

Good morning. Welcome to our plenary session on systems leadership. Thank you so much for joining our session today. I appreciate it's a unique environment. We had hoped to be seeing colleagues face to face but what's fabulous about this format is we can see over 10,000 people participate in this conversation this morning. We're going to be talking about inclusive system leadership and as we just saw in the video, as we read in the newspapers and we all know from our lives, some of the most common complex challenges that we face in our country. Our system challenges our response to COVID-19. How we eradicate homelessness and rough sleeping, how we respond to this recession, reduce reoffending, tackle crime, tackle the misuse of drugs. These are complex system challenges. And they require a different type of leadership that's collaborative, that copes with ambiguity, that's good at taking risk. That's iterative. We can't control everything. We need to be connected across boundaries to make good change happen and to deliver more together.

My name is JP Marks, I'm DG, Work and Health services in DWP. My role is leading the delivery of Universal Credit and Jobcentre Plus, and I'm lucky to be able to chair this plenary session today. Let me introduce our fabulous panel who have joined us from across the country. First of all, I'd like to say thank you and welcome to Dame Shan Morgan. Sean is our Permanent Secretary in Wales. Thank you Shan. Steve Alambritis who is here with me in the panel in the plenary room is the leader of the Council in Merton. Stephen, thank you for joining. Emran Mian who is on the video link as well. Emran, thank you for joining, who's our DG for decentralisation and growth. Emran is leading a lot of our leadership at the moment on place based leadership, which is key, of course to system change. Thank you everyone for being here. Steve Oldfield, who I've got in the room with me as well. Steve is the Chief Commercial Officer for the Department of Health and Social Care. I think it's fair to say that Steve has had a lot on his hands in the last few months leading at the heart of the response to COVID-19 in the department for health. We look forward to hearing his stories. And I'm delighted to say that Prathiba Ramsingh is sat next to me. Prathiba is our service leader for Jobcentre Plus in South London, and does a fabulous job leading our response to this recession. We're going to hear some stories from Prathiba as well. So colleagues, throughout this plenary, you're able to ask questions. The wonderful Tanzeem is just at the end of the room there, and we'll send them through to me and we will then respond as best we can to make sure that we offer the best conversation that we can through this session. But I'm delighted to say that we're also joined by Debbie Sorkin, who leads our National Systems Leadership Academy and has spent a lot of years thinking really carefully about what is good system leadership. And Debbie is going to kick us off with some slides and a quick update on what is system leadership, what does good look like? And then we'll open it up for a conversation. Over to you Debbie. Thank you.

Good morning, everyone, and Tanzeem, thank you very much for that slide. This will be very much a whistle stop tour around some of the main tenets of systems leadership. Systems leadership isn't something arcane or abstruse. It's integral to the leadership behaviours the civil service is looking to inculcate. Systems thinking is helpful. When you're working on issues that cross departmental or sector boundaries, hence, it's being explicitly identified in the current strategic framework. And it underpins many of the attributes set out in leadership in action, especially in relation to cross system working, where you might not have positional power, but you still need to collaborate to get things done. Could I have my next slide, please? Thank you. Over the past four or five months, we've seen some very good and some not so good examples of collaboration for many people, and I think especially in the civil service COVID-19 has been a whirlwind introduction into working across boundaries and in new ways.

So in local and at national government level and across public services, people have come together in new groups to work together and at speed. So if you're in the NHS and you want a Nightingale Hospital building Colonel Ashleigh Boreham here on the top right is your man. But not everything is as comparatively straightforward as a Nightingale Hospital. Some situations are much more difficult, especially when you're working with people you don't know with whom you don't have any kind of rapport or relationship or trust. And in these situations, you need a different form of collaboration.

