



Meeting: Public and Not-for-profit Network Panel

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: 2 September 2024 10.30 – 12.30

PRESENT

Edith Yembra (Chair), Claire Jenkins, Dinusha Weerawardane, Anna Mylvaganam, Anna Hudson, Matthew King, Martin Jahoda, Angela Ireland, Sugar Ahmed, Matthew King (observer) and Martin Jahoda (observer)

APOLOGIES

Alia O'Callaghan, Sidra Harris, Michelle Gurung, Ben Bulman, Chibuzo Okpala, Svetla Taneva, Kevin Ellis, Deep Shah, Rekha Tailor, Evans Chisala, and Lip Sy Choo.

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Venes (Sectors & Communities Lead, ACCA UK), Lloyd Powell (Strategic Engagement Lead, ACCA UK), Gemma Gathercole (Strategic Engagement Lead, ACCA UK), Stephen Connolly (Sectors & Communities Manager, ACCA UK)

Welcome & introduction

Melanie shared the previous actions from the panel meeting in Solihull. The LinkedIn action that Maram had taken forward regarding promoting the panel through short videos from panel members is still ongoing.

- The WhatsApp group is active and if panel members wish to access it then they are to contact Angela Ireland to be included.
- Informal meetings were revisited as there was a lack of clarity if the meetings were continuing and if not, can the rota be reintroduced. Edith will review who is meant to be taking forward the September meeting.

Panel objectives

Sustainability was raised as being a challenge for the panel and it was agreed that the group was better placed to work together collectively on talent, AI and sustainability.

The *Talking series* for the public sector was raised and the panel was encouraged to raise topics that they were interested in or could lead on in terms of sessions in the *Talking series* so that these could be part of the panel's plans. Edith will be doing a Talking Series on the charity sector. Anna H took forward an action to come back to the group on what she has learned regarding sustainability and how it is being applied in central government – this could also be part of the ACCA's *Accounting & Business* e-magazine articles for the panel. LinkedIn was raised as being an area that the panel may not be familiar with. The Panel's nominated LinkedIn champion is Lip Sy Choo.



Members of the panel have been featured in previous editions of ACCA's *Accounting & Business* e-magazine – if any panel member wishes to be featured then it is a great opportunity to speak about their role and work.

The panel reflected on the objectives going forward and how to build objectives around the talking series within sub-groups, LinkedIn growth, working with partners, and creating case studies on a particular topic over the next 3 to 6 months.

AI was discussed and there is cross sector work going on regarding the basics of AI and the sector was asked to consider if there was a more specific need regarding their roles and the use of AI in their workplace. ACCA's policy and insights team are publishing regular reports on this subject and more ACCA content can be found on [ACCA's website](#).

This panel's sectors are generally in heavily regulated roles and the group would appreciate a public sector lens on how other panels and sectors are using AI. This was in relation to the public information that the panel members deal with as AI is not necessarily a tool used in each area as the money and resources for AI are not the same as what the current panel members experiences are. Due to the broad nature of the sector, it was identified that some universities are at the forefront of AI adoption and in other sub-sectors there will be a lack of exposure to AI due to cost.

Sector trends and insights

Funding cuts across the NHS were discussed due to financial unsustainability within the sector in the care sector. The funding from the last 2 years has been static and this puts pressure on the fundraising arm of charities as the individual donations are impacted due to the high cost of living. It's a challenging time for the hospice sector with no new funding and hospices closing. This is compounded by cuts being made and redundancy. Hospice UK are lobbying the new government and have certain charities who are affiliated with them but they are also struggling as they're losing smaller charities because they can no longer maintain their affiliation fee due to the financial burden.

The new government is quite focused on working with ACAS on workers' rights and the finances in this area, and the input of the Cabinet Office has created additional pressures within the budget submission. The pressures on public finances have had an impact on this sector. The ACAS helpline is helpful for organisations and for employees to access support. Anna Hudson was keen to do a Talking Series session, but the topic has yet to be decided and this will be revisited.

Within central government one of the key focus areas is on pay. At the next round of pay discussions it may be that there could be some challenges, and this may result in strikes – this action may take place if there is a gap between central government staff and the large pay increases given to junior doctors and train drivers. Regarding AI it is having an impact at Companies House regarding interviews with a focus being on interviewing face-to-face due to the use of AI in online interviews.

The *Talking series* around local government will include information regarding spending reviews and funding cuts. A lot of services in local government are outsourced which means it is challenging to control costs. Within the university sector a lot of universities are having much wider redundancies. There are some issues with how lecturers are logged and stored on university systems and there is a push for contracts to be issued rather than the lecturers being set up to be paid hourly on internal systems.

Within the not-for-profit sector there is an onus on collaboration with other groups to try and bring inward investment to the area. Part of Sugar's work includes working with minority groups to



encourage individuals to pursue ACCA as a career. Agencies have been brought in whereby they've developed software to make it easier to navigate funding requests.

It was highlighted that all the feedback and insights provided are included within a report that is created by ACCA and the more detail that ACCA can provide helps the budgetary representation. In the next December meeting it would be good to see how the budget has impacted each area of the public sector.

Next steps

Talking series & allocation of actions:

- charity sector (Edith)
- local government (Angela Ireland)
- central government ACAS (Anna Hudson)
- AI in the public sector (TBC)
- Talking series on women in auto industry (Sugar and other directors)

Matthew is a member of a special interest's group on AI and highlighted there are a few areas where government is already using it e.g. the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the National Grid. NS&I uses a lot of consultants which has been highlighted by the new government as something they wish to reduce. What impact might this have with ACCA members of firms regarding government bids? A multiyear review is taking place to review spending.

The next meeting takes place on 2 December. The pilot phase of this panel transition is coming to an end and new Terms of Reference are being prepared. Panel members will be provided with further information once it has been finalised.
