

THE PANEL ON FAIR ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS

13th January 2009

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Prime Minister has asked the Rt. Hon Alan Milburn MP to chair a panel of representatives from major professions to examine what more can be done to ensure fair access to careers in key professions.

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2. The work of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions will complement the package of measures outlined in the New Opportunities White Paper.
3. The Panel's work will focus on the processes and structures that govern recruitment and progression into key professions. The focus will be on the contribution that can be made by the actions of the professions themselves, supported by government where required.
4. The scope of this work includes:
 - a. Financial obstacles to entry and progression – and financial support provided, for example, through scholarships
 - b. The flexibility of paths into – and promotion within – the profession, including inflexibilities that may stand as obstacles to people from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - c. The role of work experience as an entry route into the profession – and in particular unpaid internships
 - d. Recruitment practices – including those that govern progression – such as interview programmes and selection days
 - e. Outreach/recruitment marketing to encourage both new applicants and those seeking promotion within the profession
5. The panel's work will not cover:
 - a. 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
 - b. Employment law and illegal discrimination
 - c. Wider issues of equality such as race or gender

AIM

6. The Panel's work will complement the Government's wider measures to increase social mobility. The Panel aims to achieve this by securing improvements to the structures and practices that govern recruitment and progression into the major professions, with the focus on improving access for all. The Panel provides an opportunity for government and the professions to work together closely and intensely on this agenda.

7. As well as working with the professions themselves to secure change, the Panel may also make informed recommendations to government where there are clear national barriers to fairer access. This could cover government's role in:
 - a. Facilitating financial support for entry unpaid internships
 - b. The flexibility of key routes into the professions
 - c. Measures to encourage wider recruitment

8. The review's work will be informed by:
 - a. The work of key external experts
 - b. Internal analytical work (led by the Strategy Unit)
 - c. Views from the major professions
 - d. Other departmental processes and reviews

9. The output from the Panel will be a policy statement to be published in Summer 2009 which will announce steps to be taken by each of the professions to widen access, as well as recommendations for government to support these steps.