**Matt Ross:** Hello. I'm Matt Ross, Editorial Director of Global Government Forum, the publishing events and research business serving civil servants around the world. Welcome to our webinar on skills and systems remote working. We're going to look at how civil servants of all grades or professions and departments can adapt to working from home. The webinar is running in association with Microlink, a company providing systems and technologies that help people to compensate for any physical or mental problems they have. We're going to look at a number of topics including how people can adapt to working in the home environment, create their right workspace, adapt to a working style to operating a distributed team, and adopt technologies to help overcome the specific challenges around remote working. We have three speakers today: Dr. Nasser Siabi, who's founder and CEO of Microlink; Dr. Nancy Doyle, who is an occupational psychologist, the CEO of neurodiversity consultancy, Genius Within, and a post-doctoral research fellow at Birkbeck University of London, and Carl Ward, head of assistive technology, training, and workplaces accessibility assessor at Microlink. Before I hand over a couple of housekeeping notes, the webinar is being recorded in part so we can produce an article for publication in Global Government Forum will distribute that to all of you in due course. We have a captioning service on the webinar. It's produced by a company called Verbit. If you go to the bottom of Zoom window, you see so many called closed caption there. Simply click on that and the caption should begin. The system's got two options: an instantaneous caption, and one with a 15 seconds delay, which produces more accurate results. We're using the one with the 15-second delay because we intend to really help people who are hard of hearing. So if you feel like using it, I suggest you just switch off the sound, and focus on the captioning. Other people may wish just to keep an eye on it because it's remarkably impressive, actually, it's fast. We've set aside two periods for Q&A within the webinar, and we have some Q&As in. We'll be keeping an eye on that both. If you have questions for any of the speakers throughout the event, please do simply click on the "Q&A" box there, type your question in, and we'll put them to these speakers during those Q&A sessions. If you have any further questions after the event, Microlink will be happy to answer them. We'll be in touch, so When we have produced the event, produced the write up, we'll be in touch with everybody, with the write up linked to all the slides, linked to a recording of the event, and contact details so that people can get back in touch and ask any further questions they have. We're going to hear first from Dr. Siabi, Microlink's Chief Executive Officer. Nasser needs to unmute himself.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Hi, good morning to the American and the North American friends, and the UK colleagues this is  afternoon. Thank you for joining this webinar. We are really hugely excited with the participation number, really quite impressive. It's an important subject. What we have done over 30

years is to help hundreds of thousands of disabled people who have challenges at work to be able to do their work and be equal to their colleagues, their peers, whether it's in education, higher education, or in workplace. We've done that with basic interventions, which is psychological, physical, and productivity tools. Now, these are non-medical interventions. We've always done this on the basis to make an individual to be able to do their job and play on a level playing field. That has been the cornerstone of our success. Most companies who did this, obviously, they were doing the right thing, they were doing the legal thing. But throughout the past many years, they've discovered it's absolutely a great investment because the money that they spent to get those people up to the level that they can perform equal to the rest of their colleagues, the money that they spend is paid back five times over. We've done a huge case study many years ago, which is available, if anyone's interested. Why we think this is relevant is because people with disabilities have always struggled. Because of a lot of restrictions, companies, quite understandable, they had IT barriers where they couldn't do what they wanted to do because their software may have not take it into the standard issue of software the company uses or they won't be able to have access to the work remotely. We've been able to make that happen for tens of thousands of these people. Now that the world is changed, it's almost turned upside down, you find that almost everyone has become disabled because your access to their work platforms has been taken away from you. Now you have to work from your home with a restricted access to the equipment, the access to your colleagues, the meetings. So that certainly has that profound impact on everybody's performance, whether it's physical or psychological. We think that these many years of working would certainly help the situation right now for people to start considering this as an opportunity for creating a much more inclusive and a holistic workplace, because this lockdown will end and when it does, a section of the population will still have to be in a locked-in position. You saw that people who are over a certain age, at risk. So whatever we do now, we obviously would need to carry on doing it well into the future. We believe that the practice we've been following for years could apply and certainly would help millions of people to become even more productive. The work that we've done, as I said, there are three parts of interventions we do, and there are psychological. All the work, the psychological work is non-medical and is delivered by our brilliant analysts, Nancy and her colleagues, who provide work coaches, psychologists who actually help people to find the coping strategies when they're struggling. So her experience is going to be invaluable for today. Then we also have physical equipment that they need for their comfort. Again, when you work from home in a very restricted area, you need that comfort and that safety as well. Hopefully, once this is over, you will see the benefit of changing the way of working for the better, permanently, rather than just for now. I'll pass you over to my colleague, Dr. Nancy Doyle. Over to you, Nancy.

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Hi, everybody, and thank you, Nasser. So I'll just go straight in. So we're going to look at the psychological impact of remote working. As Nasser says, that is something that we're all having to do right now, but actually, it's something that many people with disabilities need to do in order to participate in the labor market. So the same principles that we're all learning for ourselves right now can actually also apply in organizing staff teams so that more people can participate in work. Talking to diversity and inclusion specialists across the world, it isn't just disabilities that could benefit from increased flexibility around remote working, it's also parents. So we're hoping that this opportunity that we've all had to have insight into remote working will create more inclusion for women in the workplace and for disabled people. So we're looking at well-being in isolation and we're looking at the cognitive impact of all this remote contact. So just a couple of notes before we start. Well-being in isolation, you cannot pour from an empty cup. So you might be here on this webinar to learn about things you can do for your staff, but I also want you to just take a moment and apply it to yourself. It's all very well thinking of other people. That's something that we tend to do in management and leadership is we think about how to organize our staff. Actually, we have to apply the same rules to our self. What do you need to

work at your best at this time? Also, another thing to note is that when there are peaks of drawn-out crises or disaster periods, something that we've learned already in psychology is that there is a double peak of anxiety, one at the start and one when we transition back. So be prepared. So thinking about the emotional needs of your staff, what you've just been through in terms of the reorganization, you are going to have to go through again. Only this time, when we have the second peak of anxiety, we're going to be in a position where many people will be grieving, where people have had genuine life-threatening experiences, and where people are really unsettled. So we need to be thinking about mental health as a safeguarding issue, not just the normal, run-of-the-mill, day-to-day, or let's talk to each other about how we're feeling. It needs to be a little bit more structured, scaffolded, and professional than that. We can go onto the next slide. Maria, if you could tip on to the next slide for me. There we go. Lovely. So the things that we already know about making remote working work brilliantly is about time and space boundaries. So there's lots of research into what we call "The always on culture". The always on culture is where we lose the separation between our work life and our home life. That has implications for the expectations that we're setting around when we reply to e-mails, about how available we have to be for our work, and how split our attention is. That's been shown to have quite a negative impact on people's well-being and anxiety. So right now, what we're going to have to do is we're going to have to create boundaries and routines. In general, for home workers, what we need to do is create boundaries and routines. So we can do that with equipment. If we don't have a lot of space, we can at least put away equipment at the end of the day. If we are working from home and we can create a separate space, that's great, but we might not be able to. Many of our employees and colleagues right now are working from home with young children, with other people in the house. I, for example, have a dog who's just started growling. That's not ideal. Sorry about that. I hope she doesn't distract us too much. So what is going on for people at home? Let's not assume that everyone can do what we can do. Something that really works is structuring the day and creating a company structure for the day. So you can start the day with a five-minute round robin and end the day with a five-minute round robin. People that have been remote working for a while, what they're reporting at the moment is that this is great because now everybody's doing it. People who were remote working when other colleagues were going into a physical building are now saying things like, "Well, actually this is brilliant. Now I feel part of the company, so I know what's going on." So these are some things that we can do now to make everybody feel included and to create some separation and structure, but actually, ongoing, this might be one of the things that we can keep because it's a very inclusive way to go about things. However, having said that, lots of people aren't able to stick to hours right now. So if you have staff with young children, they might be working very, very unsociable hours. I think the biggest thing here is talking about it. So understanding that equipment, space, time boundaries, coming up with agreements about, if somebody's working late at night, do you have to respond to them late at night, or if you're working early in the morning, are you allowed to send e-mails before nine o'clock? Can we use delayed send? Each team needs to come to an arrangement when you've got remote workers because everybody's remote working situation is different. So can we go on to the next slide? So emotionally and cognitively, remote working is very different being around in person. So the parts of the brain that you're using to process information right now are very different to if we were in a big room, if we were having a meeting, if we're at a conference, you've got less sensory stimulation available to you. So normally you're picking up cues from body language, you're noticing the reactions of your colleagues, you're aware of who's engaged and who's not engaged around you, whereas in this situation we're kind of isolated and we've got a very flat stayed image and one source of noise. So it's much harder for our brains to engage and extract the meaning that we normally extract out of conversation. Some people find that very draining and lots of us are finding that we used to be quite happy to have two-hour meeting and now we can really only handle one hour meetings and we need to put in breaks in between meetings. Some people find the cameras really overwhelming. there's evidence to suggest that the way

