

## Ask ET – Wednesday, 3 February 2021 Transcript

**Jonathan Curry (compere):** Good morning everyone and welcome to Ask ET. Thanks for coming along, we have some time today with some of our ET members in what is our first Ask ET via MS teams. I hope you have everything crossed - fingers and toes - that all goes smoothly but do bear with us if we have any technical issues along the way. We have some contingency plans in place, thanks to our communications colleagues for that, and it will hopefully be smooth running throughout.

**Compere:** Obviously with it being an MS teams event, we do have some house rules and ground keeping that I'm sure you're all very familiar with but just for the sake of clarity and consistency we're asking everyone to not just mute but also to turn their videos off. This is because this is a recording and we're keen to keep the focus of that recording and the visuals of that, because there'll be a video recording as well as an audio recording, as smooth as possible for people who aren't able to join us today. They can watch and see what's going on. That does mean that we'll lose some of the nuance of your questions but hopefully the experience afterwards will be very smooth for those people watching offline.

**Compere:** If you do want to raise a question or comment or anything like that, you can raise your hand that's how we'll be kind of filtering the questions. We want to try and get through as many questions as we can. I can see [redacted] has already jumped in there and got his hand up. We'll be looking to use that as the means to have you ask your questions, if you can be as succinct as possible that would be great. What we want to avoid is what you see some of the journalists do at press conferences where they try and roll three questions into one. If we can try and keep it succinct that would be great, just so we can get through as many as we can and cover as many topics that you'll all be interested in. Do come in and ask those verbally as much as possible, rather than using the chat bar just to help the ET members hear you all. They wish they could see you all but, as I say, unfortunately some of these things can't be helped.

**Compere:** Okay, so that's the ground rules. Obviously we are civil servants and that comes with it various obligations about what we can and cannot talk about and how we pitch some of the better questions and responses; however I do know you'll all be very obliging of those values and kind of working towards our Civil Service Code and propriety as we always do, so do bear that in mind.

**Compere:** Okay, hopefully I've covered everything I'm supposed to. I've got a little compere brief so that's all the ground rules you need to know. So, who are we? Who am I? Who's going to be talking to you today? I'm Jonathan Curry, I have been working on SG2020 as was and we're now in the process of developing what our new programme of organisation development and our vision is going to be and I also look after the People Survey. I'll be shortly switching my camera off, as well and going on mute, and instead will be turning the attention to our Ask ET members today. We have the Permanent Secretary, Leslie Evans, the DG for Organisational Development and Operations, Lesley Fraser, DG Health and Social Care, Caroline

Lamb. I was going to say one of the newer members to the ET, however I've seen a Saltire article today which might suggest we've got even newer members than Caroline. DG Scottish Exchequer, Alyson Stafford - hello Alyson - and DG for External Affairs, Katrina Williams. Fast losing your kind of newbie title there Katrina. So these are the people and Nicky Richards, our Director for People has joined us as well. So, lots of different areas they can all cover for you, lots of different topics I know you'll have ready to ask them. I'm going to kick them off with an icebreaker, which gives you a chance to think through the question you want to ask and start raising your hand to get that logged in our running order.

**Compere:** However, I say the first question will ask to the panel members is just to give you a sense of what they've been up to. Can they tell us about one thing that they've been doing differently since the pandemic began? So we'll start with yourself, Permanent Secretary and we'll go through the panel on this after that. So, one thing you've done differently.

**Permanent Secretary:** Well I wasn't sure whether this was about business or about domestic practice so, let's start it off in a light hearted way. The thing I've been doing differently is hair cutting, who would have thought it? So, I've been responsible for cutting my own fringe which I've got better at but, more frighteningly, I've been responsible for cutting my husband's hair. I'm not sure who is more frightened him or me, but I've done it and I shall carry on doing it while we're in lockdown.

**Compere:** Thank you, let's see. Nicky do you want to go next?

**Nicky Richards:** Thanks for that. I haven't been brave enough to try hair cutting and I think I'll try and resist that. Though I was meant to be having a hair appointment on Friday, which is you know sadly disappeared so I might be needing to sharpen up my skills and scissors on that or you know phone a friend. So, so many things have changed - not having seen my family for a year, not having a life, you know small things like that. But probably apart from Zoom Pilates, the other highlights probably been getting back into running. So got pounding the pavements a bit more again, which has been good but the weather forecast is putting me off that for the next six weeks, probably.

**Compere:** Indeed the storms are coming and all that. Alyson, how about yourself?

**Alyson Stafford:** Thanks and hi. So, I guess you know just thinking about our - I'll stick with the sort of more personal theme but link it back to work so many of you will know that part of the exchequer work is actually the National Performance Framework. So right in the middle of that is our values and kindness. So as well as reminding ourselves to still be kind to each other, I think the one thing I've had to remember is actually that we have to be kind to ourselves. So, I found those early months of us working from home really punishing of sitting still for so long - I used to do a lot swimming. So I've not been brave enough yet to start wild water swimming, certainly not at this time of year, because, as you can see from the backdrop, it's pretty snowy where I am but so I've taken up Pilates. So, Nicky's just mentioned it and I hadn't realised it would do me so much good so I've become actually quite evangelical about it. I never thought I would but there's been really good to do that.

