Debbie: Hello, good afternoon. Welcome to our afternoon cuppa, it is nearly the end of the day. And if you've got this far, hump days over, we're nearly to the weekend. Thank you for joining me. My name is Debbie Forster. I'm the CEO of the Tech Talent Charter. And I'm welcoming you to our Inclusion in Tech Festival. Now for some of you, you've been here since the very start. And thank you, thank you for staying for all those sessions. There might be a few of you, according to my signups, that suggests that we've got you coming in for the very first time. So let's think of a few things. We are the Tech Talent Charter. Today's festival is really going to be focusing on practical insights. If you've taken the time to join us, we're committed to leaving you with some actionable insights. We focus on the practical and we focus on connecting the dots. So you'll be hearing from real employers talking about how they're tackling, driving the challenges of EDI within their companies. We want you to feel that you have an involvement in this, we want you to be part of the piece and we know that our signatories are a big part of how we're able to do what we do. We're also grateful that we have our sponsors. Beasley is the sponsor, the headline sponsor for this event. They've been great partners and planning all of the content across the piece. We also rely on some fantastic partners, principle partners, who have investors from the very start, so HP, Lloyds Banking Group, PwC, Nominet, Global, and the government's Digital Culture and Media and Sport department, the DCMS. In the old world, in the 3d world, I'd be up on the stage and have one of those funky Madonna microphones going on, and I'd be giving you those logistics, this is the fire exit, here are the loo's, there's the coffee, what I'll do very quickly, is to give you a run through what you have on the screen here, if you're a newcomer. So on the screen that I'm on right now, this little orange box that I live in, if you look down, a ribbon should pop up in it, you can turn it on to HD to broadcast in full definition. And I know everyone's enjoyed watching every wrinkle and freckle going across my forehead, there's also a box that means you can turn on closed captioning, if that helps you take part in the event today. And I do want you to take part, we've been really fortunate, every one of our sessions has had loads of questions coming in from the audience. So if you look just below my screen, there's the box where you can start asking those questions. If you already know you came to this event with a burning question that you want answered, start dropping that in now and we'll prime that to go to talk to our panels. We also, a little further down, if you missed yesterday, sometimes you'll hear us referencing some of the great discussions that we had yesterday, I don't want you to miss that. You see below, where you can scroll back and watch yesterday's events. You'll hear us referencing our annual report. This is a report that we publish each year, to join the Tech Talent Charter is free. But you do give us key cord, EDI data on gender, ethnicity and your big problems and what's working in the space. We turn that into a report that was published last week. We discussed it in yesterday's sessions. But you can still have a link below, to have a look at what that report is, and to measure yourself against how the rest of our signatories are doing in the space. You also have a chance to do something on social. Some of you on this call today, have already been sharing on LinkedIn, Twitter, on Instagram or Facebook, what's mattered, what's resonated for you from this event? Or if you still have a burning question, that you want to do, do feel free, we'd love if you do share with us on social, we want to keep this conversation going. And logistics. Now we've had the odd session where someone couldn't get sound, etc. And apparently, from time to time, my internet's not as good, and I go a bit fuzzy. The team would tell you that that's also what happens when I don't have enough caffeine. So apologies if it happens. I'll try and keep my broadband functioning and my caffeine coming., before we go into today's session. Now, the charter, I was thinking back, this is our fifth festival of some sort. Back in 2018, our second event, we met back in the Gherkin, and that was the first time we started talking about alternate routes into tech, and by that I mean apprenticeships, returners programmes, cross training upskilling any of those alternative routes. And that was when we first started talking about, how could we make that work, and it was new, and it was different, but some of our signatories were making that work. Roll forward, COVID has shown us that every company needs to be digital. And that has meant that the need for tech talent has never been greater. And it also showed us, that a lot of people were in jobs or careers that were not stable, were not sustainable for them, and they're looking to

change and get in. So this is a point in which, as Winston Churchill says, never waste a good crisis. We in tech, can lean into this crisis. And we can use that, both to get us great talent and diverse teams, to really innovate. And we can make sure that we help people get back to work. So to hear more about that, we're going to hear from a range of our employers who are doing a lot in this space. And this is going to be led by one of my TTC directors, and someone from our great partners at Tyto, Rebecca Donnelly. Over to you, Rebecca.

Rebecca: Thank you very much, Debbie. Good afternoon to everybody joining us for this session, in particular to our panellists. And yes, my name is Rebecca Donnelly. I'm a director at the Tech Talent Charter, and a senior partner at Tech PR agency, Tyto. So we heard from the Secretary of State, Nadine Doris earlier on in her opening video at the start of today's sessions about the importance of building digital skills capabilities across the UK. And we're seeing organisations increasingly, as Debbie mentioned, look outside normal routes to identify, recruit and train new talents. And this has obvious potential benefits for attracting more diverse talent as well. And we see the government investing in digital skills boot camps, third party organisations, such as Institute for coding, and Tech She can, placing specific focus on bringing talent from underrepresented groups into the industry. However, in this year's Tech Talent Charter annual report, 58% of our signatories told us, that they are not currently running any skills or careers initiatives, designed to attract more diverse talent. So in this session, we're very fortunate to be joined from speakers, by a range of organisations, who are investing in alternative routes, to share with us some of their insights. We do of course, want to get your questions to them as well. So as Debbie mentioned, if you scroll down just below the conference scene, you'll see a Q&A box. So please do put your questions in there at any point during the conversation, and we will address as many of them as we can through the conversation and at the end. But first, I'm going to start by asking our panel to introduce themselves very briefly, so we can dive right into the discussion. Maja.