that we do video conferencing, where we stare into a camera and we've got a full-on face interaction. If I do it like this, so you're looking right into my eyes, actually, that's a fairly abnormal way of looking at each other and normally when we do it at times of great passion or when we're about to have a fight. So it creates a different emotional response for us that we're not used to and people will be muddling through that right now and try to work out why they're finding this really inaccessible and why they're not. So the idea really is to keep things as short as possible, to give people flexibility so if the camera is too much for people, don't insist on people having cameras on. However, lots of people really require some form of visualization. So I would advise not relying on phone meetings for groups more than three or four because just voice processing and no image whatsoever is even harder. So having a nice, colorful visual slide if you're not going to have video, that sort of thing. Then in terms of energy, this is a marathon, not a sprint. We're looking at lots of evidence right now that suggests that this isn't going to be a kind of ride, we've got a few weeks of shutdown and now we're going back up again. Actually, what we're really doing right now is accelerating what was already happening, which is moving out of our offices and moving much more towards remote access working. So we need to understand how to pace ourselves in these situations. We're going to be out of offices more, working on our own more, working from multi-locations more, and that's just how the world is going. So thinking about how we can make sure that we create company structures or team structures where events are paced and timed so that they're not as stressful as the last few weeks as they have been and things like the Pomodoro Technique. The other issue with being a remote worker is you don't have your colleagues around you to stimulate you in the same way. So people are finding it hard to concentrate and focus and the Pomodoro Technique is about setting timers so that you deliberately set the space for focus and then deliberately segment another space for moving around and actually standing up and stretching and not just sitting down all day and those things are really helpful. Okay. Now we move on again, thank you, Maria. The other thing that's going on when we don't have all of our full sensory information is and we're misunderstanding each other and we haven't got as much informal contact and we've got heightened anxiety as a kind of international baseline right now for most humans. So we're going to be more likely to jump to conclusions, to misinterprets and I recommend practicing pre-forgiveness. So you talk to each other about the fact that this is likely to happen and then is less disconcerting when it does. I have a colleague, she's actually my PA. She is one of the most efficient people I've ever met in my life. When this first started, she started sending out lots and lots of e-mails all the time. When I asked as a friend, "What's going on?" "Well, I need to keep letting people know what I'm doing because if I'm not present, then you're all going to assume I'm just sitting around in the bath, drinking wine and eating bonbons," and then I was very quick to reassure her that nobody was thinking that and everyone was quite sure that she was working at her best. But that kind of misinterpretation and assumptions that we're doing, that can be quite negative and it's very easy for things to spiral and particularly when everybody is stressed. So if you have a contract of pre-forgiveness where you are opening the space and saying, they're all going to be misunderstandings, we are going to tread on each other's toes, we're going to not stay up to date with what each other's doing. This is going to cause problems. Let's create some boundaries around that. Distractibility and hyperfocus. So with all of these things going on, the different cognitive demands of our communication techniques. Some people are going to find this really helpful. There are some colleagues that you have right now who find the office environment quite overwhelming and they might be going into hyperfocus right now. They might be doing their best work. They might be literally getting into the detail that they've not had time focus. They keep getting distracted, but lots of us will be very distractible and we'll be finding it harder to concentrate. So one tip for that is to look at times of day where people are most productive. You might find you got people who actually really welcome starting work super early because it's easier for them to focus when it's quiet or conversely late at night. General distractions, if you've got people who can't acquire the habit they acquire it they need, we do always recommend masking background noise. That's a really helpful

technique. If you're going mask background noise with music, it needs to be music that you know well. If it's music that you've never heard before or just a random playlist on Spotify, then actually the novelty of a new song is going to distract you. But if it's an album that is your favorite album that you're used to listen to when you were a teenager and you know it really well, it will just mask the background noise, so bit of a tip there. We're also finding that the news is very distracting. I have another colleague who was very anxious recently. Both she and her husband have existing conditions that mean they are particularly vulnerable to the virus and they have young children and her anxiety levels are going up and up and I noticed that she was wearing an Apple Watch that was literally pinging every five minutes with the headlines coming through and just happens to take it one time and go, "You know what, it might be time to turn the Apple Watch off for a little while. Let's just not have that level of distraction. Can we boundary the time?" Yes, I understand that you need to be aware of what's going on so that you can take the right decisions for your family, but let's boundary that and not be doing it throughout the day while you're trying to do other things. Another good tip for distractibility is to have a dump pad for intrusive thoughts. So as you're focusing on one bit of work and then you suddenly remember the e-mail you haven't responded to or the call that you've got to do tomorrow, just have that space, have a whiteboard next to your desk or a big A3 piece of paper, whatever you'd want to just put those things and then create time in your diary for picking them up. These are just a couple of ideas. There will be other ideas out there. So I really recommend just having a strategy session with your team and working through lots of these ideas because they can share best practice. If we go on to the next one. Self-care is important right now. You cannot pour from an empty cup and neither can anybody else. I think people who are doing lockdown with children, I think, will just need to go, "All hail, I have teenage children, and quite frankly, they are so easy by comparison to toddlers." It's just amazing what some families are dealing with and so self-care, normally, we look at things like exercise, nutrition, and hydration, thinking about places we can go or nice leisure activities, and at the moment, we can't do that. So we've been recommending things like, take time out to organize photos that you've been meaning to do for a while, or learn an instrument, or do some painting, make sure that your boundary in time to do this within your working week. But for some of the people that have got kids around and they're trying to work and manage the kids and the home learning, that's just going to be impossible. So one of the things that I say to people with young children around right now is that actually, sometimes, self-care is giving yourself permission to not be brilliant. If you just need to sit around in your pajamas for most of Saturday watching Peppa Pig and eating flapjacks, then that's what you need to do. Don't raise your aspirations at this moment. What we do recommend for people is that they have circles of support. I don't want to suggest that everything should be rolling up to line managers. I think supervisors and managers right now are in quite a pressurized situation where if each individual direct report is using them as the emotional support as well as the performance and structure of tasks, that's going to be quite overwhelming. So you can set up peer groups within your teams, check-in buddies, two or three people that keep an eye on each other, and are just there for a bit of a wind or a bit of a debrief, a bit of a letting off of steam. That's a much more sustainable way of doing it for this period and in general, actually. Next slide.

