

Good afternoon and welcome to this session Leading Teams Virtually. My name is Louise Wheeler, and I'm Head of Leadership Programmes at the Civil Service Leadership Academy. I'm delighted to be joined today by Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary in the Home Office, and Joshua French, who is a co-founder of Bailey & French, but you can see that there are tens of thousands of people, friends and colleagues dialling in from across the world. And we are so pleased to have you all here. We hope in this session, we're going to create a space for you to think about the importance of leadership in the current context, how you can lead effectively even in a virtual environment. And by the end of the session, have some practical tips and ideas to take away. This pandemic affected everyone. We've had to change the way that we live our lives and how we work. For those working on the front line, the way that we do work has needed to adapt. And for those of us who can, we've had to pivot to work in virtually. There have been so many achievements that civil servants have contributed to that have been rightly recognised over the past few days. And over the past three months, the Civil Service Leadership Academy have been hearing your stories and the details of how these achievements have been made possible. We've been running virtual leadership development sessions with thousands of places being taken in order to support leaders to really think about how they're leading right here right now during these challenging times, and what they might need to do to support their team to succeed in the current environment. The feedback that we've had is that leaders need space to think about the practicalities of dealing with uncertainty and leading remotely, so this is what we're going to create for you today. In terms of leadership and leaders at all levels, it's crucial that all of us as leaders continue to pay attention to how we lead, and to question the assumptions held about leadership, our own and those of others, how we can reset and reshape our leadership intent, our approaches, and our impacts to meet the opportunities and the challenges of the context faced. So that we together in the Civil Service can respond well to any context. The context we're going to consider today is leading within a virtual working environment. We have an hour together, and we're going to spend our time exploring how we can best lead our teams. But we're going to do this by developing our understanding of the Civil Service theme approach, how this can be used as a framework to support teams to really thrive in both face to face and virtual environments. We're going to support ourselves about how we can create those inclusive virtual environments, and think about the actions we can take as leaders. We're also going to share some techniques to help us build positive, trusted relationships within teams. So at this stage, I'd like to welcome Joshua to introduce himself and set up our first warm up activity.

Thank you so much, Louise. So I'm Joshua French. I'm one of the founders of Bailey & French. And we're an organisation, we focus on wellbeing and performance with a particular focus on humanising workplaces. So places where people can really feel like they can be authentic themselves, where they understand their potential and can support each other to fulfil that. And importantly, enjoy and experience meaningful, positive connections with people that they work with. We have a particular specialism of an area of psychology called positive psychology, and we'll be touching upon that throughout the session, and then it will be available for further reading afterwards as well. So yes, in terms of the session, we want to make it quite interactive, and the first thing that we're going to focus on is the experience of leading teams virtually over the last few months. So this is what the theme of the workshop is, but we're really curious and interested to hear what your experiences have been. So if you can use the chat feed and just send through anything at all, in terms of your reflections, what you've noticed what's been different, what's been good, what's been challenging about the experience of

leading teams virtually. If you could send that through, that would be fantastic, and then we can refer back to that at different points throughout the session.

Great, thanks so much, Joshua. So in terms of running order, we're going to be exploring the Civil Service teaming approach, discussing inclusive virtual environments, what helps them, what enables them, what some of our barriers can be, and considering ways that we can build strong relationships and our teams, and we'll finish up with a summary by Matthew. Matthew is also going to kick us off for the main part of the session by sharing his reflections of starting his role as the new Permanent Secretary of the Home Office in a virtual environment. There's going to be opportunity for us, so pick your questions in the next five to 10 minutes. If you can feed them into the Q&A function, Slido, we can take the most popular ones, and take those in about 10 minutes time. So, Matthew, welcome, we're really pleased to have you here. Could you start us off by sharing your reflections of leading within the past few months in your new role as Permanent Secretary in the Home Office?

Absolutely. Well, thank you very much, Louise, and great to be working with Joshua, and it's wonderful to hear that so many people have joined the session. It is a really important topic and one that I'm delighted to take part in. So just to kick off here, a few reflections from me over the last few months. The background is that I started this job as Perm Sec at the Home Office literally on the same day that lockdown started, so three and a half months ago. It was a time when the department was in some flux, and with some very significant issues to deal with, including the Windrush report which had just come out. Of course, since then we've had the Black Lives Matter movement, and race has been a very prominent issue in our country and in our society. We've also of course, like many other departments, have had the issues of EU Exit in transition to be working with. And above all, we've had the pandemic itself, but for the Home Office, that's largely been about the policing, the border, and all sorts of other things that have been going on as well, so a very busy agenda. But for me personally, one of the things that was most impactful was that I didn't really have a run up to this job. I was basically told the week before I started that I was going to be starting, and of course, also coinciding with lockdown, having to get to grips with a new agenda, and a new team, almost from a standing start. So there are three things that I tried to do. First of all, I tried to find the silver lining, I tried to look for the positives, and there are some positives from doing a job without any notice. And there are some positives of working in this, through this pandemic virtually. As you might be able to tell, I'm actually in the office today, but for my first month, I didn't come in at all, and now I'm only coming in at one or two days a week when I absolutely have to. For me, the virtual working, the public, the upside of virtual working is that it can be more inclusive. It can be a great leveller. There are some people I think, who are responding in a way that has allowed them to feel more included in their workplace than before the lockdown. So that's the silver lining to hang on to. Secondly, there are things which have to be managed and can be managed. We just need to do things in a more deliberate, careful way. In leadership terms, I'm a great believer in the model, Future, Engage, Deliver and that is all about signposting. You've got to signpost to the people that you're leading, what is the future? What is the vision that we're all working towards? Secondly, how are we engaging? You've got to be really explicit and conscious with the ways that you're engaging with your teams, making time and putting the effort in to do the stuff that you wouldn't normally have to put effort in, because it would be happening naturally as you bump into people in the corridor, and all those sort of spontaneous interactions, so they've been really specific and active about creating moments for engagement. And then crucially, focusing on the delivery, even if you feel a bit

