

Debbie: Hi, my name is Debbie Forster. I'm the CEO of the Tech Talent Charter and I am delighted to have you join us for our Inclusion Tech Festival. This is our working lunch, so make sure you have your sandwiches at hand, I'm going to drink my lunch. We've got a lot to cover today. Thank you, it's been a crazy 12 months, it's been a really crazy month. There's a lot going on, I know in your work today, you've already had a good morning's work behind you. Thank you for taking the time to join us. What we'll try to do today is what we always do with the Tech Talent Charter. We are going to focus on the practical, finding actual insights that you can put to work today. What's important to us is not talking about the problem, but really connecting the dots, sharing what works, so that you can make your company more inclusive, more diverse, and really move the dial across the whole sector for diversity in tech. Okay, so first of all, thank you very much for our sponsors, we're not for profit, everything we offer to you is free. We do that because we work with some great sponsors. Beazley has worked closely with us, to be our headline sponsor, both giving us that sponsorship and helping us curate the content today. We also are really delighted to work with our partners, that are principal partners, that really invest in help us think strategically. That would be HP, Lloyds Banking Group, PwC, Nominet and global, working also along the DCMS, which I'll mention in a moment. In the old 3D world, which I miss terribly. If this were a face to face event, I would take a few seconds to tell you where the loos were, where the fire exit. Let me talk you through your screen here today. Just on the bottom of this little orange screen that we have here, if you'd like you can turn this up to high definition. You can count how many freckles and wrinkles I have going on across my forehead. There's also a box where, if you want to turn on the closed captioning, that's there for you to do. We would like today, to be as interactive as possible. We were delighted yesterday, that we had lots of questions coming in from the audience. If you look just below the screen that I'm on, you'll see a box where you can add those questions, both for the session you're listening to, or if you have broader questions for topics that we're having later today, I'd love to have you take part. Throughout the today's sessions, we will be referring to our annual report. Now the Tech Talent Charter gathers data, we now represent 16% of the overall tech UK workforce. If you want to hear the insights from that, if you want to see how you measure up against the stats this year, if you look down a little below, you'll see where you can have a connection to have a link into that. if you're not a signatory yet. We also have a spot that you can join the Tech Talent Charter, And why aren't you? We would love to have you join and it's free. You can click below and find out information for that as well. You can see also, there's a link to signing up for the other sessions, today, we have one more session, after our working lunch, it is going to be a powerful one. So I'd encourage you to join that, we also have links where you can watch and listen what we did yesterday. Great feedback came in from our sessions yesterday, if you haven't watched it, I'd love to have you have a look at that. Please have a look at that link. Social media, the days where we could sit in a room, watch what was going on and tweet the socks off it, so we could tell everyone what was happening in the room, aren't necessarily there, but it is important. what we do now and in the future. It meant a lot to us and it helps us shape To have you share on social media. What is resonating with you? What are the big questions? Are there any quotes today that will come through and really resonate? We are on all the social media channels. There is information below and we'd love to have you Tweet, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook us, on what matters to you, in this space. we'd love to hear what you're thinking. We also have some surveys going, Okay, that's enough logistics. You probably noticed, that the last 12 months has been a bit tricky. Let's be honest, the last 24, but the last 12, really challenging, was really grateful and excited to see that, from our perspective, from DEI, things didn't stop. In fact, companies have been working harder, working to make sure that they are working with us to drive the space. If you've wondered what we've been doing over the last 12 months, let's just take a quick look back. Well, you know, that song is going to be drilling its way into your brain, the rest of the day. It's a gift we're just going to leave you with. So, thinking back, from the earliest days in 2017. When we started the Tech Talent Charter, we were really grateful to come to the attention of government and we are an employer led organisation, but we are an organisation that has worked in a space supported by government. In particular the DCMS. So I'm really pleased that we were able to

get a pre-recorded message, from the Secretary of State for digital, The Right Honourable Nadine Dorries, let's hear from her.

Nadine: I'm delighted to be part of today's event. Particularly as one of my main missions as digital secretary, is to open the doors of tech to new faces. The Tech Talent Charter, is an important part of that work. And their diversity in tech report gives us a real insight into what's happening in tech companies, up and down the country. We know that UK Tech is absolutely booming right now, with yet another record setting year of investment, in 2021. But I want to make sure that everyone benefits from tech success. That the industry's record breaking growth is evenly spread across the entire UK. And that people can get involved, no matter who they are, or where they came from. This year's report has shown, yet again, that we need the right data to drive change. Collecting information on the tech workforce, gives us the knowledge to know where and how we need to act. And by being a member of the Tech Talent Charter, organisations are a vital part of that process. The joint effort of signatories effectively means, that we are now statistically reporting on about 16% of the UK tech workforce. But the report also makes clear that one of the biggest challenges facing UK Tech right now, is the digital skills gap. We've got the jobs and now we need to give people the right skills to fill them. While increasing diversity as we do so. The government is doing lots of things right now to build the workforce of the future. We've announced University conversion courses in data science and AI. And we've launched local digital skills partnerships in eight regions across England, to help increase digital skills capabilities across the country, and build thriving regional tech hubs across the UK. This is one of our central priorities in the coming months and years. But we also need to keep collecting the right data so that we can keep an eye on what's actually happening on the ground. So I was very interested to see that only 14% of organisations involved in this year's report, provided information about their employees socio economic background. As I said, my main mission is to open up UK tech to new faces, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds. As someone who grew up in a Council estate in Liverpool, this is an issue very close to my heart. And so I want to take this opportunity to make my own call for action, and to ask every single organisation to step up their efforts in this space. Whether it's collecting data or considering how they can improve accessibility to people from lower socio economic backgrounds. The Tech Talent Charter, is doing great work and I'm looking forward to seeing what can be achieved this year. Thank you.