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** So just in summary, I think, in terms of emotions, note that there's going to be increases in anxiety around all qualms and anxiety affects our thinking. We don't think at our best when we're stressed. So if people's performance is dipping, we're just going to have to accept that for a little while and focus on the anxiety. We can acknowledge it, we can have settling moments planned in regularly, coffee morning breaks, once a week check-in buddy check-ins, and those kinds of things will help us to get through, and they'll actually going to bond us together. So some of the organizations that are doing this really well right now are reporting things like never feeling as close to their colleagues as they have right now. It's like being part of a family at the moment, the support that we're giving each

other. So how we lead and manage through this period can create the loyalty and engagement with work that we might have got distracted by. There are differences in people's ability to plan, prioritize, and consider time boundaries. We're not going to be able to enforce one set of rules for everybody. But what we do need to be able to do is talk about it. So if we make some of the time boundaries explicit, and we create flexibility, and we recognize that some people are going to need more help in this, some people are going to be really good at it, put them together, get them helping each other. Within that as well, we've got differences in sensory perception, differences in social perception, the nuances that we're losing from being face-to-face and talking to each other, that's going to create a misunderstanding. So remember to practice pre-forgiveness and remember that we've got differences in sensory and social perception that affect cognitive meetings. So whereas some of us might be extroverts and want to do nothing but have video calls all day, some of us who might be introverts, or have autism, or have sight loss or hearing loss and who find this form of communication quite draining, we actually don't need that much contact and we might want to step back. So make sure that you provide that sensory flexibility in your meetings. Closed captioning, send agendas in advance so that people feel prepared for what's going to happen, and provide as much visual stimulus as you need to, but giving people the choice of whether or not to engage in that if they find it easier or harder.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you very much indeed, Nancy. Thank you. That's a great and perfect timing. We are on track. I've got some great questions coming in. I just want to ask one myself first. When people are working remotely trying to do new things with a whole load of new constraints or in how they can operate, it's easy for tensions to arise between people. All the roles have been thrown up in the air and come back down. Nobody's had a way it worked out exactly. You don't know who's doing what and what needs to be doing. In those circumstances, it's easy for tensions to arise and we lack the informal ways that people might overcome those. Meeting over the kettle, just a smile across the office, we lack those ways of smoothing ruffled feathers. How can people who are feeling a bit aggrieved or bruised get relationships back on track and avoid falling into that fort of vicious circle?

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Well, that's why I think we need to practice pre-forgiveness. So we need to acknowledge that's going to happen so that people take it less seriously when it does. That's the other point of the check-in buddies, is sometimes you just need to have a whinge and you need somebody on the other end of the phone to go, "Yeah, yeah, I see what you mean, but do you know what, he probably didn't mean it. Is there anything here that you need to take forward?" There are structures for giving and receiving feedback that can be very helpful. One of the training programs that we use at Genius Within, and this is particularly helpful for autistic people who don't always understand social nuances in communication, is to take feedback and to take experience into the concrete and into the examples away from the misinterpretation. So if we take my example of my PA, who thought everybody would think she was lolling about in a bath not doing any work, her thing was, "I didn't want you to think that I wasn't engaged and working hard." So we can go into, "So what did I see? What did I hear? What did she/he see, or hear? What let her know that I might be thinking that? Was there anything I said? Did I send her an email chasing her for something that sent her on a spiral? What were the actual concrete events that led to the misunderstanding in the first place?" If you can go back to the concrete events and the examples, it's easier to then work out where two people's interpretations have diverged. I think, for most people with existing trusting relationships, this is going to be able to be handled with a bit of a laugh and a bit of a, " Oh well. No, that's definitely not what I meant." But if you've got colleagues where actually the relations were strained in the first place or where they had a communication difficulty related to a disability or mental health need, that's the point where you might need to at that point, bring in a supervision session with somebody who's professional because you don't want those things

spiraling and creating real anxiety that overwhelms and results in a withdrawal from the workplace. Is that helpful?

**Matt Ross:** Yeah. Yeah, thank you. Got a question from Debbie H. We've talked a lot about coping when you have lots of people around, lots of noise. She says, "Do the experts agree that those living alone are often the forgotten in the group? The isolation can be acute and is rarely acknowledged."

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Yes. Yes, I do. Yeah, I really do, and that's less of an issue around creating time boundaries because people are available. But it's more of how much responsibility do you want to take as an employer for maintaining well-being there? So something that we're doing at Genius Within, for example, is we're having coffee mornings. So there's a point in the day where you can just join in on a Zoom call. It doesn't have to be at work. You can just have a chin-wag about anything. Then the other thing we're doing is the Friday night quiz. So we're taking it in turns to write a quiz. Sometimes people turn up in fancy dress. So we're creating more social occasions for people to join in on which creates a sense of camaraderie. The other thing I found with some of the things I've been reading recently is that actually, right now, there are lots of people in that situation. So I have another colleague who started volunteering, and what she's doing is volunteering for our local community, and she's ringing other people who are on their own and isolated right now. So we've got quite a lot of older people in our community who are on their own, and she has made it her mission to spend two evenings a week ringing people to check in on them, which is also making her feel part of the community. So it's that whole kind of, what you want, you can reach out and give to others and then that provides a feedback loop into you and that's a thing you can suggest to employees. But you can also create events for employees, depending on what kind of employees you have. Not everybody wants to do a fancy dress quiz. That might be particular to us.

**Matt Ross:** Yeah. Got a question from Fernando Porio. "How do you deal with staff who don't participate at all or are all too quiet even if you're given the space and lots of opportunities? Is this what we should be expecting in this situation?"

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** For some people, yes. I saw a very, very funny tweet from one of the accessibility team at Microsoft. He's someone who's very active on Twitter. Michael Vermeersch, she's a great person to follow. He's autistic and very early on in this. He's always been a remote worker. As an autistic person, he enjoys the silence and the ability to focus and the ability to join in as and when he sees fit on his own terms. He said, "My diary is absolutely full of extroverts wanting video calls and I can't get on with any of my work. When will you all calm down and leave me alone," which I thought was quite amusing. So I think the thing is to not assume. You might find that the people who are withdrawn and isolating are doing so because that's just how they work best or you might need to be worried about them and you might need to go and do a bit of reaching out and prodding to see what's going on, and that's where the check-in buddies can really be helpful. Looking for things like, are they withdrawn from just social occasions or are they also withdrawn in that they're not productive, and they're not producing work, and they're not responding to emails? That's the point where you might want to be more worried about them. Choosing not to join into forced social events is not something to tackle necessarily. But when the work starts to go as well, you might want to worry about that person's well-being and make more effort to check in on them.

**Matt Ross:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Matt Ross:** Carl Burkett from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service ask, "What's the expectations from our employers when we are home-working if we're also home-schooling? Are we expected to do our usual amount of working hours and the same working patterns?"