Maja: Okay, can you hear me? Yes, we can. Okay, excellent. Hello, everyone. My name is Maja Borota Nedic. And I'm director of engineering at booking.com. Thank you for having me. Diversity and inclusion is a major focus for booking.com. And I'm really, really happy to be taking part in this session.

Rebecca: Thank you very much, Sheridan.

Sheridan: Hi, yeah, I'm Sheridan Ash, and I were a couple of hats. So I lead technology innovation, at PwC in the UK, and led many of our women in tech initiatives, over the last sort of five to seven years. And I'm also the CEO of a charity called, Tech She Can, and Tech She Can, is all about creating initiatives and pathways, into tech subjects and careers for girls and women, all the really important moments that matter in their lives.

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

Gori: Thanks so much, Rebecca. Hope you can hear me as well. We can. Yeah, fantastic. I'm Gori Yahaya. I'm the founder seat of upskill digital. We're a learning organisation, that builds learning programmes, to help employees and prospective candidates have the competence that they need in tech skills to be able to get to organisations, we also run a digital academy, where we place diverse tech talent into organisations as well. So I'm super excited about this conversation. Hopefully, we can talk about why it's so important to focus on alternative routes into tech.

Rebecca: Thank you. Absolutely. And last but not least, Sarah.

Sarah: Yep. Hi, everyone. Apologies in advance for being off camera. But as this is being recorded, I do have to stay hidden, which is not great in the spiritual world. So apologies for that. But I am here behind my little avatar. So Sarah, I work for the National Cybersecurity Centre, which is part of GCHQ. And for the past five years, I've had the pleasure of leading CyberFirst Programme. So our programme is all about seeking to create and support a future diverse workforce, that's got the necessary skills and knowledge to keep the UK secure and resilient to current and future cyber threats. So we do have a key focus on diversity as part of all that And I guess, as you can probably imagine, future cyber threats is a massive thing, in this really uncertain and scary and worrying times. So it's something that's very important to us at the moment. So we have a whole range of things that underpin the programme, but I will talk to you more about that as we go through the programme.

Rebecca: We will thank you so much. Now hopefully, Juliet will be back with us in a few minutes so that we can involve her in the conversation. But we will crack on regardless. And I think when Debbie gave her initial remarks at the start, she mentioned some of the different alternative routes, that are being explored by employers, such as returners programmes, apprenticeships. Maja I wanted to come to you first, because at booking.com you invested in a number of these different initiatives. Can you explain what have been your key successes and learnings from some of these programmes?

Maja: Okay, thank you, thank you, thank you, Rebecca. So over the past few years we at booking.com have put a lot of effort to grow our talent programmes, like apprenticeship, graduate and tech returners, to help diversity and inclusion. And we got a number of learnings. But I will call out initially just two for now. For all of these problems to be successful, what you'll learn is, it is important to make sure that there is a right support structure in place for these people on the programme to be set for success. So we work with our managers and we work with our learning colleagues, to make sure these people have the right kind of, the support structure, right development plan in place, to help them settle into their roles. With that said, we also recognise that it was very, very important that we also support our teams who are onboarding these people. So it was kind of the learning that we need to provide, the support all around, from the candidates and the people on the programme, also for our teams, as well. The second learning that I would like to mention is about the programme being targeted. Without tech return, with our first tech return programme, we had the blend of people who were returning and who were retraining and this was interesting and useful, to have that rich variety of the skills and backgrounds and just variable skills, it made all the supporting model quite intense. With that said, and with that learning, we decided for our second tech returner programme, which is happening as we speak, and it's finishing in two weeks time, to actually target being returners only, which again, will help the whole this, onboarding, supporting, and so on. So these are, initially my two key learnings.

Rebecca: That's a really interesting point you make there, because for anyone who's not familiar with that concept of returners, the people who've had a significant period outside of the workforce. And of course, our minds are immediately turned to perhaps women who have been raising a family and taken a few years out of the workforce. But of course, those aren't the only reasons that some people may be looking to return into the workforce after a few years out. So it's interesting to say that you've had to consider the different perspectives and the different situations of the talent that you're trying to attract, to make sure that the programme is tailored for them.

Maja: Yeah. Sorry to interrupt.

Rebecca: No, no, go ahead.

Maja: Yeah that's exactly. Because the first program was, to your point, returners. For people with career break, which, having a career break from tech industry. Then we had people who had some, who had careers in the tech industry, but not as developers or testers. And we had then, the third kind of category of the people, who were just career break, or sorry, career switch. Working in a completely different industry, wanting to start their career in tech. Every single one of these cases required very tailored support, to help them for success, to enable them, to embed into the teams and actually be happy in their roles, in our teams.

Rebecca: Thank you Sheridan, I'd love to get your take, because obviously one of the initiatives that Maja mentioned was apprenticeships, and I know that's something that PwC have been using for some time. Can you tell us a bit about why PwC invests in this? And what have been some of the challenges and learnings, and perhaps how you're taking that into the work you're doing with Tech She Can?