Debbie: So, thank you for that message. And if some of those resonated with you, if you do want to know more about the data, what we do with it, what we've learned, what it showed us, please look at what our sessions were from yesterday. There's some great insights from companies, looking both at our report and how they're using data within their company. If you are interested in thinking about things like social mobility, I'd encourage you to sign up for the evening cuppa session, where we'll be looking at a range of underrepresented groups that we've not really dug into before in our session called invisible lenses, and the skills crisis is a real one but there are companies making a difference. So if that is a topic that's interesting to you, please sign up for this evenings session. If I think back in 2017 at our first event, we talked, even then, about the importance of flexible working as a way of making our workplace more inclusive to removing barriers for a whole range of people to come in. And back then, that was pretty radical. The companies who were doing it were making real inroads. But if we look at it in terms of, there was a whole lot of people saying, there is no way my tech team can work remotely. There is no way that I could possibly have a part time person, or someone starting late. Then COVID came, broke everything, and we had to learn how to do it. Two years later, what have we learned? What are the opportunities? What are the risks we need to be aware of as we try to build this new normal? Let's hear from Rebecca Donnelly, who is one of our TTC directors and working with our great partners at Tyto. And a panel of employers, who've really been working, and thinking, and doing some great things in the space. Over to you, Rebecca.

Rebecca: Thank you very much, Debbie. And thank you to everybody who is joining us this afternoon. So as Debbie said, my name is Rebecca Donnelly. I'm a director at the Tech Talent Charter and a senior partner at Tyto PR, which I mentioned because we are a fully location agnostic employer, and have been since long before the pandemic when we were founded in 2016. So I'm doubly invested in the topic for this next session. As Debbie mentioned, the last two years have seen a major revolution in the workplace when it comes to remote work. Very few companies have not had to adopt it in some form, or at least look at the impact it has on their employees. But as we waved goodbye to the last of the COVID restrictions, at least in the UK, the future of remote work, but flexible work, more broadly is still a big question for many organisations. With the multiple headlines on the numbers of people quitting or changing jobs in a trendline is a great resignation. And a recent study from the ONS, said that 85% of those currently remote working, want to continue working remotely in the future. However, in our Tech Talent Charter report this year, only 10% of our signatories told us that they've switched to a fully remote model, long term. Of course, one of the key benefits, as Debbie mentioned, of remote and flexible working, is in attracting more diverse talent. So whether that's those with caring responsibilities, who are still more likely to be women, or people with certain disabilities, for whom a daily commute may be more of a challenge, but also for those who may not be able to afford to live in or near big centres of employment. So remote work allows for greater choice for a much greater pool of talent. In this session, we're going to hear from some organisations who've been embraced and implemented in quite varied, remote and flexible working policies. We're going to explore what they've learned from those initiatives. And of course, the impact they've had on driving inclusion and diversity. We do want to find some time for questions at the end of the session, so if you do have any for any of our panel at any point, please pop them into the Q&A box that you should see if you scroll down beneath the conference screen. But first things first, I'd like to ask our panel to briefly introduce themselves, and then we can jump straight into the conversation. So Victoria, can I start with you, please?

Victoria: Yeah, so good afternoon, everybody. I'm Victoria Sherrington. I'm the Digital Capability and People Lead at Homes, England. Part of my role is to bring new talent in, and also develop the capabilities of our existing people. And within doing that, make sure that we keep the diversity lines on there. So we are trying to develop people from very, very different backgrounds, into some of our leadership roles.

Rebecca: Thank you. Dave, I'll come to you next please.

Dave: Thanks, Rebecca. Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Dave Prezzano. I'm the managing director for HP's, United Kingdom and Ireland business. And I'm honoured to be part of this panel, I'm really looking forward to hearing more from my peers because HP is indeed moving to a hybrid work environment. And it's crucial for us to ensure that everybody, really the hybrid work is accessible for everybody.

Rebecca: Thank you. And Adam.

Adam: Thanks, Rebecca. Hi, I'm Adam Mitchell. I work in NatWest bank. As part of the day job, I work in the performance of business management team supporting our digital channel teams. On top of that, I also co-lead our ethnically diverse working group and a global co-chair for our professional network. So, really keen to be in the conversation, and delighted to be here. So thank you for the invitation.

Rebecca: Thank you. And finally Ann-Marie.

Ann-Marie: Hi, I'm Ann-Marie Lester. I'm the Chief People Officer, at Atom bank. We're one of the new challenger banks, and we're based in Durham in the Northeast. We have recently moved to a four day week. So we've expanded hybrid and remote working further than many other

organisations. And I'm happy to share what we've done and also listen to the other contributions today.

Rebecca: Fantastic. Thank you all so much for joining us and for giving us your time this afternoon. Victoria, I wanted to start with you if I can because Homes England is a fully location agnostic and flexible employer, and has been since long before the pandemic. Can you tell us a bit more about the thinking behind that strategy and how important inclusivity was, in driving that approach?

