Debbie: Thanks so much for the panel, and Rebecca, and overcoming technical hitches, and everything going on. I really, really appreciate it. And I hope all of you found it very useful. If you want to carry on that conversation, things to remember, we worked with Tech She Can a few months ago, in one of our hackathon topics. So if apprenticeships and what we know about apprenticeships, is something of interest, do have a look at our open playbook. If you're interested in the idea of that internal cross skilling, in less than a fortnight, we have a working lunch, that will be focusing on just that topic, and we'd love to have you join that. Alright, last session, but one actually, the team and I are quite excited to be part of, When we began in 2017, we started with a pledge that this would be all of inclusion, but we began with gender, because in 2017, that was still pretty edgy. But we always pledged that this was going to look at all of the lenses of underrepresentation. By 2019, we were looking at ethnicity, and began, starting to dip our toe into understanding how we could do what we could do, to remove barriers in terms of social mobility. We've been listening to all of you as signatories and partners, and we want to work with you now, to take that further. And so for 2022, we really want to go deeper into the areas that we call invisible lenses. Now, hear me out. These are areas of underrepresentation, that are not invisible to the people who are underrepresented. These are areas that are so easily overlooked. And they take a much deeper level of psychological trust from our workforce, for them to even disclose those to us. They're also areas that, if we think about things like neurodiversity, where we're learning more every day. So these are very much visible, real and meaningful. And we absolutely know, that failure to acknowledge, to support, to welcome them, creates barriers in recruitment, and retainment. But most importantly, it limits our employees from presenting and bringing their whole selves to work, which is what we need, in terms of inclusion. In our latest data survey, we asked our signatories to share which characteristics they were measuring. And we can see that there's some great practice out there. We're aware that moving into these new areas, can feel daunting, for you as an employer. But we know it's essential. And what we can always do, at the Tech Talent Charter, is to try and share what's working, to connect you with other experience in the space. This is essential, if we're going to move the dial on this, and engagement in the whole space. So what we want to do, and be aware of this is, throughout 2022, our open playbook is going to be developed, to contain some more nuanced content in this area. And we'll be working, shortly having another hackathon. So please, if you have expertise in the areas, for example, neurodiversity, we need to hear from you. If your company's doing this, if you have lived experience, that can help us, in any of the invisible lenses, but most particularly, in just a few weeks, we're kicking off a hackathon sponsored by KPMG, looking at neurodiversity. But first, we can listen to our panel, the team and I are really excited to hear from our signatories, to hear from you guys. If you do have questions, please share them below. It's an important topic. And I think we all have a lot to learn. Can we have my panel join me. Hello, everyone, we've made it in, and I'm hoping we can all hear each other. You hear me, I'm good. Fingers crossed. Okay. We're gonna kick off with those micro introductions, you've got a very short time to tell me why you're on the call with us and in this panel, and then we'll really dive into what we can learn from each other. Who wants to go first on the screen?

Kaammini: I'd be happy to, thank you. Hi, everybody, my name is Kaammini Chanrai, and I am the UK diversity and inclusion lead for Vodafone. I'm here on this call today, because this is an extremely important subject. And in particular, I'll be talking about some of the work we're doing around LGBT+ inclusion and disability inclusion at Vodafone.

Debbie: Super. Rachael, do you want to go next?

Rachel: Yeah, absolutely. Hi, everyone. So I'm Rachael Joyce. I'm a director at PwC. I sit in our digital and forensic investigations team. But actually, one of my roles is our expansion in Manchester, where we're recruiting an extra 1000 people in our tech hub. And that is all about absolutely creating that diverse workforce, at specifically Manchester.

Debbie: Thank you, Roz, you're up next.

Roz: Thank you I'm Roz Britton, I'm head of digital talent and capability, within the Scottish Government. We've recently undertaken a good deal of work around neurodiversity. I have lived experiences, I have some very close family members who are neurodiverse as well.

Debbie: And last but not least, Mark.

Mark: Hi, everyone. I'm Mark Russell, I'm a manager in our inclusion, diversity and equity team at KPMG, in the UK. Really interested in these areas and the invisible lenses, I've worked across all of our areas. We look at KPMG, that specifically, on social mobility and disability inclusion, and more recently, neurodiversity. Just as well, my pronouns are he, him, his and for any visually impaired attendees you might have, I'm a 39 year old white man, with a beard, sitting at home.

Debbie: Mark, thank you for doing that. That's a really useful reminder for us, in this space to do that. So I'm Debbie, and my pronoun is she, her and I am an ageing white woman. Right, let's kick into the space. Kaammini, I remember back in the early days, when Vodafone first joined the Tech Talent Charter, you were sharing materials with us, when we were mostly focusing on gender. You were sharing work with us, that you were doing in the areas of LGBTQ+ and disability. That was early days for a lot of companies to be doing that. Can you talk to me about how that journey began? And what was some of the key starting points for the work for you?