Sheridan: Yeah. At PwC, I think we've got the classic problems that a lot of companies will have. We've had early pipeline issues, there's very few younger women coming through from schools and colleges and universities. And then we also have the problem that, it's quite difficult to get women back, just as we've heard, after things like maternity leave, or they've had some time out of the workplace for whatever reason. And it's also quite difficult to advance women. So while we've done everything we can at PwC to get those things right. And we've done a really good job, we've over doubled the amount of women that we now have in our technology workforce to, sort of about 32%. We still are having problems with those key issues, which is in effect, why Tech She Can was developed. So if you think, Tech She Can, think of it as, like it was incubated in PwC, but actually with 18 other organisations that were mostly our clients, but also DCMS that Debbie mentioned, so government support as well. And the whole principle behind Tech She Can was that we can't solve these problems on our own, in effect, we're all fighting over the same women. So if we come together and collaborate, what can we do? It's for the greater good, if you like to just enrich the pipeline at the early stage and all those other stages I've mentioned. So in effect, if you like, PwC now works with Tech She Can on some of the areas where we are still seeing major problems. So for example, although we've increased at PwC, the amount of women, we have very few black women in our technology workforce. So at the moment Tech She Can and PwC, are partnering to, and we've developed a apprenticeship programme that is specifically going to be targeted at black women. We're also working with other organisations, within the Tech She Can family, to look at bespoke programmes, that are focused on pivoters, how can we increase the amount of women we've got in the workforce right now, by taking women that maybe have lost their job during the pandemic, and putting them through level three or four, software engineering or DevOps apprenticeships, where they get a job, and they're literally training within a year's period, and they're straightaway in the workforce. So those are some of the things that we're doing.

Rebecca: And I think really interesting, again, you've made the point about the importance of taking a really bespoke approach and not just implementing one programme and expecting that to work across the board. But before we move on to explore that a little bit more, I wanted to welcome back Juliet. Juliet, can we hear you now. No, unfortunately, we still cannot hear you. I'm so sorry about this. I do hope we could get that issue resolved for you really quickly, so that we can hear from you, because we're really keen to learn more about what the Bank of England's been doing with their returners programme. But in the meantime, I'll come to Sarah next, because we talked about a skills shortage in the tech sector. There is a very, very real skill shortage in cybersecurity, particularly with very few women working in the sector. Sarah, we'd love to hear more about what the National Cybersecurity centre is doing to make a difference in this space.

Sarah: Yeah, so I can talk about CyberFirst. And actually, I'm pleased to say that PwC are a very active supporter of CyberFirst. So that's great. And they've been hosting some of our web events, which is superb. So CyberFirst was primarily set up as a bursary programme, looking to recruit future students, to come into the cybersecurity sector and help fill that skills gap, talked about. And one of the things obviously, is a great focus on diversity. So we've been looking having, what can we do to encourage more women to apply and to join our scheme. So we've tried things like changing the brand, to make it more inclusive, more attractive, more exciting and more appealing. We've changed the language, in terms of how we do our recruitment adverts, to bring on the more nurturing side to try and get more women to apply. And then we started off primarily, the recruitment was focusing on students that had STEM degrees and studying STEM degrees, or taking STEM A levels, we recognise that maybe that was putting quite a few students off applying and maybe then feeding it with elite. It was for the geeks, and therefore it put quite a few people off. We it changed it now that the bursary scheme can be for any student studying any A levels, they have to have three levels, but they can be studying any degree whilst they're going to university. But what they have to have is that natural passion and the natural curiosity to be able to want to learn, we can teach people cybersecurity skills, but they can't have that natural curiosity to want to do that. And through that, we have managed to attract more women onto the programme. So we've got 20% girls on the programme at the moment and 15% ethnic minorities, which is really positive. But we still know that's still not good enough, and we still need to do even better. So this year, we have managed to recruit and attract 50% females and 50% males on to the bursary programme. But some of those women, some of those students, female students that are applying haven't necessarily got the right technical skills that we need at the moment. So we're going to be running a two pronged approach over the summer, where some of the students will get invited directly onto the bursary programme. And we're gonna have another group of students, who are all females, where we're going to give them a boost. So over the summer, we're going to boost their tech skills, boost their confidence, some of them lack the, what we call them the softer skills, and we now like to call them our skills, in terms of how to do interviews, how to sell themselves, give them that inner belief that they can do this, and it isn't just for boys, and there'll be get them to come on and join the bursary programme. So we're hoping, if this booster works, that we can actually really boost the number of girls on the programme and maybe actually aspire to having a recruiting a programme, that brings in 50% Boys and 50% girls. And if we can crack that nut, we'll be really pleased. And then that pipeline feeds into industry, government and academia. We have 170 companies working with us. We're not recruiting just brain assistant, we're recruiting for PLC. So that's how CyberFirst is with the bursary programme. And then we have a load of other activities, whereby we have an all female and all girls competition, which is aimed at year eight girls, that's reached out to 60,000 girls.

Rebecca: Focusing on a much, much younger, much younger end of the pipeline.

Sarah: And that is very much about encouraging those girls to make the right choices at GCSE's, working with them so they can make the right choices at A level. And then obviously going through to university, if they wanted to do that, approach are absolutely amazing as well, BTechs, T levels, there's all sorts of things out there.

Rebecca: Can I come on to Gori? Because I'm really interested to hear a broad perspective on a lot of these different initiatives that have been mentioned. Gori, you represent Upskill Digital, who worked across a lot of these different programmes, and you're now one of the government's skills boot camp providers. What advice can you give to the audience listening today, on how to choose from this myriad of different options, how to decide what's right for them. And how to start going about implementing an initiative like this?

