

I'm absolutely loving those videos, a very fitting introduction to this plenary 'A Great Place to Work'. I'm Elizabeth Honer, Chief Executive of the Government Internal Audit Agency and sponsor of the Great Place to Work theme for this conference and host for this plenary. As we've been hearing through the morning, what binds us in the Civil Service is our shared commitment to improving people's lives, to working for the public good, delivering first class services to our communities and supporting the most vulnerable with COVID-19. We are responding to the biggest peacetime challenge this country has faced and we're doing so with energy, with speed, with utter commitment working together as one civil service. We have shown that we can work across boundaries across departments, across teams. And as Alex said in his opening address, we have every reason to be proud. Our core purpose improving people's lives is the bedrock of the civil service being a great place to work. What also matters is how we go about that in the values we live by, the cultures we create in harnessing true diversity of thought and opinion, and offering equality of opportunity for all. So that's the focus of this session - the how. The areas that we'll be exploring include what place means in today's civil service, in terms of geography, and physical occasion with many working from home with others and offices and on frontline delivery. 2020 is the year of inclusion. What is the Black Lives Matter movement telling us, and how are we responding both as an employer and in our policy development? What are we doing about other underrepresented groups? And how can we become truly inclusive, harnessing our different perspectives, views and beliefs to achieve better outcomes? And what about our values and culture? Is there such a thing as civil service culture and perhaps that is what binds us? To help us explore these questions and yours, I'm delighted to introduce our panel Selvin Brown, Director of PPP Policy and Engagement for the Department for Health and Social Care and Civil Service deputy race champion, Alex Chisholm, Civil Service Chief Operating Officer, and Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office. Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary of DEFRA, Rena Lalgie, Director, Office of Financial Sanctions and Implementation in the Treasury, and recently announced as the first female and first black governor of Bermuda. Now that is a great place to work. Angela McDonald, currently Director General for Customer Services and HMRC, and soon to be the new second Permanent Secretary there from 1 August. Congratulations to you both. So a huge welcome to our panel. I encourage all of you delegates to pose questions in the slido box that you'll find to the right of the video feed. Just click on start the conversation and go to the queue and a tab. To get us started, I'm going to invite each of the panel members to say just briefly what a great place to work means for them from your experience during your career, and as a leader of others, selves and Selvin, perhaps you could kick us off. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Elizabeth. And I must admit, it's a privilege and very daunting to be talking to 10,000 colleagues throughout the country and possibly abroad. I'm going to cover three things. The first thing I'm going to address is Black Lives Matters. George Floyd died after being arrested by the police outside shops in Minnesota. That event breathed life into a global movement that had already been around for seven years. It's a multicultural, multi generational and global movement which also plays out here in the UK. As a former trustee of the Stephen Lawrence Trust. I think we're looking at a Macpherson level of quantum of change, the kind of level that was around 20 years ago. I spoke to Stephen's brother Stuart, as I do every Sunday. I asked him what he wanted you all to know and to think. He told me that 20 years on from Macpherson (Inquiry) and 25 years on from Stephens death, the thing that he finds hardest to accept is that it is not universally accepted that there is a basic

problem. And that's the thing that he would like us all to change today. On secondly, on what makes this also is a great place to work because everybody knows I started as a filing clerk, very, very junior doing filing. didn't even have a computer when I started. And there were great civil servants like the late Andrew Campbell who took me under their wing and helped to see the potential in me and helped me to nurture that potential. I want this to be the rule, not the exception. That would for me, be a great place to work. Our emergency response to COVID is proof of what we can do as a Civil Service. I recognise the brilliant things that Andrew has done with the furlough scheme at HMRC, the things that I have done at the HSE on PPE. How can we make this the rule and not the exception? One final thing on great place to work, when I joined the Cabinet Office, it was like coming into a family. I want to know how we can walk in each other's shoes, how we can show empathy, show emotional intelligence, and really, really be open to challenge internally and externally. I'm going to be cheeky and say one final thing on the Chancellor of the Duchy's Ditchling speech, I thought was a good speech. I thought there were things in there. The main arguments for me, were basically sound. I welcome the debate. I think it's timely. As a modern Civil Service, I think we need to be pitching at the the level of the Second World War post-Civil Service, who built the welfare state who built the social care system and built three million homes for heroes. The challenge that we've got in rebuilding the economy, the challenge we've got on net zero emissions demands that I'll end with this, as RA Butler said in 1962, the Civil Service is like a Rolls Royce. You know, it's the best machine in the world. You're just not sure what to do with it. I know that together we can answer this question. Thank you.