Victoria: Yeah, as an organisation Homes England have a number of offices all over England. And as a digital team, we have a number of digital hubs as well that support people in there. We've also offered homeworking for, as you say, since before lockdown started, before the pandemic. Like lots of public sector organisations, we needed to reduce our estates around offices, and home working was part of the way that we were able to do that. What that meant was, we did a piece of work prior to lockdown starting about productivity tools, and Teams, 365, all of that stuff. So when lockdown came to us, our staff were already prepared and set up to be able to work remotely, and to be able to work from home. So this thing that people used to do... And being agnostic is always about having a choice and saying, you have a choice to work at home, you have a choice to be in the office. You are adults, you will make the right choice as to where you need to be on specific days, at specific times. And that's something that we had as an organisation, and we continue to have as an organisation, trusting our people to be able to make the right decisions. What we were able to do though through that is very quickly, there was no break in service at all for us. We were able to move to everybody being remote and carry on delivering and carry on doing what we needed to do. The fact that we had offered it to people in the past, and some people had taken it up and some people don't. And what happened with us really, was we were able to bust a lot of myths about what can and can't be done remotely. There was always this fear of, we can't have these meetings, everybody will have to be face to face with some of these senior meetings. When the choice is taken away, what do they say... That necessity is the mother of invention, is the core, isn't it? Well, that's the situation we were in, of going, actually we are where we are, we need to do something. And then what we've taken from that is a lot of learnings that we made during early lockdown and said, How do we build a model now for the organisation, that we can use moving forward. we should always be saying to ourselves, From a diversity perspective, and from a talent and attraction perspective, Why would it need to be a specific office? Why would people need to be in, what is it. What are the real ways? And sometimes there are reasons you need people to come in. I think that will always happen. There will be times when people need to come together. You will always need to have spaces to do that. But for us, when somebody comes to me, and wants to bring a new person in, they might try and specify an office. That's the first question they're going to get, Why? Why does that need to be like that? Why are we asking that question? Because we can offer more and the market is very difficult in digital, and we know the market is very difficult to bring people in. You don't want to put up a boundary, an unnecessary boundary, that stops people from applying, or stops people from coming into your organisation. So it's helped us to do that. And helped us to reach other groups, to be able to go out and go actually, we can work slightly differently from a location perspective. We can work slightly differently from hours and how people need to come in.

Rebecca: I think that's really interesting what you say, about the need to challenge the way you've always done things, and always question why, why are we doing it this way? Is this going to put up any barriers towards attracting great talent? And also the point you made about trust, building a trusted culture, which I'd like to park and come back to a little bit later, because it's hugely important. Dave, I'd be interested to hear, from your learnings at HP, because I believe you had some flexible working before but had to make a huge, fast, shift under lockdown. What did you learn from that, and what have you decided to take forward into the future?

Dave: Yeah, it's a great question, Rebecca. And again, it's great to be here, and part of this panel. Kind of like Homes England, as Victoria was explaining, HP's similar. We were an advocate for really for the last 80 years on flexible working and part time working, all the way back into the late 1930's, when HP was founded. But as you say we did, of course, like everybody else, have to do this, almost immediate shift to home, back in March of 2020. And I'd say, in terms of the learnings, I would say that we learned there's benefits to hybrid working. I think there's pain points as well, which I can talk through. I think unquestionably workstyles have changed permanently and hybrid work is certainly here to stay. I think that's also a finding. Lots of external survey data out there about that. And both employees and employers alike, in fact, you talked about some of this, Rebecca. At the beginning, in your opening remarks, they see the benefits of a hybrid work environment. What we see really is, in particular, heads down and working from home, is really fine. If you're just working on something independently, or if you're just powering through your email, it's probably better to work from home, frankly because you don't have the distractions, you don't have your commute. I think what we saw, and what I see from other companies is that people really missed that collaboration. And I mean like whiteboarding, brainstorming, bouncing ideas off of each other. If you just ask yourself, have you ever had a really brilliant idea, while sitting at your desk? And I could tell you that I have not. It's just our brains don't even really work that way. It's really when we're standing up, we're at a whiteboard, we're on a walk with a colleague or something along those lines. That's when that innovation happens, and that collaboration. And so it's one of those pain points, you asked about, is just we've missed some of the innovation that comes from face to face collaboration. I think lots of companies, including HP, you asked about what we're doing, we're creating more collaboration spaces in our offices. So less cubes for people to work and more places for people to work together. I think the other thing that we're seeing is, sending people home, is not really a strategy. Because we see this, what we call the hybrid gap. And that is that some people are thriving in hybrid, and some people are actually barely hanging on in hybrid. And interestingly, this is actually, I would say, more a generational divide, between more senior people and Gen Z. I think the audience could probably tell, which category I fall into. I'm definitely not a Gen Z. If you take myself as an example, my kids are out of the house, I've got a dedicated workspace, I'm working from home today so you can see this, I have a door so I have privacy. As the MD for HP, I've got access to cutting edge technology. So for me, home working is really not a big challenge. But I shouldn't assume that, that's true for everybody. Because I imagine someone who's just entering the workforce, who's got roommates, or a really small apartment with no dedicated place to work, or young children around, it's not so easy for them. And we know actually, that it's creating, it's not just difficult to get your job done, it's actually creating a mental health challenge for young people, and we're definitely hearing this. It's a new kind of challenge for employers and managers. And this is actually affecting, I would suggest, since it's affecting more young people, it's also affecting our most diverse employees. at improving the diversity of our organisations Because as the TTC data shows, we're getting better by hiring diverse employees, and those are mostly young employees. These are the voices that we need to hear from the most, and they're the ones that are having the hardest time. It's a risk, I would say. I think the last thing I would say is just, I think we're thinking about, how do we drive a hybrid meeting. Because, during the pandemic, we were in some ways, may have been mileage varied a little bit by where you work in terms of your office. But we were all in the same level playing field, meaning we were all dialled in, via Zoom or via Teams. And now, you have these hybrid meetings. Where some people are in the office, and some people are at home. And I think, the risk here, is that you have the people that are in the office dominating those conversations, and the people that are remote, are more watching the meeting than participating in the meeting. I think for employers, we can talk about this throughout the session, but for employers, they need to think about, how they drive accessibility and inclusivity in how they run their meetings.

