

Welcome everyone to this afternoon's Civil Service Live session on how to be a good ally. It's a real pleasure to be here with you this afternoon to look at such an important topic. I'm Annie, I'm a senior policy advisor at Policy Lab. We're a small, multidisciplinary team with six years experience of working across the system to develop, test and demonstrate experimental and people centred approaches to complex policy challenges. So I'm here to facilitate today's session, along with my colleague Theo from Policy Lab, and Lianne, behaviour change lead at the Civil Service diversity and inclusion team. So what I'm going to hand to Theo now to explain the aims for today's session.

Thanks, Annie. I'm Theo. I'm a member of Policy Lab team. There are four things we'd like to explore in this session. Firstly, to understand and share what you think allyship is, secondly, to think about how we can be allies and how we can push this to the next level. Thirdly, to crowdsource your ideas and views on how to be a good ally, and finally, to leave you with the tools to continue exploring this issue. Thank you.

Thank you very much Theo. So in terms of format, this workshop is designed to be interactive and practical. In the first section, we're going to look at what allyship is. I'm delighted that we're joined by Bernadette Kelly today, who is the cross Civil Service social mobility champion, and Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport, who will share some personal reflections on allyship. We'll then ask you to privately reflect on your own experiences of allyship before collectively looking at a scenario. So we'll be asking you to use the slido poll at certain points during the workshop, which you can find by clicking on the start the conversation button at the top right of your screen and then looking at the poll tab. Your written sli.do responses won't be visible to other people, but they will be visible to us. It's fantastic that I think we've got upwards of 1000 participants watching today, so as you can imagine, we won't be able to read out all of the responses, but we will feed back some of your views and insights as we go and the Civil Service diversity and inclusion team will be looking at the responses after the session to feed into further work in this space and any future outputs will of course be appropriately anonymized. So Lianne, Theo and I will be working away in the background to make sure everything runs smoothly but please do excuse us if there are any technical glitches. As you can imagine, we're all getting used to a new way of doing things remotely. And so to get started, I'll pass over to Lianne who's going to kick off a discussion on what allyship is.

Thanks Annie, and as you say, it's great that we have so many sign ups for today's session, and we'll have a whole army of allies across the Civil Service. Allyship is something that we've all been hearing quite a lot about recently and that's why I'm starting by looking at what allyship is and its meaning. That said, it's important to point out that this is nothing new and although the session description mentioned looking at allyship in relation to race, it's equally applicable to any underrepresented group, every group needs allies. So for example, you might have heard it talked about in the context of bias as well. I suppose the thing that worth noting is that when something becomes a buzzword, sometimes some of the meaning can get lost a little bit. So outside of work, if we're active on social media, for example, when we think about allyship, we might have a conception that's rooted in sharing hashtags or updating a profile picture and these things are really important in terms of raising awareness, but there's so much more to allyship than this. Being an ally is such a powerful thing, but when we say that's what we are, we really want to be able to say it with a full sense of what that entails.

I'll turn now to the dictionary definition.

And here we go, a supportive association with another person or group. That's how allyship is defined in the dictionary. And I think that's fine. But what's important is also to see that this is quite cold and theoretical, and it shows us why dictionary definitions are usually only a start point, because for me personally, I think allyship is really about warmth and empathy as well, and as Theo mentioned, we're looking to get to this personal interpretation of allyship and to crowdsource your ideas today. So now I'm going to ask what allyship means to you personally, what it looks like and there'll be the slide poll and then the screen to your right if you click on the poll tab. You can take a moment and put in your thoughts

And then we can feed back to the group.

I can see the responses coming in. I'll just give you 30 seconds to do some typing and then I'll read a few out.

Great. So let me just call out a few of these responses. So we've got working alongside and supporting colleagues and staff, meeting the needs of or showing awareness of each employee's needs. Great one. We've got another, amplifying the voices of the unheard, showing support and solidarity with people and challenging systems, structures, and people. And a final one I'll pick out for you, being a champion for inclusion, anti oppression, and emphasising social justice. And I'm told that we've got more than 350 responses, so that's fantastic. I'll pass back to Lianne who's going to talk a bit more about the detail of some definitions.