Selvin, thank you very much some powerful messages there. So on to Tamara, thank you.

Well, thank you very much, and for letting me be part of this conversation. I'm going to give three of the many reasons why I think the civil service is a great place to work. And I'm going to add a little bit of what my children's teachers call ' Even better if...' a few EBIs along the way. Firstly, I love the Civil Service because I can have a job where I make a positive impact on people's lives. Early in my career, I did a job on Sure Start which was at the time, the government Early Years programme working cross-government to help very young children in deprived areas, and I could see the massive impact that had. That made me committed that everything I did, I'd make a connection between what I was working on and the impact on people. A lot of my career has been in the Treasury, but even when you're working on tax, and Angela will maybe concur with this, you think of tax as something which raises money that you can spend on public services, and you're back to thinking about the citizen. So what about my EBI? My Even Better If... we could be better at understanding the citizens we serve. I worked on building safety in the wake of the Grenfell tower fire. I worked in the building that was five miles away from that community, and yet they felt very far away from the work of government and get impacted by it. My second reason is that the Civil Service is a community and I love being part of a community. In my home life, I'm part of a book club. I'm part of a women's group I've been going for over 25 years, I love cooking for friends and family, particularly around big Jewish festivals. And in my work life, I love that sense of community to the community that is my team. But actually beyond that, the community that I can be part of, by being part of a network by keeping in touch with people I've been on a training course with, by being part of the mindfulness group we have on Yammer, and in lockdown, the fantastic group that's been sharing cocktail recipes. And the highlight of my career is my cocktail recipe being named the Perm Sec. So what's my EBI? I think it could be even better if we invested a bit more time and money in our networks and our communities because they are the key to

our wellbeing and our greater productivity. So my third reason is the Civil Service commitment to inclusion. I have not always felt comfortable and included in my career in the Civil Service and some of that has only been on reflection on times gone by. But I have benefited from the Civil Service commitment to inclusion. Being able to have three children and manage my career with different working patterns. And yet, never did anybody assume that that meant I wasn't committed to my own development and my own career. Yet that wasn't the case for many of my friends over that period. And I feel able to practice my faith and to be taken for the person that I am and to be able to be authentic, and bring my whole self to work. But there's a big EBI here, and Selvin did touch on it. There is a lot more for us to do on inclusion and on diversity. And as race champion, I have said that despite huge efforts, we have a long way to go into tackling racism and discrimination. But we have seen progress and the commitment is there. We need to act on it.

Thank you very much Tamara. So even from that, some common themes around focusing on the citizens, people and communities and diversity. Thank you very much. So Rena, let's hear from you.