Rebecca: Yeah, I think that's a really interesting point. And we're already seeing some audience questions coming in, asking around that, asking around how you measure productivity, how you

build inclusion. I think one thing that we've always felt as a remote from the start company is that there's a big difference between what happened during the pandemic, when everyone was forced to work from home, and a true innovative approach to agnostic and flexible working, because those two are very different things. So I think what you're saying is, the need to take a really innovative approach to how you manage hybrid working, and not just assume that it's going to be the same as in the office, but just with some people working from home. And Ann-Marie, Atom took a really innovative approach, and switched to a four day week recently. Which you hear lots of people talking about, but only a very few companies have been brave enough to make that leap. What was it that made that decision for you? And what have been the impacts so far?

Ann-Marie: Like everyone else on this call, and I'm sure many people in the audience, we knew that hybrid working was here to stay, in some respects. And the benefits that we'd gained from it, as an organisation, not withstanding some of the challenges, actually, that have just been talked about, which I absolutely agree with. Part of the ethos at Atom, is to challenge and to change things for the better. We do that with banking, and by the very nature of the organisation, we are. And actually took that to challenge work in practice, and workplaces in general. So what could we learn from hybrid working? What were our people telling us in terms of, how they were feeling? And so we stayed very close to our employees throughout the pandemic, in terms of surveys, and focus groups, in terms of what was working for them, and what was impacting their life. Stress and wellbeing was obviously paramount throughout, probably many organisations in terms of, how people were feeling, the impact of longer working days and sitting at your kitchen table, or in your spare room. We really wanted to challenge, not just how can we use hybrid working for the better, but how can we change working practice. I really like the phrase, busting myths. I think that's what we're doing. We're trying to do it with a four day week. We implemented it in November. All of the organisation are part of our trial, however, I should say that people can opt out. Because I think from the elements of diversity, it's really important that people can maintain a level of flexibility. Working a four day week, isn't for everybody. In our trial, which we've been running for the last four months, we're extending it until the end of May, just to keep testing our productivity measures, our organisation metrics to actually see, not just how our people are feeling about it, but actually what's the true benefit that it's bringing to the business. So I guess the implementation of it is being drawn from feedback from our people. Thinking about our impact on the environment as an organisation as well and the benefits that hybrid working have actually brought to that. Seeing how we can extend that, but then fundamentally challenging how we work. To look for different ways of working, while still offering flexibility to everybody who's involved.

Rebecca: And have you seen any learnings from that in terms of who is most likely to adopt a four day week? Or who would rather not adopt it?

Ann-Marie: It has varied, it has been on individual circumstance. However, I would say about 97% of the organisation has opted in to working a four day week.

Rebecca: That's quite a powerful number, isn't it?

Ann-Marie: Yeah, but some of the feedback has been, perhaps that people with caring responsibilities, that prefer to split their working time. And I should say, I guess within the four day week, we were working a 37 and a half hour week, over five days, and we've dropped that to 34. So whether you participate in the trial, or not, over five days, you still receive a drop in working hours. But childcare, lots of different scenarios has been a given in terms of why people prefer to opt out. But the vast majority have opted in.

Rebecca: That's really, really interesting. I wanted to look at... The reason I was asking about who is most likely to adopt it, is because there are some preconceptions, we're talking about myth busting, some preconceptions about the kind of person who wants to work remotely, or who wants to work a four day week. We see lots of articles, telling us all to get back into the office, which I always take with a big pinch of salt as a fully remote company. But there is definitely a potential negative benefit, negative risk, for inclusion and diversity. Which is that, people who work remotely, or who choose to work a reduced week, could be seen as not being as engaged in the workplace, it's called proximity bias. So if you're not there, willing to travel in, and be face to face to your colleagues, it means that you're not as committed to your job, and you're not going to have the same access to opportunities. So Adam, I'd love to hear about what you're doing at NatWest, because as a very flexible employer, with lots of different options, and how you make sure that you address that upfront, so that remote work is not seen as a second class option.

Adam: Yeah, I think it's a really good point actually. We've been quite purposeful of doing some stuff in this space. The first part I'll start with is, the last couple of years has certainly brought my attention, and need to really embrace the complete person. I think we were always really good at understanding our teams, and our people, and understanding their career, their aspiration, their goals, things that are going well for them, things that they need support with. But as we've moved to more of a firstly, a homeworking, and now going into more of a hybrid scenario, it's really given us the opportunity to get to know the complete person. And by that I mean, I've got a six year old child, and if this call was at 3:45, she'd be running through the door. And as she ran through the door, what you wouldn't see is the look of anxiety and trepidation on my face. I probably welcome her and say, hello. I'd appreciate her curiosity. Where we go back two or three years ago, those things were unheard of. So now, I do feel we've made that step, and a really good step into really understanding people in their fullest. But to your question around proximity bias and making sure we're inclusive, we've taken some really good action in this space. We've really thought about how we support people in the organisation, to make better decisions, and have a better view on being more inclusive. The reason that's important is because a lot of people, their biases, and some of their behaviours will come from a place, sometimes of good intention, but possibly, they've just applied things wrong. We've been really forward thinking in terms of rolling out some training, that's targeted at all of our employees from Senior Management, down to our new joiners. Really around choosing, and helping them to choose how to engage with people, also to be brave enough to challenge any behaviours, or anything that they don't see as being inclusive around the organisation. So kind of giving them the power, but also a framework to really take that step, and take that challenge. We found that's been really good, because actually, everyone's now thinking more in an inclusive way. And we're giving people a safe environment to explore the different lenses of diversity. Because a lot of people don't always feel comfortable to do that in the real world, because people can make mistakes and get it wrong sometimes. Where people are able to safely explore an inclusive environment, so we've created these safe environments where we do lead sessions and what that feels like through the eyes of different people. And that's been really well received. That's something we've really, from inclusion perspective, aim to push out, certainly the back end of last year, and as a key learning for all our people at the beginning of this year, as well. On top of that, we've provided further I suppose, coaching, training and frameworks to some of those people involved in recruitment and hiring. To make sure they're making more informed and inclusive decisions, so they don't see people's differences as anything other than an opportunity to really diversify the way we make decisions and how we support our customers. We've also got a framework where we've, again, really got out to people, and people that are keen to be involved, because it's not for everyone, but giving them the opportunity to really upskill themselves and be part of senior interview panels. So to make sure they're able to provide an alternate lens to that of the original hiring manager.

