

## **Good Practice Example – Planning and Attraction**

### **Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland. Appointment Round to Find a New Convener and Six New Board Members (2016)**

#### **Background**

This appointment round had been initiated to identify a new Convener and six new members for the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) with the member appointment dates to be staggered. MACS provides independent advice to Scottish Ministers on transport accessibility for disabled people. The regulations that established MACS as a public body mean that the Convener of the committee has to be a disabled person and at least one-half of the total number of members of the committee (including the Convener) have to be disabled persons.

The Commissioner designated this round as appropriate for medium level oversight. As a consequence the Public Appointments Adviser's (PAA's) involvement ended at the conclusion of the planning phase. The directorate subsequently split the appointment round into two with one to find the new Convener and the other to find the members.

The prior two MACS appointment rounds were representative of good practice and the same selection panel chair was going to chair the round to find a new Convener. This clearly provided a level of continuity and knowledge for this latest set of appointments. The relevant case studies on those appointment rounds are available to download from the following links on our website:

<http://www.publicappointments.org/publications/publication/778/mobility-and-access-committee-for-scotland-good-practice-in-planning-attraction-and-assessment>

<http://www.publicappointments.org/publications/publication/231/mobility-and-access-committee-for-scotland-effective-attraction-and-assessment-2013>

We had allocated the same PAA to provide oversight on both of those occasions. As allocations are made on a cab rank basis, there was a new PAA for the latest appointment rounds. That PAA was put in touch with the previous PAA to gather intelligence on how each of the prior rounds had progressed.

The panel chair had noted at the conclusion of the last appointment round that, whilst it had been representative of good practice, there was scope to make further improvements such that a wider and more diverse range of people could be both encouraged and enabled to apply. As well as hoping to attract applications from younger people and people from a BME background, the panel chair felt that the appointment process could be made more accessible to, in particular, potential applicants with learning disabilities.

The Scottish Government's central Public Appointments Team (PAT) supports all regulated appointment activity on a round by round basis. It does this by

assigning a PAT Manager to assist with planning and to provide both support and expertise at all stages. PAT also actively works on broader improvements to the appointments process with a view to both learning lessons and to disseminating good practice more widely. Much of this work is completed and/or commissioned by the head of PAT and/or PAT's Development Manager.

The PAT Development Manager in this case made early contact with the panel chair from the Convener round to discuss previous MACS appointment rounds and what lessons could be learned from those as well as what might be done differently on this occasion. That was with a view to rolling out those practices to cover a wider range of appointments to public bodies. It was apparent from previous rounds that the MACS panel chair was knowledgeable about how to design appointments rounds that led to the successful appointment of people with disabilities. The secretariat at MACS is also well-versed in ensuring that appropriate adjustments are made to enable each new member, regardless of any disability that they may have, to participate fully as members of the Committee. The Commissioner and the PAT had already identified that underrepresentation of disabled people continued to be an issue for the boards of Scotland's public bodies. Proper consideration of the successes that MACS had had to date, as well as what was planned for these latest appointments, could clearly offer lessons with wider applicability.

The PAT had already made contact, along with the Scottish Government's Equalities team, with Inclusion Scotland (IS), which is a consortium of organisations of disabled people and individuals who work with others to draw attention to and address the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect the everyday lives of disabled people in Scotland.

The PAT had done so with a view to commissioning IS to examine current Scottish Government practices in order to make the wider appointments system more attractive and accessible to people with disabilities. This appointment round offered an opportunity to gather more intelligence on changes that could be made. The panel chair was very supportive of this proposed approach.

Prior to the round starting, Inclusion Scotland worked up an outline proposal for the project, intended to examine the current system and to make recommendations for change.

## **Planning**

Planning involved Inclusion Scotland and both selection panels and their chairs as well as the PAA. It was conducted very openly and also involved an element of building on the training that panels had already undergone such as unconscious bias e-learning. Much of the discussions revolved around the particular barriers faced by people with mental health issues and learning difficulties. Unusually, and given the complex nature of the round, which included two panels to find a new Convener and members respectively, two pre-planning meetings as well as two planning meetings were held. A great deal of time was spent on exploring the needs of the board and on how best to express those as transparently as possible and without the inclusion of unnecessarily restrictive requirements.

This led to the design of appropriate person specifications for each of the roles to be filled, including for the Convener. The appointment rounds were designed with the intention of appointing those new members whose skills in combination most closely met the needs of MACS.

The person specifications were translated into the core skills framework format which means that they were clear about what good evidence of each criterion would look like and how each would be tested. The revised specifications were then included in updated applicant information packs. The panel put time and effort into shortening the pack and making it easier to read and more welcoming. Additionally, and this was ground-breaking, the packs were also produced in an easy read version to make the content more accessible to potential applicants with learning disabilities. Easy read versions of the letter to be sent to the candidates identified for appointment as well as the associated declaration forms were also produced for this appointment round.

## **Publicity**

The panels, having considered the management information gathered from the previous rounds, targeted publicity to relevant groups and individuals. The panels did this by sending targeted emails and making phone calls to partner organisations, asking them to use social media and traditional methods to reach out to members/supporters/users. The panels also produced a poster which could be used, including at transport termini. The panels also asked their partner organisations to cascade information to other organisations (or signpost them so the panels could do so) to achieve a positive ripple effect. This was all done by the MACS secretariat and was free.

News about the vacancies, as with all others, also appeared on the appointed for Scotland website. Additionally, and this again was ground-breaking for a MACS round, an open day was run by Inclusion Scotland for its members and stakeholders and with the support of People First Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland. People First Scotland is an independent organisation run by and for its members. It works to support people with learning difficulties to have more choice and control over their lives.

The open day was held on Wednesday 15 June in the Station Hotel in Perth. A flier was produced to publicise the day and was issued to stakeholder organisations via PAT and Transport Scotland as well as by direct email-shot to all subscribers to Inclusion Scotland's regular newsletters.

The flier made it clear that the purpose of the day was to explain the work of MACS and to give people information and support, should they wish it, to apply for the vacancies. The Scottish Government also paid people's expenses for attending. The panels felt this was important as they were alive to the socio-economic factors that encouraged and enabled applications from a wide and diverse pool of applicants.

## **Conclusion**

The outcome of the appointment round can be downloaded from the following hyperlinks to press releases about the appointments:

The new Convener:

<http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org/media/26937/macs-convener.docx>

The new members:

<http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org/media/26979/macs-members-nr.docx>

<http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org/media/28106/macs-jan-2017.docx>

The chair of the panel, Jill Mulholland, confirmed that she was delighted about the level of interest generated during this appointment round and about the diversity and quality that the appointment process delivered.

Jill Mulholland has now moved on from her role with Transport Scotland and is no longer available to discuss her experiences of chairing appointment rounds for MACS. The PAT Development Manager, Kirsty Walker, does however have access to information on this appointment round and is happy to speak with others about the approach taken to fill positions on the MACS board on this occasion. Kirsty can also forward information on the provision of reasonable adjustments for the appointments process and for those appointed to boards:

Email: [Kirsty.Walker2@gov.scot](mailto:Kirsty.Walker2@gov.scot)