Thank you. And again, some common themes I think will come out from what I have to say. I think I really started focusing on what I consider to be the conditions for success, success for me as an individual, as a professional for my teams and for the objectives that we are trying to deliver, and three things immediately came to mind. The first is the Civil Service. I love the Civil Service, I'm incredibly proud of being a civil servant. And at all levels, that's part because at all levels are just the most amazing jobs on offer in the Civil Service, and even when we are under attack in the public domain, when our morale feels like it just couldn't sink any lower, we can turn up, we can be professional, we can aspire to deliver more to achieve more, and we work together in order to be able to do that. The second thing is that it continues really a theme that's coming through around for me, which I described as adding value. I think, a great place to work for me, is somewhere where it feels like if I'm doing something it would be, it's kind of better for me having been there. And earlier on in my career, that was very much about what I did, the things that I did, and that sense that I was adding value by being there. As a senior leader, I now get much more job satisfaction from the things that other people do, from the things that people in my teams do, from the things that I can enable to happen. And that's in part by really the fact that I can provide the space to do it, even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, by the support that I can offer and through a safety net that I can allow for individuals, for teams, for an organisation to prove what it's capable of doing. And finally I refocused on the sort of the personal element of it and, and as a black woman, I think when I reflect on my experiences in the Civil Service, I think one thing really comes through to mind. And that is, for me to feel like it is a great place that I am working at that point in time. I need not to be surrounded by people with power and influence, that for one reason or another, encouraged me to dim my light, or quite simply, snuff it out. Ideally, I'm surrounded by people who helped me to grow and to shine. But the reality is, that we are not the meritocratic organisation that we should be. But I do believe that at the moment, we have an opportunity to really shift some of that and I'm really keen to take part in that discussion.

And thank you, very powerful indeed. And we'll come back to some of these themes as we go through, I'm sure the questions so Angela, great to hear from you.

Thank you ever so much. And one of the opportunities of going further down is that I get to build on the great things that my lovely colleagues have said. But I think in addition, one of the things I would add great place to work for me is, I want to be in an organisation, which helps me to flourish, helps me to fulfil my potential. And part of that is about our characteristics, but also, it's about who we are, and where we are, and what we think it takes to be successful around here. So if I was to do a poll right now and say, could you paint me a picture of who you think is successful in the Civil Service, you might paint a picture, and you might say, well, they probably went to university, probably Oxford or Cambridge, and they were probably a fast dreamer. They're probably doing a policy job, and they're probably working in London. And if you want to really progress, to get to the senior heights in the Civil Service, and that's my archetype, that's what I picture. Now, we have an awful lot of incredibly fabulous colleagues who fulfil those have those experiences. But we have an enormous number of talent in the Civil Service who doesn't have any of that. I never went to university. I am not a long term civil servant, although it depends what 10 years classes as. Well it's not 30 years. I'm an operational delivery person. Thirty years of it and proud and I live in Yorkshire. And therefore you think, so how does a girl like me get to be the Second Permanent Secretary at HMRC? Well, I'm definitely still asking myself that question. But I do think that, for me a great place to work is that the talent across the entire of the country, we need to put our opportunities in the way of our people, such that wherever you are, whether you're an environmentalist or a scientist, or an operational developer, operation delivery person or an accountant, whatever you are, that you think actually people like me with my specialism, with my geography, with my life experience, people like me can get to be influential and senior if that's what you want, and make a real difference to the citizens. So what I'm after is going back to Tamara's EBI is we've got to move from talking about careers that flourish out of the M25 and really, actually deliver senior roles. And as I said, I'm hoping that as the first North of England Permanent Secretary, you might take hope from the fact that it is possible to get to be senior and not have to live in London. Not that living in London isn't absolutely fantastic, but obviously, you know, there's other places to live too.

Thanks, Angela, thank you, some very inspiring role models there. Thank you very much. And finally to Alex, thank you.

Thanks, Elizabeth and look, it's just been great listening to all of you. We didn't have a kind of a practice session for this panel, so I'm hearing this for the first time, the same as the rest of the people listening. Just as it has been said, I mean, the best thing about the Civil Service is the amazing colleagues, and it's lovely to be able to hear my colleagues, speaking so passionately and so well on the subject. And look, I had a chance this morning at 9.15, so I won't say too much now. Maybe there are just two things, if I could, Elizabeth and to all of you about a great place to work. One thing is, I wanted to sort of bring to mind an experience I had, over 20 years ago, when I was working in an internet company, a dot com business as they called them then. And we were a small company, 100 or so people operating across five continents for 30 different nationalities, and that was a very, very, obviously multi ethnic, multidisciplinary, all different age groups, all different backgrounds a fantastic experience. And I learned then really the sort of power of diversity and of creating a kind of a team of all the best talents, and I've always had that as a kind of positive experience to refer back to. And also part of being a kind of a startup like that where you had, you were borrowing money and had great obligations and taking risks yourself was a sense of great kind of impatience and urgency to try and solve problems and make a difference. And we had to listen very closely to the customer, we had