Gori: Sure. Well, as you've heard, there's a multitude of options out there. And I think what was interesting is, Maja mentioned it, and I think also Sheridan did as well, which is the importance of making sure it's bespoke to your organisation. So tailors to the needs of your organisation. So there's a couple of things to think about. Firstly, defining the timescales. Depending on the role that you're going for, and the needs of the business, you need to understand, how quickly do you need people to come into your organisation that have a specific set of skills. When do you need people to be deployed in particular roles? So if it's data roles, for example, do you have eight to 12 weeks to wait till they come in? Or do you need to bring them in immediately, and then actually train them on the job? So asking yourself those kind of questions is really key to work out what kind of programme might be right for you, as well. If you have got the time to wait, then that's fantastic, but also understand the depth of knowledge that you require from these individuals when you're going through a particular programme. Sheridan mention about some of the career changes, they have perhaps that longer need for reskilling, to ensure that they can switch from one role to the other. So what depth of knowledge is needed for them when they come into that role? Do you need somebody with a particular set of skills that's going to start the job ready, in which case you thinking about apprenticeships. Can you afford the amount of training that's going to come alongside this and ensure that they're ready for the role, perhaps in a year's time or in six months time, for example. And what does entry level really look like for you. So you've really got to have a think of those kinds of questions. I'd also recommend identifying skills gaps within your organisation. Some organisations don't have the skills to identify the gaps or the tools to identify gaps effectively, but it is useful to make sure that they are looking at this as well. And then your final part of the question was, how do they make sure that it works for them once they've got the programme And Maja mentioned this before, which is about the support piece. So regardless of whatever programme you do, once they enter the organisation, you have to make sure they're supported. And that's absolutely key. So everything from mentor, sponsorship, development plans, how do you ensure that these individuals, that might have slightly differing needs, as diverse individuals, those needs are catered for. We focus a lot on the inclusive hiring piece. So that once they have made it through the candidate pool into the organisation, that biases have been tackled, and hopefully their onboarding strategy, means that they're actually supported into the organisation, so that they can actually thrive when they get there. Because you don't invest all this time into getting somebody and then realise that, actually, they're not going to stay. So yeah, those are few things to consider when you're thinking about that kind of programme.

Rebecca: A really good final point you made, I think it came up on an earlier panel discussion, about the importance not just to focusing on recruitment, that once you've brought on great new talent, you need to make sure that they get the right support to stay. We're getting some brilliant questions in from the audience. And please do continue to get your questions in there. I want to start coming to a few of them in a minute, if we can. First of all, I wanted to see whether we are able to speak to Juliet. Let's give it one more shot. Juliet, are you with us. Nope, unfortunately she's not. So sorry about this. I'm not quite sure what technical issues are going on there. But we will keep going and see where we can get to. And one of the questions. Oh, she's back. Should we give it a go, Juliet?

Juliet: Yes, can you hear me?

Rebecca: We can hear you.

Juliet: Yes! Great.

Rebecca: Wonderful, thank you.

Juliet: I'm sorry about that.

Rebecca: That's absolutely fine. I was just encouraging the audience to send in their questions. We've had some really good ones that we're going to come to in a moment, but I wanted to just give you the opportunity to introduce yourself finally. We've been talking about a number of different initiatives, to attract talent in from alternative routes. And I'd love to hear a little bit more about what the Bank of England is doing specifically and how it's going.

Juliet: Sure, yeah, yeah, I'm sorry, I missed what everybody else was talking about. I'm sure it would be really interesting to hear. But I'm Juliet Bryant and I work in technology at the Bank of England, in workforce planning and strategy roles. So I'm heavily involved in resourcing recruitment for technology. And one of the things I was going to talk a little bit more about was the returners programme that we've been doing for the last few years, last three years in particular, this is something we've been doing in technology, it was actually piloted in a different part of the bank originally, and then we decided that would be a good way to attract more women in particular, into technology, and also to fill some of those resourcing gaps, that we had, and difficult to fill roles and some of the skills, shortages and challenges we've been talking about more recently. I'll just talk about some of the things that went well, then I can cover some of the things that we learned from it as well. So you can get a feel for that. As the programme was initially designed for quite a different skill set at the bank, it was to recruit supervisors. And then when we were trying to adapt it to technology, there was a few things we learned from that as well. It was a six month fixed term contract that was offered. And we were looking for experienced professionals with a gap, a career break of at least two years or more. Also with some coaching, to support and getting back into the workplace, that's just a brief overview of the programme. What we found what was really good was that we got some good people out of it. And so in total, we had, this is not just technology, but all across the bank, we've had 76 returners that have come through, and 91% of those were female, what we also found was, it also attracted a diverse range of candidates, not just in gender, so we had 49%, that were MBA ME candidates as well. That was the proportion of the people that were actually hired from the programme. So it was ethnicity, as well as gender and also people who maybe had career breaks because they'd had health issues, or all kinds of different reasons. Generally good for diversity across the board. And we've got really good people really experienced people, one of the things we realised is that people who came from the programme, would get up to speed really, really quickly, we needed to make sure the programme allowed for that. So we weren't hiring too much, and a very separate route that would take a long time to get to the point that their equivalents would have been who'd, who were working as experienced hires. And we've had good retention from it as well, I think what only one person from the technology route actually didn't stay at the end of the fixed term contract. That was a mutual decision because the role wasn't right for them.

Rebecca: I wanted to pick up on one thing you said particularly, as we've had a very relevant question in from someone in the audience, who says a lot of this sounds very junior focus, is it possible to train someone into a senior tech role? Do the panel have any examples of this having worked, and I was about to ask that question of our panel, but you specifically mentioned there, that part of your programme has been about recruiting more senior returners and talent. What's the split been? And have you found that more challenging or less challenging than more junior roles?