These kinds of situations are complex. What I've put up on the slide here is a framework. It's called Cynefin. I'm not, for Shan's benefit, even going to try and define that. It's developed by a man called Dave Snowden and he is worth googling, especially in relation to complexity and organising a children's party, for any of you who have children. What he says is, some things are simple, or complicated. Simple things, you do one thing and something else you may do happens. So you go into a room switch a light switch on, usually nine times out of 10, the light comes on. Some things that are complicated follow that idea of being simple, but they take a number of steps. So a lot of medicine, a lot of surgery is like this. If you're having a cataract operation, it will take a number of steps and a lot of skilled people. But the key thing is, as with simple things, we have done this before, we know what to do, we can rely on this, there is predictability here. You know A causes B. So you can pull a lever in policy terms, and you can be reasonably sure that something will happen. In complex situations, by contrast, that doesn't apply. You can't predict what will happen, you'll only know after the fact. So in these situations, you need to try things out. You need to see what happens, need to amplify what works and shut down what doesn't. The key thing is not to treat simple, complex things as if they are simple or complicated. What Dave Snowden says is if you do that, you tend to end up in this orange diamond in the middle, where you will probably end up having lots and lots of useless meetings are not getting very far. Now that can be a great tactic. But really, it's no way to do real work around complex issues. So what sort of situations are complex? These sorts of situations. New situations, things where you haven't come across these before. The best thing you can do in these kinds of situations is to say, you know what, no one knows what to do here. This is new. Can we sit down and work out what our next move should be? Incidentally, anyone who tells you that they do know what to do? They are fibbing, okay, they are fibbing to you and they are fibbing to themselves. So new situations, suboptimal situations where you've got rubbish systems and rubbish processes, but everybody normalises it and everybody uses it. So if you've got terrible IT if you've got windows paleo, this is you. Things shift their shape, you think you've got the idea of what the issue is, and then it suddenly changes. Where there'll be a political element of one kind or another. Things that have been going on for ever, and whatever you do, seems to make little difference. So health inequalities would be an example here. Where you need to work with lots of different people, and where no one person can be in sole charge no matter what it says on the project document. So if this is you, this means that you are working in complexity. And this means that you need to apply systems leadership approaches. I sometimes call systems leadership The God of Small Things, because you don't have to get to a solution or a major change in a single bound, you take small steps that over time accumulate into something bigger. It's about collaborative leadership, by which I mean distributed leadership. So it doesn't vest in you, because of your grade or your banding or your position. It doesn't vest in a single individual. It goes back to the idea of empowering others in leadership in action. This is about leadership vested in actions and behaviours. So what you do, and everybody can do something. It's about networks, so anyone can join. They don't have to be in your department. And it's about common purpose, by which I mean you are really clear about what it is that

you all collectively want to do, and what that means for everyone around the table. Common purpose. If you take nothing else away from this session, common purpose is the foundation. If you have common purpose, you can motor. If you don't have common purpose, you will fail, because everybody will go off in different directions. And there's an evidence base in research in practice and evaluation that shows that if you take these approaches, there's a lot that you can do.

So start with common purpose, open questions, what do we want things to be like for the citizens around the UK. It doesn't need to look elegant. You're working with what emerges rather than what's supposed to happen or what it says in the project plan. This might mean doing lots and lots of short term planning rather than a single long term plan. It's about relationships that you build with other people and the trust that you thereby build and the influence that you can thereby have when you don't have position or power. There's a nice slide "systems move at the speed of trust". It's a saying, but it's also true. You can behave in ways that lead to change, empowering other people, standing back saying who's in the room, and who isn't. Really working with your values. This is why I think I want to do this. This is what I came into the Civil Service to do. It is absolutely about inclusivity. Asking "who isn't in the room?" And it's focusing on real work, not the myriad ways of work avoidance, so something small that you can actually do something about. This might mean choosing your battles, and there's a Native American saying, "if your horse is dead, get off it". Sometimes it's the wrong time and the wrong place and the wrong people. But the key thing is to make a start, start anywhere, follow it everywhere, and keep going. If you practice working in these ways, you can find a lot of doors opening and a lot of new places to explore. Thank you very much.

Fabulous. Thank you so much, Debbie, amazing. And I think a lot of messages in there about common purpose, empowerment, trust, but also that lovely message about making a start, and we hope our plenary will encourage some system leaders to do more of it, but some new leaders to step into system leadership for the first time. If we can put the first question up on the slides, Shan Morgan, could I come to you in terms of COVID-19? It has been a hard test of system leadership for us for communities across the country. I mean, do you agree? What's your personal leadership learning been since this pandemic began?