listened very closely to each other, and make the most of all the talents that we had. And I think, again, that tells us something probably about where we'd like to be as a Civil Service. So if I then rather than move back 20 years, move forward five years and say, so what's my vision for how I'd like to be working across the whole Civil Service? Well, first of all, sort of unconstrained by place, and I think it's really great to hear what Angela was just saying, but like everyone should feel that they can pursue their career, whichever part of the country that they are operating in, and that we lose that pull towards London. I think also again to Angela's point, it doesn't matter what your social background or according to what Rena and Selvin was saying, what your ethnic background is we really need everybody to give their best in the Civil Service. That's incredibly important. I also think as part of that kind of, you know, five year vision, when I go around talking to people say, it's quite hard to get stuff done. I'd like it to be easier to get things done. And that requires much better data, much better systems, much better training, much better support, for ordinary day to day things that make it difficult for us sometimes deliver for the public, we want to serve, those need to be eased. So that I think is really where we want to get to over the next five years. And there's lots of different things to do to bring that about. But I really agree with what Rena was saying that, you know, the opportunity is now and I think you've heard it from all the different members of this panel. And probably the fact that your dialled in to this event suggests that you to think of something in this moment. Let's make the most of it. Thank you back to you,

Alex, thank you very much. So the questions are really coming in so thank you very much for those and do vote on those that you want to hear about. So just to kick us off and staying with that theme of diversity and inclusion, a question here and a couple of related questions. So I belong to BAME is the question. I continue to experience blocks to learning and development opportunities, and how has the panel overcome similar challenges? And a related question here, why is it difficult and rare for people of BAME to make it to the top posts in the Civil Service, yet easy for non BAME external candidates to enter top grades? So a real focus here on opportunity. Selvin, can I turn to you first on that one?

Yeah, so can I start with the last question first. So, you know, over the last two years, we've had a focus on getting more BAME colleagues into the SCS, and it's not all about the SCS, but just to take that as one example. And we've gone from 4.2 to 6.8% BAME in the SCS. In the previous seven years, we went up by half a per cent, so there's clearly something that we are beginning to do, which helps to find and nurture and to accelerate the talent into the Senior Civil Service. But we need to do a lot more of that, right? We need to be very, very clear about what are the things, the barriers, the things that are getting in the way from people who are really talented, getting into the Senior Civil Service. On what I may have done, I was talking to Chris Wormald this morning, he was my mentor, when I was trying to get into the CS and I remember Chris sitting me down for an hour and a half on New Year's Eve to prepare me for my SCS interview. He did that, he really did that. And I was saying to him, there was a moment in time when I was going to go off and do an MBA and he diverted me onto a Master's degree, which was a statistical research degree. What a stroke of luck I had in talking to Chris about the folly of doing an MBA over doing the stats degree. So I think I've been really lucky to find the right people, to talk to the right people, to listen to the right people to help me on my way. And I think if you are out there, if you have the potential, if you are determined, as I have always been, determined, go and find people that can help you because my experience with the Civil Services is if you want someone to help you, they usually do.

Absolutely, thank you. Angela, perhaps you could expand on what's helped you during your career then, and perhaps to overcome some of the barriers if indeed, you experienced them?