Rebecca: Oh, sorry. I was just gonna ask, have you found that generally, because there's two ways of looking at this, aren't there? We all think of remote and hybrid working as being, having great opportunities for the individual employee. But of course, there's a big question around culture and how you change an organization's culture to support people who are working remotely to think about how they do things. Have you come up against any barriers with that at NatWest, in terms of people going well, I don't want this person to work remotely, I want them in the office with me, and how have you tackled that?

Adam: Yeah, I think it's a fair question. So I think firstly, it's really about understanding what the job is, and understanding the needs of the jobs, and how we can best meet the needs of the individuals, so our customers as well. So for some roles, they'll absolutely need them to come into the office, maybe more often than others. For some roles, certainly it's not needed as much. For us, we've been quite open in our assessments of each role, and trying to think around how we can make it open to as many people as possible. Because I think, gone are the days where you need to be in any office, five days a week to be deemed, to be able to do your role properly. There will be some opportunities actually, where people can go into the office, where it's things like, to shadow somebody, to sit around a table and to listen, to embrace, to absorb some of that knowledge. There are complete, there are moments, where actually there's a great benefit for it. But actually, I wouldn't see those as barriers for other people, not to be able to go into those roles. I think your points really valid. I think we certainly have come up with some, but I think it's being open minded and seeing how we can best navigate, to make sure that the best person does get those roles.

Rebecca: Absolutely. Dave, has this been a challenge at HP, in terms of not necessarily taking a hybrid approach, but in persuading team leaders, middle managers, function heads, to support remote employees, as much as they do, as those who are in the office?

Dave: Yeah, I think especially originally as we started to open things up and people would come back. I think some managers just assumed that everyone wanted to come back, as much as maybe they did. So there was, I think there was some assumptions that, some myth busting, as we said earlier, that had to get done. A lot of what Adam said, resonates with me, I think the company put out a little bit of a framework for managers to help them determine what sort of workstyle would be appropriate for certain jobs. Because we have certain jobs. If you're working on machinery in our R&D lab, that's tough to do from home. If you're supporting customers, you can almost do that exclusively remotely. So we basically laid out a framework that said, generally speaking, this is what it ought to look like. And then managers can work, as always, with their employees on flexibility. It was creating that framework, which I think helped managers not have to invent the wheel on their own. Yeah. I think the other thing that we did, is really around, we do a lot of surveys. And we're asking about inclusion, as part of our surveys. We're asking about, how it's working, would you be comfortable coming back to the office? Under what circumstances would you be comfortable coming back to the office? We literally just did one a week or two ago. They come back anonymous, but they come back for managers to see what their team is thinking. In an anonymous kind of way, so they get a sense for what people would prefer. I think it has been really, really insightful. And some people were hearing, do you want to come back, some people are afraid to come back, some people want to come back, because they've got mental health challenges. So I think information is really helping a lot.

Rebecca: Yeah. And presumably, a big part of that is then how you feed that feedback back, to line managers, to team leaders, so that they're prepared to answer those questions. We're seeing quite a lot of questions come in from the audience, which is brilliant, and we still got time for more. One area that's coming up quite a lot, is this issue of productivity. How do you measure productivity? How do you keep on top of what everybody's doing, and how well they're performing in their role?



And I wanted to come back to something you said, at the start Victoria, around the importance of trust. But also, how you do that, in terms of monitoring performance, in terms of tracking outputs. How do you do that with a remote and flexible team in a way that builds a more trusting environment?

Victoria: Yeah, I'm not sure you need to do it differently for a remote team as you would do for a team that's in the office. This is what we talked to our managers about, just because you can see somebody doesn't mean they necessarily working very hard. Somebody can waste time in the office as much as they can waste time at home. It's about the individual and it's about you as a manager, knowing who your people are. It's about you being able to set them good objectives and good outcomes. And have enough of a relationship with them to be able to understand what is they're doing, and then be able to say actually, maybe we haven't done as well on that, or we could have done better. But it is that element of trust, and have it. There's that saying isn't there, "Employ good people and trust them to get on with it." And that's what we should be doing. If there is a performance issue with somebody, there's a performance issue, regardless of where they're working. And your organisation, like every organisation, have things in place, that deal with performance and capability for people. For me, it is very much about being very outcome based. What is the outcome we are expecting out of this? And then letting people get on with it. We do a lot of agile delivery, where we are and so you have to let those teams run, do the discoveries, come back with stuff. You're not necessarily going to know what the next thing is until that piece of work is finished. It's always down to that trust piece. You've got to trust people to get on with things. But that doesn't mean you just blindly don't pay any attention to what everybody's doing. Of course, you still need to do that. And having those regular meetings, those regular stand ups, those regular check-ins, those regular one to ones, all of that, is really important to allow you to do that. That's certainly the advice that we were giving to our line managers, was to be able to do that. And also look at, what does productivity mean for different people. It's not the same. You're not building widgets, as they would say in things, it looks different for different people. So take that into account, whilst you are looking at your productivity. All I can say is I look at where we were before lockdown, and look at where we are now. And I think we're a stronger team. And I think we're doing more and I think we're doing it better. Isn't that hugely positive? That's not to say it's all right, lots of things we still need to work on. But it feels like a better team.