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Definitely not the same working patterns, and that's why I was quite vague about the time and space boundaries. So what's working for some organizations is the beginning of the day and the end of the day, but being very aware that some people are actually having to fit their work into different hours. So I can't give advice on best practice there because it depends on your organization and different organizations have different needs. But in terms of if it's an employer or as an employee, this process is something that brings you closer together, that increases loyalty and trust and engagement, then definitely, you want to exert as much flexibility as possible, and you need to negotiate with your team. Would be lovely if within a team we had one person who was actually a bit bored and lonely and on their own and wanted to work twice as much, and another person that was overwhelmed with kids and needed to work less, and then they could just share the workload out between them and agree that was a nice way of going about it. It's going to be very difficult. It's going to be very tense. The issues that are going to arise from this are perceptions of justice and fairness. How come I'm being paid the same amount of money to do less work or to do more work than my colleagues? It's not fair that I'm expected to do the same amount as my colleagues when this is my situation. So people are going to go into what's fair and what's not fair. Managers are going to have a very fine line to tread on balancing those needs. With all things around fairness, transparency is the antidote. So you can't go across people's confidentiality boundaries, but what you can do as an employer is talk about the process that you're using to allocate work and to decide what's fair or not fair, and you can say, "Look, these are the draws, these are the difficulties. We're all doing our best right now. It's not ideal. There are going to be some imbalances for a while, but we have to look at the bigger picture," and just keep communicating about that. I think when things don't get spoken, they become unspeakable. What we don't want is a load of back channel sniping about things that may or not be fair. So be very transparent about the process and give people the opportunity to talk about it one-to-ones, and ask them, go and get that information. Do you feel that what's happening right now is acceptable, sustainable, fair? Is there anything different that we could do to support you? Those are the kind of questions that you can ask to maybe draw some of that out.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you, Nancy. Got a question from Colin Bonfield. He's just started a new role at the start of the lockdown. I've actually got friends in similar positions. They had to come in and furlough people and try to build new relationships across the organization. Any advice to people in those situations?

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** As in doing the furloughing?

**Matt Ross:** Well, no. I suppose how you build relationships with people and you've never met them, and you're doing quite complicated, difficult things.

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** You know what? I actually think this is a wonderful opportunity to build those relationships. We can reframe this as this is an easier time to do it because people's boundaries are different. We are being more honest about how we're feeling in the workplace. We are all in the same situation in terms of the ability that we have to leave the house. We're not in the same situation in terms of how easy that is for us, but what we've got is this commonality where we can talk about our situation and have a bit more informal disclosure than we might do normally. What we could find is that that brings us together.

**Matt Ross:** Yeah. I'm looking maybe a bit far ahead for this stage in the webinar, but a couple of people asked questions actually around this. Jordan Miller, "I'm surprised myself by enjoying where I'm working now. I'm actually more nervous about returning to the working environment." We received another question from Liz Baker, the Environment Agency. She's enjoyed aspects of the lockdown, missed parts of working life, but in her voluntary work with the homeless charities, she found it quite overwhelming being surrounded certainly by people who are making [inaudible] . It made me realize I will need to adapt back. Is there anything people can do to prepare themselves for returning to something like normality?

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Well, I think the first thing is just to acknowledge that that needs to happen and that's really important. So everybody needs a back to work plan. Those of us working in HR and leadership, we really need to start creating that back to work plan now because it might take a little while. As I said right at the beginning, we've got the double peak. Though as you go into a disaster situation, people get into an overwhelming state of anxiety, and then it normalizes for awhile, and we create a holding pattern. Then as things return to normal, as we all breathe out a sigh of relief, all of the hugeness and enormity of the past hits us in one go and we become very anxious. If you align that with suddenly becoming surrounded by people and noise at the same time, we are likely to have some fairly serious mental health issues going on. So we do need a plan, and it will have to be bespoke to each organization on what's reasonable and what's practicable. But one of the things I'm really hopeful of in this period is that we've all learned how viable remote working can be for many people, and I've got a hunch that we're not going to go back to normality. So for starters, we're not flicking a switch here. We're not going to be just flicking the lockdown off, and that'll be that forever. It's going to be bumpy for a few months and possibly years, and so we've got to have an easing in gently. But when we finish that process, let's really look at what we actually need in terms of face-to-face contacts. We could be so much more accessible to a wide range of people if we just had more flexibility in terms of when we work. In mid April, I was looking at an article in The Economist, looking at the Chinese economy and how it was rebounding from lockdown in the Wuhan area. They were back up to 80 percent manufacturing capacity by the middle of April, but commercial letting and sales was only at 50 percent, and I think that's quite telling. If we're going to change our working conditions, we're going to be less dependent on commuting, less dependent on going to the office, and I don't think that's a bad thing. I think that's potentially an opportunity for lots of people with caring responsibilities who tend to be women, and so therefore, from gender equality in the workplace and also for people with disabilities who find it harder to commute, people with disabilities who require a certain set of quite intense technology to support their work. These things can be more readily accepted now because we've all had to have an experience of them, and I think that's a benefit. So when we plan to go back, let's plan to be more flexible, let's plan to be gentler on each other, let's plan to have this remote option for people that need it.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you very much indeed, Nancy. We will come back to you shortly, but we want to have a look at some of the issues around workplace, equipment, and working methods. So we're going to hear briefly from Nasser again, and then we'll go to Carl, the Head of Assistive Technology Training for Microlink.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Thank you, Nancy. That was brilliant as usual. Nancy, very rightly focused on the mental health aspect of your workforce, and that's extremely important right now because of the circumstances. However, I think the other important part is the physical well-being, and physical comfort and safety. We, as a company, we were a bit ahead of the rest in terms of sending people home to work from home about few days before the lockdown. I felt that was inevitable. So any key staff were

given the laptop. They soon discovered just having the tools is not enough, they need to create a safe environment so they can actually do the work and do it without hurting themselves. Quite frankly, the way we treat our body is not how it's supposed to be, and very soon, we'll discover it will have a long-lasting damage if you're not careful. So what we have got, the two interventions about comfort and safety plus the productivity. So that gives you the wholesome person who can actually contribute to the work that they've been paid to do. A lot of people are grateful for their job. I've got a few people who are very upset for being furloughed. They want to work, but obviously, the nature of the work, we could only bring some of them for now and then we keep rotating them. But every one of them requires that physical environment in which they can actually do their job without feeling discomfort, feeling stressed, and obviously, physical stress, I'm sure Nancy will agree, also leads to mental stress and vice versa. So what we need to do is to minimize that by not allowing people to treat work like they do in their leisure. Work is very intensive. It requires a lot of focus, and by that nature, your whole body becomes tense throughout the work you're doing. Even for half an hour of meeting, actually, you start feeling the tension in your body. So in order to do that, you really have to create that comfortable environment. So Carl will actually go through this with you and show you what we need to actually take care of in terms of well-being and safety, and comfort, and also, what productivity tools you're required to give your people to actually overcome the current situation, which is quite unusual and unprecedented. So over to you, Carl. Thank you.