Well, interestingly, an amazing parallel with with Selvin actually. It has been about having people who were prepared to take an interest in me who helped me to navigate, helped me to understand. So I joined the civil service 10 years ago after 20 years in private sector and I couldn't work out how how to make things work. I didn't have any network. I didn't know anybody and I wasn't quite sure how the rules worked. And also being a rather loud and extroverted person, I also found that I could rub people up the wrong way with my sheer volume of enthusiasm. And so I've really valued people who have helped me to meet people to understand, to give me feedback, actually, that's really landing well, or no, try something a little bit different because we all need development. And without those people who have given me that guidance, and sometimes the confidence when I thought, I can't do this, or I don't know where I am, or nobody's going to want a person like me. I'm not going to make to actually have somebody to go, "No, give it a try. No, no, you're right, keep going." And to pick me up when I fall over, that has been absolutely the thing that has helped me and it is the thing I do now for other people. I'm a massive believer in paying it forward. So I wouldn't be where I am if other people hadn't given up their time selflessly to help me. I passionately believe that it is my responsibility now to do that to those people who will come after me and for whom I might be able to make that difference. So that's that's what I've been doing, Elizabeth,

Very interesting and a big push on mentors and those supporters. Tamara, you've got your your physical hand up, Very good, thank you.

My hand is up, I just want to add to a brief thing because there's something in that about our responsibility as leaders and of that kind of paying it forward. But I just wanted a warning for all of us about how sometimes that happens in peacetime and then when an emergency happens, when something happens that moves very quickly, like COVID. Suddenly, people reach for people who look like them. And they don't give that thought as to who do I need to ensure gets that opportunity? And it's absolutely incumbent on all of us to just get that thought of how do you bring along somebody who might not immediately volunteer, because those are the moments when you ask people, that people lost ground, because they didn't know that was an opportunity that would help them learn so much, and move on, and they missed out. That is where some of the differences then emerge, and we've all got a responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen.

Really interesting comment, and there's a really fascinating question here, sticking with that theme of diversity though, but a slightly different take. The question is, it seems that to get ahead, you need to be an extrovert, confident and work every hour, which puts introverts, possibly also those with disabilities at a disadvantage. So anybody reflecting on the extrovert-introvert, who'd like to take that one otherwise, I shall choose you. Rena, you've got your mouth opens again, I've got my mouth half open, in part because I'm actually naturally quite introverted and find some of this quite difficult. And I mean, I think I think I would be lying if there wasn't a stage, particularly in the Senior Civil Service were an ability to be able to kind of bring yourself to people both in terms of your personal experiences, but also in terms of leading on sort of whether it's delivery or policy, whatever you are doing, being able to be

more extroverted in the way in which you engage with other people so that they can kind of relate to you. So I think there is a bit of that, that happens at some stage. But I don't believe that this is all about those who who speak the loudest who speak the most and I think it's one of the great things about the Civil Service that you know, there are undoubtedly people who have kind of looked forward and seen people who ensure that they dominate the conversation that they are always the ones to kind of you know, whether it's repeating what someone else has said, or actually bringing something new to the table, but feel that their their value add comes from the amount that they speak and the amount of the extent to which they speak out. I don't believe that that is true, and I think there is a place in the Civil Service for all of us. I think you will see lots of different personalities throughout all grades in the Civil Service who are bringing their very best and achieving a considerable amount. I definitely benefited from leaders as I was coming through, who were really happy actually taking not being extroverted, not leading and being able to sit back and allow you the space to be able to demonstrate what you could do but knowing that they were there in order to kind of catch you if you fall or indeed be able to protect you in those moments of exposure.

Fantastic. Thanks so much. I just going to go to Alex, is there anything else to add on extrovert introvert. You must particularly in your current role, see a vast array of different character types, if you like.

Absolutely and look, I really agree as before, with what colleagues have just said. I mean, if it's any kind of interest just to reflect, I would say there are a lot of people in the Civil Service including at the very top of the Civil Service who are actually not natural extroverts, but who are adapted introverts. And they have got the hang of being able to communicate in a way that is very necessary because we work in teams and we're often giving advice and we're often needing to communicate with large groups of people. So you need to be able to do that but I don't think if whoever asked the question, should feel that they necessarily started out as great extroverts. Angela, I accept, is an extrovert, probably lots of other senior people didn't start out that way. And that pretty much goes goes for me as well. When I was a child, I had a stutter, so I'm not a not a natural kind of performer, you know, to be on a stage and taking part in a play as it were, so don't be discouraged, first of all, but I think also recognise that just as Rena said that the civil service, one of the best things about it is, is it does pay attention to where what really gets done and who is good for work, and it doesn't particularly reward the kind of person who's looking to take the credit the whole time or to speak over others. And indeed, often it's the most thoughtful contribution that goes the longest way so there's room for everybody in the Civil Service

Thank you very much and Selvin, you had your hand raised, I think.