more distant from the delivery from the end results of the policy or the operations that you're working on. Finding ways to connect for all of your people with that endpoint so that people can really see the worth and the benefit of the work that's doing. All of that, in my view, is doable. We just need to do it consciously and deliberately, looking out for ourselves and looking out for each other. And then the third bucket of things is things which you just can't do, as well as you would normally like to do in normal times because of the virtual environments, where you just have to accept that things are tough, and that you cannot expect to have the same sort of impact or same sort of engagement. For instance, getting to know a new team as I have had to do, I just have to give myself permission that that is going to take longer than I would like. It is not possible to bring together physically, all of the senior people in the Home Office, for instance. It's not possible even for the executive committee to sit around a single table. So all of the things which I would normally have used to get to set the direction of the beginning of a new role, I've just had to accept that I cannot do it. I think giving yourself permission that certain things are going to be really tough are going to take time, I think that's a crucial part of managing through this complicated time. And just bearing in mind that the wellbeing and the mental health aspects of the pressure that we are each under, that all of us are under and people on our teams are under, just being conscious about that and accepting that they're going to take up a good chunk of your time. So those are my top three reflections. There is a silver lining, secondly, there are things which you have to manage and can be managed. And thirdly, just accepting that some things are going to be tougher than they would previously be.

I'd be very interested to hear your reactions to those sort of buckets of activity, and your tips for how all of us can learn from each other in these extraordinary times. And I look forward to contributing to the rest of the session, thank you very much, Louise.

Thanks so much, Matthew. So we've already got quite a few questions coming through for you. I think people are quite interested to hear from your personal experience of how you've managed some of these aspects. And so the first one has been, I think, your most popular question is, how can we replace the spontaneous conversations beside the photocopier, when all the chats and even the ones to check-in seem to have a purpose when we're working virtually?

So we can't, I think we have to accept that everything that we do to try to fill that gap will only go so far, but we must try and fill that gap, you know. We must do the sort of things that otherwise wouldn't happen, so building in time to your diary for social events, for catch ups with the team, all the stuff that would just happen naturally, I'm afraid, you just have to accept that it is not going to be spontaneous anymore. It's got to be planned. It's got to be put into the diary, otherwise it probably just ain't gonna happen. And that obviously takes some of the fun and the spontaneity out of it, but much better in my position, for my opinion, to give that a go. Get it into the diary than not to, and also just looking out for the people who are going to need looking out for. Maybe you won't even know who those people are going to be, if like me, you are in a new role, but really sort of understanding your team, spending time trying to talk to the people who have networks, if you like, into the organisation which in my case, I myself cannot reach, those are the sorts of things which really pay dividends, I think.

Excellent. Thanks so much. There's been some chatter coming through about the power of instant messaging as well. So I'm having a spontaneous How are you? moment as an IM, or there's been

some talk about having WhatsApp groups for teams and people just sharing what they're up to, just to build that sense of connection outside of work as well as in work. Ok, the second question we've got is the most popular, how do you engage with your team if they're unwilling to engage with you initially, ie they're video conscious?

What a great question. So in my view, engagement is all about giving people as long a menu of ways of engaging with you as possible. There isn't a single right way of engaging with an organisation like the Home Office which is 36,000 people. You know, there are 36,000 different preferred ways of engagement, so giving people lots of different ways of engaging. Some people will come alive when it's face to face. For others, as the question is suggesting, will be very conscious if there are videos, so they're going to prefer something that's either just on the phone or just one-to-one. And there are even some things that you can do that I would be really surprised by actually, when you're transmitting something, and probably the best single thing that my executive committee did, was just record a little video. It was literally each of us just saying thank you in different ways and the internal comms people put it together in a really, really engaging way, and it probably had more positive feedback than any other single thing that I've done, and that was just just one video. So you just need to give people lots of different ways of interacting with you. Whether that's on video, receiving something, talking privately, you know, just lots and lots of different connections.

Thank you. I think we've got time for one more question and this is an interesting one. Do you have any tips on having difficult conversations around performance and behaviours? And there's quite a few people that have liked this question, so it seems that a number of people are finding this difficult whilst working remotely. Do you have any tips or ideas you can share?