**Compere:** a very active group so far and Katrina, how about yourself what's been different for you?

**Katrina Williams:** Well, thanks Jonathon. I should say this hair cut is all the work of my lovely husband who has developed new skills since we've all been living under these circumstances. I had the pleasure of doing the first part of the pandemic in Brussels and then lastly back here in the UK. Apart from running, and quite a lot of running in the dark, so I think I'm a bit like Nicky in that respect. I've learned the value of chat. I always thought I was quite a self-contained person but I suddenly realised how much of my energy of my ideas I get from just chatting to people. So that's just the warning to those of you who encounter me that I'm quite likely to engage you in a fair bit of chat if I do.

**Compere:** Very good a very trusting of you to lend your husband this the clippers and the scissors in that way. I came out looking like a prisoner after my wife kind of went about, and I'm not sure well that says more about our relationship or her cutting skills, but there we go, that's for another time. Caroline over to you.

**Caroline Lamb:** Yeah, hi so, I was wondering what things I was doing the same actually rather than what things I was doing differently. I guess if I was going to highlight two things - one would be trying to get back into running which is something that others have mentioned and I absolutely agree about the weather at the moment, it is not conducive to running. One of my reflections have been, my life has been running at such a fast pace over the last 12 months that when I do get the time not to run but to actually pause and look at things and notice things so notice no drops starting to come through and things like that just take those minutes to slow down and notice what's happening around you rather than always running a million miles an hour.

**Compere:** Very good, I can see the metaphors forming for work as we talk about running in the dark then slowing down and looking at what's around us. Lesley Fraser - anything from yourself? What's been happening that's different for you?

**Lesley Fraser:** Good morning and I feel a bit ashamed really, I've not taken up running. One of the things I've been really enjoying recently is online concerts and I thought I just wouldn't because I love going to live music and I've missed that so much this year. I bought a season ticket for Celtic Connections and it's been brilliant. I've really enjoyed it and I've mastered a skill of casting from my tablet to my TV screen, and all without ITECS having to get involved I hasten to see so that's been really good, thank you.

**Compere:** Excellent. So, don't worry folks, we won't go around the whole panel for every question that was just to get them limbed up and test the equipment so over to yourself. For those of you who missed the start - it's the hands up icon that we're looking for and **[redacted]** – you were very quick off the mark. **[redacted]**, if you'd like to come in and ask your question first of all.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Hello and good morning everybody. My question is for, I think, Lesley Fraser. My question is about the Scottish government what place and what it will look like in the future. We're all working from home, we're all working

remotely. I work in [redacted], although I haven't been there for almost a year, so I'd be keen to get your view, and possibly Nicky's as well, and Leslie, the Perm Sec. What will St Andrew's House look like when we get back to some normality. Will be all be pouring back into [redacted] or will we be working remotely, as we are at the moment, or given the flexibility to work remotely. I think a lot of people have embraced this new reality that we're confronted with so just keen to get your view or not, please.

**Lesley Fraser:** Yeah, great question [redacted]. I think we have really been thinking hard about this. I mean, if you told me a year ago that 16,000 people would be working online and in three months' time, I would have said no, I don't think so, just not possible but we've done it. It's been really hard for lots of people, the nature of the work that we've been doing and Caroline was just reflecting on just how busy and colleagues in health and social care and right away across the organisation have been. But also juggling, looking after our kids and home schooling and all sorts of things. But also, you're quite right, it's been fabulous and for us as well and because it's given us flexibility and it's given us insights into new ways of working and collaborating together and a lot of control to be able to choose when we work and we'll want to bring that and into the Scottish Government of the future for sure.

**Lesley Fraser:** So, colleagues in Facilities, along with colleagues in Property Division, have been doing quite a lot of work on this and looking at where we live as a population in the Scottish Government, what might be some of the choices and options for us about hub locations for offices in the future. I also think in the more immediate term, we won't be flooding back in, all of us won't be coming back through the doors on a single day. I think that we'll be opening up gradually and we've seen that very much as we've been flexing the response to the pandemic and I think that will become our norm once we get the green light in health terms we're able to start opening up again. And then that will be a question of what do we need to do back in the office for business reasons or indeed for wellbeing reasons, and where else can we keep the benefits of being able to work remotely and having a bit of that flexibility and control to be able to choose ourselves. So, definitely an area for the future, definitely part of what we want to build into our future organisation and really pleased to get people's continued inputs and insights into that as well.

**Compere:** Nicky and Perm Sec, I know I said we'd do one at a time. I know there was a specific ask for your thoughts. So, Nicky do you want to come in next and then Perm Sec we'll leave it for yourself for the final word on this question?

**Nicky Richards:** Thanks Jonathon, thanks [redacted]. I think it's just such a core question for us all.

**Nicky Richards:** Actually I had open this morning a research report that had been done for the wider UK Civil Service about the whole experience of working from home and I just think there are so many just really profound insights from us from all of this whether it's the reduction in our absence figures which are pretty marked and I think are consistent across the wider civil service, but also I think some really differential impacts so what this study was saying was that about 35% of people don't have a work specific place for them to work from at home and for them the experience of homeworking is much, much less positive and they are much more

anxious to get back into the workplace. So I think we've got lots of contrasting pieces here. I think most of the research we've seen routinely suggests that at for least 70-75% of people their preference will be to be in the office for kind of three days a week and you can see that mix of meeting with Katrina's chatting need but also that the sense of personal productivity which a lot of people feel is enhanced from working from home.