I agree. Absolutely. I think that intro film that you showed at the start was a real reminder of how quickly our whole world has changed. And for me, the COVID-19 crisis has been a very vivid experience of systems leadership in action. And I think as Debbie's talk brought to life, it requires a complex, multifaceted and inclusive response, which covers and engages with all aspects of community and economic life. Success depends fundamentally on a collaborative and coordinated response across the whole of government. And that's UK wide. And local. And what has struck me has been, again, as Debbie was saying the real sense of common purpose in our determination to protect our communities, our citizens. That's been so striking. It's not been a time for single heroes. We've relied on a huge range of people providing expertise and commitment at all levels. From the dedication of key workers who provide the core services to grassroots innovation like manufacturing PPE, and direct engagement by the public including volunteering for all sorts of things. I've been so impressed here in Wales, by the way. The Welsh government and the wider UK civil service have responded really wholeheartedly to this new situation. And that's obviously included the enforced shift to remote working, which hasn't been easy for everybody, particularly those with caring responsibilities. I think something that has really

underpinned our whole approach has been trust. It has been fundamental to empower people to focus on outcomes. We've been developing team charters where everybody agrees their own role and responsibility, and that helps empower people to make their contribution to be trusted to make that contribution. So that has been essential to successful remote working for us. And to come to the second part of the question, my personal leadership learning has been really understanding the importance of creating a sense of common purpose across the whole organisation and building trust by empowering people to be their best.

Thank you, Shan. Fabulous. Thank you very much. Steve Oldfield, you've been right at the heart of this in DHSE in the response to COVID, could you give us your perspectives, please?

Thanks, JP. Well, a couple of thoughts, systems and leadership. I'll try and comment on both. And then a kind of slightly unrelated comment. Systems. So what I learned was the system you're trying to lead is much, much bigger than you could ever have imagined. Like significantly bigger. You know, there are bits of our world which you think you know, in your day to day job, you think you understand, and suddenly you're engaged with bits of the system that directly you would never have very much contact with. So I find myself on a Sunday afternoon on a telephone call from the leader of the London Ambulance Service who is really genuinely seriously concerned about the fact that his crews are not going to have enough PPE and that was in the early days of the crisis. Dealing with the NHS laboratory networks dealing with trust pharmacies to find out whether they've got enough ICU medicines to see them through the next three days. And the network changes, the system changes over time as well, partway through, we found ourselves dealing much more collaboratively with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office network, the posts, especially in Beijing, helping us source materials and so on, again, parts of a system that we would never naturally have had to deal with. The other point on the system part is that, I think system leadership, we found isn't a choice, it's a necessity. So there are some things that happen quite naturally, like you roll your sleeves up, you start working with people and so on. Other bits of it are just jolly hard work and you've really got to put a lot of time and effort into discovering the the system and the network that you're trying to influence and work with, and then building the relationships in order to do it. So your traditional networks that you have either personally or as a team often aren't enough to deal with a situation like we found ourselves in in COVID. And the other word was leadership. And that's, again, it's related. But I think one of the things that we often fall back into as leaders when we're in a crisis situation, is we revert to a command and control type response. And actually, it's avoiding command and control and building willing participation across all of that system and that network that you're working with, you've got to make it interesting enough for people to want to be part of it. So not only have you got to create a really clear vision for what you want everyone to try and achieve together, but at the same time, you've got to actually make it thrilling and exhilarating for them to be part of it. And you know, making tracheostomy tubes interesting for people is not an easy task. And yet parts of the team were able to do that and gather people around achieving it. The other point that I wanted to make was not related to the word system or the word leadership, but it's about data and analytics. And I think one of the things you know, the question is about personal learnings. One of the things I found is that data, either the availability of data, or more importantly, the lack of availability of certain key pieces of data are absolutely fundamental to your ability to lead systems. And we found ourselves very grateful for some of the great data that we have, but also really understanding what some of the gaps were in our data and particularly when it came to that whole

question of national and local boundaries and how you manage data that's coming from different bits of the system. We're very used to dealing with, for example, NHS England, at a national level in the data we have. But increasingly, we found ourselves needing to dig down into data at the local level. Stocks of ICU medicines in hospital pharmacies, the number of ventilators that hospitals had in order to then take the right decisions at a national level, about what we did going forward. So data and analytics, we thought was really, really important.