Rebecca: It's interesting, you feel a lot of people are comparing the challenges they've had of managing a hybrid and remote team over lockdown, with some sort of, mythical, perfect office environment, that existed before, which wasn't really a thing in most organisations. Ann-Marie, we were getting quite a few questions, really interested in the four day week approach. You talked about, you have actually reduced the number of hours that your staff are expected to work in a week. I'd love to hear your point of view on the productivity question and how you manage that, how you've changed expectations of people. Or are you literally just expecting people to get more done, or to get the same amount done in less time?

Ann-Marie: We actually expect them to get more done, in less time, strangely. And that's not through working people harder, it's through being more efficient. We're absolutely tracking metrics both across the organization throughout the trial, so we're looking at things like, attrition, sickness, all the time. Are people actually spending more time doing the work that they were originally doing before? And we're also looking at departmental metrics, where we're really seeing, what is the output? So forget about the input, what is the output? And what would we expect to see? What are the true measures of the organisation? Throughout the trial, we've realised many efficiencies in terms of how we work. Our meeting culture has fundamentally changed. It's really interesting, once you look through a focused lens, to see what efficiencies can you derive from very normal working practice. People are now really assessing, the value of their own time and the meetings that they're

going to. They're self selecting, in and out, in terms of how much they think they can input, or what is the output going to be. We've aligned our meetings, to certain days in the week. So we know that most people will be around to attend, ensuring that we can still get things done. And I think the time outside of the meetings, and the reduction in meetings is actually allowing people to get more done. So the feedback, the vast majority of the feedback in the early days, and continuing, is that people now have more time by which to do the jobs that they really want and need to do. And actually create the output, that they weren't able to before. So I think it's about efficiencies, looking for efficiencies that can then drive productivity as well.

Rebecca: I think that's really interesting, because a lot of what you're saying to me, just sounds like you're taking a good management approach, and are proactively looking at how do you measure productivity, how do you manage people's time, how do you give people the right support. Which are things that any business, should be doing. Dave, how have you managed that in HP? And we're actually getting some questions in around whether these organisations give guidance to the employees about which days they need to be in the office or what meetings they need to attend. Is that something that you proactively manage at HP?

Dave: We do, yeah, I think we, like Adam said, and I think I touched on as well, we do, at a high level sketch out certain roles. Which, again, if you're an R&D engineer, more than likely, you need to be in the office if you're working on equipment. That's one where, generally speaking, you would be in the office. I think lots of roles are hybrid. And in fact, many roles, literally, people didn't come into the office for two years. So we know that, maybe we didn't believe so before, but we know now that they can be done remotely. I think there is a high level framework, and then literally, it's just team by team, manager by manager, and individual by individual, to say what works for some people. Some people want to come in every single day, some people never want to come in. I think it's up to the manager and the individual. I think there's been some discussion about, how do you measure productivity. I would say, to the degree that you can, you would want to measure outcomes, and less on tracking behaviour. Because at the end of the day, everyone's unique and individual. Some people are really efficient, and can drive amazing outcomes in six hours a day, and some people are gonna take 8 or 10 hours to do that same amount of work. I'd focus more on the outcomes and less on the behaviours.

Rebecca: I think that's incredibly good advice. I wanted to slightly switch track a little bit, because we're talking a lot about the practicalities of how you setup hybrid and remote culture. But obviously, the aim of this event, this festival is to talk about how we drive inclusion and diversity, in the tech sector. So I'd love to hear some insights on that. How have some of these approaches that you've taken as organisations, supported this? Have you seen evidence that different people are applying, or that you're retaining staff, who may have otherwise struggled to stay in role? Adam, have you got any insights about your experiences at NatWest, on this point?

Adam: Yeah, I think it's a really good point. I think at the start point, given now we're not so location specific, more people feel they can apply. We never really said you couldn't, but I think people typically would have saw a role advertised, possibly in say, Edinburgh, for instance, and think actually, I'm not in the base, it doesn't feel quite right for me. Now we've been able to remove some of those barriers, we will find people applying from all different walks of life, which is great because what that's meant is, all of a sudden we're injecting those teams with new thought processes, new people's experiences, and everyone's a customer at heart as well. People's views, from customers as well, which has always been really good. If anything, what we've seen is, better outcomes, better delivery for our customers, more diverse leadership teams. So now, starting to see, we use our leadership team as an example, in what it's like to see more diversity in that as well, which again, creates more different thoughts. Probably one of the bits that we have to be clearer on whilst we're

going through a lot of this readjusting to how we're working is, and [inaudible] a really good one, I think I've challenged my team, and I find myself telling them more often than not to log off. Not to be working into the evening, and to resist that urge to log on in the weekend. So we've certainly not seen a productivity issue of anything. I think people are working even harder, because they're at home, they've got that flexibility. So it's really important that we keep an eye on those sorts of bits. But certainly from a diversity perspective, I think it's been great to see now, that we're having a good mixture of people applying for roles. go into more of our senior management positions, which is great, because like I said, When we're seeing more people from a diverse perspective, that can only take an organisation on more of a diverse journey. we've been very proactive as well. We've got a lot of employment networks, So it's more about creating... for making sure, when we have key roles coming up, that we really reach out to those groups, and make sure the roles are advertised in those various chat communication channels. So people are seeing that, actually we really want you to apply. We'd love for you to apply. We welcome your applications, and we're willing to help support you and understand what it looks like and feels like, to be in those roles, and any support you need is part of the application process. we definitely want to encourage more diversity across all of our business. From my view, the fact that people now aren't bound so much by locations, we've been able to mix up the way people have been working in their current teams and the current silos. So we're seeing lots of positivity come out of the back of it. And I think our outcomes, and a lot of our results speak true to that as well.