Kaammini: Yeah, absolutely. And I think one of the things, which I'm very conscious of, is that we are still on that journey very much. And I just want to emphasise that. Because I think there is always continuous learning to be had in this space. And for us, I wouldn't want us to rest on our laurels, for anything that we've previously committed to. I think as an organisation, it's happened in a number of different ways. And we've been fortunate enough to have people across our organisation speak out about particular issues that they have faced, and actually really draw that attention to our organisation more widely. We have fantastic, fantastic employee networks across our business. So our LGBT plus Friends Network, and our vodABILITY network, in this particular circumstance. We're very collaborative with our diversity and inclusion teams, to ensure that we understood some of the key issue that people were facing across the organisations and actually what some of the things that we could do, to support them looked like. I think, equally, we've been really fortunate to have leaders, who are willing to take responsibility and ownership in this space, too. And in particular, we saw really great progress happening, when we put executive sponsorship in place for some of those networks. So let's take our LGBT plus Friends Network, we have a global executive sponsor. And we have a UK specific executive sponsor as well. So it's been a top down and bottom up approach. And I think it's really important that at every level, we have seen that engagement. And that's been a real driver for us to do more within this space.

Debbie: Okay, super. So, Rachael, does that resonate for you, at PwC, in terms of the journey that you've been on, let's say for say social mobility, what's the importance of those leaders and the role models at the top?

Rachel: Yeah, I absolutely agree with what's been said, it's, so important. For us, in lots of the areas, well all the areas, I think we're talking about today, there is that lead, in someone that takes ownership for where are we, where do we want to be. And what are those small number of interventions, because we can't do everything. And also that visibility, that if you don't see somebody leading on this, or equally someone who you can relate to, that's where the real challenges are. So I absolutely agree with what's been said, I think, from our perspective, there are

lots of areas around social mobility that I could touch on, one for us that is quite important, was around that bit of, the where are we, and where do we want to be. So actually, a few years ago, we only had sort of, socioeconomic backgrounds, about 30% of our staff. And we made a real concerted effort to change that, because we wanted to know where we were, so we could do something about it, proactively. And we're now at 80%. And that's through something very specific that we intended to do. And the other thing is around publishing our pay gap, around social socio economic backgrounds, something we did for the first time last year, and I guess those two things, really demonstrating how seriously the firm is taking it, but absolutely agree with the comments...

Debbie: Out of interest, I'd love to understand, what are the key points, because we've heard this in other areas, in some of our other talks. And we do understand, that when we talk about these areas, this is not really essentially at the start, about recruitment. This is about creating the culture, so our existing team can feel that way. How do you think, in relation to social mobility, very much one of those invisible lenses, how did PwC create that safety, that trust, to begin sharing that data?

Rachel: I think partly it's a holding to ac... Accept you might not want to put things out there that are not pretty and don't show, yeah, actually, we aren't doing really great. And we've got the sort of crap, that's not the case, and actually being, I guess, brave in saying we're not there. But we are being honest about that. And putting those stats out, you can see them they're not great. They're not [inaudible]. But I think the first step was us just wanting to be open about that. And then for our for perspective, that creates activity.

Debbie: Did that link into, did you have that similarly Kaammini, in terms of when we talk about looking at LGBTQ+, that's an area of very personal data. How did you go about creating that safety, where people felt confident to share data with you, to be part of these groups?

Kaammini: Yeah, and I think for us, we actually did the work, before we asked for the data. So I think that sometimes organisations can be quite dependent on the data. And of course, the data is important to make those informed decisions. But I think one of the things that we accepted was, we don't necessarily need the data to understand that we are likely to have setbacks within this space. And there are things that we could do to be more inclusive. And I think that really started from a few initiatives that we put in place and a few learnings that we initially kicked off. So for example, one of the things that we have done and we continue to do is look at our policies and the wording within our policies, to ensure that is as gender neutral, and as inclusive as it can possibly be. And so embedding that into the employee lifecycle, as an example, making sure that it's done by design, not as an exception to what we're doing, kind of sets that tone, that this is something that, as an organisation, we want to be more inclusive. We did things like introduce pronouns into email signatures quite early on, we would do things like talk about how we include different communities, we developed a learning pathway, for example, on LGBT plus inclusion, which allowed people to then understand that learning for themselves. We created lanyards that people could wear, that really showcased people as allies across our organisation. So there were these small little nudges that we were putting into place, that really set the tone for how comfortable people could be, to then disclose that data. And so as a consequence, I think there is a real feeling across the organisation, that even if we're not perfect all the time, we have the right intention behind it. And so as a consequence, we get that good disclosure rate from across our business.

Debbie: Okay, I'm going to return to both of you to see what we can think about, but whatever the lens, there's some common themes that are gonna start coming through, aren't they, in terms of that. Roz, I mean, for Scottish Government, I was really pleased to, before any of our other employers were really talking about neurodiversity. We had lots of employers asking about

neurodiversity, but not necessarily doing a lot in the space. But Scottish government really took a lead on this. Can you talk to me about how you began on that journey?

Roz: Yeah, absolutely. It predated me, but I think it's, somebody referenced, it's about having the right leadership in place. And one of our senior leaders is himself neurodiverse. And so was quite keen to lead the work and champion it. We started from a place where our stats showed we didn't have great, just in terms of disability as a whole, we weren't particularly inclusive. We didn't have a great number of candidates coming forward, who were declaring a disability. So we wanted to work with a partner who could bring that expertise. So we consulted with Autocom, who are a neurodiverse charity, and brought them in to absolutely rip apart our processes. And really deep dive into what we were doing, and make recommendations. And some of them were just very simple things, that have made a real difference. Such as the typeface, that you're using in job adverts and published documents. I mean, this is good practice anyway, but using plain English, in again, in your texts and your promotional materials, but it's made a real impact. So we now have 95, that took place in 2000, sorry 2020, and since then... We've been doing it for ages. 2020, but since then we've had a 95% increase in the number of candidates coming through who are declaring a neurodiversity.