**Carl Ward:** Thank you, Nasser. So as Nasser has said, obviously, being comfortable at home is a massively important thing. So I'm going to talk about some of the physical impacts and also things we can do to help, and also some technical technology based things as well that we can help to make you feel more comfortable in the home. As an assessor, I see many different forms of bad posture, which tends to be one of the main problems of discomfort. Even in the workplace where people are given the right equipment to work with, I'm still seeing that happening. It's even more so with somebody who's working from home because they generally haven't got the right equipment, and they're generally a laptop user as well. Bad posture leads to fatigue, potential injury, and a lack of productivity. So it's really important that we educate people and help them to understand about sitting. It's such an incredibly important thing. Here on the screen, I've given you a few examples of the way that people often sit badly. So for the first thing here on the top left, we've got the slouch. That's somebody leaning forward towards their laptop, usually towards the screen and towards the keyboard so they can get closer to it, their feet off the floor as well. Your head is about the weight of a bowling ball. So if you imagine holding a bowling ball out in front of you, you know that it's quite a lot of muscles under tension to allow you to do that. So leaning forward, your whole center of gravity is in the wrong position. So all of those muscles are working constantly to help you to keep your position like that. Your legs as well not touching the ground, you're going to be taking away a lot of the circulation from your upper legs. The recline. So actually reclining back in your chair in this way, stretching your legs out, it looks like it's probably going to be comfortable, but again, our center of gravity is in the wrong position. It's not helping at all. Also, our arms are outstretched in front of us for long periods, which, again, is not going to be at all healthy for us for neck, and back, and shoulders. Lastly, the horizontal. Now as a homeworker, yes, your sofa is a lovely, comfortable place to be to watch the television. It's not a wonderful, comfortable place really to be to sit and do your work and use your laptop. You can make it comfortable for a little while. On these pictures here, we've got someone lying down with a cushion at their back, that does help, but you're completely bending your body in a way that really it's not very comfortable to sit in for very long periods of time, damaging to the neck and the upper back often. So the next slide, please. So homeworkers really should just be encouraged to follow a few simple rules to create a healthy working environment for themselves if they can. If they're able to, we'd always recommend that actually, you give them their own display screen environment self-assessment to do as well so they can actually go through some of

these points and look at how they're sitting and look at the way that they are to make sure that they're actually paying attention to it. Often, people are just completely unaware of where their bodies are once they're sitting. So doing their own self-assessment is a good thing. Work at a desk or a table if you can, and I know that often, sometimes, that's not going to be the case for some people that can do that, but somewhere where you can get your legs underneath the table is important. Working at a kitchen counter is often a really bad thing. You can't get your legs under, so people tend to twist. Again, that's twisting the whole back and causing them problems there. If you're able to get your legs under, you can move yourself closer to your laptop, which is what we want. Use a separate keyboard as well if you're using a laptop. Moving the laptop away from you, bring in that keyboard closer to you so that you're able to actually get your arms into a really good position is going to be helpful. A mouse as well. Trackpads on laptops, notoriously bad. If I use one for five minutes, my hand, I feel it hurting straight away. It's a very stressful thing to use, a trackpad. So using a proper mouse is really helpful or a roller ball mouse or an ergonomic mouse in that way can be helpful as well. Raising the laptop up to a position where the top of the laptop is actually at eye level is important too. We tend to slouch over our laptops. We move towards them,  doing this kind of thing, not helpful at all. Bring that laptop screen up to eye level so that you're just looking down slightly between zero and 40 degrees down. Your eyes can naturally do that without too much trouble. If you're moving your neck, then that's causing a problem. If you have your screen too high, if you try looking at the ceiling, it's very difficult to look at the ceiling. So it's got to be at that eye level to make it work in that way. A laptop riser, a laptop stand is all that you need there. If you don't have one of those, telephone directories, if they still exist where you are, great things. Box files, reams of paper, something just to bring that laptop up to the right height. If you have an external monitor, great, use it, that's really good. Don't fall into the trap of using that external monitor with a laptop screen below it as I see many people doing. Again, you're still giving yourself that same problem where the laptop screen is much below you, the largest screen much too high. So turn off the laptop screen and just use the bigger screen. It's there for a reason and it will work for you in a much better way. Lastly, your chair. Again, if you've got a chair that's height adjustable, brilliant, that really does help. If you don't and you're sitting on one of your dining room chairs or something like that, look at the height of it. If you've got your arms up an unusual angle, put a cushion underneath yourself, raise yourself in that way. If you find that your feet are dangling from the floor at that point, put something under your feet as well to support them. That could be very useful. Simple things like maybe just rolling up a towel or something in that nature behind you in the small of your back for a little bit of lumbar support can help on a straight back chair as well to give you that bit of extra support too. Sit-stand is good. You see someone there using a sit-stand environment. If you're able to work at the kitchen counter, brilliant, if it's at the right height for you in that way. But yes, you can work at the kitchen counter standing. Alternating your position between the sitting and the standing is incredibly healthy, and really does promote a very good posture if you're able to do that. The next slide, please. So equipping your staff with the right tool significantly lowers the risk of injury and fosters well-being and productivity. We, at Microlink, we commonly supply a homeworkers kit for many homeworkers that actually incorporates many of these sorts of devices. Laptop stand, as we discussed, mousepads, wrist rests, keyboards, screens, even you see there are an inflatable lumber support that you can use. So you can use that instead of using that towel scrunched up. These have all been proven to really help a homeworker get themselves into a much better posture by using fairly minimal tools with what they have. An active noise canceling headset as well is something we often provide. Nancy mentioned this before about trying to shut yourself off from the environment around you as well. Often, we provide things like that too that actually do stop a lot of the noise and distraction around you too. The next slide, please. So moving on to the technologies. As Microlink, we provide many assistive technology solutions to people with disabilities. But actually, a lot of the technologies provided, there are absolutely fantastic productivity tools for everybody. Getting your text into the computer, the whole thing of typing. Some

people don't find typing to be a particularly easy thing. I still use these two things most of the time for typing. I'm not very good at all. So speech recognition really is an excellent technology nowadays to use. It didn't used to be that great in the old days absolutely. You may well have tried it and it may well not have worked very well for you at all. I'm sure that most people have come across it in some form or other nowadays with things like Alexa or Siri. That might be a bad thing, I suppose, if shouting at it. But still, the technologies now for actually getting text into the computer are very well developed and very good. Technologies, for example, such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking is a commercial product that you can use. Very developed, allows you to work well with multiple vocabularies, multiple languages. We can correct scripts, do all sort of things that will actually allow you complete hands-free control of your computer as well if you want. But even your in-built operating systems now have become very developed and well-worth considering. So Microsoft have the speech recognition system within their Windows 10 now which is very good as basic dictation. Apple as well now have introduced the voice control system which is very adaptable and works very well too. Next slide, please. Going in the other direction, actually getting your computer to talk to you. Again, text to speech tools, we often use them for people with disabilities or maybe you have adverse conditions where they have a difficulty in reading and enough to hear the information is very helpful for them. But again, useful for everybody. Reading from a computer screen and particularly from a laptop when you haven't got much screen area to work with is not very good. It's very fatiguing for most people, particularly when you're reading long multiple page documents. It's just not a great reading environment really. So by using a text-to-speech system, we can sit back in our chairs, get it to start reading that document, we're hearing it and many of the technologies allow you to have the text highlighted on the screen as well. So we're hearing it and seeing it. So a multisensory kind of experience. So for many people they find that a much more absorbent way of being able to read information. So that's well worth considering, and it means that you're not having to crane to see the screen of your computer. A few things here, some commercial products. ClaroRead, Texthelp, Read & Write are fantastic text-to-speech tools. But they've got a whole wealth of other tools in there to help with reading and literacy. But Microsoft have an amazing system which is free now that you can download called the Immersive Reader, which gives you text-to-speech systems, highlighting of text, dictionary functions, lots of really useful things that you can use to help you to digest the vast amounts of texts that a homeworker may well have to from a laptop screen. The next slide, please. Lastly, mind mapping. Now, this is a wonderful tool. We can use this in a collaborative way as well if we're in the workplace, which I think is a great way of doing things. If you're not familiar with mind mapping, you may well have seen something like you see here on the left-hand side of the screen, where we've got a hand-drawn mind map diagram. I think children are taught this within school. Other people like using it. In any case, it's a really visual and engaging way of working. We've got a topic, we've then expanded that topic out with some branches with main topics around it, which we then expand it further as the thoughts come to us. We work in this in a really non-linear fashion, something I find really using myself to work in this way. So I don't need to think about the start, middle, and end of what I'm doing. I can just think about things as they come to me, put them onto the map as they go. It's great. It really is visual, and it helps us to look at something in this way; very engaging. But traditionally, it's not really a transferable kind of way of working into the workplace. So we wouldn't really encourage people to use this as a day-to-day thing itself. You can't present a mind map in this way to the board of directors for a new project that you're working on. So we need to work in a different way. There is software now, lots of software systems. You'll see here on the right-hand side of my screen, I've got a picture of a mind map that's been created within a computer. There's a particular application called MindView. There are others: MindManager, Ayoa, that allow us to do this within the computer. We can put our ideas very quickly and easily into the computer, onto the computer screen, organize them in that visual way. Fantastic. But, and this is the power of it, that we can then take that information and turn into that linear fashion. So you see there on the right-hand screen of those two, we've got a Word document,