Juliet: I think historically, we've had quite established programme, junior programmes, into tech at the bank. We've had apprenticeship programmes, which were originally school leavers, became apprenticeships in early careers, I think this was a way to bridge that that gap. I think, where it's been a bit more challenging, in terms of where to pitch the roles, is because we'd be looking at people with professional experience, people who've worked in these fields before, or be it having had a career break. And then actually, what we found is very quickly, they've been able to move into

a position, where they're ready for actually a more senior role, once that confidence has got back to the levels, maybe that they were at before. And they've maybe filled some of the gaps, in what they might have missed in their skill set, in that career break time. What we learned quite quickly is, we needed to make sure that when that person came off the programme, maybe not right away, when they came into a permanent role, that we needed to be able to promote them, there needed to be career paths and routes, to be able to move them into those more senior roles, if they're ready for them. And to not hold them back, by the fact they came through this this route. Some of the other things as well, we learned from in particular, is to make sure that we have got those budgeted goals available at the end of the programme, might sound a basic thing, but think about the time of year we do it, and do we actually have the roles available for to them to go into. And when they finish the programme, so that we have that messaging, making sure they have the right environment to go into. They do need different levels of support, and making sure that they're working with supportive managers and teams and they're not thrown onto a highly stressful project, for example.

Rebecca: That's a really interesting point about internal perceptions. And I definitely want to come on to that. But I wanted just to put a quick question, to Sheridan, if I may. We've had a question in from the audience, saying a lot of this sounds very focused towards large companies. And I think most of you on the call today, do represent large companies, but you're also working on initiatives that do support smaller companies with this, how can smaller companies, that don't have the resources to create different bespoke programmes, how can they invest in returners programmes to bring in, or any kind of programmes, to bring in talent?

Sheridan: Well, because we saw this as a real problem amongst our members at Tech She Can, so we've got about 220 organisations as members now, and they are huge organisations like the PwC's and the Tesco's. But we've also got some small organisations, like an AI start-up. So one of the things that we're doing is we're facilitating sharing the levy. So there's a levy system, that big companies, I think it's anything over 50 employees, that you either have to use the money on apprenticeships, else you lose it type of thing, it's like a tax. Basically, what we're doing at Tech She Can, is we've got big companies, that can't use all their levy, and we're able to share that levy with smaller organisations. If you are listening, and you're a smaller organisation, please do get in contact with us. Because we can train your, we can get you apprenticeships and provide the training, as long as you've got a job for them at the end of it.

Rebecca: That was back to Juliet's point. Sarah, do you have a perspective on this question as well?

Sarah: Yes, I was just gonna say that we've got quite a few SMEs that are part of the CyberFirst programme. And obviously, they can benefit by having students work with them over the summer, so eight weeks, 12 weeks on the placements, and if they like them, then potentially can offer them jobs at the end of it. That's all funded through the National Cybersecurity programmes, that there's no cost outright on any of the SMEs, it's just finding those work roles, to be able to work with the students over the summer, and then they're part of a community as well. So they can learn from what other SMEs are doing in that space. So if any of you are a SME, and would like to be part of that community, I know it's cybersecurity, per se, but it is technical skills. And we really welcome them as well, so that's quite a nice opportunity for any, if they're interested.

Rebecca: Thank you. I wanted to pick up on something that Juliet was saying earlier, about making sure that you have the right support systems in place. When you bring people back after a gap, or when you bring people on through apprenticeships. We actually had a question in from the audience, asking about exactly that, perceptions of people coming into organisations from these routes. And Gori, I wanted to ask for your perspective on the learners, and the people who go

through the boot camps, and get placed with different organisations, how you feel the perceptions of those people is changing.

Gori: I think it's changing quite a lot, actually. What's interesting is some of the initial boot camps that we were running back in the day, I think a lot of people thought that they were primarily enabling those with stronger tech skills already, to access careers that needed them to hone their skills and add more to top ups. And actually, what you're finding now is, more and more programmes cater to those that have very little tech skills, perhaps they could be Humanities graduates, or career changers, or those who are pursuing brand new opportunities. And it's opening up a new world for those individuals who feel that they can start almost from scratch. Tech programmes are taking people on a more longer, more personalised, more detailed journey. That's really helpful for those feel supported throughout this as well. The impressions of what this can do for you, and what kind of pathways it can open, it's really starting to change. Again, you see more programmes that are focusing on helping women getting into tech roles. Incredible to Juliet's stats of 91% of women are going for the roles. It's fantastic. The way they're attracting more people and using the right terminology and advertising campaigns that really attracts more people is key. We're seeing many more programmes that are exciting, more diverse and marginalised groups, and that's really key from our perspective. There is, I think it's something that either Sheridan or Maja said about, sorry, I think was Sarah said it, about the eligibility to get into these programmes. If it's a STEM career and you're coming from, you don't just need to have a university background, right. You can be A levels at a minimum, for example. I think just opening those programmes up. Our programmes are very open. We try to get people who are from marginalised communities, but we go to the harder to reach places, to make sure that they really have access into these kind of programmes, and support them all the way through the journey. So the impressions of these programmes are changing, because they're becoming more accessible. I think that they're feeling comfortable that they can be part of the future tech workforce. And I think that's really key.