That's great, Annie. Thank you. I'm quite overwhelmed by that actually, it feels like we've got quite a lot of people on the session today, who've already got a really good idea of what allyship is. That's great to see. And so now we've got that dictionary definition. And we've got those personal perspectives.

And I'm glad that they are still coming in. I just wanted to look at a few different things to sum up those six points on the next slide. First and foremost, it's about taking on the struggle as your own. So when we think about this, it's not just a matter of sympathising, I think it's really about empathising and being able to put yourself into the shoes of others. I think there's a big aspect around standing up, even when you feel scared. I think that's important. To be an ally, you've got to transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who lack it. And there's all types of privilege you might experience when you find yourself in the majority. Next one is around acknowledging that even though you feel pain, the conversation is not about you. I think this is an important one, it's one I've struggled with. Because when we see an injustice, it's really hard to take a step back sometimes. But in some cases, that's what being an ally is about. So linked to that you really need to be able to decentre ourselves, but also own our own mistakes. And we will make them and that's fine. It's just to understand and not be too hard on ourselves when we do. And then finally, it's about each of us taking responsibility for our own education. So if there's something we don't understand, it's on us to put in the work, which, of course, is what we're doing by coming to this session today, and being able to learn from each other and find these answers for ourselves. And so that's quite a lot to take in there, maybe you want to take a quick

snap of the slide with your phones if you've got them. Hopefully that's got us off to a pretty good start and we've got a firm foundation and I can hand back to Annie.

Thank you very much for that Lianne. So I'm now delighted to introduce Bernadette Kelly. As I mentioned, Bernadette is the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport, and is our cross Civil Service social mobility champion. Bernadette very kindly offered to share with us some of her reflections on allyship. So, Bernadette, we've just been looking at some definitions of allyship. I was wondering if you might like to reflect on what allyship means to you.

Well it's been really interesting the way and the importance of allyship has come to the fore in the discussion we've been having, particularly in the last few weeks. Obviously, it's been around for a while, in the last few weeks and months of the debate about Black Lives Matter in particular, it seems as if it's suddenly something we're talking about so much more and I think that's incredibly positive, because I think I'm probably like a lot of other people. I've been a bit uncertain. I've heard the term but I'm not quite sure what it means or how you get to be an ally. Do you have to somehow acquire some sort of badge or qualification or something like that? But actually, the truth is, lots of us, we all have the power to be an ally, anytime, and lots and lots of colleagues are showing allyship every day in the way they support their colleagues, and I think if we could have this debate in a way that gives more confidence to people to say, yeah, yeah, I am an ally, or I want to be an ally and I'm going to stand up and say that, then I think that, yeah, that would be hugely important. I think removing the kind of mystique about what it means is a key part of giving people that confidence to do that and to take that step.

Fantastic. Thanks so much Bernadette. And I was wondering if you might like to share some of your kind of personal experiences of allyship, and how your perspective on this issue might have changed over time.

One of the things this debate is making me do is ask myself actually how good an ally am I and I might come on to that, because I think I could do more. And I think lots of us should be asking ourselves that question, but it makes me inevitably think back to a much earlier time in my career, when I first joined the Civil Service, which was, you know, now more than 30 years ago, and the culture was really different then and there were, in particular, actually very few senior women. At the time there were very few Black, Asian minority ethnic people, even fewer, obviously. But there were also very, very few women. But I do remember there was one very senior woman in the department, a sort of solitary, very senior woman and what I most vividly remember now is how behind her back, she was sort of routinely made fun of, she had a nickname, which wasn't very kind of polite. And people, you know, thought was great that we could all comment on how eccentric and strange she was and curiously, i've talked to some other female colleagues from that time, and this wasn't the only example, wherever there was a senior woman it sort of seemed there was this kind of pattern, that they were kind of not taken seriously and joked about. And now they must have been incredibly talented, actually, and determined to reach those levels in what was an all male culture. And yet, I think back at it now, and I think, gosh, i'm actually a bit embarrassed that I kind of colluded in that culture and I didn't call it out. It didn't occur to me at the time, that that's what I should do. But it's very clear. I mean, obviously, it's much better now, for women, but many, many of our colleagues from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, colleagues with disabilities, we hear from them all the time. Hopefully, they don't receive that behaviour,

but the kind of daily discrimination, of just being kind of casually excluded or not, given the opportunities that they see their colleagues getting that still happening. So kind of, yes, we have come a long way. But it's made me ask myself, are my eyes really open to this. Am I calling out the bad behaviour as I now see it? And are we doing that effectively in the Civil Service?