I think this is a really interesting one. So my own view is that actually, when you're working at distance, you have really got to signpost, what you're doing now, and that applies, particularly if you need to have a performance compensation. So you need to say, that is what you're doing. I think you need to be even clearer than you otherwise would be. And if there is a culture in the Civil Service, we have a fault, it's probably that overall, we're probably not direct enough. We're not always necessarily honest enough. I know there are occasions when you can be too direct, too honest, and my team told me that I do that plenty of times and I apologise for that. I do think that in general, we do need to be even more specific, even more direct, even more honest with our feedback. Well, we're having a performance compensation, we do need the other person to understand what it is, that you're trying to coach them to improve on. That's going to take time, it's probably going to take several bites at it, so don't try and do everything all in one go. Checking that the other person is really understanding, so ask them to play back to you. What have you heard from this conversation? What have you taken from this conversation? What are you going to do next, as a result of this conversation? All those tips might help you get a better sense of understanding of the level that they have got to, and through that, you'll be building up, I hope, a trusting relationship that then allows you to have those performance conversations more easily. I accept it's really, really difficult, especially when you don't necessarily know each other if one of you or both of you and you.

Thanks so much, Matthew, and I think that's enough time we've all probably got for the Q&A section. Please, everyone online, please keep your questions coming in. We'll have some time at the end of the

session, and we will ask the most popular questions at that stage. So Matthew brought up some really important points there, about what does it mean to work in this environment and the importance of trust and relationships. It's probably quite helpful right now to introduce our approach of Civil Service and teaming. Over the past few years, there's been a genuine focus on developing a sense of inclusion within the Civil Service. This year being 2020, year of inclusion, we have been really making sure that this approach can be used even in a virtual environment. Civil Service teaming was designed in 2019, in partnership with Bailey & French, and it brought together the next stage of the competent leaders approach to leadership and engagement and wellbeing. All that brought that to the fore at a time where we need to support teams who are working on to real sustained pressure of Brexit and EU planning. So as the scale of a pandemic became really apparent, we quickly have pivoted this into a virtual offer. It's probably helpful to take you through what Civil Service teaming is. We think it means coming together as a team and working towards a common goal. We know that teams aren't static, they constantly change and during change, we know that if you take part in teaming activities, it can strengthen relationships and support our performance and our wellbeing. Civil Service teaming incorporates the best out of a number of new and current approaches to wellbeing and inclusion, such as the Civil Service inclusion model, and the perma model of wellbeing. So you may have noticed the perma model in the people's survey. Or you might have had it as part of the wellbeing competent leader sessions over the last few years. It's a robust and easy to understand frameworks, for understanding how we can thrive as individuals and as teams and organisations. So these models combined have helped us create conversations that happen in teams, which result in actions that help us to achieve five particular states that are really helpful for our wellbeing and our performance. If we're doing teaming really well, these states allow us to be at our best and our teams. So you can say to yourself, I am at my best in this team. We feel like we are a team. We feel like we work well together and work well with others. We are all role model leadership, and we can, and we do respond well to any context that we're in. This teaming approach has been really valued by teams and departments over the last three months because it's helped them strengthen relationships, and support performance and wellbeing, even though we've been working in a virtual and tougher environment than usual. So we're going to start with a poll.

Yes, we're going to have a look now and keep the interaction going. So thank you, Louise for talking us through the Civil Service teaming model. So let's all connect to it by opening up this poll now, and you can see there's some statements for us to reflect upon. The first one is, I am at my best in this team, and we're going to be thinking about how much we disagree or agree with that statement. And then the next one, we are a team. And then we work well with others as the final one. So just as you're completing that poll, just a few things to think about, in terms of definitions. I am at my best in a team, what does that really mean to be at our best? It's considering of course, our performance, that we're able to really play to our unique strengths in our role, but also in terms of our wellbeing, that we feel strong, resilient, that we're able to be ourselves. And that we can find something really meaningful and purposeful in the work that we do and in the connections that we have with others. And so the next one us, we are a team. It's a word we use so much, but what does it really mean to feel like we are a team? What's the definition of that? So thinking about the team that we're in, how much do we feel that sense of connection and cohesion, and strength within that unit? And then for others, we work well with others. So we're not just an isolated team, we're working within a system and there's other teams, other people, other departments, other organisations. How much can we turn our focus outwards as well, and

make sure that we are supporting those around us, and we're connecting with those around us too. So just some things to think about as we're considering how much we agree or disagree with those statements. Now, let's have a look at the results as they're coming through. For the first one, I am at my best in this team, let's have a look at the results for that first part of the poll might just be taking a few moments to come in.

