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SOAR employee network launch on the Social Mobility Day

11th June 2026
Virtual event

Agenda

1 Ice breaker and welcome to all

SOAR team introductions and an interactive exercise using Slido.

2 Introduction to the subject matter

What is the Social Mobility Day and what key terms will we use?

3 SOAR network – who are we?

A few words about the new network, its vision and mission.

4 Belonging at work

An interactive exercise using Slido.

5 Sponsors' statements

Panel-style reflections from Gemma Bailey and Rod Viggers.

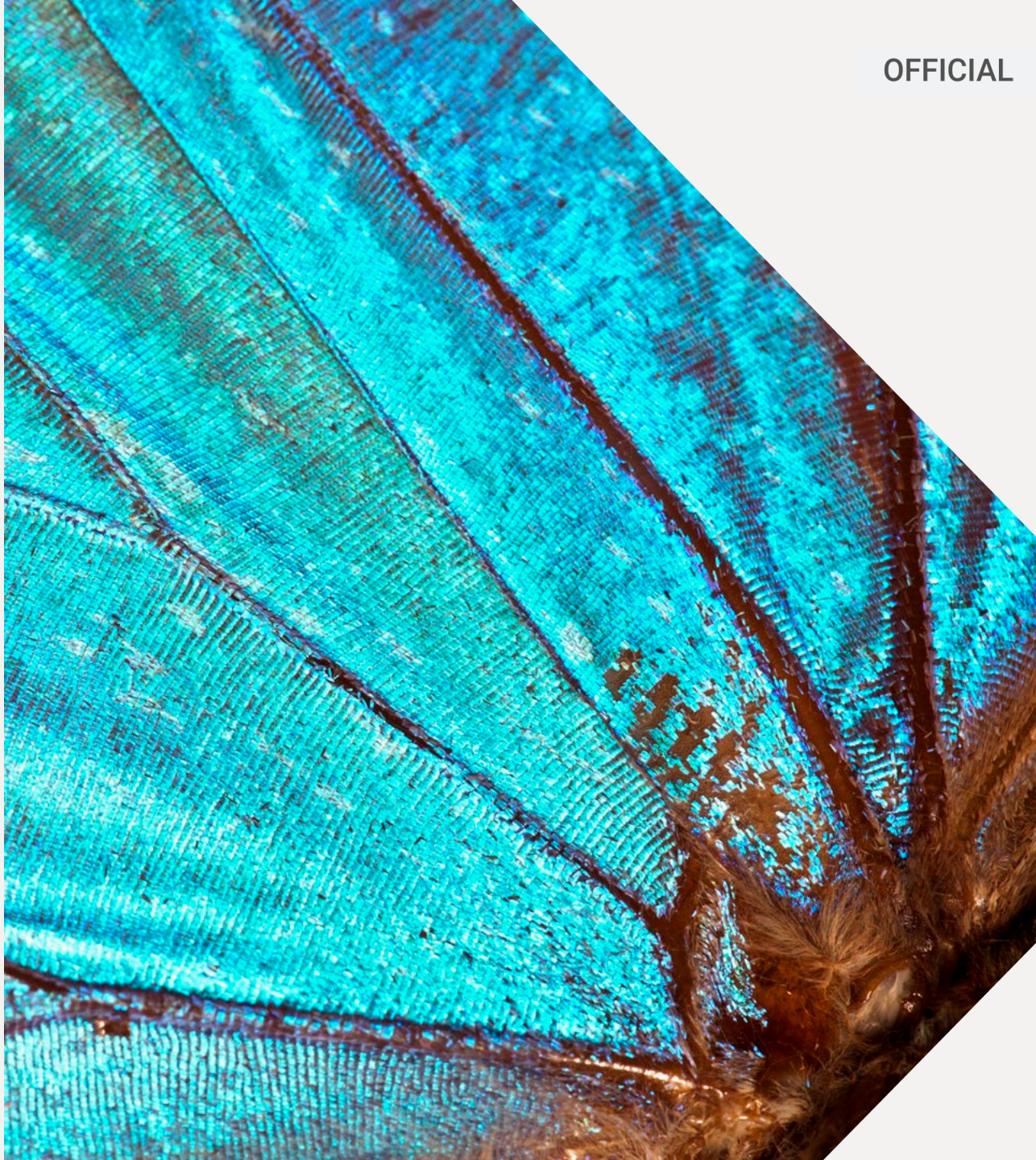
6 Q&A session with sponsors and LT

Time for comments, questions and suggestions related to SOAR.

7 Break out rooms (if time allows)

Time for all of us to interact and chat in smaller groups.