which is our standard start, middle, and end document, with a title and chapters, and all the things that you would do with a standard document or report. It's created that for you just from that visual document. I'm going to hand over to Nasser now because Nasser's going to talk about a couple of other products and solutions that we have that you might find useful. Thank you, Nasser.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Thank you, Carl. That's a very insightful. This one is a bit more clever technology. Clever in the sense that they've recently come out to help people to do things really more productively, as well as helping disabled people. Right now, everyone is suffering from information overload. You have tons of information coming to you that you could have in a matter of five-minute conversation by the water cooler, or having a cup of tea together. Now, it's coming to you in a formal big document and email. You have to read it all. Taking information is not very easy. So what you do is, as Nancy quite rightly says, Pomodoro Technique means you have to also find time to relax. You can't sit behind your screen for hours and hours. But relaxation also could mean that you could still engage in the work without having to be trapped behind the desk. So for example, this OrCam MyReader, which is recently developed for blind people, it captures the information on a printed copy, converts it into audio, and you're listening to it. That's extremely useful for a blind person who wants to read menus, or read books, or magazines. They have created a new version of that, which is essentially a later marker. You put a pointer towards a page, it scoops the entire content of that page, reads it back to you, instantly, like a real-time scanner. Now, of course, you can use that one for reading what's on your screen, or you can do it on what's on an e-mail, or a printed copy, or even a book. That's quite useful for that. The second part involves brain science. Now, I'm not the expert in brain science. Someone told me, "Don't talk about things you're not good at." So I'll leave that to the scientists. But I know one thing for sure. Brain is rewireable, if you practice in particular ways and they tell you that if you work in a particular way, after a while, the brain adapts to that. So that's the nature of your brain. So SuperReading was actually developed by someone in Silicon Valley to help very busy professionals to be able to read much faster. Now, not only just read much faster, also, comprehension also has to be high. So the technique they developed actually allows you to read up to five words a go rather than single word at a time. If you do this for a month, around 20 minutes a day, it shows that you can speed up your reading by a factor of five, that means 3-5 times faster than your normal speed. It's really worth trying at a time where you've got so much to read through, and the time investment would be really good. These are their online tools. We've actually we've been dabbling with a lot of technology. Next slide, please. Now, the second part of this, what we know about the future, there's going to be a wave of people's mental health. Now, I don't know about, again, too much of the internal clever signs of these things. But wearable technology has become part of our lives. People wear things to help them to become more disciplined in what they do, whether it's to do with jogging, or to do with weight watching. There are tools now in the market, what they called neuro-feedback. One is actually approved by the NHS, that people can actually use when they've got depression. Does it work, and doesn't it work, I think that the user will decide whether it's good or not. It's not up to myself or the science to say, "Well, actually, there's no foundation for it." If a person thinks that device is going to help them, it's useful. So this particular one that we've actually used, and I will tell you with a caveat. I trialed for a group of my staff to actually see whether this technology works. All it does is allows people to do those exercises, the mindfulness, the breathing, and over a time, the data, it shows them how they're improving, and then matches it to the individual's feedback. Is this going to be the panacea for mentors. No, of course not. Nothing is. There's no silver bullet for any problem we have in society. What it does do, when the time comes up, a lot of people need a lot of interventions, we need a lot of options for them. People need to actually go and find those help because we do know mental health right now is the biggest cause of unemployment throughout the world. Whether you've become unemployed then have a mental health, or you have a mental health become unemployed, the facts are, the highest number of people out of work have a mental health. So I think if the numbers

increase, we're going to have to find solutions. I'm not sure if we've got enough professional and medical people to do that. So I think, again, wearable technology could offer a way forward. As I said, this one has been very good for some people. They found it extremely useful, and some just found it not for me. Great. Well, that's the way of technology. Next slide, please. Here is basically myself and Nancy. We'll just do a quick sum up. Nancy, please, over to you.

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Hi there. Sorry, I've been busy answering people's questions in the Q&A, and I lost my unmute button. Actually, this builds on some of the questions I've been being asked. How do we take some of this forward? I saw a wonderful meme on Twitter the other day, and it said, basically when we go up, it's one of those quadrant models, in the view of, I think it's George Box who said, "All models are wrong, but some of them are helpful." This is a helpful model where, when we're thinking about how we reintegrate, we've got four categories. One is new things that we're going to keep, one is new things that we don't need anymore, and one is old things that we've ditched, that we're going to keep ditched, and one is old things that we're going to reinstate. Some of these things around managing project work remotely, looking at the way teams perform and the way we measure performance based on outputs rather than input, and thinking about some of the remote communication and how helpful it's going to be, those can go into the new things we're going to keep boxed. Let's pop them in and let's have that conversation as we come back, let's find out. It's very easy to just rock up a quick SurveyMonkey, what's worked well for you over the last few weeks, what hasn't worked well from you? Let's put in place some of those structures. So because I've got a blended team, I've got a small head office and then actually, most of my staff are split out across multiple locations. Those that were mainly remote have all said that they've enjoyed this period and they feel more connected to the company than ever before, and I think part of our core structure now is going to be keeping regular dial-ins. We've been having a start the week meeting as managers and all our remote managers are just loving it, and we did our monthly meeting with everybody dialing in. Whereas normally, it's most of us there in person and a few people dialing in and then it creates that separation. So it's really just going, "Right. What are we going to keep? What's worked really well that we're going to keep and do more of? What hasn't worked so well that we're very glad to give up, and what did we use to do that we actually now realize is a complete waste of time and it's been actually making life harder for us, not better?" I'll go back over to you, Nasser, for a sum up?