Well, and contrary to what people may believe, I'm actually a deep introvert and like a lot of colleagues I've learned how to talk in public. I always get very nervous though, to be clear. I think there is something also about... so I'm dyslexic, and I think very differently from other people. And so there is something also about how applying different ways of thinking actually is a very inclusive act. So when I think about COVID, when I think about PPE, I think about that end of the lens rather than this end of the lens, that's where I naturally start. So actually, the diversity of thought and the way people think and introverts can be very useful, particularly in a time of crisis in my experience.

Brilliant, thank you very much. Now, there's lots of questions coming in here though with a slight change of track which is about the concept of place and working and opportunities outside London, also around homeworking, juggling child care, and shouldn't a Civil Service be more flexible and accommodating with times of delivering training meetings and the like, and I would hope that this style of Civil Service Live is actually more inclusive in that respect. But perhaps Alex, I can come to you first, in terms of your vision for a flexible Civil Service with equal opportunities outside London.

Great, yeah, thanks Elizabeth. Yeah, so I really think that this is a massive time of opportunity there, because we've been quietly investing for the last two years in these major hubs across the whole of the UK. And so some of you will have heard this morning. I think, in the next two years, we'll have 14 hubs open across the whole of the UK, with capacity for 49,000 civil servants. That is a big change, so that will mean obviously, that those people who don't want to continue to work in London will have plenty of alternative places to work. But also, when we are recruiting people locally in the regions across the UK, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland as well, we will be able to offer people local places of work, which I think is really good. I also think that, we've found during COVID, that the kind of the idea of presenteeism, that you had to be there in person, you had to be in the room with the Minister, or with the senior officials or whatever it might be, we really seem to have broken that, you know. Lots of people are very comfortable as we are doing now, working off-screen, and that is hugely improving the flexibility and options for people across the UK. So I think that combination of more capacity, of really good quality offices to work out of, when you need to, plus working remotely, should greatly improve the flexibility. I think having worked in 20 different employment environments, the Civil Service is already pretty good for flexibility just to say that, but this will enable us to be a lot better again.

And Alex, what about the Minister side of things? You say the Ministers have got used to it, but we still hear comments about Ministers preferring face to face [contact], which in turn means London. What's your experience with that?

Yeah, I think it's a mix actually, and in truth, Ministers are human, the same as the rest of us, and some of them do prefer face to face [meetings] no question. But others are totally comfortable working in different parts of the country. Those for whom being face-to-face, meant a long train ride or plane trip are delighted, I must say, to be able to avoid that. So I think that they will adapt to it, same as the rest of us. I think, obviously, it's worth recognising that in the last administration, access to Parliament was pretty critical because there were a series of knife-edge votes. That seems to be less of an issue at the moment, both because the change to voting rights, but also just because of the large majority, the government enjoys. So I think that too, is probably going to weaken a little bit of that sense of, you know, being tied to Westminster. Actually, getting out of the Westminster bubble, trying to get out of that kind of slightly village type environment, I think would be really good for Ministers and civil servants to connect with the day-to-day lived experience of people across the UK, which is very different from what happens in Whitehall and Westminster.

Thank you very much. Angela, I don't know, if you've got any reflections there, you talked in your introduction about being based or living in York. And I think the moment you're dialling from Leeds, that of course is now Second Perm Sec, or soon to be, Second Perm Sec. You'll be working as a senior leader from outside London, so what has your experience been?