Thank you. Stephen, let me just move down to you. Thank you so much for joining. Could you give us your perspective as a leader of a local authority at the heart of thinking about system leadership on the ground? What are your perspectives on what good looks like and how we get this right?

Yes. What was very interesting to me was, there was something completely and utterly new with regard to our relationship with central government. And that is, yes, local authorities will have been through pandemics through other systems like that, but on this occasion the central government said to local government - said to me as a leader of a local government, "do whatever it takes". I had never been given such an instruction from central government. Normally they say keep within your budget. You can't do this. You can't do that. No, you can't have that devolved. So do whatever it takes: open the floodgates and as a leader, how could I? And what did I need to do to make sure that profit-making organisations and businesses are now wanting to do something for nothing? That charities wanted to help. That staff were professionals? Be they librarians, Chartered Surveyors now wanting to work in food banks to be deployed? What did you do then? So what we did was we took the instruction from government at face value, and engaged with everyone. And they didn't have to seek permission, as long as they informed us what they wanted to do, and how they wanted to do it. So we set up a volunteer hub. Of all the organisations within the borough that helped the residents and one of the ways that we helped was for example, we suspended our bailiff system. So bailiffs were no longer instructed to knock on a door to handle writs or a demand for monies outstanding. They were actually knocking on doors delivering food parcels. And so it did change the whole complexion because councils are used to being told what not to do. The government said, "do whatever it takes" and so it was a whole new ballgame. As we've been told, it's when something's new that leadership systems come into play, because you don't have the book for it.

Fabulous. Tim, thank you so much. Emran. If I can come to you on the on the video link. I know you're thinking really hard about place-based leadership and system leadership and the value that could bring to our response in the recession. Could you give us your perspective, please on that and what you think we need to do to get this right, moving forward as a Civil Service, thank you.

Thank you. And really pleased to join the conversation. I want to pick up where Stephen left off. Actually, I think one of the really powerful things and one of the ways in which we've been able to demonstrate systems leadership during this crisis is that some of the usual constraints have not been there. And that's meant that we, as leaders, at all levels in our organisations, have been able to think fully about what can we do to solve this problem. And who can we do that with. And I think that's been massively empowering. And there's something really important there that I think we want to hold on to. I think another aspect of that has been that we've been emotionally very engaged through this crisis. It's affected us, it's affected the people around us and I think sometimes what risks happening to us in

these complex systems is that our emotions get sublimated, they're not part of what we're using, they're not part of the energy that we're bringing into the room. And in this crisis, our emotions have been very front and centre. And I think that's helped us to do some of these things. And it's actually helped us to connect across systems, because we're all feeling very similar things. And as leaders, for example, we're all feeling a very similar kind of pressure and all feeling a very similar kind of responsibility. And that connection's been really powerful. I also think that place-based working, our proper embrace of this sort of technology, has been massively helped by the crisis. I feel like we've lost that hang up that we've always had, I feel, about where is the meeting taking place, and the privileging of the people who are in the room versus the people who are joining through the technology. I think what we've succeeded in is a shift to a much more democratic conversation and a conversation that I think will make it much, much easier for us to have conversations in a place-based way. And because there'll be no excuse anymore to not have those colleagues from different parts of the country as part of the conversation, because we know we can do it. And we know we can do it effectively. And we know we can do it at pace.

Thank you so much. And I think one of the things we want to cling on to although there's been a lot of challenge, of course, as Emran says, we know we can do it and there's been some incredible leadership through COVID-19. Department for Health, everything that Public Health England has had to do, we've got Merton council turning their bailiffs into people who can deliver food parcels and across the furlough scheme, the schemes to bring people in off the streets and try and eradicate homelessness and rough sleeping: huge progress. And it gives us a real insight, as Emran says, of what's possible using technology leading in a different way. Let's come on to our second question because I have a role model example of system leadership sat next to me in Prathiba Ramsingh. And Prathiba, I wonder, could you give us your perspectives of system leadership and trying to work across boundaries in South London? And how you do that every day naturally, and seek to do it well.