Debbie: Okay. We've been having questions coming through and something that you said about working with an outside partner, is something that can work with somebody the size of Scottish Government. But we've had some honest answers of, look, I'm a small company, how do I do this? And another person has asked, do people feel better, that a third party has come in to support? Does that help with trust? I think for all of you, and Mark, I will bring you in in a second. But for all of you, have outside partnerships been important?

Rachel: Sorry. No, you go for it Roz.

Roz: I think for us, it gave us the credibility because Autocom particularly, is driven by people who are neurodiverse, so you can't ever discount from their experience, and knowing, I think that really helped. I think now, because of the work we've done, we have people within the profession, who have declared a neurodiversity, and quite senior leaders, who are becoming our ambassadors and our champions and our critical friends, they will often pull me up, if something isn't quite right, and help me to tweak it and refine it. But I think having that credible, expert, lived experience in the first instance really, really helped us.

Debbie: And both Rachael and then Kaammini, in terms of the areas you were looking at, did you have some powerful outside partners, organisations you worked with, in the space?

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, I was just gonna add on the comments from Roz. So yeah, we've also worked with Autocom, exactly that point, although they've helped with placements, of people that they employ in, they come into PwC. And actually, it's about the adjustments to help make that person feel, welcome but continued, though, initially, what adjustments might need to happen, but then a regular check in and that has had a massive impact and has been received really positively, or to deliver some training to our staff, so that people understand what they need to be aware of, and how they can help.

Debbie: And Kaammini, in terms of disability and what you've done on LGBTQ, did you have some key partners that helped drive that through for you?

Kaammini: Absolutely. And I think it's really critical to understand how you can benchmark yourself against an external standard as well. Because there will be organisations that are experts within this

space. And being able to do that is really critical. So for example, with disability inclusion, we have worked with the Business Disability Forum, for a number of years. And we use the government's disability confidence scheme, to understand how well we're doing, and to help build a framework for us. And we've actually just moved from level one, to level two. And we're looking to then move towards the next level after that point. So I think it really helps us to then self reflect on what we're currently doing, how well we're doing that, and then what we could do next. And then equally with LGBT+ inclusion, we work with a number of partners. Including Stonewall, we use, again, their benchmark, to really gain feedback around what we can do going forward.

Debbie: Super. Mark, take me on KPMG's journey. Because you've done a lot on social mobility, gender, and now you're really trying to lead the way within the company, of what we do, in the area of neurodiversity. Talk to me about, what have you heard so far that resonates? And is there anything you'd add to the journey?

Mark: A lot that resonates. Thanks Debbie. And I think for me, I'm going to take a bit of a step back, and just say, I think it's, for us, we've made lots of learnings, and I wouldn't say it's learning one thing from social mobility, and applying it to to neurodiversity, but it's probably that whole inclusion journey. And a bit like Kaammini, I wouldn't say that we're doing absolutely everything right. And it is absolutely still a journey for us. But we have been on the journey for quite a long time now and been trialling things, but that intention piece, is really important, I think. And looking at this, not just being about diversity, but about inclusion and an equity as well. And making sure that the rhetoric and the commitment you're making, are matched by colleague experiences, and that's a challenge, but it's certainly one that we want to lean into, and that we're committed to at KPMG. So for us, we go back to probably a decade ago, when we first started really looking at inclusion and diversity, as an agenda item and having targets, and again, when we set targets back in 2014, public targets, that is, we went beyond just having a target on gender, and had a gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability target. And I think that, even then, was quite a bold step, that then made us look at this beyond just gender and ethnicity. And again, I think as an intention, I remember hearing someone who said to me, if you weren't intentionally including someone, you were probably unintentionally excluding them. And I think looking at all of the aspects of what falls into the agenda, all of the protected characteristics and non protected characteristics, in the example of socio economic background as well, it's really important, I think, to just make them visible really, give that visibility. Because as you said, some of the lenses that we see diversity through, will be visible and lots of other elements, and there'll be lots of intersectional elements, will be invisible. So I think it's important to take that step back and really try and shine a light on all aspects of someone's identity, background and circumstance. For us, when we look back to sort of 2014, and then social mobility was something that was very important to us, I guess from that, probably in 2014, when we first set our public targets, we were looking at social mobility more as a corporate social responsibility, sort of commitment, and it was very important to our volunteering work. But then we were looking at it on another level, from a policy perspective and looking how we could change our policy and process landscape. And over time, in 2016, we started capturing socio economic background, within our questions that we asked colleagues to share with us, on our HR monitoring system. So that then, just become part of our inclusion, diversity and equity work. And now social mobility, we applied the same lens to social mobility, as we then did to gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation. And I guess that's where we've really learned from and really tried to look at that commonality, across all of those different intersectionality's and encompass as much of that as we can, within our work, and our strategy and our action plan.