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Slido/Teams chat – Ice breaker questions

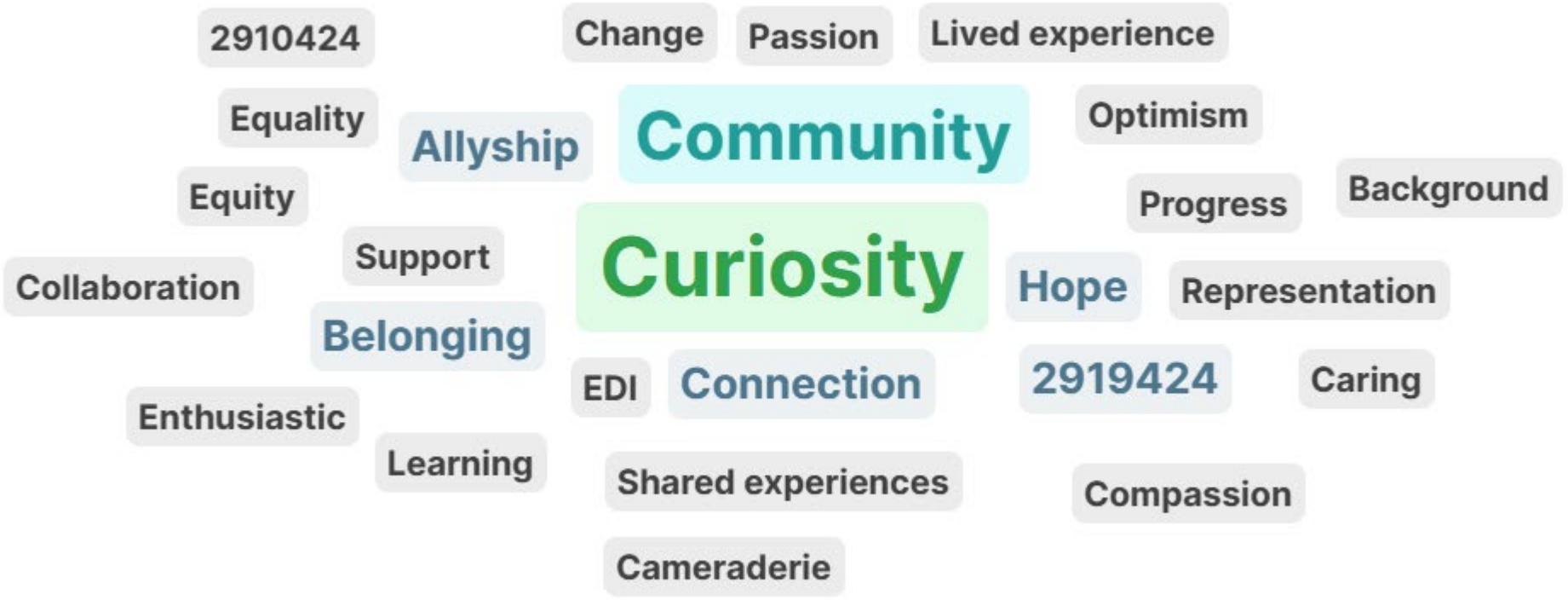
Slido name:
SOAR Staff Network Launch

Slido code:
2919424



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Please share one word that describes what brought you here today.



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What encouraged you to join theSOAR Staff Network?


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Please share one word that describes what brought you here today.



What encouraged you to join the SOAR Staff Network?

Glossary

When using terms such as socio-economic background, status, class and culture, it is important to recognise that these concepts can be interpreted in different ways. While we are not sociologists or linguists, SOAR has developed a glossary to support shared understanding:

- **Socio-economic background (high/intermediate/low)** means the set of social and economic circumstances that an individual has come from. It permits objective discussion of the influence of these circumstances on individuals' educational and career trajectories, and it can be measured by capturing information on parental occupation and level of education.

- **Social mobility** is the link between an individual's income and occupation as an adult and the income and occupation of their parents/guardians. Mobility is about our stories, about people's outcomes in life. In a society with high rates of social mobility, a person's outcomes are not tied to what family they are born into.

- **Socio-economic inclusion** refers to including and welcoming individuals from all backgrounds, particularly those who are under-resourced, shaped by factors such as income and wealth, parental occupation, education, social connections, culture and neighbourhood.

About Social Mobility Day

- Social Mobility Day 2026 takes place on Thursday, 11th June 2026.
- Raises awareness and celebrate action toward improving social mobility in the UK.
- Organised by Making The Leap (a UK-wide social mobility charity which provides training and school and mentoring programmes).
- This year's campaign, titled Stories Matter, encourages organisations and individuals to acknowledge our trajectories – our personal life stories, as well as stories of organisational change, and commit to actionable improvements for socioeconomic diversity.