Thank you for the intro JP. I want to reflect on what Stephen said earlier, "do what it takes" and getting those messages from our senior leadership really helps to empower us and be creative, make the connections we need to make, to really support the new wave of customers that we're seeing at the moment. And it's quite different to what we've always done. We've always done partnerships we've always done and worked in a system leadership sort of approach. But as things change, we need to create new environments, new partnerships and new ways of working. So, you know, I'm lucky enough to work with Merton Council, Stephen's team, to create opportunities to develop job brokerage across three boroughs, networking together using Jobcentre Plus work coaches who are amazing, local colleges, and that connectivity provides that wraparound service for the citizen. And when you put the citizen at the heart of this, actually that dissolves so many of the perceived barriers that we have. So I think that energises our people, that enables us to grow systems leadership at every level, keep our people with us. So they grow it. It's not the leaders who grow it, they grow it, because they can see the benefit to the customers that we serve, and the wider society. So I think there's plenty of colleagues who are on the call today and you know, who are listening and we'll think about other things that we do naturally. But it's just making sure that we're prepared to take those risks and we know we've got the backing. And don't be afraid. Don't be worried when things go wrong. It's just natural and just right from the word go, just imagine that one of the things that's likely to happen and keep going and embrace it, because you never know quite where it's going to take you. It will grow bigger than, and energise more people than, you could imagine. So I think go with it.

Fabulous. Thank you Prathiba, really good. Shan, can I come to you? We've got a question on the chat from the audience. I'm going to go through a few of these. And this is "what advice would you give to someone going into a leadership position, trying to reflect on how to be a good system leader, but they're starting out for the first time", what would be, looking back on your career and everything you've been through, two or three things that you would say, really focus on, on starting in this sort of way as a new leader in a new leadership role. Thanks, Shan.

I'd say go and talk to a lot of different people, people whose leadership style you admire, on your visit because it's really good to know something that you don't like is you know, you can learn a great deal from it. When I first took this job, I went to talk to a huge range of people, other permanent secretaries. And I still have those notes. Every so often I get back over them, they really helped me keep on track with what I think are important things. So that's my advice. Go and talk to lots of people, go and listen to lots of people. And the other advice is: I had what we call a reverse mentor, who was a very junior new member of staff. And I talk to her about that and say, what do you think good leadership looks like and so there's a different perspective. It was very vivid and really important to me.

Thank you, Shan. And Debbie, let me come to you because I think as a leadership community for the civil service, we want to build a culture for system leadership, just like Prathiba was reflecting on where it is an empowering force for change. Where we tolerate the ambiguity, we push the risk management down to the local level and we make it happen. Can you say a few things about what can we do to enable that culture to flourish?

I think the main thing is to create a kind of space of psychological safety. Where if something doesn't work, and if we are trying to innovate, then hello, not everything is going to work, then it's not "oh, well, that was career limiting, wasn't it?" Actually, we learn from it and we move on, and we do something different. So enabling people to try things out with a view to: if it works, great, we'll amplify it, if it doesn't work, we've learned from it and we will shut it down. We will not keep doing the same thing for the sake of it. It is the key thing, and modelling that, because it's not the words that are spoken, it's what actually happens on the ground, so people see that it's safe, then they will keep on doing it so that will spread like wildfire, and so will the reverse. So this goes back to that idea of leadership being about actions and behaviours and what you do and how you model it. And if you model "it's okay to make mistakes", people will tend not to be negligent, but they will feel actually it's safe to try things out.

Thank you, Debbie. Other comments on the chat people saying, you know, hard examples really bring this to life. Stephen, you gave a great example of transforming your bailiffs into delivering food parcels. How do you create the culture in Merton Council, where people can take risks, change roles, innovate? Could you talk a little bit about how you create the culture for system leadership?