Debbie: There's a real trust issue isn't there. Pardon me, Mark. In so far as, you and I talked about, and I think there is that intersectional piece we need to remember. Because we need to be very careful and very mindful that we're not suddenly pigeonholing someone, that I can see someone,

and actually you present as a woman, so therefore, that is the underrepresented person, or that you are a man and so therefore, there isn't any underrepresentation. There's an element where we need to step back. And we need to create the space, but we need to be ready when people prepare to disclose, that this is a more subtle, nuanced picture, than deciding which box you're going to jump into.

Mark: Yeah, absolutely. I think the nuance there, comes up from someone that's an inclusion and diversity practitioner, it's fascinating to look and understand, try and understand that nuance. And I think you're right, there is a real trust element, in terms of people feeling comfortable and feeling like there is a safe environment to share elements of who they are. I think Rachael talks about the campaign, within PwC, to move the response rates for people, sharing their socio economic background, and we find the same and I think, when you have got an organisation, and you mentioned culture earlier, the right culture that's in place, then I think you'll find that people will be more willing and able to respond to those sort of questionnaires around their background and identity and circumstance. I definitely think there's a real element of trust within that. And I think there's probably then, two parts of that as well, because then once that employer has got that information, the employee has given the trust in you, as an employer, to have that information, you've got to make sure that then, you're putting the support in place, you're looking at the policies, you're looking at your processes, and again, it's reflected in the experiences that are being felt by colleagues as well. Sometimes when we do open out that and we are looking at it through a much wider lens. Sometimes you might realise that, actually experiences won't always get better straightaway. Or you might have to realise that actually, that we might have to have some quite uncomfortable conversations, to realise that maybe there is issues that do need addressing.

Debbie: Okay, so let me step back and I need all four of you, to help me on the journey. If I'm in a company and remember, I could be in a small company or a large company, and I want to start making a difference on one of these lenses. Now I'm right in saying, I shouldn't try to do them all at once. Correct? Okay, so I've got a nodding, smiling group.

Kaammini: Do you mind if I come in on that, Debbie? Because I actually have strong feelings against that, because I think from our... I think from my perspective, you can't, you know, people are complex, people are not just one thing. And actually, when people try to separate out diversity too much, they forget about inclusion. And I think there are commonalities between how you can support individuals, with not the same things, but actually, by making your processes your systems, your training more inclusive, it can have that impact on everyone in a positive way. So I would actually disagree and say that, whilst it's important to do a deep dive on specific issues, equally, you shouldn't pick and choose, this is not a priorities list, necessarily. You can't choose who to prioritise.

Debbie: Okay, good. Good, good.

Mark: I'd agree as well.

Debbie: You were all being very polite on that. I wanted to see if I could bring you out on that. So rather than do a, let's do X, it's about how are we being more inclusive, it's then finding people within the company. And the more senior the better, who can start leaning in, to being that champion, to being that person who can disclose, to start creating that space, is that a good next step, is to find those faces and stories.

Mark: Yeah, I think role models and it was touched upon earlier, are absolutely vital here. Because again, when people are starting to open up and not necessarily open up, because not everyone needs to bring everything to the work all the time. But I guess when they feel comfortable, get that

sense of belonging, and able to feel part of an organisation, then they need to see people that look and feel and sound like them. So I think it's really important that there are initially, leaders that are able to be those role models, but not just be role models, but are able to be allies, sponsors, drive that accountability, that will then really start changing behaviours. Because everyone can be a role model. I don't think it's just leaders that are role models. I see role models at absolutely every level, but I do think, to start seeing that culture of role models and people feeling comfortable to talk a part of who they are, that might have otherwise felt uncomfortable. I think it does really helps, to have that leadership buy in.

Debbie: Okay, so let me check, then, I'm starting with inclusion, not going down my checklist for diversity. As I'm doing that, I am trying to empower, and give space, and amplify voices, who are role models, who are willing to disclose, it can be leaders, it doesn't have to. Roz if we think about what happened in Scottish Government. This isn't somebody who knows, it could either be somebody who is neurodiverse, or it could be someone who has a [inaudible]. And so there's some sort of a strong identification. We're beginning to get people to start telling stories. How important is that? Because there's a lot of training we can do. But why are these stories so important in the journey?

Kaammini: Can I come in on that, because I think that there's a step before that, which is around creating psychological safety, to make sure that people feel comfortable sharing that story. So I think asking people to share stories is absolutely fine. But you want to create an environment where they feel very safe to do so. And I think that as an organisation, however big or small you are, there are big and small things that you can do, to encourage people to do that. Reassuring people, that that there won't be any retaliation against what they say. Ensuring that you are equipping people with the right support, and actually, that you're going to listen and act based on what they're saying. Those are good starting points. And I think once you've created that basic level of psychological safety that then enables people, including your senior leaders, to feel that willingness to speak up.

Debbie: How did the rest of you feel about this? Because what we hear are these safe spaces, but I think we need to be careful about who has to feel safe, and who has to be brave. There was, we had a really powerful comment that came up last year, that was talking about, we needed to create a safe space, so a white middle class woman, like me, would feel safe to share my ignorance, where they said, actually, I need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I need to be brave enough to be wrong. The safety should be for the people that are disclosing, that there's no retaliation. So it's sort of, on both sides, I'm seeing lots of nodding. Can you talk to me about how that played out in your company? How did you communicate those messages?