Thank you so much for sharing those thoughts, Bernadette. I was wondering if you might say a bit more about allyship in the context of leadership. Yeah,

Lianne made a really interesting point, I think about how you know it requires some sort of personal bravery sometimes to be an ally. And at one level when you're very senior like me, it's a bit different because people are more likely to just naturally take what you say a bit more seriously, because of your position, but I think even we need to be brave. I mean, I often feel just as everybody does, I'm in a meeting, and I want to make a positive impression. I'm hesitant about saying anything that makes people uncomfortable. And therefore I think every one of us can sort of take to heart that lesson about, about bravery. And I also think just as leaders, we can really create the space as well for everybody around us to be brave. And we can do that by kind of kind of putting in place processes and systems. So you know, my department like others now, we're creating a shadow board, so that we can really hear from our colleagues, our Black and Asian and minority ethnic colleagues and our colleagues with disabilities and other underrepresented groups, so we can genuinely hear from them about what we need to do to be their allies as leaders. But I also think as a leader, the thing that we can all do is be open to challenge. And it's actually quite a hard and uncomfortable thing. When people come to you and tell you, you know what, you're not doing enough. You're not being a really a kind of proud leader for equality and inclusion. I heard that myself recently, from in my own department. When my colleagues who lead our positive support group, they said, look, it's nice working here, it's got a nice culture, but we don't think you as leaders are really looking out for us and for our careers, and that was pretty uncomfortable. However, it was really important to hear. So I think sort of being open to those voices that challenge us and challenge our beliefs and challenge what we think we're doing is a really, really important part of this as well. And then finally, of course, it's the obvious thing. We have to lead by example and we have to act on what we hear and be positive forces for change.

Fantastic, thank you so much for sharing those powerful reflections, Bernadette with us, it's really, really appreciated. So we've now we've had a rich discussion about what it means to be an ally and we've heard some of your suggestions and Lianne's kind of given us a view of allyship in terms of taking on struggles as our own, transferring the benefits of whatever privilege we might have, while acknowledging that conversations aren't about us, as well as owning our stakes and taking responsibility for educating ourselves and Bernadette just shared some of her personal reflections on allyship in terms of raising awareness of the concept, her experiences past and present and this really important idea of bravery, the importance of being brave and creating space for others to be brave. So I'd now like to begin to think about when allyship might be needed. For example, this could be important when you notice a colleague is often not being given the chance to speak up, or is looked over in meetings, it could be that you're noticing the use of inappropriate language or cultural references perhaps, or you might notice a lack of representation of diversity in visuals, presentations, and documents that reinforces notions of a majority. So I'm now going to hand over to Lianne, and she's going to talk a bit more about this concept and lead us in a reflective exercise.

Great, thanks very much Annie. So as you say, we've covered a fair bit of ground at this stage and now we've got this moment of reflection to start stitching some of these things together. So we've got a couple of minutes and the first thing I wanted us to be able to think about, and pop the answers in slido or maybe make a note on your pad if you've got one, is to think about when you have been called upon to be an ally and if you just relax, we'll take a minute and pop those answers down now.

Okay, so hopefully that's given everyone a minute or so.

And for those who are ready to move on, but we've still got a little bit of time so don't feel that you need to rush too much. The second poll that we have is what was your response in this moment. So when you were given the opportunity to show allyship, what action did you take what did you do?