**Nicky Richards:** We know how uncomfortable a lot of people find the shared workspace environment. They can be quite difficult. We've probably all got caught in the crossfire of 'I want the window shut', 'I want the window closed', 'I'm a hot person', 'I'm a cold person'. These are the kinds of things which I think do have serious implications for people's experience and positivity about work, that sort of sense of control over their environment, but I think we probably also really must not underestimate the complexities of accommodating 70% of people wanting to be in the office for three days a week because from a property and facilities perspective particularly if we're going to have to accommodate social distancing that's going to be really tough because that is a very inefficient use of our estate. So we've got to be really thoughtful about this and I think come together about how do we make that work, how do we enable the people for whom working at home is a really poor experience either for their own well-being or because they don't have the right kind of environment for it. But there are so many different factors at the moment not least the schools being off which I think are making that even more challenging and difficult to kind of sift through but what an opportunity to think completely differently about how we think about our workplaces and how we use them.

**Permanent Secretary:** I'll follow on that if I may Jonathan. I agree with everything that I've heard from Lesley and Nicky and I think I would just make three points. One is I've said before in my communications to the organisation that we can't and mustn't go back to being the organisation we were. That we've crossed some rubicons and many of them as Nicky said are massive opportunities including greater flexibility on how people control and operate their own work life preferences, so we can't and mustn't go back.

**Permanent Secretary:** We need to be thoughtful and strategic not least taking account of some of the operational impacts of any changes we introduce so that's the first thing. The second thing is I just want to give credit for the way in which people have adjusted to not just working from home in a way that we weren't anticipating but doing it under these circumstances. It's one thing to work from home more, it's different if you've got your two year old and your five year old with you or you're worried about your mother or somebody who's in a care home. That puts a completely different complexion on it and I think the organisation has responded magnificently to really tough personal circumstances. And where business and personal circumstances overlap that's always a difficult territory. So I want to give credit to people there and the third thing I want to say is because this is such a big shift we are going to have to be careful but I don't think we need to be slow about some of these aspects. We will need to adjust as we go and be thoughtful about what the longer term implications are for our estate. That also means working very closely with our unions and I know they've got a real interest in how we approach this process, short, medium and longer term. And my commitment is to work closely with

the unions representing a variety of interests and experience that we know we're hearing from staff on a day by day basis.

**Compere:** Thank you all for that and thanks [redacted] for such a great start. [redacted], I've got you next as the hand up and then we're going to follow with [redacted] after you. So [redacted] over to you.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Thanks Jonathon. I was sad but not surprised to read that people from private schools and selective state schools are still more likely to get on the civil service fast track than people who went to non-selective state schools. We've just launched a race recruitment and retention plan. When will we see a socio-economic recruitment and retention plan or if one already exists, where can we find it and what progress has been made so far?

**Compere:** I know Alyson and Nicky have interests in this area. Either of you want to go first in response to that question from [redacted]? Nicky shall we start with yourself and then perhaps Alyson can come in with further comments after that.

**Nicky Richards:** Thanks for that and thanks [redacted]. I think it's a really key point, isn't it? I think one of the things that we see in the Scottish civil service is a slightly different kind of makeup perhaps and I think we perhaps haven't capitalised quite so much in some senses on the UK fast stream but I think the efforts that we've put into our own programmes like our graduate development programme has been to try and make sure that we do access actually a much wider and more diverse section of the population.

**Nicky Richards:** I don't think we do see quite the same concentration particularly around private schools or educational attainment, so I think we do have a slightly different makeup.

**Nicky Richards:** I think it's one of the things that we are looking at quite carefully and I know it's been a bit of a source of difficulty. I think it was really interesting seeing the response of different staff to the socio-economic background questions going into the People Survey. This is a tricky area. We've all got our own kind of experiences I know how I would answer those questions based on my parents educational attainment and everything else but a lot of people didn't feel comfortable answering those questions and so it can be quite tricky sometimes even just establishing what your evidence base is here to be able to know whether you're making a difference or not.

**Nicky Richards:** I think our view is that if you can get your recruitment processes right for people who have got the most extreme circumstances and are facing the most extreme discrimination and I think all of us would recognise that the stats would show that ethnic minority communities are often disproportionately represented as are disabled people amongst those who experience socio-economic disadvantage, so I don't think we can separate out the different groups and I'm sure that by making difference in some of those areas will make differences to them all.

**Nicky Richards:** I wouldn't advocate right now for us now to do a separate plan. I think we've been clear about where we need to focus our efforts and by saying yes

to everything actually it sometimes means that we just simply don't make any progress. So I'm kind of unashamed in needing to focus our efforts a bit here but I am also confident that the work that we do through the apprenticeship scheme, that we do very clearly through our graduate development programme, that we've done through for example reviewing the use of qualifications on our recruitment literature, those kinds of things are also making a difference. I know Alyson's also passionate in in this field and is the champion on social economic background for ET.