Rebecca: That's brilliant to hear. Something that I'd add, from my experience, working for a location agnostic employer is, you can just hire the best person, it doesn't matter where they're based. That's been a huge advantage for us and being able to bring on board some fantastic talent, who otherwise may not have had the same opportunities. Victoria, do you have a perspective to add here, from your experiences at Homes England?

Victoria: Yeah, probably not dissimilar to what we've just heard there. We have a Women In Digital Network now. One of the things that they're tasked with is, is providing this real positive image of women in this view and this visibility, and making sure that, that is both internal to the organisation, external as well. So when we're looking at bringing people in. When you when you advertise a role, the first thing most people will do, will look at your organisation on Mr. Google, or on social media. And you need to have those images there for people to be able to see, to be able to go actually, that is an organisation I can work for, there are people like me there. So coming out with those stories. We have our shadow leadership team as well. We're just developing the shadow board now, at Homes England. And part of what that group will do, again, is to put the message out there that we do have diversity in our workplace, but we want to increase that, we want to make that better. We're looking at our apprenticeship programme. I think that people have an idea that to be an apprentice, you have to be 16 to 18, or something like that. Not at all. So we're looking at people who may be in the workplace, for 10/20/30 years. Using that money and then saying, Okay, they can go to higher level apprenticeship, so you can improve your skills. And again, focusing on trying to improve our diversity in there. And then also putting together a paid internship programme, for the summer, a four week paid internship programme in digital. And trying to really focus that within social diversity. Finding an organisation to work with, who can help us to do that. So we're looking at it on lots of different levels, in order to increase that diversity. Just picking up on something that we were talking about before, about homeworking isn't for everybody. It really isn't. was around domestic violence. One of the things we picked up on really, really early at Homes England, And people who were, for them, the home was not a safe place. For them, this was actually really a dangerous situation for them to be in and make sure that they knew where to go to for support, and that we could do that. It isn't perfect for everyone, and we have to acknowledge that and say, sometimes being in the office is the right place to be. Providing support in different ways is the right place to be as well. So diversity, I think, it's such a broad topic.

Rebecca: No, I think you're absolutely right. As you may have noticed, from my contributions so far in the session, I'm a huge remote work advocate. But you're absolutely right. It's not for everybody, it does present some challenges. And I think one of the things I've really heard loud and clear, from everyone on this panel, is the need to take stock. To not just try and replicate an office model remotely, and not just try and replicate a remote model for everybody, but really look at, how do we measure productivity? How do we see people as individuals? How do we support people? How do we give the right training? How do we make sure we get their feedback? So people have that opportunity to bring their best selves to work, which is ultimately what we all want, right? There's been a lot of talk about myth busting, so far, and we've had questions in from the audience on, what are the biggest myths? And I know, we've touched on a few of them. But would anyone like to share, some of their biggest lightbulb moments, as they've been through this process? Where they've gone, Oh, we were worried about that, but we didn't have to be. Anyone want to jump in?

Dave: I'd be happy to jump in, Rebecca. I think when we first started, I think we tried to set up this environment in Zoom, or Teams, that was similar to what we had in the office, before. It initially took 10 or 15 minutes, just for a meeting to start, because of all the technical problems. But eventually, we got on top of that. So we were encouraging people, make sure you have your camera on, we wanted to be face to face. And then we learned pretty soon, that actually, that's not a great idea, actually. Because I think it puts a lot of stress on people, to be on camera for eight hours a day if they're doing that. Maybe they've got something going on in the background that they don't want you to see. So I think we were encouraging people to have their cameras on, now we don't. Now we don't do that, we don't pressure people to do that. In terms of other light bulb moments, I guess I would say, I think we have to make sure that we think about the culture, big time. If I'm a young employee joining... Because I think it's, We had two cohorts of interns join, during the pandemic. 30 people a piece, in each cohort, for 13 months. And essentially, they never came into the office, and they never met each other face to face. When I joined, and like many of us who joined companies that were more office oriented, when I was struggling, I could just go to somebody at the office, and tap them on the shoulder and say, I'm struggling, how do I get help? And if you're joining and you're a virtual, digital, hybrid employee, who do you tap? You have to create these networks. And I think Victoria talked about a network of Digital Women's Network, I think you said Victoria. And we have four such networks at HP. We have a pride network for LGBTQ, we have multicultural, we have young employee network, and we have women's network. These networks were hugely important to give people the connectivity, it's like a university kind of group, where you got a lot of like minded people together and they had a network built in, that they could tap into to learn how to get things done and a shoulder to lean on. So really, really important, I think.

Rebecca: Thank you. Adam, did you want to jump in on the big myths to bust?