Rachel: So for us, I think, and to the point of small, some people are on there from smaller organisations. It might not be an example of something that's happened in your organisation. Could be that you, it's about how you react to things. So is it something that's come up within your team? Is it something, actually, in wider society? And there's plenty of things to debate there. How do we start the debate on those, within your organisation, to demonstrate how you would react, how you would support those individuals, and I think to that trust point, that starts to build that. So are there small things that you can do to, to set that tone, such that people feel comfortable, that when they want to raise something, they feel like they know how you would react. I think that's a really important point. And to the point of, we're all big on, big companies on here, doesn't have to be from within your organisation, it could be from taking examples from outside.

Debbie: Super, and Roz you were going to say something.

Roz: In which, for us, was running workshops, and just getting on the ground and talking to people, and creating that safe environment, be it was virtual, over the past couple years. And we have

regular touch points, with our profession, with our community. We do it by different grades. So people don't feel that they're necessarily sharing things with their line management, that they might not have to. I think in terms of bravery, I think, we've been asking our leaders, if they have a story to tell, and a lived experience, to be brave and to share it. So I think there is a question in chat, about the menopause. And I experienced the menopause earlier this year. And it was a massive leap for me to be able, because it was personal thing, I didn't feel old enough, I felt it was perhaps a barrier to my work, I didn't necessarily want, I was embarrassed, I think to talk about it, or share it. But then, I kind of felt I do have a responsibility. Also, if I'm talking about DNI, and asking other people to share their stories, then there's a responsibility on me to come out and talk about the issues. That women are facing and...

Debbie: Powerful. And we are as a side issue, more and more employers are starting to realise menopause, since it's gonna happen to around 50% of the population, we need to be talking about it and doing it. And we are pulling together some resources, in our open playbook about that. Mark, you were going to add in on that, I'm trying to untangle everyone leaning into today. So Mark, what are you saying in that space?

Mark: Yeah, I was just gonna touch upon the psychological safety aspect. And for us, I guess it's not just one thing, it's, again, a suite of lots of resources. Sustained, sort of work, and management of all of those areas as well. So I think if we look at a culture and leadership, I think there is an element of leadership as well, to make sure that they're role modelling some of those behaviours. But then from a policy and process perspective, it's really important that we've got transparent speak up channels, we've got a community of ethics champions, certainly, after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. That was something that we really looked at closely and realise actually, were our SpeakUp channels clear enough, were they easy enough to access? And did people know exactly how to use them. And was there different options for people, as well. Because not everyone would want to use the same type of SpeakUp channel. So it wasn't just one thing for us. And yeah, we thought policy processes are important, but then making sure that it's connected with people, role modelling the behaviours as well, that ultimately, then give people the feeling and the permission to share some of those stories.

Debbie: And there's an important, I think there's two things to think about in that stage as well, because on disclosure and saying those things, sometimes people not wanting to talk about it, and disclose is not anything to do with us as employers. We need to accept as well, that people need to be on their own journey of feeling comfortable and wanting to talk about things before we go there. And then what I would say for small companies, because I've often worked with small companies, what I would say in that respect, leadership becomes key. Because I think the smaller the company, the more as a leader we need to lean in, to create that safety in a smaller group, and we need to be that person to lean in and say, I get things wrong, I don't understand things, to either share our challenges and areas in which we want to disclose, but to then be that person in the room that is willing to say, and I'm here to learn, I'm here to learn where I get it wrong, I want to put it right. This is creating that conversation, as we've said before, because it's not just getting people talking, is it? It's showing that we're actually listening and acting on those things. Kaammini, I can see you getting a lot more there. Do you want to share some more with me, on that?

Kaammini: No, I just completely agree with you Debbie.

Debbie: Let me throw a question, then. If we are getting people to start talking about things, if we are getting a little more data, and we are starting to put in interventions, trying to remove barriers, how do we make sure that we're not sharing stereotypes within an initiative? How do we make sure that we're not getting it ultimately wrong, when we're trying to get it right?

Kaammini: Yeah, I think it's probably a learning curve, for a lot of individuals, around, because stereotypes are so wedded in society, that they really do, they can play out. For us, we focused on training quite a lot to do that. And it's sort of been twofold, in terms of how we've done our training. So we do training on, so for example, I think I mentioned earlier, that we have an LGBT plus learning pathway. And basically what that is, it's like a modular approach, on how to be an ally, to people within the LGBT plus community. And that gives examples of, how to subvert that stereotype, and how to unpick some of those things that people might have learned throughout their lives. And so that's really important. I think, on the flip side, as well, one of the things that we're encouraging people to do more is, to have these conversations and to address them and to be bystanders, sorry, to be active bystanders, within these situations. So one of the things that we do is, we have a programme called the withstander programme. And that's our training on diversity and inclusion. And that focuses on two aspects, bystander intervention, which is how to call out negative and inappropriate behaviours when you witness them, and active ally ship. And that bystander intervention piece, is really about ensuring that, it's not just in the responsibility for the individual to be like, hang on a second, you're stereotyping me. It's also the responsibility of others around them, to make sure that we're really creating an inclusive environment. We're really placing the responsibility on everyone, to ensure that that culture is constantly learning, and constantly working through, but in a respectful way, of course, because you don't want to isolate people from the conversation around inclusion, you want to ensure that people are taking these as learning opportunities.