**Alyson Stafford:** So let me come in and just reinforce that. So as Nicky says a lot of the work that's happening in relation to tackling some of our real deep felt race equality challenges will help us with that wider diversity and inclusion that we wish to see. So there's not a plan for that recruitment but there's certainly work that's happening to help with promotion and also ensuring people sort of within the Scottish Government do get good chances.

**Alyson Stafford:** And I think the more that any of us can share our experiences and our own personal stories to be able to say, despite the fact that I grew up in a council estate and my father was a sheet metal worker and my mum did some part-time office work you can get through, and you can through your own skill and hard work actually get into jobs that will actually enable us to demonstrate that life chances can happen from to people from very different backgrounds in a way that can really move things on.

**Alyson Stafford:** [redacted] has been doing some great work with the network for socio-economic strength and [redacted] if there's anything that you think and if you would like to get involved in that network, if you're not already it would be good to really bring in thoughts and ideas that you have as to how we can really keep the flame alive. [redacted] has been a hugely busy on the Covid effort in terms of the data analysis, but I think it's really important we keep the flame alive as we go through this work at the moment and thanks for your question.

**Compere:** Great stuff and the hands are shooting up so [redacted] we're going to come to you next and then Liz after that so [redacted] over to you.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Good morning ET. Good to see you all looking so well. I agree with the comments so far all very positive. Nicky you touched on the estate. I just wondered if at some point there's been thought given to reducing the size of the estate depending how this all pans out and we adapt to offices. I presume some of the buildings, particularly St Andrew's House, might not be ideal for converting into a 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

**[redacted] (attendee):** And just very cheekily, sorry Jonathon, on the back of that, the 2020 pay agreement provided approval to non-compulsory redundancy policy. I just wondered if that was likely to continue into the next year's pay policy?

**Compere:** So Lesley Fraser I wondered given the question around buildings I might come to yourself on that one and then we'll see if anyone wants to come in on the second point. I might come to yourself Nicky if that's ok.

**Lesley Fraser:** Great, hello [redacted] very nice to hear your voice and again thank you for the question.

**Lesley Fraser:** Our estate always evolves actually [redacted]. I think we've got more than 80 buildings that we use up and down the length of Scotland so it's always changing and flexing and my goodness we're having a good look at it as a result of Covid but we were planning to do that anyway. I think Glasgow is a really good example. We've brought Social Security headquarters into Dundee and the operational headquarters into Glasgow. So that's dramatically changed both what we do and the size of the organisation and as we were just reflecting working from home and working digitally and working with partners in different ways as well in order to really join up our services and deliver better for citizens in Scotland.

**Lesley Fraser:** I think all of that will be on the agenda and looking at our estate and making sure that that's where we need it to be, that it's doing the right things, giving a focus for communities, accessible for our staff, giving us the kind of spaces where we can collaborate and really make a difference. That's definitely on the agenda for the future.

**Lesley Fraser:** I'll just segue if that's allowed, a sort of Radio 2 segue, into [redacted] second question which was about pay policy and no compulsory redundancies. That's been an absolute theme for Ministers since the SNP came into power in 2007, and so I guess that will be something that Ministers will be considering, and all parties will be considering, as part of their manifesto preparations [redacted], but Nicky may want to say more about this as well. Thanks.

**Nicky Richards:** I think same point Lesley. Ministers in this administration of have been very committed to that. I know that it can sometimes cause operational challenges particularly for some of our smaller bodies, where actually makes it quite challenging for them in terms of reshaping their workforce, but at the same time I think everybody recognises that doing those kinds of exercises on a voluntary basis would be the preference and the better approach. I think we'll watch this space post-election and I'm sure it will get reconsidered on a year by year basis as it does currently within the development of pay policy. Nice to hear your voice [redacted].

**Compere:** Great thanks Nicky and likewise [redacted]. I recognised your name from Saltire comments so I wasn't sure if it's the same one or not. Good to hear your voice as well and thank you for your question. [redacted] we'll come to you next and then [redacted] after that so [redacted] over to you.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Thank you and good morning everyone. My question is really a follow on from [redacted] question. If we were to be in the office two to three days a week, whatever it may be, will this impact on our T's and C's? Would we be classed as home workers or office workers? I don't know who the question is for. Over to you.

**Compere:** Thank you, yes, you keeping me honest there, [redacted]. So I think we may have to go, refer to the same people we've just had. So I'm not sure if Lesley you want to come in with any initial, Lesley Fraser, any initial comments and then Nikki you might want to add in anything beyond that.



**Lesley Fraser:** Jonathan I might just delegate here to Nicky if that's okay?

**Compere:** let's try this before Nicky but yeah, over to you Nicky.

**Nicky Richards:** I think my IT is about to break the. There's a reason why it's always dangerous to come on these calls. I don't honestly [redacted] - I won't be able to answer that I think that's something which we will need to reflect on as part of a much wider a package of what it means to work for the organisation in the longer term. Clearly there are there are differences in terms of the setup for people who are homeworking and you probably understand more about the sort of policy background on all of that than I do. But yeah, these are the kinds of questions and there are so many I think that we would need to work through should we be in that position for the longer term.