And something we can already be starting to do as we wait for that first poll result to display, is as you can imagine, in these sessions, we're always moving towards what can we take away? What can we do as actions? Throughout this whole session, we can start to be thinking about, what's something I could do to take away that would actually mean that I could feel even more at my best in this team, that kind of thing. Ok, so now let's look at the first results, I am at my best in this team. Ok, thank you very much. So we can see and what I'm going to do is a rough comparison and see how much we can agree. And it looks like, it's a little bit blurry on my screen... but there we go. It is 53% of us agree with that. And then 16 strongly or 17 strongly agree, so just about over 70% of us feeling really positive, clearly positive about that. Fantastic, so that's going to be something that's so valuable and important for us in this context that we feel that we are able to be our authentic best within this team. So now let's look at how that connects then to the next result that's coming through. So we are a team. Brilliant, we have 51%, agree and 24% strongly agree, so again, really high, three quarters of us are in the positives there. So we are a team. When we're thinking about this, it's interesting to notice the connection and the journey between those two things. There's this oxygen mask analogy that's often used, that is important for us to put our own oxygen mask on, if you're on an aeroplane and there's a crash before we can support other people. This analogy is a simple analogy, it's one that's used a lot, but it's a really important one for us to remember. If we can look after ourselves and make sure that we are strong, then we're much better able to nurture and create those conditions where we can all feel that we can be in that team together. Now let's have a look at the next one, which is about moving our attention even further outwards. So we work well with others. Excellent, so 57% and 23 so it's going up and up. Up to 80% of us really strongly feel that we all agree at least, that we work well with others, in terms of being able to share learning across organisations, being able to evolve what we're doing and be able to support each other to achieve our outcomes. That's so important at any time, but even more important in this current context. So what we're looking at here in terms of this, this journey is all about, how can we, as leaders, consciously and skillfully create the conditions where we can be at our best to begin with, and then we can support others to do that in a team environment? And then we can move beyond that, so that our organisations can, as best as possible, flourish and thrive. And if we can get ourselves into these optimum positive states, then it really does affect how we perceive the work that we're doing, how we frame it, and also how we show up and the behaviours that we demonstrate.

Thanks, Joshua, and I think it's useful to pick up on a key point there, that the way that we feel at work is really important. It's often related to the way that we see the world, how we interpret it, and respond to other people and their behaviour. In the Civil Service, we've been doing a lot of work to think about inclusion, behaviours and also how we see the world. And where we have got to is that heart of inclusion, is really our ability to be authentic, to have a voice and to feel like we belong. We know that great inclusive teams have all of these elements within their cultures. We know that we can build these into our cultures. So as we think about our behaviours, as we think about our team meetings, as we think about our line management conversations, we need to be thinking about how much are we

bringing in the ability for someone to feel authentic, feel they belong and feel that they have voice? First of all, before we think about yourselves as leaders, let's think about you as individuals within the Civil Service, and let's connect with your experiences of inclusion, and the elements of authenticity, voice and belonging. These are so important to us because they are really at the heart of what it means to be part of a great inclusive team. The following poll is going to help us look deeper at these team inclusion elements, so you should be seeing another pop up for a poll. Again, we'd like you to begin with ourselves and rate, how you rate yourself on these statements right now, 1 being low and 10 being high. The three questions are, I feel like I belong in this team. I feel that I can be myself authentically in this team, and I have a voice in this team.

And just as we're kind of considering our how much we agree and disagree those statements and thinking again about the definitions of these words. Belonging is not necessarily that we need to feel like we're all friends or best friends within our teams. But there's something there that we can really pick up on is when we can tune into this sense that there is a shared endeavour here. We're in it together. We're supporting each other and because of that, I feel like I belong with these people in this team. That's something really important to reflect upon when we're considering that state and that feeling of belonging. In terms of authenticity, we can all be reflecting on this individually. How much are we able to be our full, authentic self in the workplace? This encompasses aspects such as, are we able to talk about things, we're finding challenging? Things where we're feeling really excited and hopeful about? How much can we be open in that way and, and vulnerable sometimes, to the people that we work with to really feel like we can be that authentic self? Also, how much can we show the playful, humorous side of ourselves as well? And so there's not this sense of having a work mask that we're wearing, but being our full, very human self? And of course, we all have very unique strengths, things that light us up things that we love to do and that we're good at. So how much are we able to really feel like people are seeing that and recognising and valuing that? In terms of voice, how much do my views... are my opinions really heard? And how much influence do I have on the the direction of our team, the future? How much am I shaping and influencing that? So different things to consider there in terms of belonging and the authenticity and the voice. Now, it would be really interesting to see what's coming in, in terms of the poll results. Again, we can have a look and see. So there's some real positives here, and of course, with all of this as a real range there, but with Agree and Strongly agree. That's up to 78% for I feel like I belong in this team, such an important foundation for our wellbeing at this time, if we feel like we've got that sense of belonging that support network. Excellent, so let's move to the next one, a sense of authenticity, how can how much can I be authentically myself within this team? Again, we've got a range, but all together doing my maths quickly, so if I'm right, it's just over about 76%. Ok, so I'm feeling positive about that, a feeling that we agree or strongly agree that we can be authentically ourselves. That's wonderful, and of course, what we're going to be starting to think about now, is asking ourselves the question about how much would our teams feel that they are being authentically themselves as well? It's great that we're role modelling that, and I'm sure that will help out the teams and those that we work with too. Let's look at third one, how much of a voice do I have within my team? So 82% at the moment, thank you for sending in those results. So I guess it makes sense if we're a big community of leaders here, that our voices are heard. So again, starting to think about bringing it back to our teams. How can we make sure that our teams and each individual within our team really feel like they are able to shape an influence and be heard in terms of our discussions, our conversations and our connections about the work our team is doing? Fantastic. Thank you for sending those through.