Debbie: And what about employee resource groups, or champion groups and all of that can some of you talk to me about how this is important, in terms of disclosure, not leaning into stereotypes, getting real traction in the space.

Mark: I'm happy to kick that one off. I've actually got into my Inclusion, Diversity and Equity role now, from chairing our Disability Network at KPMG. Between 2015 and 2018, and I'm, always been really interested by how networks operate, have redesigned our governance framework around our networks. But I'm a huge advocate and promoter of just how positive a vehicle, employee networks, resource groups, however you frame them, within your organisations, can be, because I guess you can, and you talked about it, Debbie, about that active listening, we get so much incredible feedback through our networks, because we're listening to them, we're using them as a really important feedback loop. And they're part of everything we do, if we need to test and ask questions, around work we're doing, they're such a great resource. And they're able to cascade that information down to their communities and make sure that we're just able to hear directly from all of our historically underrepresented groups. But for me a really positive vehicle for all organisations, of whatever size.

Debbie: Super, and is important, isn't it with these groups. Because if you're working really closely with these groups, and we've heard this in other panels as well, it ensures that we're doing things with people, not to them or for them, and I think when we look at a lot of these lenses, we can lapse into that Victorian do gooder, let me fix this for you, darling. When in fact, there's some real insights. Have any of you had, from some of your employee resource groups, some real, oh god, yeah, that would have been silly to do. Have there been any great feedback, that you would feedback, that you knew from your groups, that helps you remove a barrier, move forward in this space.

Kaammini: I mean, for us that's like an everyday occurrence, to be honest with you. Because being such big organisation, and I'm sure there'll be smaller organisations, which experience the same thing. But there will be things, within a hundreds of different systems, or processes that, perhaps aren't as inclusive as they should be. And that constant feedback loop is imperative. One of the things that actually came out of our employee resource groups, was as an organisation, we signed

up to the hidden disability sunflower scheme, which, for those of you who aren't familiar with the scheme, it supports people with hidden invisible disabilities, in terms of our customer base, so we trained up all of our retail employees to understand how best to support people with hidden disabilities, who might come into one of our stores wearing the lanyard with sunflowers on it, or a mask or pin, to indicate that they have a hidden disability. And that really came from feedback from our employee networks. And it's really fantastic to see that something that, just you might not have thought about, or perhaps hadn't gotten to yet, was something that was really accelerated, from that feedback.

Debbie: Super.

Mark: Just add as well on that, I think one of our pillars we have in our strategy now, is fairness in our systems and processes, and talking about the systems it's again, we get so much great feedback from within our networks, about some of those processes and systems, because they're experiencing what some of those systems are like, from a colleague perspective. And it's frustrating sometimes, to hear that the systems are sometimes unintentionally causing barriers themselves. But it's really important for us as a team as well, to recognise that actually, it's not always the individuals that we need to focus our interventions and initiatives on, that we need to look at our systems and processes as well.

Debbie: And that's huge. And it's a beautiful transition into what I need to talk about next, Mark. So bonus points to you. I'd like to go into, if everyone's alright on this on the panel, a little bit more of a rapid fire of some of the questions, and a lot of these questions are coming up, are either around specific topics, or some of these systems, that I'd like to look at. And can I apologise to the audience remember, this is our first kick-off discussion, in these areas, to pretend that we're going to cover and give you everything you need to know about all of these hidden, invisible disabilities, would be the height of arrogance. And so as you're hearing these things, if there were other topics you want to go deeper in, if there's some that resonate, do feed back to us, because this is a series, of a number of hackathons, working lunches, drop in sessions about this, but let's link into a few things. So if we think about the lenses that your companies were all working on, in different ways, remindful that I might also be a tiny company. So don't give me big grand solutions. Recruitment, how can I tailor my recruitment, so that it's more inclusive, when we think about these lenses? What are the things you've learned along the way? Who wants to attack it? Okay, Roz is in, go.

Roz: I think language. I think language is a really simple and quick fix. But it can make a huge difference, not just to neurodiversity, that I've been speaking on, but to gender inclusivity. And actually, common sense, plain English is more accessible and better for all of us. So I think formatting and choice of language, can make a huge difference, without any great, I would like to say, great for small businesses and larger ones as well.

Debbie: And there's some great checkers out there, that can check your adverts, your interview questions, etc, for all kinds of bias in that respect. What about from the rest of you, something that helps me with my recruitment, to become more inclusive?

Kaammini: I think for me, it's authenticity. So not pretending to be something that you're not, and being willing to learn from others experiences, of your processes, that existing.

Debbie: Super.

Mark: I'd say your colleagues, those role models internally, to tell the rest of the world that you are reflecting wider society, you've got people in your company, that are neurodivergent that have got

all types of disabilities, long term conditions that are from all types of socio economic backgrounds. I think your own employees can be a great attraction, to learn about who you are as a company.

Debbie: Rachael, is there anything you've picked up, that have been things on the intern.