**Nicky Richards:** But I would hope that the opportunity to reflect and be flexible in our approach and the kind of deal that we would want to make with staff, that people would respond positively to the flexibility that Scottish government can offer and I do think that combination of the stability that we can offer as an employer as well as the flexibility that we offer as an employer are just such a profound part of the deal we can offer to staff and I do think that's something that we would want to hang on to for the future.

**Compere:** Permanent Secretary, I think you might want to come in on this as well?

**Permanent Secretary:** Yeah I just wanted to - I mean agree with Nikki, this is part of the sort of this is illustrative of the complexity actually and the technically important elements of making a move like this. It's not something we can do easily or simply. However one of the things that is interesting is hearing how some of the other parts of the UK are approaching this and particularly in Whitehall, who have actually been much more present at work in terms of numbers of bodies and so on and indeed expectations from their ministers I think, than we have encountered here. And some of them are a little bit further along the route, and I know Nikki is talking to some other departments about how they're thinking about their agreements with staff about what kinds of things they might expect, and indeed making sure that they're negotiating some of these aspects of a different kind of style of working.

**Permanent Secretary:** So, I think one thing I would want to say is we would need to ensure that we learn from others as well as making sure that whatever we introduce here feels right for our circumstances and feel sustainable as well, which is very important.

**Permanent Secretary:** If I could make one other point while I've got the camera Jonathan, something slightly cheeky, I was just really interested in what [redacted] - I think she's made -she's gone out of the chatroom - and seen that I can see at the moment but I think she made a very interesting proposal with regard to the socioeconomic question about role model profiles and maybe us developing a few of those to show the diversity of people who come into the civil service and also and people who are in different parts of the organisation of different parts of the hierarchy. I mean, for example, both my parents left school before they were 14, so

you can't assume that anybody's background, as Alison said, and I'm sure many others on the call would be as traditional as you might anticipate. And I think it's really important that we do share those stories actually to show what different routes people take in their social economic, and in their careers. So, I wonder if we could maybe pick up that point- that [redacted] made, I thought it was a really good one, and maybe Allison and her team would have a think about that with [redacted] about whether it's likely to be done or not -great that's getting a positive response there. I was slightly cheeky – I'll pass back to you Jonathon.

**Compere:** Quite alright and thumbs up from Alison, I didn't see that. So thanks for that and, so I'm not sure if it's the same [redacted] but obviously there is a [redacted] and we'll obviously be the going through this with our CSGU colleagues and partners. And it's interesting as well from Liz Ditchburn yesterday thinking about how we go through this with a broader kind of employers and the kind of the business community as well and thinking about some of these challenges about the future in that wider context about the world of work to. So good stuff being provoked there. [redacted] you're up next and then [redacted] we'll come to you, so [redacted] over to you.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Thanks Jonathan and good afternoon everyone. So my question is on the parliamentary elections, and I should say that this is probably on my mind more now giving you a vlog at the start of the week perm sec, and also I guess the restrictions that were announced or extended yesterday, and so this may be a completely irrelevant in a couple months. But with the parliamentary elections fast approaching, I'd really be interested to understand from the executive team how we will collectively balance the expectations, and I guess eagerness, of the new administration with the inherent tiredness of the civil service?

**Compere:** Great question all and it allows me to bring in a couple of other voices into the conversation, so Katrina, if you are there, do you want to take the this first conversation - sorry this first part of the response?

**Katrina Williams:** Right, thanks Jonathan and thanks [redacted]. And I should start by thanking Jim for pointing out that we haven't achieved gender balance today in the EC team before you. But it's quite nice to work in an organisation that can fall into the trap of fielding an entirely female team. I have to say, I mean your question [redacted] I think is a very important one.

**Katrina Williams:** There's a great deal of work going on to prepare for the elections. We've also got legislation now in place that means that we can change the arrangements for the elections if we need to but there's a great deal of work going on to make sure that the elections can be conducted in a safe way. And ministers I know in Scotland, but also in England and Wales are very committed to the concept of having those elections. Of course once the elections over, you're absolutely right, you know, we will have a government, a set of ministers in front of us who will want to tackle their tasks with energy and with enthusiasm. I think parts of the challenge for us as an organisation is going to be making sure that we recognise their ambitions, that we give them a good and honest picture of the things that are still before us including managing the recovery from the pandemic as we move through that and managing some of the other things that we have on our plate.

**Katrina Williams:** I think part of those conversations with any government that I've worked with as they come into office is one about how you balance ambition and what is feasible and realistic. And actually good politicians will think very carefully about how you balance the programme so that you've got a mix of those two things. But I think it will require a great deal of intelligent work on all our behalves and we will need to think about how we husband the very precious resource, that is the energy enthusiasm of people in the organization so that we can we can do that.

**Compere:** Thanks Katrina, I'm going to break my own rules here and invite Caroline – I'm not sure if there's anything you wanted to comment on that given, you know the role of health and social care over the last 12 months has been well, let's say full on is an understatement. So I'm not sure if you answer coming on any of the points that was raised in there?