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About the SOAR Network

- SOAR stands for **Socio-Economic Opportunity, Access and Representation**
- Launched 1st May 2026, we are the youngest of **UKRI employee networks**
- We **envision** UKRI as a workplace where the richness of socio-economic diversity is openly recognised and valued, fuelling creativity and collective success.
- Whilst not currently a protected characteristic under UK legislation, we believe that **socio-economic background** and **status** are important aspects of identity and never occur in void, but in connection to other characteristics (intersectionality) that shape our stories.
- **Our inclusive culture**: We are committed to building this network collaboratively, recognising that its strength lies in the voices and experiences of our members and our volunteer Leadership Team acting as a collective. As the network grows and evolves, so too will our strategy – shaped by active member input.

Why was the network created?

Our mission is to help build an inclusive workplace where every voice matters and every colleague feels empowered to thrive – regardless of their socio-economic background or current status. Through our shared commitment to inclusion, we aim to strengthen our work culture and inspire positive change across UKRI.

In our first year (until Spring 2027) we will focus on delivering objectives aligned with three core aims – each grounded in intersectionality:



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Who are we for?

- SOAR is open to all UKRI colleagues from all parts of the organisation.
- Like other networks, we are a peer community run entirely by volunteers.
- Whether you are keen to know more about socio-economic diversity, want to share your experiences or actively work together to reduce barriers faced by staff from under-resourced socio-economic backgrounds – everyone is welcome.
- You don’t have to have any specific background or status to join SOAR.
- Since we launched on 1st May 2026, over 100 colleagues signed up as members – thank you! We want to work for you and with you.

What you have told us

Why colleagues have joined

1. Lived experience and personal connection (most common reason)
2. Passion for fairness, inclusion and social mobility
3. Desire to learn and raise awareness
4. Drive to make a difference and contribute
5. Professional alignment and alignment with current job roles
6. Interest in community, dialogue, and shared learning
7. Allyship and advocacy

What you hope to gain

1. Awareness and understanding (most common hope)
2. Connection, community and sharing experiences
3. Support, confidence and personal development
4. Knowledge-sharing and mutual learning
5. Driving change and influencing the organisation
6. Advocacy and allyship
7. Professional and practical benefits
8. Purpose and contribution

Belonging at work

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What does belonging at work mean to you?

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SOAR sponsors' reflections

Network sponsors

Gemma Bailey

UKRI Chief People Officer

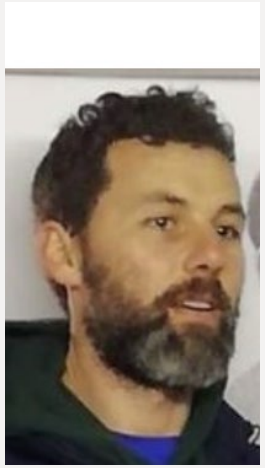
SOAR Executive-level Sponsor



Rod Viggers

UKRI Director Risk, Assurance, Counter Fraud and Investigations

SOAR Senior-level Sponsor



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Q&A with the network leadership team and sponsors

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Part 2

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Conversations in breakout rooms

Questions and code of conduct

Padlet links to be shared in Teams chat

Code of conduct for breakout rooms

- **Confidentiality:** What is shared in the group stays in the group.
- **Respect:** Treat everyone with kindness. Disagreeing is fine, but please do so in a considerate manner.
- **Voluntary nature:** Contributing to the chat conversations is completely optional. No member is mandated to share their views and stories.
- **Support, not judgment:** This is a judgment-free zone. Each person's experience is valid. We are all peers here and all voices matter.
- **Focus:** Try to keep discussions related to the theme of socioeconomic background, socioeconomic status, mobility and related intersectional matters.
- **Use trigger warnings:** If you would like to talk about very sensitive content, please use a trigger warning at the start.

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Resources

Subject	Links and phone number
Wellbeing support	The Wellbeing Ambassador Network provides confidential listening support to staff across the four pillars of wellbeing (mental, physical, social and financial). Colleagues requiring support can reach out directly to one of the wellbeing Allies or contact the the Wellbeing Team. Information about the Network and other wellbeing support can be found on the Wellbeing pages of the Source.
Employee Assistance Programme	If you need further assistance, you can also contact (EAP) on 0800 882 4102. This is a free and confidential service.

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Discussion questions for breakout rooms

Understand experience and perspective:
How do you think socio economic background and status can influence someone's experience at UKRI?

Belonging and inclusion:
What helps create an environment where people feel comfortable being themselves and acknowledging their stories as well as stories of their colleagues? (We aren't forcing any disclosure, but we want to ensure due consideration is given even when such stories are hidden).

Awareness and learning:
What might help colleagues feel more supported at UKRI, regardless of their story i.e. their socio-economic background and status?

Looking ahead:
How can colleagues contribute to creating a more inclusive and fairer workplace?

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Thank you