

THE PANEL ON FAIR ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Replies to:

access.professions@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

or in writing to

**The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions
c/o 4.16 Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London
SW1A 2WH**

(Closes Friday 20th March 2009)

Introduction

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions was announced on 13th January 2009 as part of a package of measures contained in the New Opportunities White Paper¹. It will be chaired by the Rt. Hon Alan Milburn MP, with twenty expert representatives from a range of professions. More detail on the work of the Panel and the full list of Panel members can be found at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/accessprofessions.

Scope

The Panel will look at the processes and structures that govern recruitment and progression into professions. It will identify actions that the professions, supported by government where required, could undertake to ensure fair access for people from all social backgrounds.

The scope of the Panel's work includes:

- The flexibility of paths into – and promotion within – the profession (as well as conversion between professions) including inflexibilities that may stand as obstacles to people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Financial obstacles to entry and progression – and financial support provided, for example, through scholarships
- The role of work experience as an entry route into the profession – and in particular unpaid internships
- Recruitment practices – including those that govern progression – such as interview programmes and selection days
- Outreach/recruitment marketing to encourage both new applicants and those seeking promotion within the profession

The panel's work will not cover:

- Wider drivers of social mobility outside of recruitment practices and structures – for example early years and education – as covered by the New Opportunities White Paper
- Employment law and illegal discrimination
- Wider issues of equality such as race or gender

¹ See: www.hmg.gov.uk/newopportunities

Background

Social mobility relates to the degree to which people's social and economic status can change throughout their life or between generations of their family. There are many influences on social mobility. An economy that creates more good quality jobs provides people opportunities for social mobility. For instance, in the second part of the twentieth century there was a significant rise in the number of professional positions – from around 15% of all jobs for people who turned 35 during or before the Second World War to 40% for the equivalent age group in the period 1985-96.²

High quality education – from early years through to school and university – is also essential for social mobility by providing people with the skills and capabilities with which to take advantage of new job opportunities. The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions will be looking at what more can be done to improve social mobility through fair access to the professions.

The evidence suggests there are a number of important key stages for access into the professions. These include:

- Forming positive aspirations early on: research shows there is a strong link between an individual's aspirations and their job outcomes.³ Developing positive norms and values associated with professions, as well as challenging any misconceptions, is an important first step to access to the professions.
- Capability, knowledge, and information: entry into professions will often require specific skills and experience, for example undertaking a postgraduate university qualification. Young people need quality information about the education and careers choices open to them. Other factors such as communication skills or core work skills can also contribute to an individual's chance of accessing a profession.
- Supportive initiatives, policies and programmes to enter the profession: the availability and quality of support for accessing the professions – including professional outreach, internships and work experience, and recruitment practices – can have a strong influence on the overall accessibility of professions to different social groups.
- Routes for progression and development: many professions are characterised by initial years of intense development and progression. The strength of support (financial and non-financial) for young and aspiring professionals is important to ensuring that people from all social backgrounds can access and develop in the profession.

² Heath and Payne (1999) Twentieth Century Trends in Social Mobility

³ Schoon, I. & Parsons, S. (2002a). Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes.

Responding to the Call for Evidence

This is an open call for evidence and we encourage you to draw it to the attention of others who may wish to submit evidence to inform the work of the Panel.

You should be aware that evidence submitted may be printed in subsequent outputs from the Panel and/or published on the Panel's website. If you would like your evidence to be treated in confidence, please indicate in your response. Personal contact details will be removed from any published material, but may be used by the Secretariat for purposes of the Panel's work such as contacting you for further information.

The Call for Evidence is divided into four parts. It is not mandatory to complete all four parts.

Submissions are preferred by e-mail (in word or pdf format) to

access.professions@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

or in writing to:

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions
c/o 4.16 Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London
SW1A 2WH

The close for submissions is Friday 20th March 2009 (although we welcome early contributions).

In your replies please state:

- Your name and contact details
- The organisation (if any) you represent
- Which (if any) particular profession your evidence refers to. (We welcome evidence on either access to a specific profession or on issues of access to professions generically)
- Whether you wish your submission to be treated in confidence

Part I: Background detail and facts

In this section we welcome some background detail and facts about the profession(s) your evidence focuses on. For instance:

- How many employees are there in the profession?
- How many are training to enter the profession at any point in time? How many actual new entrants are there to the profession each year?
- How many employers are there in the profession? What is the average size of each organisation? What types of organisation (e.g. public, private, third sector) are these?
- What are the expected trends in employment in the profession?
- What are the qualification requirements for the profession? What proportion are graduates?
- Are there non-graduate routes into the profession?
- Are there routes for people to enter the profession mid-career from other professions?
- How many people receive scholarships each year, how much are these worth, and how are they allocated?
- How many internship and/or work experience opportunities are available?
- Do you know of any relevant academic or other studies of the profession?

Part II: Evidence on current issues or barriers to access to the profession(s)

In this section we welcome evidence assessing current issues or barriers to fair access to a career in the profession(s). This might, for instance, consider:

- What is the evidence in relation to levels of representation of new entrants to the profession(s)? (e.g. by parental background, school type)
- What are the typical routes into the profession? (e.g. are there specific courses or degrees necessary for entry)
- What issues or barriers might potential entrants face in accessing the profession(s)? For instance this might look at:
 - The quality and availability of information and advice provided to young people for them to aspire to the profession(s), and find accessible routes in
 - The formal or informal networks that can help facilitate experience of, or entrance into, the profession(s)
 - The type of recruitment practices used to recruit new entrants (e.g. interview panels, selection days, assessment centres)
 - The use of outreach and marketing by, or on behalf of, the profession(s)
 - The financial obstacles or financial support available to aspiring potential entrants
 - The availability and funding of work experience and internship opportunities
 - The range of potential routes into the profession, including non-graduate and mid-career entry

Part III: Current initiatives, programmes and policies to ensure fair access to the profession(s)

In this section we welcome evidence looking at current initiatives, programmes and policies in place to support fair access to the profession(s). This might, for instance, include outreach programmes, internship or work experience opportunities, recruitment and selection practices, or expansion of flexible routes into the profession.

In your evidence you may wish to set out:

- Who is responsible for delivering the initiative, programme or policy and how is it funded and delivered?
- How effective is it at encouraging young people to raise their level of aspiration and/or enter the profession(s)?
- Are there transferable lessons from it for other sectors and professions?
- Are there any interesting schemes to promote fair access that you are aware of run by your counterparts in other countries?

Part IV: Suggested actions to extend fair access to the profession(s)

In this section we welcome comments and suggestions about additional initiatives, programmes or policies that could broaden access to the profession(s) in the future. This can include measures undertaken by the professions, government, other non-governmental organisations or a combination of these.

In your evidence you might like to consider:

- What would be the aim of the initiative and how would its success be measured?
- What are the potential strengths, drawbacks or limitations of the proposal?
- Who should be responsible for organising, funding and delivering it?