Okay, so I know that there's some answers coming in now, which is great. So if you just keep those coming. I want you to sort of hold that in your mind for a moment because I'm going to go on and talk about levels of allyship, so what we're calling an allyship scale got 400 responses, which is great. It's great to have such an interactive and engaged group on this because I think that it's something that we really want to learn about together, so that's great. So on to this scale then. So this was adapted from a piece of work by an academic Karen Bradbury and as you'll see on the far left, point one, you've got what we're calling adversary behaviours, and these are the ones obviously that we're all keen to avoid. So this is when we actually find ourselves supporting the status quo. So when Bernadette spoke, she mentioned, collusion and that feeling when we don't always recognise it in the moment but we've all been there, where you actively join in. The next point is point two when we move into the passive space. So this could also be described as a bystander space and it's worth noting that when you're in this space, whether that's as a passive adversary, and you've no response or even moving into allyship response the passivity means that our actions are usually less visible. So the person who needs an ally doesn't get that sense of support, because we're doing something that around that may be helpful for ourselves in terms of education. But we're not really giving enough back and we're not standing up in the way that we perhaps should be and that's the passive section, around two and three. Then we move into active allyship. This is from point four onwards, and when we're in this space, this is when we're making a positive intervention. When we are standing up when we're being brave, and we're actually calling out and interrupting behaviour that isn't appropriate, and at this point, we might also take it a step further, this is step five on our scale, when we might also start to educate, so we might share our own reflections and help the people around us, who might be showing adverse behaviours, help them and support them to move into that allyship space themselves. And then point six is when we actually initiate an organised response, and I think this is when we start to see real change at a systemic level, when we organise things and that's when we're really putting ourselves out to do the hard yards, but also to really make the changes that we want to see into the system. For now I want us to think back to the reflection that we did.

And I want you to paint the scale. So this one where we're joining in in the adversary space right up to six and I want you to say where you think the response that you made in that example that you gave, where do you think that your response was on that scale.

I'll give everyone a second to do that, and if you've already fed in your response, I know we've got some people who are quick off the mark, maybe think about another example and what your response was then, because as I say, we all have a lot of opportunities I know, invitations to be allies throughout a particular day or week or within our communities.

And I suppose whilst we're waiting for those poll results to come back, I wanted to pick up on something that Bernadette was saying earlier around confidence and sometimes when we conceptualise something like allyship, and it's surrounded by this sense of mystique, and I think when we have those feelings and worries that prevents us from acting sometimes, and it's really important that we know that we can make mistakes. I think that's one of the key messages that's important for us to take away today. It's an ongoing place. We're all learning over time, and also, it's not a matter of we've come to this today and then we've got allyship down and we can move on. These are things that we'll all need to keep working on and that we'll grow and develop on. So I suppose it's not to rush ourselves too much. So I can see that the polls come through now and everyone can see that too.

And that's quite interesting, actually, in terms of where we are, I wonder. So we've got as I suspected, and because of the responses we had earlier when we asked people what allyship actually meant to them, we've got quite a few responses up at the high end of the scale, which is great. But also a few around this level three, where we're educating ourselves. So that's a good place to be in in terms of moving forwards. Next down, we've got actually quite a good chunk of people who were able to make an interrupt, and I think that's really important. And that's when we're in the Bravery space that we talked about even some sixes, and only around 9% of you have said that you made no response which is great. But also just want to repeat again, really, that it's not a test and although there might be in this one scenario, a time when you were able to do something. Just be kind to yourself and don't expect to get it right all the time, and we'll keep learning and growing together. So our next session section of it is that we're going to look at how we might move up the allyship scale. So I know we had a big chunk right at the top, and we're going to look at specific scenarios. So now I'll hand back to Annie. Thank you.

Thanks very much, Lianne. So if Lianne says we're going to look at a specific scenario where allyship might be needed, and think about what an active allyship response would look like in that context, so reflecting on that scale that we've just learned about. So I'll start by describing the scenario and then I'd like you to suggest using the slido poll what a high level allyship response might be. So here's your scenario. In this scenario, there's a team whose meeting culture has started to become toxic. Certain people frequently interrupt or talk over others, sometimes even shouting. It's made certain people in the team feel like their voices are never heard and they're not valued because the behaviour is never challenged. So that's your scenario. I'd now like to invite you to use a slido response poll to suggest what an active allyship response to this scenario might be and it sounds like a lot of you are already in kind of an active allyship response space, which is great, and please do kind of reflect on using that scale. What might a good response look like in this scenario, and we'll give you a minute to do that and then Lianne is going to feed back on some of those responses.

So a couple of people are asking for me to read this scenario again so yes certainly. So let me set out that scenario once more. In this scenario, there is a team whose meeting culture has started to become

toxic. Certain people frequently interrupt or talk over others, sometimes even shouting. It's made certain people in the team feel like their voices are never heard or not valued because the behaviour is never challenged. So that's your scenario. Do pop in the slido what you think a good allyship response might look like in that scenario

It's great that we can see some responses started to come through we'll just give you 30 seconds and then we'll start to feed back on some of those.