I do. I think that there are, it is absolutely true to say that despite being here, I spent a fair amount of time on a train, and be in London two or three days a week, but obviously HMRC is a national organisation. So I always spend regular amounts of my time out in regional teams. I'm massively hoping that the change that we have experienced during COVID has, has broken us of the habit of, if there's a meeting, we all need to go to London to have it. What has been incredibly interesting to watch actually, as we have used Microsoft Teams, as such a core part is, how it has really democratised our meetings. So you can have a meeting full of 10 people, you can guarantee that typically two people will be the ones that speak the most. And some people will come out of the meeting, never having opened their mouths. Actually, what we're getting from digital meetings, using the joys of the little hands up thing of the chat bar thing is actually, more and more people are engaging in the conversation. We are having richer conversations now we're all not in the same room together. That's really fascinating from a human behaviour perspective. And picking up on what the colleague asked earlier about the introvert-extrovert thing, it's actually making it easier for a broader array of colleagues to feel like it's easy to get a word in edgeways, which as you getting a sense with a meeting with me can be a little challenging. So it is, I think that there is a massive opportunity to make use of digital, but I think it's beholden on leaders like us not to make it snap back. Because if I go back to London and say everybody back to London, we're all having a meeting now, then everybody will come with me. If I stay out, and I make use of digital, that's what everybody will do. So I think those of us in the influential positions, because when we talk about Ministers, but the reality is a teeny tiny number of us civil servants spend our day with Ministers, by far the majority of us don't go anywhere near a Minister. Therefore it's up to us as leaders to be able to set the tone for how our day works, and as I say, how we make the most of the technology and the opportunity that COVID has offered us here.

Absolutely. Brilliant. Thank you. Tamara, you had your hand up.

Thank you, and some of us want to build on that. I think it's a really, really exciting opportunity for us. But we mustn't underestimate how much we need to change our culture and our ways of working. And actually, we have a continued opportunity because we won't have shifted it in the few months we've had. But we will while we still got very limited capacity in our offices, have an opportunity to build that 'new normal' for the future. And absolutely, it's that issue about how do you hold meetings that go on being location blind, because if you just have a bunch of people in a room in one location, and others electronically, you won't get that amazing impact that I've noticed, too, that Angela talked about, that fantastic use of the chat room, as well as a different way of using a meeting. So there is something in our leadership to have how we build that new those new ways of working so that we actually make a real success of this. It's very, very exciting. There's a lot of work to do.

Absolutely. Thank you very much. Now there's lots of questions coming in on pay. I would encourage people to dial into the opening session where Alex and Rupert McNeil did cover that quite fully in that session. So I'm going to turn now to recruitment and talent that came out very strongly in your opening remarks as well. So the question here around, do we truly manage our talent internally? Recruitment policies seem disproportionately to favour external candidates, particularly it says here from the private sector. So Rena, perhaps I can come to you. I don't know what you see in Treasury and in others, what's your response to that?

So I think there were a couple of things, and if I could also just pick up on one of the questions that was in the in the chat, which is linked to this, I think, which is about if you're not very good at writing application forms in the correct style because I think our system is not ideal. We know it's not ideal, but actually, I think we are much closer to having genuine, the sort of fair and open competition than we have been at various points in our history. So I would say to anybody who is finding it difficult to get over that sort of stage, if you're finding that actually there is something about the writing form thing, get some help and support. And you will be surprised by the extent to which people are happy to read through application forms to work with you on that, to do mock interviews, in order to be able to improve that bit of it, because I think for some individuals, you know, across multiple backgrounds, there is a genuine issue just about sort of getting the form right. And it's not the same for each government department. So, from the Treasury perspective, you know, the style and look at thinking about some of the other departments that I've worked in, the style of getting a successful application form that gets you over the line can be quite varied between departments. So get general support, but also speak to somebody who can help you to understand how the panels operate within that. On the sort of leaning towards the private sector, I think it is really unfortunate that at times, it is quite easy to think that to kind of roll with the narrative, the really negative narrative that sometimes dominates the the sort of public debate about the Civil Service that suggests that we don't have the talent within, that saddens me as a career civil servant. But I think it also makes me really sad when I think about the people that I have met long when people that do jobs across all of the grades, and the genuine dedication and talent that we have in the Civil Service. And I have seen appointments, particularly at senior levels, where people have thought well, to get the right sort of skills and experience, it has to be somebody who's external. And somehow we need to get to a stage where we've got a bit more balance in the way in which we approach that because there's definitely a place for it. I saw it when I was working in departments, what was the department's Business Innovation and Skills and we genuinely wanted people who had private sector experience. There's a huge amount of value that came from our colleagues who came in with that background. But too simply, we've often sort of reduced it to, it's good if we get people from outside, and it's bad if we have people from inside because they didn't have the talent. And I just think that lacks the sort of level of intellectual rigour that we should be having in our discussions about recruitment and retention.