What we've done there is had a quick reflection on ourselves, and as I said, now we're going to move it forward to our teams. So what would their experience be and we'd love to again, get the thoughts through from you on the chat feed. The question is, how do we think our teams are experiencing authenticity, belonging and voice in this context. How do we think our teams are experiencing authenticity, belonging and voice in this context? No right or wrong, it's just sending in any ideas, any thoughts, any experiences, we'd love to hear them, because then we can refer back to them.

Ok, so do send those through on the chat feed. And as they're coming in, we'll talk a little bit about the the aspects of virtual leadership which is a big theme for this session. And not everyone here. Some of us will not be all working virtually. We have all had to kind of shift and adapt to working virtually for nearly the majority of the time. So what barriers can that bring up for us? And for Matthew, in some of the things that you brought up in your conversation, there's definitely that sense that there's some really unclear ones. Let's think about some of those, a sense of belonging, let's theme it around that. We are literally more disparate. We are in separate locations so we're not able to share those spaces. There was a question that came up around those those natural water cooler conversations. How can we really get that sense of strong human connection? Especially when we're in this kind of virtual environment, we're not able to read the room so well, and we're not able to connect with each other or with the nonverbal clues, etc. It doesn't feel like the same kind of connection. So how do we really instill that same sense of belonging? Then thinking about authenticity as well, so what are the barriers with this? I mean, the way we're interacting now is, is becoming more normalised, but it's a virtual. It seems like a simulated way of having a conversation and it can feel a lot more transactional. Let's connect, let's talk about the things that we need to do. Every conversation as the question said, has a purpose. So what do we need to get done, with less space and time for those authentic connections? We will come on to it, in terms of some of our tips and ideas about how you can create a space and a platform for people to have those authentic connections. And then with with voice, this has been brought up before that, thinking about not everyone feels the same level of comfort and skill and being able to communicate naturally with this kind of virtual environment. So how do we make sure when we're making decisions, when we're talking about important things that everyone's voices are heard? At this point, as well, in terms of barriers, there's a key thing to think about, which is at the heart of inclusion is authenticity and belonging and voice. There is clearly a societal conversation that's happening at the moment about how we can level the playing field for everyone, regardless of race, to be able to experience the sense of belonging and voice, and being able to be their authentic selves? We really encourage leaders to think about how race is an important factor in terms of inclusion. and developing leaders who have a commitment to be actively anti-racist is necessary, really necessary at any time leading in general, but also for us to really be aware of when we're leading virtually as well.

So, various different kind of aspects for us to think about in terms of barriers.

Now, I know that as I've been speaking, thoughts have been coming through and it would be great I don't know if Louise, if you've got an eye on any of the comments that have been coming through in terms of people's thoughts around the team's experiences of these elements?

Yes, there are so many hundreds and hundreds of comments coming through, so I'm going to do my best in taking some of the ones that have stood out and that have been supported. There is a bit of a

conversation around what's the role of the leader in supporting and creating the environments for people to feel that they're authentic? It's really important then that we recognise that leadership has a role to play in helping people to be authentic. There is not just the role of the individual, but it's a cultural piece. It's a relational piece to help people feel authentic. There's been some comments about how do we handle dominants in groups. How do we handle those that show up in in a team meeting and how do we handle that conversation for us? We would use Civil Service teaming to try and level that playing field so that everyone can feel that they have a voice. Also making sure that you structure meetings in a way, which involves and encourages the voices of those who may be more quieter, and those that are more likely to be dominant. Actually, it's been quite interesting. One of the findings that we found from the research we've been doing over the last few months, is that in the majority, people are finding that one of the benefits of working virtually and having meetings virtually, is that there is a reduction of what's going on with the power in the room. And since everyone has voice and people that may not have spoken up so quickly before, feel that they can speak up in a virtual environment. We're hearing some sort of differences in experience there. And there's some some thoughts here about, you know, leadership's really important but not everything should fall to the leader. So there is something about the power of being in teams, something that Alex Chism talked about earlier on, about the importance of recognising everyone's contributions and how everyone creates the culture. It's not just about leadership, but recognising that leaders can really help set the tone and set the conditions of the environment as well. And there's lots here focusing upon how tech plays a part. Some people's experience have been that it's been fantastic. Tech has enabled really great opportunities to engage across teams. Others are finding that the tech is a barrier so people are feeling more isolated and there's a real spectrum of experience across the piece. Ok, I think that's probably it from the chat.