**Caroline Lamb:** No, thanks very much I really appreciate that. So I think two things. Absolutely in DG Health and Social care people have been working at an enormous pace and under huge pressure. But actually we have to think beyond that to the folk who are working on the front line in our health and care services and they've been in exactly the same position. And so I think we need to be really mindful a lot of people have stored up a lot of untaken leave because they have just not wanted to let the service down, they they wanted to keep going but we absolutely need to make sure that as we start to think about remobilising health and care services we do that in a way that allows people to take a pause to take a breather to use that leave that they that they haven't used their to come back refreshed and ready to support what's going to be needed across the service in building back as strong as service. And Derek Feeley's report on the individual independent review of adult social care is published today with some you know real ambition in that for how we can improve our adult social care services. There's a fabulous video that goes with it, so I'm going to take this opportunity to commend that to to all of you to go go have a look at it not just you have to read the whole report it's very long, but please have a look at the video because I think in terms of a call to action it's really compelling - thank you.

**Compere:** Thanks bot and thanks to **[redacted]** as well. So **[redacted]** we're going to come to you and then **[redacted]**. And any any further hands up - this might be you're kind of last call giving we're kind of where we are in the time. So **[redacted]** over to you next.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Hi everyone and thanks Jonathan. I have a question about the People Survey results. So what is one thing that executive team were particularly pleased to see in the last set of results and is there anything that stood out was required in some specific change or action an organisational level, thank you.

**Compere:** I can see Lesley Fraser nodding along on my screen, which helps me direct the question, so thanks Lesley for giving me that queue so over to you.

**Lesley Fraser:** Thanks a great question **[redacted]**. It was really good to see that abrasive people looked contributed to the survey this year, but also to get the results back and to be able to look at those. I was taking, you know generally, really

positive results - really amazing in results in lots of places. I was delighted to see a real shift in things like leading and managing change.

**Lesley Fraser:** But that's tempered with, I guess, just really -a broad range, you know, so people's experience in the government is very different depending on where they are as well. And that can be really quite localised. So I think for me there's something about how we just improve and help people to get that more consistent positive experience, there's lots that we need to build on there.

**Lesley Fraser:** I was also pleased to see that people's experience of bullying and harassment had reduced which is positive. I'm really interested in whether that's linked to working from home. I guess it must be. But I'd love to see more on that and some you know, some people's experience as well as the kind of quantitative data and on that. But that's an area, where I think about the inclusive diverse organisation, really bringing, you know, all the talents to work and thrive in government, that I really want to see us focus on in the year ahead as well. Thanks Jonathan.

**Compere:** Thank you and it's Team Lesley – so Leslie Evans I think you've got your hand up as well.

**Permanent Secretary:** I have Jonathan and actually Lesley has said most of what I would have said so I won't I won't hog the floor for long. I'll just say one thing, apart to say hello [redacted] and I miss her and it's very nice to hear her voice.

**Permanent Secretary:** Yeah, I think the thing that I found most compelling apart about that they were stunning results given that we have been through such an extraordinary roller coaster of the year and people still feel very positive about a very passionate about their work. I think the thing that I would want to say, apart from being glad that some of the bullying and harassment figures are showing helpful upticks, by which I mean, people are feeling more comfortable and making about making those points and about raising their expectations with us about the kind of organisation, they want to come to work in every day. I think the point I would want to go back on is the point that Lesley raised which is about the consistency of experience. I want somebody who works in Team A to come into their work, virtually or in reality, every day and get the same quality of management, of experience, of career opportunity, of development opportunity, of stretch and challenge, as well as cherish, as person B would do in a different part of the organisation or a different part of a country and a very different part of the professional, specialist or administrative career that they've chosen.

**Permanent Secretary:** I don't think we've got that at the moment and that's the thing that I find is a real Philip for us to move on to for next year is how do we ensure, not uniformity, but how do we ensure consistency of experience, particularly in the quality of management, support, development opportunities? I think we've got a way to go on that but I think the signs of this people survey have been really encouraging, and I'm very proud of the organisation without being complacent.

**Compere:** Thank you and thank you [redacted]. [redacted] I've got you up next and then says [redacted], so I'm not sure - [redacted] I don't think it's your surname, I

think that's just the way it comes up from there on the thing. But just to flag that **[redacted]**, with your hand up, you'll be after **[redacted]** but **[redacted]** over to you first.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Thank you and get the afternoon everyone. A number of ex-military personnel have joined the Scottish Government on fixed-term contracts, predominantly in health and social care and outbreak management as you'd expect. Are there any avenues under consideration to further enhance ex-military equipment or perhaps offer more permanent roles?

**Compere:** Caroline, I wondered if you might come to you to kind of talk about some of that military experience and how that's kind of added to the health and social care response.

**Caroline Lamb:** Yeah, thanks so just interested in the way that question has been phrased. So a lot of the military assistance we've had has been under a makar so we and that has been enormously helpful to us. Probably most useful to our NHS boards in that most recently that's involved in military setting up lots and lots of vaccination centres across the country. And indeed we also have military personnel involved in actually administering vaccinations as well so that's really helped us to ramp up capacity in that area.

**Caroline Lamb:** I think the other thing that we've drawn heavily on the military for has been around some of that planning and logistics experience in terms of so we use them as part of our when we were having to respond to requests from across the country for PPE. The military brought us some really helpful hard experience in in terms of managing what is a really significant logistical exercise and frankly I thought that dishing out PPE with a was a tough logistical exercise. then then managing vaccinators, vaccine premises. waste disposal .scheduling of individuals doing it in the right order- It is sort of PPE Plus. So we've been we've been hugely grateful for their assistance. And as indeed in terms of pulling in staff on fixed term contracts or under SLA's a lot from NHS boards and quite often with military backgrounds as well, which has really helped in some of that sort of hard logistical planning and delivery work. Thanks.