Adam: It's probably not a myth but it's just more appreciating some of the bits we didn't appreciate when we was in the office. Those kind of bits that, when we then moved to remote work, and we didn't really put the personal effort into continuing. And they were some of the bits so, I think Dave touches on it. We kind of go from eight hour days, from meeting, to meeting, to meeting and some of the bits that we've forgot about when we was in the office, was those two minute moments, when you may have gone to the coffee machine, or to the water cooler, or been on your way to the bathroom, and just that smile at someone. That connectivity, just to make sure their day is going okay, to read their body language and to see if they need any support, to see how they feel and if they seem uncomfortable etc. And I guess when we first went to remote working, we did exactly the same thing. Let's stay connected, let's get those cameras on, let's talk, let's see people. But what we didn't make so much time for, was actually reaching out to one of your colleagues, see how they're doing today. That person who wasn't speaking so much on the call, is anything going on? Is

everything okay with them? How are they adjusting, etc. For us, it was really around making time for those moments, we didn't realise that was so important. And that's really about understanding the person, connecting with the person, taking time to reach out to people. Now when I look at my diary, I always try and keep a few more slots available, where I just can reach out to people, find out how their weeks gone. Or I can just say thank you to someone for doing a really good job. It doesn't need to be a formal recognition using our recognition tools, it is just a, Do you know what? I heard you on that call earlier today. I thought you was amazing, just wanted to say well done. Which is the sort of thing we used to do better when we were more face to face, because we understood the importance of it. Certainly one of the things in my mind is, as we've evolved through this journey is understanding those little tiny noticeable things, do make a huge difference. And let's just find out how we can still make sure to add value, in our new way of working, in the hybrid world.

Rebecca: Yeah, I think that's a really important insight. And I think something that I've been very conscious of as we've grown our team remotely, is not just checking with people when you've got some work to do. But also making sure that you support them and you recognise them. We're nearly out of time, it's such an interesting discussion, I could go on all day, we've got about five more minutes left. I might just ask you, perhaps you first Victoria, and then Ann-Marie. Just for your closing thoughts. Your key pieces of advice, or your own lightbulb moments. And the real takeaways that you want to leave our audience with today.

Victoria: I suppose a couple of lightbulb ones. One is, I never realised I'd be able to tell someone's mood from looking at them on a camera. That's amazing, we've all become absolute experts on body language, haven't we? To be able to, I can tell if you're in a bad mood, even though you've not said anything. So I think that that was quite good that we were able to do that. I think that we have been able to pick the informality up, because that's the thing you worry about losing. And then we've picked up with all the informal stuff. We tried early on, to formalise the informal stuff, if that makes sense. Everyone got a card and said, Go speak to this person, who you've never met before. Everything with the best of intentions, obviously. But then we actually thought, what we need to do, is just make sure we have enough space, and we have time in there. And, we, like everyone else used to have, pub conversations on a Friday afternoon, after work. And we did all of that. We don't do as much of that now, and I think we've really lost a lot of the well being stuff that we did in early lockdown. And for me, I think we need to bring some of that back. I think that was great. I know my colleagues a lot better now, even the ones I've not met, than I did before. Because you just somehow learn how to do that. I think they're probably my key ones. And I suppose the other thing is the, what hybrid working will allow us to do, is to access different communities and different groups to come work for us in digital. And we should be embracing that. And that's not saying, one size fits all, and everything is the same for everyone, and as leaders, we're going to have to just think a little bit harder about how we engage and how we bring people in. But I think ultimately, it's absolutely the right thing to do.

Rebecca: Thank you and Ann-Marie coming to you.

Ann-Marie: Yeah, I guess we've all worked with a lot of ambiguity, haven't we, over the last two years. I think we always feel like we're searching for the answer, to whatever it is we're working on, or whatever challenge we're posed with. Having done that, for the last two years, I think we've proven to ourselves, to all of our organisations actually, that hybrid working can work and does work, and actually, in fact, brings benefit. I think for me, it's about, use the data that you have in your organisation to understand what is your business telling you? And what do you want to be different? Involve your people in that, in terms of some of your thinking around how you can change working practice for the better, for everybody and give it a go. We all didn't know that we were going to give the pandemic a go for want of a better word, in terms of how we needed to work, but

actually we've done it and we've learned a lot of good practice from it. While some decisions and some initiatives may seem like huge, huge things to tackle, you can give them a go. And as long as you're measuring, supporting your people, and asking for feedback, you will probably realise that you can do things very, very differently, even still.

Rebecca: Fantastic. We literally have two minutes left, and we just had a couple of last minute questions from the audience, that I'd love to tackle, just with really, really quick answers. One of them is, you mentioned a lot of networks in many of the groups for support, but I didn't hear ones for neurodiversity or disability groups. Do you all have those? Or is that something you're considering?

Victoria: Yeah, we have those.

Dave: Yep, we do at HP, as well as veterans groups, yeah.

Rebecca: Right, and the last question, which just looking for a really quick answer is, have some of these changes you've made, had a positive impact on your recruitment and retention? Have you seen positive outcomes? Or is it too early to tell for some of you?

Ann-Marie: I can jump in there. As soon as we'd mentioned our launch, the four day week, our applications increased by 500%. Within that, and without analysing every CV, I can pretty much assure that there will be a range of people, different people, diversity, different backgrounds, needs and wants, in those applications. People do pay attention to what your business is doing, and it has absolutely impacted recruitment at Atom.

Rebecca: Brilliant, that's brilliant to know. Sorry, was somebody else about to jump in there quickly?

Dave: I was gonna say, I think Adam mentioned that too. I think the idea of, recruiting wherever the talent happens to be, even if it's not close to your office, it's quite liberating, I think for a hiring manager.

Rebecca: Fantastic. Well, listen, we're gonna have to close it there. Thank you all so much for an absolutely brilliant conversation. Like I said earlier, what we really heard here, is the need to look at what your business actually needs. How you measure productivity, what you're trying to achieve, how to support people as individuals and approach your strategy with that in mind, rather than zooming in on how do we manage remote hybrid work, what tools do we need, look at the picture more broadly, and make sure that you're approaching things through a broader lens. Listen, it's been absolutely fantastic to hear from you all. Thank you so much for joining us, and I'm going to pass back over to Debbie.