So I know that you're all still busy typing, but we've got some coming through now. So when someone is interrupted and spoken over we can do something there to step in and ensure there's a clear agenda, I think is an important one, challenge that behaviour. Point made that this can be done on or offline and I think that's an important thing that doesn't always happen when you want to call out a behaviour and don't necessarily need to do it publicly and sometimes that gives people a little bit more space. So what I can see for me at the moment that are coming through. I've got another one here around shifting the focus to the person that's trying to be heard. We're really looking at things that we're doing to amplify the voices of those who aren't necessarily being heard, and the idea of setting an agenda for example, potentially even rotating chairing responsibilities around the group, maybe saying at the beginning a reminder for meeting attendees about being respectful, and active listening, would be good. Bring people into the conversation. These are those systemic changes, I think when we are making sure that the change will stick. So it's not just in one meeting, which might be where we call out someone but by changing the process around the meeting. That would be confident that it would mean behaviours would persist and the other thing it's probably worth saying quickly is that whilst we've been in lockdown, there's been tech solutions that have actually helped with this and that might have been useful in this particular scenario that can aid, and so on Microsoft Teams for example, you can raise your hand if you want to say something and I think that this can be particularly helpful if people are struggling to say something, and feeling a little bit unsure about how to get a word in and get attention to what they want to say. So now, last thing, before I hand back to Annie, it's just to say that it's not necessarily only the chair that can act. We can all encourage, each other to do better in this area so if you do see someone in a meeting, and they do the things that suggest they want to speak, and no one's come to them yet, then maybe you can say they want to speak now, or something like that, or did you have something to say about that Annie and that's the way that we can amplify those voices. So now I'll hand back over to Annie to start wrapping up.

Thanks so much, Lianne. So we're coming towards the end of our time together today. So I'd like to ask Bernadette, whether she's got any reflections on, on what she's heard this afternoon. Any final reflections for today?

Well mainly just to say thank you, because it's been great to hear from you Annie and Lianne and to see the comments from people, and which have really sort of strengthened I think you know a sort of sense of understanding of allyship. I really like Lianne's scale. I'm the social mobility champion for the Civil Service and I'm actually now thinking how can I use that to sort of make allyship in social mobility, you know, the support that we show for our colleagues, who may come from less privileged backgrounds? How can we, how can we reach them through allyship as well I'm also really keen to see whether we can come up with some of those institutional changes at the top end of that scale, which

really changed the whole system, as well as encouraging individuals to take action in, in the ways that they can. And just to say, the other thing is judging from the tremendous responses to those personal reflections, we've got an awful lot of allies on this call at the moment, and I guess there's always a sort of, it's always gonna be the case with a session like that people who are really interested in the topic will be joining us today, and so it's great to have this chance to have a conversation with people who care about being allies. But I guess what I hope we can do is now take that conversation out to lots of other colleagues who maybe haven't thought about it aren't quite as confident or brave as we want them to be and spread the word around allyship.

Thank you so much, Bernadette. Really important points there, around kind of spreading, spreading this idea outwards, and so thank you so much everyone for being such a wonderful group of people today and participating so actively in all our exercises, the final thing that I'd like to invite you to do is to take a moment to think about a pledge about how you can be a better ally. So what would you kind of commit to doing in order to further your allyship, and if you wish, you might like to share this pledge in the forum thread after this session, so you can find that on the site for this. If you go in the forum box, there's a forum dedicated to this topic. So do share your pledges there if you'd like to. The thread also has information about how you can sign up to the inclusion collective, which is a group of people interested in these sorts of topics, and so please do check that out if you're interested, and we'll be able to get in touch with you to find out more about what you've got planned and what you've got going on. So that brings us to the end of today's session. I hope you found it interesting and useful and I'd like to thank the session design team, so that's Theo, Laura, Lianne and everyone else who's made this kind of happen backstage and of course a big thank you to Bernadette for joining us today. But most of all, I'd like to thank you all for your active participation, and as Bernadette says, please do share what you've learned today or what you found interesting with your colleagues who might not have been able to join so a huge thank you from me and all of us and I'm wishing you a wonderful afternoon.