Yes, so I try to explain it to everyone like a washing machine. If you watch a washing machine from the front, it won't tell you how it works. You need to go behind and take it apart. And then you see how it works and it's complex. There's bits everywhere and each bit interrelates with the other. So one example of engaging with everyone so everyone knows the pressures that a council faces, and that it's not like a secret den or secret garden was when we went out to the public seeking their views on a new

leisure centre that we had put enough money to build at a cost of around 11 million pounds. We did a consultation with residents, and what did they want to see in that leisure centre? I think it was plainly obvious that everyone wanted to see a brand new leisure centre, the old one was creaking. And so we did a consultation on the basis of the 11 million pounds being the cap for the budgets. And so residents could go into the consultation and choose what they wanted to see in that leisure centre. Was it a diving pool? Was it a cafe, did they want a 50 metre swimming pool, 25 metre and all that, and if they went above 11 million pounds, it rejected their submission to the council and they had to go back in and think about limited resources, and what you want, and priorities, and that went down really well, and they engaged with us in a big way and we were able to understand what their priorities were. But as I said, it wasn't whatever it takes, there was a finite sum of money, but they were able to come in and out of it until they got to the 11 million pounds. So that worked very well. Fabulous. Thank you. And Steve, you reference data

and insight to understand how a system is going. Good comments on the chat here: are we doing this? We read about the challenge to the Civil Service, are we sufficiently capable to utilise data and insight to lead systems? Could you reflect a bit on are we making progress with that, is that capability there, any suggestions for leaders listening on how they should engage with data and insight in a better way, so they can make progress as a system leader?

So one reflection would be, it's not talking about data for the sake of data. So it's always data in the context of a problem you're trying to solve. And I think that's where leaders have an important role to play, which is don't start with the data that you've got, and the architecture of it, and so on, start with the problem you're trying to solve. And then work backwards from there and say, what data or analysis of data do you need in order to help you solve the problem better? And we saw some really great examples, and still are, on things like testing, as the picture emerged of this disease, which we really, looking backwards, didn't understand very well at all at the beginning and as it as we got further into this, the nature of the problem and the scale of the problem, the whole question of testing became absolutely fundamental and we realised that we, you know, we really needed more information about what was really going on out in the community and hence the the birth of the test and trace programme and so on. So it's always about data in the context of helping you solve a problem as a leader. And I think one of the things you do have to do is form a vision of what do you need to know in order to do your job better? And then let the technical guys figure out how that can be collected, where it can be collected, and how it can be presented and analysed.

Yeah, fabulous. Thank you. And Prathiba, you talked about culture, Shan referenced it as well around empowerment. If you just give us a sense of, you've got a big team multi-site across the whole of South London, how do you create an environment where your local leaders can step up and manage across boundaries, take some risk and feel supported, as you said, if things do go wrong, but similarly create connections that maybe we haven't used before to create common purpose?

There's something about having that vision and setting it out. So people feel that yeah, this is part of my role. This is part of what I do as my day job. It's not an add-on. And that empowerment comes from a level of trust. So, as a leader, I need to role model those behaviours and take people with me. So if I'm thinking about problems, share with people how are we collectively possibly going to resolve this or get

to the next stage and who are the key people we need around us supporting us. With every organisation we work with, they will have a different perspective and see things in a different way to maybe us and DWP may do and we may jump to a solution that might not be the right one. So having that connectivity with external role-modelling the behaviour and that level of trust, and if somebody is particularly concerned, give them the time to talk through their concerns and what risks they may face. And then as a leader, how do I react when something does go wrong? That is so important, my reaction to that. So it's just displaying and regularly communicating where I'm coming from as a leader, but also completely trusting them to be able to do it. But also letting them know when it's right to share things. You know, when do they want my support? When do I need to come in? When do they need to talk to me again, and just really congratulating people when things are moving forward and not expecting a huge result at the end of it? These are stepping stones to greater things.

Yeah. Fabulous. Thank you Prathiba. Emran, I'm going to come to you next if that's okay, slightly tricky question. But I know you'll manage it. We work in a uniquely political environment, it's probably fair to say. How do we encourage, support, enable, work with our ministers, so that we can create a sort of elective affinity here to deliver system leadership with political support recognising some of these problems, we are grappling with: carbon neutrality, the recession, COVID-19, reducing reoffending. And there are uniquely political problems as well as societal challenges. Thanks Emran.