Rachel: Yeah, I would add around interviews, and I think there was a question on that specifically, around, actually, they're not great for a lot of the groups that we're talking about. Neurodiverse people typically, that can be quite a challenge. Equally, people from different socio economic backgrounds, they've not had that experience of even being in an office, let alone being grilled for an hour on questions. So how do you make that welcoming? How do you, do you think about that being inclusive, and not your stereotypical, in an office face to face, or a grilling of questions.

Debbie: In conversations with several of you, I felt I was brought up short, because in really trying to unpack interviews, what works, what doesn't. There's a lot of things that came up, so one of them was, why don't we share the questions ahead of time. If we think about from different backgrounds, and different challenges, processing time, etc. Treating it like an oral exam, is maybe not the best way of getting the best answers. I had another person that talked to me, how often do we say, super, we'll have you down to our offices, so just get in, book a train, come into a hotel, thinking about, depending on my socio economic status, do I have access to a credit card, have I book... Talk to me about some of these little things, that we can do in our interview, or where are we tearing up the paper, and starting again, in this way?

Rachel: I think that the pandemic has helped with a lot of that. Because a lot of us, had to do that, over the last couple of years. We've done a lot virtually, which has positives and negatives, but actually, that does remove some of those barriers. Some of our work experience and insight days, a virtual park, where instead of someone, to your point, having to travel in and pay for that, and everything that's associated with that, can join online and get the same access, as other people that otherwise would have done.

Debbie: Yeah. There's a lot that we hate, that happened under COVID. But there's a lot of things that have been thrown open and given an opportunity to do things in a really different way. What about, we did mention Roz, thank you for being brave in that disclosure, as someone who is in the menopause as well, what can we do? What are companies doing, in terms of things like, say, menopause, domestic abuse? What are these other areas that don't fit into a category per se? But what can we do to be more inclusive, in that respect?

Kaammini: No, you go for it.

Roz: Scottish Government has just updated its guidance around the menopause. We've been deploying training to managers. And there's such a, in this space, there's such a vast range of issues and symptoms that come through. So it's everything from, sometimes women can't come into the office, because, I don't know how detailed I can be, but sometimes your periods can be very, very heavy, when you have the menopause. So actually, sometimes you don't want to be in an office, or it's better if you're sat next to a bathroom. Having windows open can be helpful. But it's also about giving guidance as to how to facilitate the conversation, and how to, because obviously, what would be unhelpful is to approach a woman who might be approaching middle age, and say to them, are you menopausal, are you perimenopausal? So it's about how you have the conversation, in a sensitive way. You're making sure that colleagues are aware, that we've got counselling services available too, to manage with some of the other symptoms. And I think a lot of our learning has come through from, we have a thing called menopause Cafe, which is a staff network, a learning

group. And a lot of the learnings that have come through from our refresh policy, has come from that network.

Kaammini: Super. Kaammini and I think you Kaammini, have done some work, and have some expertise to share around domestic abuse.

Kaammini: Yeah, so at Vodafone, we have a domestic violence and abuse policy. And we've also recently launched a commitment around, not just the menopause, but hormonal health more generally. And actually, both of those toolkits, are publicly available on our website. So especially those from smaller organisations, who might not know where to start, there's some guidance that you can actually access for free, on the Vodafone website. So really recommend that. I think for just taking menopause first, as Roz already said, I think there's lots of small things that you could do, flexibility is a big one here, and just being open to different types of flexibility and what suits the individual is really paramount. And one of the things that came out really strongly from the feedback we were receiving, was people just wanting a community and a space to talk about things. And so similarly, we've created a what we call, a cycles of life community, where people from across the Vodafone community globally, share their experiences, ask for advice. And there's some great tips on there that people have just provided as individuals, which I think is fantastic. In terms of domestic violence and abuse. We launched a policy back in 2019. And we offer 10 days of paid, safe, leave for anybody experiencing violence or abuse. And coupled with that, we also provide support around, and that leave can be used, however people want, we don't measure how many people use it. For me, if it supports one individual across our organisation, then that's quite frankly enough. And people don't need to necessarily disclose that more widely, they need to just tell either their line manager or their HR business partner, and it's not in a system or anything, it's just taken ad hoc. Coupled with that, we do quite a lot of training within this space as well. And we also work with organisations like Hestia. And we've developed, we're trying to find ways of using what we do externally, to support internally. So we're trying to use tech, to support people experiencing domestic abuse as well. So there's actually an app that we've created with Hestia, called the bright sky app, and it's disguised as a weather app, but it's actually a directory of domestic abuse services. So that's available for everyone to use publicly as well. So do feel free to promote that across your own organisations.

Debbie: I'm mindful of time. And please can I say, because the questions have come thick and fast. And there's been a lot of specific questions like, what are the resources, what are some policies etc. So what we'll be doing at the charters is, we'll be working with everyone here on the panel, but more widely across, to gather, in the open playbook, links to great policies, links to a great app, links to organisations, that you can work with, to try and begin this journey, in terms of where you're going. If I'm sitting in a company, I'm bringing us to a close everyone, and I'm doing that infamous, give me one thing, all right. So if I'm in a company, I know that we need to do more. Okay, we've been doing gender for a while, and we're not done. And we've been doing ethnicity for a while. What are some key next steps, that I need to do, to start really trying to be inclusive, in this wider, more challenging, more vulnerable, and just as essential, area of inclusion? What can I do? Who wants to go first?