**Compere:** Thanks, Caroline, and just to add my own end in the operational end of this in supporting the HR Team for Health and Social Care across the last 12 months or so. And, we kind of found a rich stream of candidates and people coming in. There was contacts that individuals had through the ex-military route and yes we found some good double digits in terms of numbers of people who we recruited through that route as well.

**Compere:** Yeah, a really rich seam and as we're kind of getting feedback on how those people have been operating/performing we'll think more about how we might refer to that in the future, what skills and capabilities that kind of recruitment resource can bring to the organisation more widely. So, I hopefully that answers your question **[redacted]**....I've still got a hand up from yourself, **[redacted]**, I'm not sure if that's kind of legacy hand as they call it, I'm going to try and invent a dab hand.

**Permanent Secretary:** more practice, Jonathon.

**Compere:** There we go. So, who's up next? [redacted], if you're there do you want to come in next?

**[redacted] (attendee):** Hello yes, it's [redacted], it's a follow on from the last question. Have you considered maybe holding a voluntary list of leavers, like pensioners etc who have left for maybe for a 3, 6 month period of time, that could be brought in, in cases of emergency, who could be registered for a specific vacancy. Which would save additional impact on teams already under pressure across the Scottish Government.

**Compere:** Nicky, I'm going to look to you. I'm not sure if you were involved in that activity earlier on. Any thoughts on that question from [redacted]?

**Nicky Richards:** Yeah, certainly [redacted]. We have drawn in some of our recently retired colleagues in order to save some of those roles. And also delayed the retirement of some of our esteemed colleagues as well in order to hang to their skills. There are always a few complexities, we had to do a bit of work with Cabinet Office and others to try and get some flexibilities around pensions so that it didn't impact people who have already taken their pensions. You know that was clearly an area for us to work through. And, you know, surprisingly some people who have retired, they don't want to come and help.

**Nicky Richards:** They're quite happy doing what they're doing, who could believe it? But, certainly there are people out there, and if you know people then please do encourage them to get in contact with us because it's always helpful to know people who might want to get involved. It's obviously trying doing a mail drop to that population is not necessarily straightforward or logistically possible for all sorts of good data protection reasons and others. But certainly if know of people who would be keen to assist we can try and find ways of making that work.

**Compere:** Thank you [redacted]. Do try and keep the questions coming. Alyson Stafford, I'm not sure, I'd been keen to know - how does it feel to run a virtual budget in terms of working remotely at the point in terms of budgetary cycles and spending reviews and all that complexity. How was that in terms of taking us through?

**Alyson Stafford:** Oh Jonathon, well actually we run the programme for government first in September of last year which again is a massive cross-government effort to ensure that the priorities are there. And that set the scene. The thread through from the programme for government into the budget was really, really vital, both from the point of view of the content and also just how we do business. I'd just say a little bit more about the programme for government. That was rooted in some really good analytical work as in how Covid is impacting on our society across Scotland.

**Alyson Stafford:** So we took the national performance framework, we looked at all of those outcomes, and the teams did some really great analytical work, and that got published as well, before the Budget. To be able to say you know, where are those things were we've really seen the impact of Covid here in Scotland. But then going to the practical things that you were asking me about. I think what we've worked really hard at and the PFG work was led by [redacted] and Tim Ellis, and the budget work by Andrew Watson and a number of other colleagues in his team...was that exactly importance of really hard at their communication, having real structure to the process. And yes, it felt that it had taken longer.

**Alyson Stafford:** But actually I think there's been the opportunity to really include people in a really structured way. So there's been much more outreach, much more

engagement. I think people have worked really, really hard at that. And it's been incredibly dynamic. I think the hardest thing with all the work on budget whether it's been managing the budget this year, or setting the plans for next year, it's just that huge yo-yo there has been between actually rather scarily supporting spend happening in areas before we knew we'd actually got the budget to do that. And there's been separate sort of controls and arrangements put in place around so that we continue to uphold our competency as you'd expect in that area. But, there's been a lot of work really about those connections and those communications.

**Alyson Stafford:** A really good plan to work through and ability to adapt it as we came through as well. And we will still need to wait and see what comes through in the UK March budget to be really able to finalise what we need for next year. I think that the toughest thing was actually knowing and preparing that we wouldn't have our traditional budget weekend. The budget weekend is one of those things as anyone who's worked on the budget, or in the finance exchequer space. It's one of those things that sort of stays in your DNA forever. There's a huge team camaraderie and quiet calm working energy that comes with it. So trying to replicate that in a virtual space.

**Alyson Stafford:** So we had regular check-ins, we all had to make our own stash of the things that would normally get us through. My personal confession is having plenty of chocolate and the spots to pay for it afterwards. But we sort of tried to keep that sort of team sense. On balance it probably felt strangely calmer. That we were all able to sort of work in our own sort of protected areas. But there were still a sense of energy and purpose that came through. So, lots to take from it.