Yeah, my experience on this has been that one of the things that ministers really value is knowing things that they wouldn't otherwise know. And I think one of the things that we can do through systems leadership is bring that knowledge into the thinking of ministers. So again, in the COVID context, when we first started thinking about reopening the parts of retail that were closed, I think there was a real risk that we came into the issue as an enforcement issue alone. What police presence is going to be needed to make this go smoothly? And one of the things that I got very early on was from talking to local authorities about the reopening of retail and understanding that lots of them were thinking about it in a different way. They were thinking about it in terms of how are we going to welcome people back into the town centre. And if we welcome them back into the town centre, they'll then also behave with responsibility. And being able to take that way of thinking about it back into the conversation with ministers, I found the ministers responded to that, and it helped them to see it in a different way. And I wouldn't have been able to have that conversation with ministers. I worry that I would have remained stuck in an enforcement conversation with ministers if I hadn't been able to go away and talk to other system leaders and to understand how they thought about it differently. So I think that's how we shift the conversation with ministers. I think they want to know some of the things that are known elsewhere in the system, and we need to bring that knowledge to them. Emran, thank you. Could you just give one minute Emran also on your perspectives on how you're thinking about place leadership in response to the recession? We've got over 10,000 people listening after all, who are based in communities all over the country. How are you thinking about how the government can do better to connect those communities to respond?

I think what we've seen a lot of during the crisis, and I think it's something that this government was really interested in, even before the crisis, is providing local areas with more flexibility and more devolution. And that's a big part of my job, and trusting local areas to come up with solutions that work for them. I think COVID has shown us the value of that. And I think through the next phase that we're

probably moving into where there's going to probably be a lot more local variation in how we need to manage the crisis. I think it's going to continue to show that and I feel that's a really important thing for us and central government to bring through in terms of how we work with colleagues in the local tier. I think too often the conversation we try and have with them is we tell them what the national framework is, and then point them towards the little bits of flexibility that we have within that. I think what we've succeeded in doing through COVID is shift that conversation a bit more towards actually focusing on the flexibilities rather than focusing on the framework. And I feel that, together with the right accountability for outcomes, is probably the way in which the conversation can continue to develop.

Thank you. Perfect. Colleagues, we're drawing to the end of our plenary. Debbie Sorkin, I wonder could you just give us a 30 second/one minute blast for those that want to find out more about system leadership? I know there is a lot of research out there. You've helped put together lots of materials. Could you just give us 30 seconds on where people can find further information and how to access that.

If you go to www.leadershipcentre.org.uk there are a number of very accessible, short, very readable reports. One's called The Future will be Improvised. It's about how places around the country have actually done this stuff, and how difficult it is to do. And going back to what Chris Oldfield was saying, this is not easy. So don't do it on your own, and you do need to keep going. But if you want to know what to do, what other hurdles people have gone through and some of the lightbulb moments, that's a good place to start. And you can also do it around digital innovation as well. There's a nice report called The Future will be Customised, which talks about just that.

Thank you, Debbie. So colleagues I want to just thank a few people who've been very, very busy working on putting this plenary and all of our content together. Firstly, Debbie, thank you for your comments just then and Adiba and Tanzeem - Tanzeem is just at end of the room here, Adiba is online. Thank you so much colleagues for everything you've done. I want to thank the panel: Dame Shan Morgan, Stephen Alambritis, Emran Mian, Steve Oldfield, Prathiba Ramsingh, Debbie Sorkin, thank you very much. Colleagues, for those of you who are listening online, there's loads of material on the portal that you can access. And I hope you'll carry on the conversation because there's spaces where you can leave comments, tell stories, give your feedback on reflections, either on system leadership experiences that you've already been through, or maybe some hints and tips that you've picked up today that you want to take forward into the future. We heard some fabulous messages around creating shared purpose, connecting across boundaries, building trust, and really coming together. And actually, even though COVID-19 has been a huge challenge for our country, we've also seen some fabulous innovation, some remarkable leadership, some incredibly disruptive delivery of public services, which has enabled us to do things that perhaps six months ago we would never imagine were possible. Whether it be the furlough scheme, bringing people in off the streets, our response to the recession, our response to COVID-19. So for all your leadership, you are a brilliant public service. We are very, very proud of your contribution to our country. I hope you've enjoyed the plenary session today. Good luck with the rest of your careers and your leadership and your public service. And we hope to hear from you in the chat sessions that follow. Thank you very much indeed for joining us today. Thank you.