Fantastic, thank you for that, Louise. Let's now start to move it towards, I mentioned earlier, about taking things away and starting things about actions that we can take. So the next step is really to hear from you. First of all, there's already been some ideas that we can share additional things that we can do. But the question is, what will I do differently to build positive connections virtually, and connections that really, really include this sense of belonging and authenticity and voice? There's a bit of a reflection and a commitment that we're inviting here. And again, we can be sending those through into the chat feed, so that we can reflect back onto them in a few moments. So what will I do to build positive connections virtually? As you're thinking about that, and perhaps as well as we're talking, we can spark off some ideas, and I'm imagining, by the way that some of us will already be doing things, this won't be a new thing. But if you're already doing something, then definitely send that in as well because we're sharing the learning here, so you might spark off ideas for other people too. But we will move towards some of our key tips, and particularly underpinned by positive psychology in terms of the things that we would recommend that people consider, and if they're going to be keeping connections strong in a virtual way. So

That's probably really good points, and just to bring in, obviously, there's thousands of comments I'm going through as we go through this. I think it's really important looking at the polls from earlier, 11% of people on line feel that they don't feel like they belong. And I think that's a really important takeaway for all leaders to have. We need to think about what can we learn from this? It's not just about the majority, so if the majority of us are having a positive experience, but there's a minority that aren't, what can we do to address this? What can we do to work with it? And the same with if 10% of people don't feel like

they can be authentic themselves or they don't have a voice, what can we do to work with this? And what can we learn? If it is, in our power as leaders to address this, what are the sorts of tips and techniques that we can do? If we can weave that into this section, I think there's a number of people online that would love to hear that.

Fantastic. Yes, so important, and as we saw, there is a huge range here. Let's now look at some of the key tips that would be supportive for everyone, and be able to really make sure that whatever stage that someone is in, whatever their current context, that they've got that support that they need. So the first one is in terms of our tips for building connections virtually, so let's have a look through these. It is being open and vulnerable and honest about any of our own challenges. This comes off the back of research from Jane Dutton and her team around high quality connections. As I said in the post work sent out afterwards, there will be more room for things we can do around this on how we can build high quality connections which have so many benefits for individuals, for organisations that energise people, that give people this resilience. We can do it by building trust and one of the ways to build trust is to be open and authentic about what's going on for us in terms of our own challenges. So that's the first thing that we would recommend that people are considering, how they can best do that. Of course, there are different levels of comfort with us being able to do that. So just think about how can I step outside my comfort zone just a little bit more to really mean that I'm building that bridge? For when we can be open and authentic, people feel that their guard can be let down which builds trusted relationships for everyone involved. The next one, creating positive platforms for people to connect and work together for a common goal. So we talked about the water cooler conversations aren't happening so much. But exactly as Matthew was saying, there are so many different ways that we can engage with people in platforms that feel like everyone is able to have these kind of meaningful connections. I love the idea of the video where there's just a few words from everyone, but it feels like everyone's connected. So social platforms and thinking of different things like WhatsApp or Yammer that can create that sense of fun. This brings people together into a sense of belonging, and also meaningful platforms for people to discuss things such as the wellbeing of the team, how we're experiencing working virtually, that all helps people come together in a meaningful conversation as well rather than just transactional ones. Next, is thinking about for voice, planning meetings to give us many diverse opportunities for inputting our voice and our opinions and our thoughts. So, a few ideas of how we could do this is, when you're using a platform, such as teams or zooms is getting people to break out into smaller rooms and having quick discussions or long discussions, and then coming back and sharing ideas after that, so it doesn't feel like there's one person facilitating it. Giving people time to reflect on what's important to them, perhaps sending questions out before the the meetings or the sessions for people to reflect on, or even having that reflection time within the session. And then people all as we've done today, sending all their ideas through in chat, no right or wrong answers so that that can be gathered and themes can be brought out of that afterwards. They're all key ideas and key ways for us to get that sense of building positive connections virtually that we would recommend. But we would love to hear as well some of the things that have been coming through from you on the chat feed, I don't know if Louise if there's anything there that's been coming through.

And so there is a fair amount coming through about being mindful of IT systems and needing some real guidance, I guess, from departmental IT security teams about what platforms we can use, and we can't use. I think that's making the lives of leaders a little difficult at times. So there's some frustration being

shared in that space. There are a number of folk who are talking about, again, working to make sure that less dominant members are given an opportunity to participate. Oh, and...here we go, twice daily check-ins. Some people are doing twice daily check-ins, that's if you need it, and other people will feel that just a weekly check-in, will be fine. It's all about not making assumptions. It's all about asking your team what they need, and what they need from you as a leader, and what they need from each other. There is no right or wrong, there is no absolute equation to follow in this space. Only you will know how what's going on for your team. If your team are acutely stressed, then obviously, a regular check-in is probably going to be very helpful. If your team are moving into a business as usual space, then a daily check-in or even twice a day check-in is going to feel like overkill. So it's all about what is most appropriate, given the context that you're in and as a leader, assimilating that and understanding that in the virtual environment.