**Alyson Stafford:** One thing we will do which we done after all our key processes is a lessons learned. And I think we will absolutely mine that, and we were doing that as we went through the year and I would just say having that in a safe space where we can actually do that together has been a really valuable thing that we keep sort of, checking in with each other and what our various clients and stakeholders have found helpful, things that we need to adapt. Just some reflections there. Thanks Jonathon.

**Compere:** Thanks Alyson, that's helped prompt a few other hands to go up. So I'm going to go to [redacted] first of all. Then [redacted], got you next on my queue. So, [redacted], over to you. [redacted].

**[redacted] (attendee):** Hi everyone. I've just got a question for Katriona really, about...she may not thank me for it...but also we're post-Brexit period now. I just wondering if Catriona had any thoughts about what the big challenges for the organisation are going to be in that area over the next 6 months really?

**Katriona Williams:** Thanks [redacted]. All questions about Brexit are always welcome under any circumstances. I think Brexit, to be honest, has been a huge planning challenge for the organisation because we've had to plan for what might be the short-term consequences of Brexit, and actually some of the disruption we saw at Dover before Christmas, there's evidence that supply chains are quite fragile. But we've also had to think about the medium and longer term consequences of Brexit because actually leaving the EU has been a huge change and will be a huge change to many aspects of life. So, I think I would say that the Team I met when I arrived here in November has done a terrific job of planning for the short term challenges,

and has done a terrific job on all of that. And that team has actually been assisted by people from all over the organisation.

**Katrina Williams:** So, if you helped with that, thank you very much. The thing we are now getting to grips with are what will be the changes for the economy but also for us socially and in terms of important issues like the quality of the lives of the people of Scotland as we move through the medium and long term and I think the challenge is that we won't automatically know what all of those impacts are very soon. So, the excellent teams from DG Economy have been doing some work on what the economic impacts might be and I think we all collectively need to think very carefully about how those impacts might feed through to all of the things that feature in the programme for government and the national performance framework. So, I think we've got through largely the short term challenges though there are still a few. If you talk to the seafood sector you'll certainly hear that they think there are a few.

**Katrina Williams:** I think the big challenge is going to be understanding and understanding what the government can do to help either offset the bad parts of some of those changes or to take some of the opportunities that might arise from those changes and support business and support society in a way that enables us to do that. So, I think there are enormous challenges still to come but well done to everybody who has got us this far.

**Comperre:** Thank you. Now, we've three minutes left. I've seen three hands up one of those is yourself **[redacted]**, so we'll give the others a chance to ask their questions first and if we have time we'll squeeze your second question in. So **[redacted]**, over to you for your question.

**[redacted] (attendee):** Thank you. I found that this is quite also a collective time that you reflect on your own capability and I think it's probably tested people's leadership or maybe even more than any other times. So I'm quite interested in probably the permanent secretary's reflections on how the challenge of Covid has put people's leadership to the test and has it revealed any behaviour that you think wouldn't come out in normal day-to-day work.

**Permanent Secretary:** What a great question, **[redacted]**, and I know I've only got about 20 seconds to answer it, it's probably more of a PhD question I think than it is a mere Ask ET. I think it has been a unique set of challenges for everybody and I think it has been a unique set of management challenges, and a unique set of leadership challenges, and we know those are complementary, but actually quite distinctive. I think from the leadership point of view which you were particularly talking about and the behaviours, I have seen more honesty actually, I've seen more authenticity, I've seen examples of leading with kindness, and a certain amount of humility. That's not to say I don't see that in the organisation and in other parts of Scotland's you know civic society normally. But I think it's been enhanced, I think there's been a frankness and an openness in some exchanges.

**Permanent Secretary:** Sometimes I think there's been a level of admitting to anxiety, to personal concerns that perhaps particularly in the civil service we have felt more like we should keep a lid on it. We have a tendency to walk towards the bullets quite a bit and still just keep absorbing all the difficult things that are happening, and I think sometimes we've been reluctant to put our hand up and say I need some help here. And I've seen that both in day-to-day work but also quite



senior leaders, and I really embrace that and really welcome it. I think that kind of authentic leadership and one which helps us become more collective and more collaborative in our endeavours is absolutely essential for us in the future as an organisation, and I hope it will be something that will feature, and I think it will in our more day-to-day understanding of each other, better understanding of each other as well as in our business endeavours as well. So there's much more we could say and talk about that and I'll happily talk about it in a bit more length, but those are my initial thinking, that's my initial thinking on it.

**Compere:** In the interest I think that's a great point at which to kind of bring this all together and some of those reflections. So we've gone from changes to personal routines, personal grooming, covered the future World of work, the various kind of people elements to that, from Terms and Conditions, to social mobility, to the role of the military as a recruitment source, and also to our matters of government as well to budgets, EU exit, and even that leadership question.

**Compere:** What a great way to end, **[redacted]**. So, thank you all for joining, thank you all for your questions. I know the comms team and I'm going to be looking at some of the comments and trying to scoop up and kind of remaining things that are left on there by way of questions. But, I think we could do some sort of round of applause for everyone and your kind of time both on the panel but I think more importantly all of you as attendees for your questions and contributions today. So thank you all very much. [Clapping] Have a wonderful day everyone.