Brilliant, thank you. We're getting close to closing time. So I want to turn finally to values in the Civil Service, that of course, the values that we all know of integrity, honesty, impartiality, and objectivity which stem from 1854, in fact, have really stood the test of time. Angela, when we spoke in advance, we wondered and speculated whether it was time to absolutely hold on to those values as our sort of professional standing, but whether it was time to complement those with values that speak more to behaviours, we have them in individual departmentsk but what about as a Civil Service? Angela?

Yeah, so I, I think it's really interesting, and it picks up on something that you said at the beginning about whether or not there is one Civil Service culture, or many, many Civil Service cultures? Because actually, what is culture? Well, culture is an accumulation of the people who come together. So I'd even wonder inside, like HMRC, is there one HMRC? Or is there the experience of the colleagues who were together in Leeds and then the experience of the colleagues who were together in London, with the mixture of backgrounds and experiences that are in different areas? So I think what holds us together

are a core set of things we believe in, we believe about. We believe in public service. We believe in making a difference. We believe in our professionalism and our integrity and our inclusion. I think though, that there is an interesting question about how do you then take that and own it so that it feels real in all of the different places, and that might be the team, might be the building, it might be the department. But I think that there is an interesting debate about are we trying to create? Do we believe it's possible to create one homogenous Civil Service? Or actually is it, there is a spine of things that join us? But actually, what we want to do is to encourage the diversity to flourish of thought, experience, approach, excitement, which is relevant to the different kinds of people who are in the different places. I'm a massive fan of thinking we need to do more regionally. And so I sit here in Yorkshire in the Humber with a massive variety of fabulous Civil Service organisations here in this region. So actually, is there opportunity, not for obviously, all Yorkshire people to come together or anything, but you know, there's an opportunity for us is to really think laterally about how we join as opposed to simply vertically, in our departments. And if we did that, given that we are all trying to deliver for the citizen, what would that do if we actually did more to try to join and take the opportunities of what joins us? So I think there are the things we have in common, and I recognise this is only my own personal view. There's massive things we have in common, but I don't think we should all try to become the same. Just just my thoughts. I don't know what Alex would think about that, but that's just my thoughts.

And we're out of time. I might have to come back to that tomorrow,

Alex. I agree with Angela. So Angela, he agrees with you. So we're out of time, and we could have gone on for much longer, so thank you very much. I'm sure you'll join me in thanking our panel members for their insight, stories and indeed, frankness and above all, thank you over 10,000 people who've joined this live session for your engagement and questions. Do continue the debate online. You can also continue to engage with the theme of a great place to work in tomorrow's session on allyship, on wellbeing, mental health and the ever popular pension power. I'm going to end with a quote from an early review into reform of the Civil Service to the Fulton inquiry in 1968. In talking of the Civil Service, that report said, we have been deeply impressed by it, the Civil Services very considerable strengths, its integrity, humanity, willingness at every level to carry the load of detailed work which composes so large a part of the country's public business. So that is as true today as ever as we continue to evolve for the future. Thank you very much for joining.