Yeah, that's such a such a great thing to remember, because we can find long list of Top Tips online of the best ways to lead virtually, but really trusting our own judgement and our intuition around that. I just want to emphasise something, again, that Matthew brought up earlier around, thinking about ways to create these moments of engagement for people. It can take a little bit of planning sometimes. But if we can think about the way that we can create a platform for people to really feel that they've had a meaningful moment, a real sense of shared pride, or joy or fun, those kind of things can take a second, a moment to happen, but they can really have a deep impact on a team's well being. And then of course, the knock on influence of their ability to positively impact those around them too. Fantastic, so we're moving towards, bit by bit, the wrap up of the session. And what we'd like to just share now is just to be clear about what's coming up next in terms of the resources that are available. There is a coaching question that is themed around the Civil Service teaming models. So me, us or others in a leadership context, by using that you can use it even for yourself or you can use it for one-to-ones or whole teams to open up great conversations, then there's more detail. We talked through a few quick tips, but there's more detail about how we can use positive psychology to help us build positive connections in a virtual sense as well. After this, you may have noticed in the forum, there is a feed or a forum conversation that's happening around leading teams virtually so after this conversation, we will be continuing that so do get involved, as we'd love to see you there. Finally, just to highlight some micro actions that are available, these are like little nudges or ideas that will be available for you if you are so keen to have these. It is 52 separate emails and they are sent through daily, and it is like a question you can use to spark off a daily huddle. Or you can think creatively about different ways that you might want to incorporate these micro actions into your day and your work. If you're keen on those, like the sound of them, then we will open up a poll now. All you need to do is leave your details in there and put your email address in, and then we'll make sure that you receive those micro actions as additional support. And yes, so we hope you find those useful.

Thanks so much, Joshua. Ok, thank you very much for your input and to everyone's input throughout the session. It's been really clear that we could have easily had a two or three hour session here. We are only really skimming the surface of the conversations that need to happen in the workplace to ensure that we're reaching those 10% of people that don't feel like they belong, don't feel like they have a voice or don't feel they can be authentic to help them move into the space with the majority of people in the Civil Service that feel like they can. Hopefully everyone will be signing up, taking some some moments of thinking to what they can do personally as a leader, and explore the positive impacts that

you can have in the world of work around you. So we've come together to think about how we can be inclusive, empowering leaders when we're working virtually. And how we can create these virtual environments, and how we can consider ways to keep building strong relationships. I will now hand over to Matthew, he's going to close the session with a few reflections. First of all, I'm just going to take before we close, Matthew, just one or two questions that have come up for you to make sure that you have an opportunity to answer them. There's one question which is, how did you remain resilient during the initial COVID-19 outbreak? And then the second question is, do you envisage government might shift resources from owning office space to investing more fully and comprehensively in home working? So give me those two together.

Thanks, Louise, great questions and lots of other fantastic comments or questions coming in, I can tell. And so, on the first one that personal resilience is so important. I remember when I was on a development scheme once, the person running it saying that the single most important part of leadership is managing your own energy. That's quite a big statement, but is absolutely true. If you are the leader, a leader, you have got to look after yourself first. I guess it's Joshua's point about the oxygen, isn't it? I personally don't like the phrase work-life balance, because it's all implies that your work and life are separate from each other, whereas work is a huge, hugely important part of most people's lives. I try to get my resilience within work as well as outside work. Outside work, like lots of other people, I try to get my energy and my resilience by exercise, including running and my family. I've got three daughters and it's fantastic spending time with them, all those sorts of things and being able to carry those things on during the lockdown. But resilience within the workplace, and balance and energy within the workplace is so, so important. And so I think really trying to understand what gives you energy to work as well as stuff that saps it. Most jobs, certainly this one, there are certain things that I just have to do, whether I like it or not. I just have to do it. I have to go to the Public Accounts Committee when they're on Monday, I have to go to the Home Affairs Select Committee, went there again today, whether I like them or not. But there are other bits of work that I can choose to do. You can work out for yourself, what are the things that you could choose to do that you really liked doing, like mentoring, and so on. The other question, on home working and putting more resource into that, in the Home Office, I think we went from about 3,000 people who normally work from home, to about 20,000 almost overnight at the start of lockdown. The IT provision was superb, and really important to make sure that everyone had not just laptops, but the right sort of chairs if they needed adjustments and that sort of thing. It's not going to be for everyone. Many operational roles do have to be done from the workplace, and that applies in this department, as well as many others. But I think that for some people, including policy work, it is increasingly possible to do at least some days per week at home, and I think we will need to make sure that the Civil Service of the future is equipped to provide those sorts of opportunities for people who would like to do that.

Thanks so much. I think we've got two other questions we'd like to ask as they've been thumbed up by quite a few. The first one is, how do we facilitate new starters remotely so that new team members feel part of the team, with a sense of belonging and being upskilled appropriately? Have you got any tips in terms of how you might approach that?