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Nancy. Actually, we may have skipped the Q&A session, my apologies. I jumped that. We'll come back to that after finishing remarks. Now, as an employer, I have several people out there, some on furlough and some on remote working. Establishing informal channels within the company that can have their own social network, using Microsoft Teams has been great. So you could have your own little private network conversation, and indeed, if you are new to the company, this is a great time to get involved because we have an everyday chat facility and people contribute what they've done. A lot of our people who are on furlough, they're actually helping volunteering for NHS, they come back with that experience, they go out shopping for elderly. So it's actually built a real sense of family, and I think that's really been helpful. There are people who really can't, they don't want to stay at home. Again, they need psychological help. We reach out to them. They come back to us and we have that conversation. So I think it's not about all just work and what you produce. It's actually, are you well enough to produce it for us? Quite frankly, as a company, we've never struggled with having disabled people working for us. More than half the workforce are disabled. The most motivated are the disabled people, and right now, I think they're the ones who are more resilient, if you ask me, because they used to work flexibly and be able to do their job, and there are lots of people I know in the organizations that we've helped. If they had the flexibility, they have actually been over-productive. So I think right now, what I would say is, look after your workforce. Just make

sure they know you're there. They don't need much help other than they know somebody cares. Giving them the task to do, also understand that the tasks don't need to be done in the same way as the old way. Try to be flexible, and some of that actually will help you overcome some of the tensions and some of the conflict. I do actually have a finger on the pulse for a lot of my staff because I do reach out to them once in a while, even out of the blue, just say, "You okay? Is there anything we can do for you?" So I think this is really a very good time to bring that compassion to the business, and I think this lockdown has really brought the best in people, and let's harness that. Next slide please. Matt, if you're able to do the questions now now, we can.

**Matt Ross:** Yeah, we can do it. We'll come back to this briefly at the end. Yes. Thank you all for that. I've got a good set of questions still coming in. I'm still watching the questions, the Q&A. If you have any further questions, do send them in now if it's something that was prompted from those last 20 minutes or so. One question I have is from Dr. Fabbri, who's a financial manager in the municipality in Rimini, Italy. "I've seen lots of monies being granted for training about smart working, but nothing provided from institutions about buying new hardware, such as laptop, PC, which is fundamental to doing smart working at home. Where staff are encountering problems in securing suitable equipment from their employers, are there are routes or arguments or ways people can get leverage to get what they need?"

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Actually, that is really one of the mysteries to me about business leaders. It's false economy. I had a brilliant public sector worker who was allowed to go home and signed off on a sick leave because she didn't have the equipment to work, and the equipment didn't cost a lot. But the salary that she gets does, and it's a public sector, and right now, all the pressure's on them. I think they do actually need to insist on getting equipment because my worry about this lockdown, one of the darker side of my brain tells me, if the disabled people or people who are vulnerable don't get the opportunity to prove themselves, they'll never get that opportunity again in the future. Because when it comes to deciding who was brilliant, who was performing, who wasn't, then those people will actually be left behind. So if you really want people to do the work, you've got to give them the right equipment, the right tools. If you don't, then quite frankly, those people would be the ones who'd be worse off. It'd be a shame if they're not. We know that a lot of clients or companies send staff home. It was almost that overnight decision. Very quickly, they realized, actually, it's not working for them, so they now have started sending equipment to them. It's the afterthought, but better late than never. So I believe that you should go back to your employers and actually insist on getting the right equipment.

**Matt Ross:** There's another question I have from Ruth Ashley in Detroit, Michigan, who has had lower back and neck issues, has been through various physical therapy sessions. Now working from home, these are being exacerbated again. Is there anything that people in that position can do to either secure further support or find ways around their physical problems?

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Before Carl jumps into this, I think his area of expertise, well, I would actually highlight one thing. I had a similar situation with someone who had multiple operations because of those condition, and she was about to have another one. Until we sent one of our ergonomics experts to go in and see what's going on, we discovered she had all the equipment; it wasn't set up correctly. Within few minutes, she said she felt so much better. She started now being more active. So it's sometimes, you've got to have the right equipment and Carl will tell you what you need. But you've got to make sure you do follow the correct principles of that and you've got to make sure they're set up correctly. Over to you, Carl.

**Carl Ward:** Absolutely, and Nasser's exactly right. I see that as well. Obviously, some of the guidance that I've given today of being mindful about your body, I think, is important. That thing about posture, and I even see people with all the right equipment still working with a bad posture. So it's about actually being mindful, thinking about how you're sitting, looking at yourself. Yes, if you've got a fantastic ergonomic chair and some of those sorts of things, it can be massively helpful, but it's still about sitting. You can still get yourself into a reasonably good ergonomic position, even using a kitchen chair to some extent. So be mindful, I suppose, about your body is the best advice.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** One thing I will add, and it's a message to maybe the employers other than the employees. Musculoskeletal condition is the biggest cause of absenteeism. We've demonstrated that in our big case study, that if you get the right equipment and they don't cost much, it costs several hundred dollars at best, you can reduce the absenteeism by 80 percent. We have that long longitudinal study done over thousands of people, that within a year after the intervention, their absenteeism dropped by around 80 percent. So again, employers should invest to make sure the work environment, at home and at work, is safe and does not cause fatigue and safety issues.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you. This is actually another related question from Rich Jones. "How can risk assessments related to reasonable adjustments be conducted without face to face contacts?"

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** That's Carl's.

**Carl Ward:** I think there certainly will be barriers with certain conditions, but certainly, the whole thing here where we're working with a video environment. I've been doing some assessments where I've been working with someone over a system like this and being able to actually see them. For me, certainly if it's ergonomic factors and I really do need to see the individual. I've been able to do that actually using the video conferencing system. So I think we can do that. An environment is important for me as an assessor, for me to understand that. But for many conditions, I can do quite a lot. Certainly for complex disabilities and physical problems, then I really do want to be there face to face. I don't think there's any substitute for that. For many ergonomic issues, I think we can do this with video. I wouldn't just do that over a telephone; that wouldn't work. I do need to have some visual context.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you. I just got some wider questions. Now, there's a couple of questions on a related point. Nina Pinmo says, "Nancy's insights really helpful. How do I balance my duty of care for staff, needing to see them, to check they're okay, with not insisting on cameras being used?" Raphael Scarey, "As a manager, I also need to control and manage my team. Targets still need to be reached, results are expected. While psychological impact should be managed, we need to have other processes in place to monitor outputs and results. Any ideas how we can strike a balance between control and understanding our staff?"

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Well, is that not just the question of managers all over the place at anytime? I think, that's always where we're at in management of staff. We need to balance control and getting results. In relation to the first question, I think those two go together, and what I would advise people to do is to be curious rather than contemptuous. So when you're not seeing the results that you want to see and when you're not getting the contact that you need to feel reassured that that person is okay, approach them with a mindset of curiosity to explore what might be happening cognitively, in terms of their ability to concentrate and plan, emotionally, in terms of any anxiety or stress that is extra to normal. Then very practically, in terms of the tools they've got available to them to use and whether or not they need something else. So if you approach all of those things curiously, what's going on for you right now? I

think having the right kind of mindset when you go into those conversations will get you the results that you want. Yeah, the intrusiveness of a video call, it's difficult to insist on, but there are other things that you'll notice if that person isn't okay. They might not want to do a video call with you, but if they're not okay, then it won't just be their lack of facial expression that you're missing. It will be a quality of their work, a tone in their email, the absence of niceties and camaraderie. So you'll see those things withdrawing as well as their face. So I think, from a safeguarding perspective, we can look for other flags as well as requiring people to see us. It depends what kind of safeguarding rules you would put in place normally. So if you had to forget all this lockdown stuff for a minute, just under any circumstance, at what point do you intervene as a manager? At what point does it become your responsibility? How helpful can you be? You don't want to cross any boundaries and people have a right to privacy. We don't want to mistake employers for as having a familial responsibility. It's nice when we have that trust and collaboration with our staff, but it isn't necessary. There's a fine balance between being invasive and controlling versus supportive and collaborative.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you. We have a question coming from Tessa. She's disappeared, unfortunately. Nasser, that one has disappeared, unfortunately. But you said you were going to answer this. It was about any suitable time management software that might be useful.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Yeah, that's disappeared from my screen. Yeah, there are quite a few, actually. There are some that's free to use and there are some commercial ones. What I will do is put back in the answer when we go back to them because we need to give them links as well.

