustments and how organisations can make Board meetings and public body activities more accessible to disabled participants. Disability Equality Training also provides education on different models of disability and on why recognising barriers to inclusion is vital to removing them. While learning about disabled people's lived experiences is an important part to public bodies becoming more inclusive and representative, this should not be dependent on disabled people obtaining public appointments or speaking up about bad experiences. Disability Equality Training should be a required element of Board members' duties. This can benefit Board members' interactions with staff, fellow Board members, and those with whom their public body engages.

Recommendation #3: All public body Board members should be required to undertake Disability Equality Training at least once during each term. This should be a mandatory element of all new Board members' on-boarding processes.

Public Appointments Process

Shadows and Board mentors agreed that the public appointments applications process requires significant improvements. One Board mentor stated, "the Public Appointments process needs to change as it is still cumbersome, and therefore we need to ask how we change this… whilst maintaining its integrity."

The main forum for advertising public appointments vacancies is the Appointed for Scotland website[3], described by shadows as "clunky, outdated, with accessibility issues for disabled people." To recruit more disabled applicants it is recommended that public appointments vacancies are also

[3] https://applications.appointed-for-scotland.org/

publicised on standard employment websites, disability jobs boards online, and to disabled people's organisations such as Inclusion Scotland who can forward these opportunities to their partners and members. Wider advertising is likely to result in a broader, more diverse body of applicants.

Recommendation #4: Public appointments vacancies should be publicised on standard employment websites, disability jobs boards online, and to disabled people's organisations such as Inclusion Scotland who can forward these opportunities to their partners and members.

Shadows and Board members felt the formatting, language, and criteria of the public appointments process needs to be more inclusive. Applications need to be available in different document formats, so they are accessible for those using assistive technology such as screen readers. The stated criteria for appointments are often biased towards those with more traditional academic and professional histories, and discount the value of lived experience, contradicting the statement of welcoming applicants from a variety of backgrounds. Shadows did not consider application packs' language to be "plain English" and there should be more varied, practical examples of relevant experience to help appeal to those with lived experience from underrepresented backgrounds. The perception was that these are unconscious biases rather than deliberate exclusions, but that they nonetheless present barriers to disabled people's participation.

The public appointments process should actively show disabled people as desired candidates for public appointments opportunities and valuable members of public body Boards. Case studies should champion disabled people as effective Board members, highlighting the value that their lived experience brings to the Boardroom. Shadows committed to act as

ambassadors for Public Appointments after the pilot was completed, so could be asked to participate in this activity.

Recommendation #5: Develop and publicise case studies championing disabled people as effective Board members, highlighting the value their lived experience brings to the Boardroom.

The Equality Act 2010[4] allows organisations to automatically select disabled candidates for interview it they meet a role's minimum criteria; many apply this in practice, including the Scottish Government. To improve the proportion of disabled applicants reaching the interview stage, the public appointments process should apply a similar model. Public appointments interviews should be positive experiences for all applicants, regardless of whether they are selected. Shadows who applied for public appointments opportunities unsuccessfully commented on the generic feedback they had received. They said comments should be constructive, meaningful, and personal, rather than uniform and non-descript. Constructive responses are especially important for good but unsuccessful disabled applicants, to guide them on building up their skills, to communicate that their knowledge and experiences are valued and required on public body Boards, and to encourage them to reapply for future opportunities.

Recommendation #6: Disabled applicants meeting the minimum criteria should be progressed to the interview stage for public appointments vacancies, and unsuccessful applicants should receive personalised, constructive feedback.

One Board mentor thought the mentorship aspect of the pilot should be

[4] Equality Act 2010, Section 158
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/158

expanded to all disabled applicants for Public Appointments, suggesting "'it would be good to have a pool of current board members to be there to support disabled people who want to apply. They could act as a mini-mentor, to encourage applications." While a dedicated mentor for every future disabled applicant may not be possible, there may be some benefit in developing a pool of Board members to provide ad-hoc support to disabled applicants as required.

Pilot Feedback and Conclusion

Shadows and Board mentors provided constructive feedback on the pilot. They were unanimously positive about the overall experience and found staff to be "very approachable and accommodating." One shadow stated, "given the unprecedented events of the COVID-19 pandemic I think the project staff and all the participating public bodies adapted well to keep the project running." There was a split opinion on the workshops, with most shadows and Board mentors finding them "interesting and informative", but one shadow was "not sure if the actual workshops really achieved much." There was a consensus that the attendance of Board mentors, and on occasion Board chairs, at workshops created a peer group of shadows, mentors, and chairs diverse in their experiences, but of equal standing amongst one another.