Rebecca: I think that's a really good point that you've got the double edged thing, you first got how people on returners programmes, coming through boot camps, how they're perceived within the organisations they're going to, but also how those opportunities are perceived by the talent. And I think there was something you said earlier on, Sarah, about people getting put off by certain types of language being used in adverts. Is there anything you've learned about how to make your opportunities more accessible and more attractive to people from underrepresented groups.

Sarah: I think it just goes back to what we've said about the language. We have tools that will test the language that we're using, and we'll also have pilot groups, that will test any adverts that we're putting out, whether that be from a gender perspective, or an ethnicity perspective, we're really keen to make sure that the language is right. And it's attracting and also certain roles, Gori you talked with quite a lot about roles. And we do know that certain roles and coming at this from a GCHQ perspective, certain roles in GCHQ, would appeal to some sectors more than others. So if we're within GCHQ, is very much about protecting the nation, keeping people safe. And using that type of language we have found, is far more appealing to the female sector, more necessary than some of the boys, who might want to become, look at the ethical hacking, offensive, cyber type things as well. So it's trying to understand your audience more and then tailoring the language to suit the audience. And we specifically have different roles, when we're looking at labs and things, you have to go through some technical labs, that they'll be synced to certain roles. And we have found that the girls will definitely go for different roles, in the labs within that role, the labs are all the same, but they've just come in through a different route, we've seen the sort of 60% of the girls will apply through that route, and then the boys will come in through a different route, they come out exactly the same, at the other end, just what's attracted them at the beginning.

Rebecca: That's a very interesting direct comparison you can do there, looking at how the language makes such a difference, for the same opportunity. Sheridan, what's your perspective on this?

Sheridan: Well, the thing that started Tech She Can off, was a piece of research that I commissioned. We surveyed about two and a half thousand young men and women, that are either, probably between about 16 and 23. So A levels going to colleges, universities, or straight into the work place. And some of the key differences, what we got from the young women was, how they choose a subject at school and a career, is understanding how it has a positive impact on their life, their family, their community, the UK and the wider world. And they don't get the link between technology and that, they get the link for biology, because they get doctor, nurse. And I have to go through this training to do that. What we've tried to do with our materials at the school age is, we teach, we talk about, how is technology used to solve the environmental problems. How is technology used to have fun, how is it used in sport. So we talk about how technology is used to have a really positive impact and solve important problems. and we provide them with relatable role models. And by that I mean young role models, not Ada Lovelace, who's been dead a long time or Sheryl Sandberg. So a lot of the work we do at the early age, is around that sort of language, but then we've taken that into the work we do around work experience, career insights weeks that we provide and also the apprenticeships.

Rebecca: Thank you and Juliet did you have something to add to this topic?

Juliet: Yeah, I'm gonna go over some of the points that Sarah was mentioning earlier around the language in the job specs, where we've also used a similar tool to the one you're describing, that looks at the gendered language and what language has different ages, but also about the role, what we're actually advertising. This is something we initially were challenged with, with the returners program, when we're advertising for the roles, what is the actual minimum that we need, the minimum competencies that we actually need to be able to train somebody for them to be, to upscale that, to be really somebody with, at something that's quite recent. Then applying that, what we've learned actually from doing the returners programme, to some of the other more experienced type equipment, where we're saying, actually we did bring this person in, they didn't know about this thing that we always put on our job specs and actually then we can apply that to some of the other recruitment that we're doing as well, to be a bit more open about those bigger people externally, who don't have that experience, and internally and internal links as well. And I think this outreach has been such changing, one of our challenges is changing the perception of the Bank of England as an employee of the technology. It is some of the outreach of going out to those girls schools and university events that are focused on women in tech and things, trying to change that perception, getting to them early, is some of the things that we found, to be helpful in that respect.

Rebecca: Absolutely. I think that's something that's come up a few times on this call. One of the questions from the audience I wanted to come to and we do still have some time. If we want more questions in from the audience, please do send them in. But we do have a few that I'd love to tackle. One question that's just come in, do you think there is a danger of these types of routes being stereotypes to marginalised groups, but there will remain a prestige and elitism around computer degrees? And Gori, I wanted to get your take on that. But before I hand over to you, we did actually have some data points from the Tech Talent Charter report this year, looking at perceptions of people coming in through boot camps. And actually 83% of respondents who'd used these, said that it was very, very successful or successful or very successful, which building on what you said earlier about perceptions shifting to be more positive, I think does show that perhaps, this is a myth that needs busting? What do you think?

Gori: It's really, I'm so thankful that the report is able to highlight things like this. I think there was a big piece in the report that said, there are still quite a few employees, that are not familiar with the bootcamp concepts. I still tried getting comfortable with it, but those that are familiar with it, do you prefer for the model. What is interesting to me is, the perception of this bootcamp learner who comes through, there is more of a need to support them through the organisation, and that actually changes the mindset of a lot of employers, which means, can I support the learners that are coming through into our organisation with more resources, more mentoring, more development plans. I think that's just important for all employers. The reason retention rates are so high is because, many employers aren't looking at how they support people in the organisation, I think all this does is give them more of an onus on focusing on an elaborate score that they need, and being aware of the level of support needed for diverse talents. And I think that's really, really important, because that often is, been an afterthought for many organisations, I think, if anything, the perception is not that they just need more support, but that all employees need, prospective candidates need support. How do I adapt my organisation so that we can support in the best way possible? I think it's really, really key. I think the other question you asked was about the Elysium? Around...