Rachel: I'll happily go first.

Debbie: Thank you.

Rachel: I think mine would be around that inclusive culture and picking something, because that will spread across all the areas that we've talked about. And whether that is, sharing stories, whether

that is setting a session to talk about something that's going on more broadly. What could you tangibly do, to demonstrate that you have that inclusive culture?

Debbie: And that often involves some sort of risk, isn't it, publishing targets or publishing declarations, or signing up to charters, or measurement things, Good, super. Someone else?

Roz: Sorry.

Mark: You go.

Roz: I would say listen, listen to people within your organisation, that have lived the experience, bring in external partners, who have more experience, than perhaps you do, and be ready to be criticised and be ready to change.

Debbie: Good. And that's that brave bit of going in with that willingness. And I love how many of you, as companies, went into the space saying, we've not got it right, we're falling short, and we need to do something in that space. Super. Mark.

Mark: So I just say intention. I think it's important that we look at inclusion in its widest form, and really be intentional, when we mean that. And transparency. We should be clear on making those commitments, targets and the actions we're going to take to address those.

Debbie: And I think that's really important. I think it's very important, companies meet our employees more than halfway, if we're asking them to be brave enough to disclose, we have to be brave enough to state our intention, state where we get it wrong, and to have that transparency. So last, but not least, Kaammini give me my last tip.

Kaammini: I agree with everything that has already been said, I would just add education and whether that's formalised education, from a third party company, whether that's looking online at available resources, whether that's, indeed listening to your people, and learning from them, that willingness to constantly be educated and constantly learn from what you're hearing, and act on it is imperative.

Debbie: Fantastic, really, really great. Listen, you've wandered into my web, I'm never letting you go. I'm going to bring each of you back, in different events and different things, because I want to carry this conversation on. This is too important for us to hold on to secrets that work. This is something that we need to really raise the awareness and look at how we can change this across the whole sector. You've been a fantastic panel, and you've helped me finish out the day beautifully. Thank you very much, everyone. Okay. That's it, that's it for now. This is the end of day two of our festival for 2022. But it's not the end of the conversation. Nobody on any of the panels, across the two days, has said, you know what, we got it figured out, we've won, we've got our little badge, we're inclusive for life, we have our inclusion vaccine, we're done now. This is a long journey. And it's a tough journey. And there's so much to do, but it's positive, you reap the benefits, your employees reap the benefits, we will be better companies, better products, better services, when we allow our companies to become fully inclusive. So this has to be moving, this is yes, difficult conversations. But it is taking action. It's bringing bravery to the table, to learn, to admit as organisations, where we're getting it wrong. It's that willingness to work with others, take advice, not to share our, keep our secret sauce closely. And to measure data, data, data. It has been a full two days, but there's still so much to do in 2022. So I hope you will stay with us in the conversation. Some takeaways, if you haven't already, please look at our annual report. There are some fantastic insights and case studies and real life examples, of how companies, of all sizes, are doing this, on a day to day basis, within their

companies. Number two, if you haven't joined the Tech Talent Charter, come join us, be part of this discussion. Help us make real, genuine, difference, for all of our companies, for all of our people today. Don't reinvent the wheel, have a look at our open playbook, share, learn from each other. There is no magic bullet there. There's no single, do these three things and it's all done. But in it, all the pieces of the puzzle here, every time you had a panel, people would say yes, I agree, yes, I agree. So let's do it. Let's stop thinking about it. And telling ourselves we're going to find that next solution. Let's look at what's there. And let's begin adapting that, optimising that, for our company. And then it is about, if you're opening that playbook, or if you were listening to one of these panels, and you're thinking, how are they not talking about this? Why do they not know? Why don't they do this? Come join us, join one of our hackathons. We have a hackathon kicking off, we'll send you information in the email, follow up, be part of a team that works together, that playbook, all of that best practice in a place and share it. Come to our working lunches, share case studies, let us know what's going on in the space, is there's some amazing organisation working on one of these lenses, that we haven't mentioned. Then come tell us, this works, if we all work together. This is about what works. We need you here and we need you here today. So remind yourself, what resonated with you, please post that on social. We've got, hitting your inbox, 11 minutes ago, in your inbox, should be an email from us, in which we asked you, really briefly, which are the faces are you? Are you a happy face? Are you a frowny face? What worked or what doesn't? Please share that with us. Please tell others what you've learned today. And more than anything, keep the conversation going. And keep working on this. It can work, it is working. We can drive this. My name is Debbie Forster, can I thank very much, our sponsors Beasley, for sponsoring the event. Can I thank our principal partners. We have HP, we have Lloyds Bank, we have Nominet, we have PwC, we have Global, we will have working with the DCMS. Thank you for Uptown, our company behind the scenes, that makes this work and the little orange box on the screen. And thank you really, to my amazing team. I get to show up on the screen and jump around and talk about what works. But what works is because of the amazing Tech Talent team behind me, you've seen Lexie on screen. Who you haven't seen is the wonderful Anna, the wonderful Cheryl, the wonderful staff, who's running our social media. And a special thanks to Karen, new to our team, but she's been the person that made sure none of the little details fell out of my soggy little brain, as we tried to get this event on the road. Anything that we do here, is what we do as a partnership. I'm glad you joined us today. Thanks very much. Good night.