I've actually seen some really good examples of that in the last couple of months, even from with my team, so just encouraging people to to open up a bit about themselves, you know, showing, not

necessarily even vulnerability, but just the personal side, what else are people interested in, you know,, just having discussions and quizzes about, what's your favourite book? What's your favourite dessert, all of your favourite activities, those sorts of things. I mean, it might not sound very much, and of course, in normal times, it would just come up naturally wouldn't it in the conversation? You've got to create those moments. It goes back to the point I was making the beginning. You just got to be conscious about welcoming those people in and just going a bit further than you'd normally would signposting what you're doing and being really conscious and explicit about the steps that you're taking to welcoming them in. Like you, Louise, I've been very struck that all of those results of the polls were extremely positive in general, there was still a significant minority, who will not agreeing with the statements and so listening to your own team to work out well, who are the 10% of your team who feel like that? And what more can you do to really try to bring them on board?

Thanks, Matthew. There's one on personal resilience, so you just touched on that, and there's a number of us that are recognising that, you know, we feel tired if we're on the screen the whole time. Screen fatigue is a real experience for us, and some people are finding that they have even more meetings in their diaries now than they did before, and many of us find it quite tiring. And some people on the chat, have said it's been quite exhausting. Have you got any tips, in terms of how you'd manage that yourself?

It's true. The thing I personally find tiring is the lack of variety. You know, if you've got just back to back meetings every half hour or every hour, and they all have you sitting in the same room, looking the same laptop rather than when I come into the office, I have much more variety and I just find the variety itself energising. So you've got to build in your own variety. You've got to force yourself to take those breaks, got to get up and move around. And ideally get outside a little bit and just sort of create those moments. Someone was saying earlier, they were in a different session... even though they didn't have to go out to work, they go out and cycle as if they were going to work, then they come back again. You know, that sounds silly, but but it's at least getting people out of the house, getting some exercise, getting some fresh air, getting a change of scene, and I can't emphasise enough how important that is.

So last question, and then we'll move to summing up this session. We talked about the importance of reflection. So the importance of making space to really think in a high quality way as leaders, about the way that you want to show up, the way that you want to have an impact and how you even understand the world around you. Some of us do that reflection on our commute, so we have that little bit of space on the train. To sit and think as we're commuting in and out, but obviously, we're not commuting like we were before. There's a question that's been thumbed up a number of times, which is asking us well, if we don't have that time, how else can we create spaces for reflection in our day? And do you have any tips on that?

So again, I mean, my answers that will be similar to the previous ones. You've just got to create that space for yourself. I mean, you will know what it is that you like doing. If you'd like cooking there, just make sure that you give yourself time and space to cook yourself lunch, and supper. If you like exercise, make sure that you get the exercise, but don't allow your diary to be so over scheduled that you that you cannot make time even for those things. So that's, that's my tip there. Just take a moment to really understand what it is that you need as an individual to be at your best as a leader, and make

sure that you're prioritising that above all, because if you don't get that right, then you can't even help your team. Someone said at the beginning of lockdown, and I was really struck by this, that the times we're living in are so extraordinary, they are memorable. And the sort of leadership that people receive at this time will itself therefore be memorable. People will remember the sort of experiences they're having over these last few months and the next few months, precisely because it's so unusual in our working lives. If you are responsible for anyone as their manager or leader, just think about that responsibility. Make sure that you're doing everything you can, as I'm sure you are, to play that role to the best of your ability to give that person a memorable experience for a good reason, that they will look back on that time to think, well, I got through that lockdown. And part of the reason I got through it, was that I had really fantastic support from my from my boss.

Fantastic. Thanks so much, Matthew. We've just got two minutes left, and I wonder if there's any final thoughts you have for us, as we wrap up and close the session.

Couple of things. I mean, one is we talked a lot about leadership. I would think and I hope that everyone on this call, thinks of yourself as a leader. But how many of you think of yourself as leading other leaders? What is it that you're doing that you can help create within your own team, that sense of leadership? And if you haven't thought about it like that, then can I can leave you with that thought, to see what you can do to bring on the leadership skills, not just of yourself, but of the people within your team so that they can then be doing some of this best practice. My last point sort of comes back to what I was saying at the beginning, about getting the balance right between the positive stuff and the stuff that you just have to accept isn't going to be as positive as you'd like it to be. I think both those things are really important. But I would really encourage people to sort of tap into that positive psychology to look for the best possible but realistic version of the future that you can describe for your team. At the same time, accept that some things just aren't going to be positive at the moment. And rather than railing against them or using up energy to battle them, just accept them and just try to manage them the best you can. And probably that's going to involve giving yourself a bit of leeway, a bit of space for things take longer, or you just need to try things out a bit more. It's not always going to work first time.

Thank you. So thank you very much, Matthew, and Joshua, for your support in the session and to everyone that's joined us today. There has been some really inspiring comments and stories that have been shared in the Q&A and in Slido. We hope that you're walking away today with some helpful personal reflections and some new insights and pride in your accomplishment as a leader within the Civil Service. So before you go, we'd appreciate it if you could just complete the short evaluation poll of three questions that should be popping up on your screen now. We want to thank you again for joining us, and wishing you a lovely day.