Rebecca: Yeah, yeah, that was the question we had in from the audience, whether there must be a two tier, or different perceptions within organisations, and that people doing engineering or computer science degrees, will somehow have more prestige, and what organisations can do to tackle that.

Gori: It's about the calibre of the candidates. If we have candidates that are coming through at boot camp, and they don't come in with a degree, but they have like, Sarah mentioned, the curiosity, the cognitive flexibility to learn more on the job and be more engaged, then, the proof is in the pudding. It'll show the difference between the two and I don't think those CS degrees are going to be the things that employers are specifically looking for. Now, there is a mindset shift for employers to start to pull away from needing degrees, more specifically, and actually thinking what can they do to help open the floodgates to all candidates, from all different backgrounds and just know that you have those that are keen to learn, have that curiosity. In a lot of the programmes that we run, data analysts, data engineers, cloud architects, we actually do a level of testing beforehand to see what is your attitude to learning? How curious are you? Cognitive flexibility, we do a lot of those tests to make sure we know that they can use that information in their interviews and say, this is my approach, and this is how I'm going to be able to thrive in your organisation and really bring you, to the best of my abilities. If anything, we're trying to really pull away from this elitists, kind of view, and actually, help employees just open their candidate pools, make them more open, which is key.

Maja: If I can build on what Gori said, based on our experience with the apprenticeship programme, for example, which we started a few years back with just, the primarily focusing with the people with no experience whatsoever, and no degrees, and targeting the grassroot entry, kind of options. And that was quite successful. However, with this tech return programme that we have started running couple of years ago, we realised that we should expand our apprenticeship programme to the people with the career change, which again, will not be coming from the, computer science or the STEM degrees. And again, we recognise that this is a quite powerful kind of approach, to bring these people with different degrees or with no degrees at all. I feel that these alternative rules are very important. And one interesting, the metric, for example, from our side is that, in our apprenticeship programme, 50%, of apprentices that we put through this programme, are females.

Rebecca: Fantastic, thank you. We have a few more questions to get through, who have been sent in by the audience. Not too much time left in the conversation, so we had one earlier. But I think it'd be really interesting just to put to the panel, because one of the things that I've seen from this is that there are so many different things you can do, and so many different options, looking at, the early

pipeline, how you engage in all these levels, but I think there's a definite sense that it's a challenge to know where to start. So I'd love to hear just from our panel, just quite quickly, what are your three top tips, or your key no no's, to watch out for if you're an organisation, who really wants to branch out, in terms of how they find their tech talent and start bringing on different types of talent, anyone wants to jump in with their three key learnings. Shall I pick someone, Sheridan.

Sheridan: I knew you were gonna pick me. I was practically scrambling at the back of my head, trying to think of what the three were. So number one, contact Tech She Can. We will help you navigate it. I think that's what I would say, it is quite complex out there. I think one of the biggest learnings that I've ever had, is this idea of making sure that you understand your data and the gaps that you've got, so what are the types of people that you want to bring into your organisation? And what are the actual skill gaps you've got, even if you're a small organisation, you can look around and see that and be able to get that information. And I think the thing for me is, there's the attraction bit, but then you've got to retain. You might do, you've got to get all the basics right, in terms of attraction, but it's no good then if you get them in, and you don't do all the right policies and the work life home balance and all of those things, because you won't keep them. And then you have to think about how do you advance people, particularly if you're focusing on specific groups, so for me, it's those things really.

So work with third party organisations.

Sheridan: Collaborate with others.

Rebecca: Yeah, do a skills gap audit and focus on retention as well as attraction. Anyone else in our panel would like to build on that.

Maja: I would like to.

Juliet: We're all fighting for it.

Rebecca: Juliet, do you want to jump in?

Juliet: Yeah, great. Thanks. So I was just, to build a bit on what Sheridan was saying there around making sure that they have the support to be successful when they're here as well. One of the things that we found with some of these programmes is that it's really important to make sure that the people that are managing them, will be involved in the attraction of recruitment bit, rather than having this, recruitment programmes that you're pulling people in from, and then the managers maybe aren't on board with the flexible working, that they might need, or whatever it is, and then making sure that you have that involvement with them at the early stages, so that they understand the support that the people would need, that you're bringing in through different routes. And I think it's the change in mindset as well. It's bit of an education piece for those people who are hiring and managing as well to make sure that they, kind of can break away from maybe the way that they've done things previously and be more flexible, about the background, or the skills, or whatever it is that people have, that are coming into that organisation. When you have more successful examples as well, then you have those case studies, and can promote those case studies as well and those successes within the organisation.

Rebecca: Absolutely. I'd love to continue with the top tips and I'll come to you next Gori, but perhaps you can also help us with another question that's come in, what can be done to help bootcamp apprenticeship entrance, overcome a sense of imposter syndrome, which can arise, when they're working with peers, who perhaps come in through more traditional rates?

Gori: That's a good question. As we know, we have wares, whether it's career changer, or somebody who's brand new to topic, imposter syndrome is rife. We're all familiar with it, we're used to it. Also, if you feel like you're stepping into an industry where you don't see many people that look like you. It can be very worrying. From our perspective, when we're running some of our programmes, we try to have our coaches that are from a diverse background, to help people feel more comfortable with some of the projects that they're working, or the topics that they will train them on, as well. We even have a programme that's called, Own Your Difference, which really focuses on helping you feel more comfortable about what makes you different, and how do you shine when you get to an organisation. The fact is some of these tech pieces, or these areas of technology that we are training people on, it might even be quite new for the organisation who's bringing you in on this, which is why they want to hire people in that know their stuff. So we all have imposter syndrome, it's really important that you can make the learners feel comfortable. So employers have a job to do to say, you've learnt it, you're here to practice on it, and let's just make sure that you can feel supported in there. For learners, I think it's just important to be able to hopefully get some support from other individuals, whether it's a mentor, or somebody that you can reach out to, that can support you on your journey, and can give you more confidence that, what you have learnt is something that you do know, and that you can put into practice when you get there. So it's always a big question, imposter syndrome. But for our perspective, it's about empowerment and support.