**Matt Ross:** Right.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** In fact, a lot of these technologies really came from the university students with neurodiversity and they struggle. So there's lots of programs designed just for them. That's what we used also, they've come to business. I'm sorry, I've lost that. I was just about to type that and I lost the screen for some reason.

**Matt Ross:** Yes, it disappeared. I'll take note of they're removed. We'll get back to it individually.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Thank you.

**Matt Ross:** Good. There's another couple of wider questions. One, Lisa Rando asks, "Do you see any differences between the way that public and private sector organizations are handling these issues?"

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** My personal experience, private sector are leading on this at the moment, which is a shame because public sector care of duty is much more robust. It's a bit more, I would say, should be a bit more proactive. But it is not to the level the private sector are doing. Especially, private sector multinationals are trying to do this globally because they really see the benefit in terms of business, the commercial benefit. For every pound, or every dollar they spend, they can get five dollars back. That's actually proven, it's not like a number. So I think that is where I think the public sector should do more. I understand there are complexities, but I believe that there is room for improvement.

**Matt Ross:** I don't know if anybody else has seen any differences?

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** I'm just seeing differences generally between good competent leadership and not competent leadership, and I don't think that whether you're private sector or public sector that's

defining any of that. I'm seeing good examples in both sectors, bad examples in both sectors, and the resounding commonality in good leadership at this moment is communication. The more communication, the better. Even if people choose not to engage in it, the fact that it's there is making the difference, and one of the things that I'm really picking up on, and I wrote one of my Forbes blogs about it, is the way good leaders right now are communicating process in the absence of certainty. So if we don't have answers, we still communicate process, and that, I think, is a big takeaway. So if everyone wants to just write that down, please write that down. In the absence of certainty, you can still communicate process, and that is reassuring for people who are looking for some sort of leadership or management or competence. A good example of it that I put in my Forbes blog was, General McMaster, the American Army Corps of Engineers, who was going into New York several weeks ago when everybody was really freaking out about what was happening, and he said, "Look, we don't know how many people are going to need this care, but this is what we're going to do. We don't know all of this, but we're going in. We're doing to this to the Javits Center, we've got these people coming in," dah, dah, dah, and he went through a list of everything that the Army Corps of Engineers was going to do to support New York. What he couldn't say was, "This is when we'll have a vaccine, this is how many ventilators we're going to have, this is how many people are going to need care." He just talked about what they were able to do and what they were going to do, and when they were going to do it, and it was beautiful, and everybody found it really reassuring. So I think that's the kind of thing that we can look to right now, and it doesn't have to be public sector or private sector.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** I believe the current situation will be a game changer. We all went into this unequal. We ended up in this situation all equal, everybody is affected the same way. We all work inflexibly. We all have the equipment we need more or less. So when we come out of this, if the employers, the planners really know how to harness maximum out of their workforce, they will do the same. They will actually give the flexibility to people, they're given the right tools, and they have given access to their platforms that previously, they weren't able to achieve. This video conferencing, most companies used to ban it. It was impossible to have one. Now, everyone has it. So I think we will move into a better, hopefully, more inclusive world, and a more inclusive world is also a very productive and more financially better for organizations. Whether if you're a private sector or a public sector, you get more for your bucks. That's the bottom line.

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Can I just jump in there? Because I actually don't think we're all having the same experience at all. I think those of us with more than one bedroom in our house with a good broadband capacity and several different devices in which to access the Internet are having a very, very different experience to people living in tower blocks, people who don't have access to the Internet at home. There are a lot of families right now trying to home-school their kids when the only Internet access in the household is a smartphone with a pay-as-you-go connection, and what I hope is that the severity of the inequality between those that do have good Internet capacity and those that don't has been drawn out as being a really important basic human right that we need to level across the field from a policy perspective right now. Certainly, the educators I know have become incredibly aware of which children can access the curriculum and which children are absolutely not able. My company works with people who are long-term unemployed and imprisoned as well as people who are in the work environment, and one of my staff had one of her clients crying on the phone because she'd got an email on her phone from the teacher with all of these things that the child's supposed to do, and all of them involved downloading and printing out resources. She doesn't have a computer, she doesn't have a printer. She couldn't do any learning with her child, and my member of staff was asking me if we could use our stationery budget to print out her child's homework for her because it's not really part of our contract, but this woman was so distressed by that. So I think it's really worth knowing, particularly for those who

work in public policy right now, that actually, there is a massive gap between the haves and the have-nots in terms of accessibility to participation in education and work, and that is via broadband, the Internet, and laptops, and that's something we need to address in public policy going forward quite urgently.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** Absolutely, I agree.

**Matt Ross:** The former Cabinet Secretary, Lord O'Donnell, made these points to me on Monday. We published that story yesterday because he wanted to emphasize that whilst the lockdown is great for achieving narrow clinical outcomes, the harm is causing including to inequality is enormous. He was urging government to take a wider view of its pros and cons.

**Dr. Nasser Siabi:** He famously did say, "GDP shouldn't be measured from the economic output. It should be on the well-being of the citizens," and that's quite frankly right now, this is more important than ever, a lot of uncertainty. So what I like to, I think it's about just the conclusion, I think we can make this world better, more inclusive. We have tens of hundreds of thousands of people on the spectrum autism. They could be brilliant cyber security people, but they don't have access to job employment because the flexibility of working from home wasn't there, or the access to the tools. I think we could actually find a new talent pool, which we've never really used. I believe that because their whole world was turned upside-down, yes, we've discovered some of the flaws and Nancy highlighted one of them, inequality in access to education for everyone. Universities were supposed to do things accessibly by law. They haven't, and now they are losing a lot of the students, and mental health certainly is going to be a major feature of our lives. Apart from global warming, mental health is going to be up there plus cyber security threats. Potentially, if there's a silver lining, apart from the old people who need to be locked in for a bit longer than the rest, they need help. They need to have continuous help. But we really need to actually use the current learning to make sure that the future world is designed, which is more inclusive for everyone.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you. Nancy, do you want to do one minute?

**Dr. Nancy Doyle:** Well, just 100 percent, I concur with that. The number of clients that I've had who've asked for remote flexible working as a disability accommodation had have been told no because it's not reasonable or it's not possible. Well, we've just had an entire worldwide experiment that shows that it is possible and you can do it, and so I'm hoping that we stick to this, that we create more blended working environments, more blended learning, that that reduces the travel burden, which is crippling our environment, and I think that the social change that we could get out of this could create a more inclusive environment and that would be a silver lining and a win.

**Matt Ross:** Thank you so much. We are just about out of time. So thank you very much indeed to all of our speakers, Dr. Nancy Doyle, Dr. Nasser Siabi, Carl Ward. Thank you to my colleague and thank you very much indeed to the audience for joining us. We really hope you found it useful. Thank you very much indeed for the questions you've put through. If we didn't get around to answering your question, we will try to answer that in writing individually afterwards. Yes, we will be sending you a link to the presentation recording of this full session and the write-up which we'll publish on Global Government Forum. That will come to you within a week or so. Meanwhile, thank you to all of our audience, actually, for all the work you're doing to support the public and deliver public services in this very strange and difficult periods. Thank you, all.