There could have been a greater push to develop a network between shadows so they could support one another outside of workshops. There was a lack of networking opportunities which could have matched the depth of shadows' Board learning with a broader understanding of other public bodies (for example, shadows and Board mentors could have been invited to network with other forums that already exist for public body Board members.) It was also felt that the lack of follow-up to the presentation from Bob Benson in the second workshop, through subsequent contributions from either him or

another public body Board member, was a missed opportunity. As well as enhancing shadows' learning, it would have given them a further opportunity to demonstrate and promote the value of their lived experiences to others. **Recommendation #7: Any follow-up project should develop greater interaction between shadows, public Board members, and other decision makers, to promote disabled people's lived experiences and to implement change to make public appointments more accessible and more representative.**

There was significant concern from Board mentors that the twelve-month timescale did not give shadows sufficient time to develop a fully rounded understanding of the Board experience. One Board mentor stated that "for any board appointee, particularly on their first public board appointment, the confidence to feel that you have sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding to make pertinent interventions at board meetings takes time to build… terms are three years and not just the one year for this scheme." Another noted bluntly, "a year is too short to get to know the work." This suggests that any continuation of the pilot should be delivered over a longer period.

Overall, shadows enjoyed their experiences on the pilot, gained knowledge and skills to better equip them for Board activities, and now feel more confident to apply for future public appointments vacancies. One shadow found their experience changed their thinking on their own limitations:

> "On reflection, I see the issue is not with my disability but with me not realising that I have the potential to apply for such appointments going forward, which I would never have thought if I had not taken part in the project."

The Boards approached for this pilot were eager to become involved, and it was necessary to create an additional space for another Board that requested to participate. It is clear Boards and Board mentors valued their time with shadows, and shadows' contributions to their work:

> "I'm delighted to have been involved in this pilot project with Inclusion Scotland and the Scottish Government. I welcome all initiatives that strive to increase diversity within public body Boards and I sincerely hope that this project leads to greater representation of disabled people on public Boards."

What was particularly striking was the full engagement of Boards and Board chairs in this process. It was a concern when planning the pilot that Boards could consider shadows their mentors' responsibility and that there would be a lack of engagement from the rest of the Board. Instead, the opposite occurred. There was substantial investment from Board chairs in the development of shadows' experiences, and some attended workshops run during the pilot. We consider the Boards participating in this pilot as models for other public body Boards looking to increase and improve disabled people's access to and engagement with their organisations.

In conclusion, the Access to Public Appointments pilot was successful. Boards, Board mentors, and shadows developed productive working relationships. Not only did shadows develop significant experience of the work undertaken by public bodies and their Boards, but Boards and organisations gained substantial insight into disabled people's lived experiences, and the value these can bring to the Boardroom. Boards have also developed knowledge of accessibility and reasonable adjustments, and some have already taken active steps to implement positive changes surrounding these. Importantly, this pilot has succeeded beyond its direct

purpose of allowing six disabled people the opportunity to shadow six regulated public body Boards. It has highlighted the talent of a potential pool of participants currently underrepresented in public life in Scotland. Disabled people can consider facts, evaluate information, and provide constructive and creative ideas and solutions as well as any other group when obstacles to their participation are removed, and they have done so throughout this pilot.

Though undertaken with a relatively small group of people, it is clear the learning from this pilot can be applied, with adjustments, to similar future projects for disabled people and other protected characteristic groups. Participants' positive experiences and outcomes from the pilot demonstrate the potential and viability for a similar scheme, incorporating the existing framework and learning, to run over a longer period or on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation #8: Access to Public Appointments should expand to run over a longer period or on an ongoing basis, utilising the framework and learning developed during the pilot.

6: Outcomes

Outcomes Achieved

1. At least five disabled people will have shadowed a Board with mentorship from a specific Board member.

- **Six disabled people have shadowed public body Boards and received mentorship from a specific Board mentor. We recruited five Boards for the pilot, and an additional Board joined after requesting the opportunity to participate.**

2. At least five disabled people will have increased their capacity to apply for a public appointment through experiential and practical training.

- **Shadows have demonstrated and articulated that they have increased their capacity to apply for public appointments due to their participation in this pilot.**

3. At least five Boards will have received Disability Equality Training and be able to demonstrate that they have built capacity and learning to be more inclusive.

- **No Boards took up the offer of Disability Equality Training made as part of this pilot project. One Board is known to already provide Disability Equality Training for all staff and board members as part of their induction. Boards have also made other adjustments that have had a positive impact, as outlined in the evaluation section of this report.**

4. A proportion of the Boards and participants will be located in rural and remote areas.

- **Boards, Board mentors, and shadows are located across Scotland, including in remote and rural areas outside of the Central Belt.**

5. An evaluation report will be produced providing recommendations based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected.

6. Support public body Boards to achieve aspects of the expectations on them in the Scottish Government's guidance on succession planning in being more diverse and representative of the wider Scottish population.

- **There was an equal gender split amongst shadows participating in the scheme. Boards proactively encouraged shadows' participation throughout their placements, and some shadows engaged with Board sub committees.**

Participant Outcomes

Shadows have enjoyed several positive outcomes following their experiences participating in this pilot:

- One shadow has joined a sub-committee of a publicly appointed body.
- One shadow's participation in this project has helped moved them back towards full-time employment.
- One shadow is continuing their shadowing process until the end of the calendar year.
- One shadow is now engaging with their Board's executive team on a specific piece of work outside this pilot.
- Following their work on the pilot, many shadows have now applied for advertised public appointments opportunities.