Rebecca: Yeah. And I think it's right what you say, we all have imposter syndrome, to some extent. Did you have any other key top tips, you wanted to throw in there, in terms of what organisations need to think about before they approach one of these initiatives?

Gori: Absolutely. I feel bad going before Maja or Sarah. So I'll just get quick with mine, so I can get them out the way. There's a few things from me, firstly, if you're going to go into any of these programmes, to make sure that when you do bring people into the organisation, if they're being interviewed or engaged with, any of your talent acquisition professionals or recruiters, is invest in inclusive hiring techniques, actually training those that are at the forefront of those interviews, hiring managers, we do a lot of training on inclusive hiring, what we find is that many individuals in that space aren't supportive, in terms of how to tackle their bias. So, you don't wanna invest all this work in getting people to the door, and then realise that they're gonna get turned away, because somebody hasn't had a crack at that yet. So inclusive hiring, inclusive onboarding, think about that, first, make sure that you're set up to allow people to come in, and then again, with the onboarding piece, make sure that they can thrive when they get there. I think Juliet mentioned it perfectly, which is the manager piece. Actually consulting those people managers, that will be supporting those individuals, when they get to the organisation is key. If you can, you want to make it feel like you're almost co creating the programme with them, so they feel like they're really fed into it, because you're about to take up a lot of their time with getting somebody in their team, that needs to be supported. So how do you ensure that you can help them, in that area as well. And then the final piece, which is fairly simple, which is, almost demystifying those roles. Sarah talks about some of the inclusive language in the roles, which is key, having a think about that, there's some really amazing, free, inclusive language checkers, that you can use online, you just post your job ad in there, and it'll just go through and work out which terms are more favourable towards certain genders or not. So have a look, think about how you can make them as inclusive as possible, the job ads, and ensure that there's tools and technology out there that can help you do this as well. Just a few things to think about to really help those floodgates truly open. And give those people the chance to shine when they try to get to the door of your organisation.

Rebecca: Fantastic. Thank you, Maja, what have we missed so far?

Maja: Also that have been already mentioned, what I would like to say, it's super important for these programmes to be successful, not to be run from top down, it needs to be inclusive, it needs to be part of the culture of the teams being involved, to correspond with onboarding, with interviewing, with all the way through, the teams and the relevant things, one thing we learned from the past is, that it can be generic, you dedicate the team where the, where the individuals are coming, so that they engage with them, from the very beginning to the very end. And as I said, it's this whole, the model of supporting structure, to have in place to organise, how do you do communication? How often do you check with the members that you are onboarding, what is their feedback? How do they feel? So I think it's important to be that two ways dialogue and listening, how successfully the programme is going, and the comms as I said, comms are very important with the members of the returner group or the training group and with the teams that are involved.

Rebecca: Yeah, absolutely. And lastly, Sarah coming to you for any of your key top tips, or things to avoid.

Sarah: So I think for me, in terms of that early pipeline, it starts early. We've all talked about [inaudible] with, and students at younger age, if you can start talking to them about the roles, or your organisation, or the sector at an early age, that's key. And also don't forget those key influences. Get out to the parents, the parents are the ones that we realise, have massive influence over what students make, from a choices perspective. So if you can engage with both parents and students, that's really, really key. And then in terms of our own organisation, as a government organisation, we can never compete with industry, from a salary perspective. So it's all about that value add proposition, what is it that we can offer, that industry can't? For us, it's protecting the nation, not many other organisations can do that. So it's selling on your values and your ethics. That's a really key part of that recruitment proposition.

Rebecca: Fantastic. Well, we are very nearly out of time. I've just been listening to all of those tips you all shared. And I want to just recap on them, and make sure we haven't missed anything, so that everybody listening has got some really tangible things they can take away. So hopefully, these are vaguely in the right order. So starting early, engaging with the talent pipeline early on, to encourage people from all different backgrounds to consider careers in tech, work with third party organisations, collaborate, get support, there are plenty of organisations, including some of the ones we've got on the session today, who are able to help quite small organisations, to activate some of these initiatives. Do a skills gap audit, so you know exactly what you're looking for. And then invest in hiring inclusive hiring techniques. So support your hiring managers with training, demystify the roles, use the values and what you can achieve at your business, to help sell those roles to the talent you're trying to attract. Then of course, once you've attracted them, focus on retention, make sure that you've got the right policies in place, the right onboarding, that you're training your team to offer the right support, working with managers, making the whole process inclusive, so that you're not trying to force it through. And then celebrate the difference of your team members, showcase your success studies and provide mentors and role models, so that people can really see their future with an organisation, and not just, we've got you through the door, now we're going to forget about you. Incredibly valuable advice. Really helpful, brilliant to hear directly, from some amazing organisations, who are putting this into practice. And hopefully that was valuable for everybody listening today. Thank you all so much for joining us, and I am going to hand back over to Debbie.