**Transcript: Accessibility Insights with Ursula Dolton of British Heart Foundation – August 2021**

MARK: Hi, there.

I can see a few people joining us.

I'm Mark Walker from AbilityNet.

Welcome.

You're joining us for a webinar that

starts at 1:00.

The conversation between Ursula Dolton

and Robin Christopherson, just making sure you're in the right place.

We've very a couple hundred people

registered for this, so we will allow a few moments for people to join us, and

then we'll crack on.

If you do have any questions, anyone joining now.

Yeah, you can use the Q&A to ask us

questions.

I'll be telling you about that in a moment.

If you have any technical issues or anything you're stuck on, in terms of

housekeeping or any of the expectations you have about being able to use Zoom

or anything else, please let us know through Chat and the Q&A there.

Are people keeping tabs on what you're

asking for three there whether it is for accessibility reasons or anything

else and let us know F there's anything you need any help with or anything

that's not working for you.

You should be able to hear me.

If you can see the screen and see my lips moving, then you should also be

able to hear me.

So, please, do let us know if there's

anything you have in questions about there.

And in terms of having things ready,

there are captions available, if you click on the "CC" button you will have

live captions created as we go along by a human rather than the AI ones and if

you have questions please open the Q&A panel, rather than chat, if you want

to ask questions of the participants in the session.

So, if you're not familiar with those,

just check out the Q&A button on the control panel, rather than using chat.

I'll go back over that in a moment,

once we have had a few minutes for people to join us.

MARK: Great, let's get on with the

housekeeping.

So, I'm Mark Walker, I'm the head of

Marketing at AbilityNet.

I'm hosting today, although I'm going

to quickly introduce you to the stars of the show Robin and Ursula, who will

be talking today what we're looking for really here is to share insights

around accessibility and accessibility leadership what is happening in

accessibility now, and where it is taking us and how do you deliver the

changes we're trying to make in the digital world around us.

In terms of the housekeeping, you

should be able to see some captions, if you need them.

You need to click on the "CC" button

on the Zoom control panel.

There are also, additional captions

available which are on a separate screen.

Which some people find more useful.

If you need that there's a URL.

Which I can paste into the chat for

you.

Streamtext.net/player?

event=AbilityNet.

The slides we're sharing they are

limited those intros there's no slides during the session.

It is a conversation between Robin and

Ursula they are available at abilitynet.org.

uk/Insights-BHF.

What you will find are the

housekeeping initiatives and some link to training and a discount code and so

on so, if you want to see them they are at:abilitynet.org.

uk/Insights-BH F.

After the event you should be able to

access, certainly this week a copy of the recording, a transcript from the

show, and also, some show notes.

We're going to be ask you to log your

questions as we go along.

We won't be answering them in this

session, but they are used to create an FAQ and forms part of the show notes

and any links we mention in the show will be linked, as well.

You'll find that on our web sites at abilitynet.org.

uk/Insights-BHF.

That will be shared around the people

who are registered and attended today.

Please use the Q&A question window to,

use questions, rather than Chat, it makes it easier to keep track.

Also, you can see questions being

asked and we can post answers in and so can others.

And then finally, afterwards, it is

really useful for us to get your feedback, please do fill in the

feedback form after the event.

We have been running these for over a

year now.

We think we have tuned them up, in

terms of feedback, but there's always something new to learn from the feedback.

If you have ideas how to improve it,

please do let us know.

So, on to today.

Robin is our AbilityNet's Head of

Digital Inclusion.

, he hosts the Title.

and joined by Ursula Dolton, Chief Technology Officer.

ROBIN: Fantastic, thank you very

much, Mark.

Hopefully you can see myself and the

lovely Ursula on the screen now.

Are you all right, Ursula?

Thank you so much for coming.

URSULA: Thank you, Robin.

ROBIN: Really excite beside this one.

The BHF is stuff a brilliant

organisation, really interesting, a great mix of a very large, central

team and a even larger set of retail staff across the hundreds and hundreds

of stores.

I'm sure this will come out in our

conversation.

So yeah, Ursula, you're the CTO.

The Chief Technology Officer, we're

not only going to be talking about accessibility but DNI diversity and

inclusion across the organisation as well.

Because there's some fascinating

things going on.

But before we get cracking with all of

that.

We have to ask, per always, what is

your hot or cold beverage of choice to help you get through this ordeal?

URSULA: Robin, first of all, thank

you very much for inviting me and giving me this opportunity.

Looking at the hot or cold beverages,

I have to say coffee and chocolates.

You can't have one, without the other

So thoroughly enjoyed my coffees and chocolates over the past 8 months or

so.

ROBIN: With wow, I hope you don't

drink too much coffee, if you always have chocolate with it, just saying.

URSULA: Try to stick to two or three.

ROBIN: I have Builders Tea, if anyone

is interested.

Hot, strong tea.

This question will sound a little

familiar to people reg tuners in.

Over the last 10 years, but by all

mean go more recently if you want to what do you think the main changes in

diversity, inclusion, the whole landscape has been N your opinion?

What do you think the main changing

factors have been?

URSULA: Well, Robin, in my opinion,

especially the past, 10 years the major change has been largely societal.

I think ideas, thoughts, but also

personal experience advise moneyed on.

Ideas that were current 10 years ago,

are not current any more, because a whole, new generation has emerged and

has entered the work space.

The expectations are different than

what it was 10 years ago.

So, I think we have become a society

that is much more accepting of individual differences, because our

tolerance levels of our society and the individual differences have changed to

the better.

Also, social media has provided a huge

platform for showcasing diversity, and also engaging people with diversity.

At the same time organisations have

brought diversity and inclusion to the forefront with many, including in the

organisational strategy.

With specific goals, as well

There is still some way to go, but all of us are acknowledging the

conversation and inclusive workforce can bring to an organisation.

That etch one of us brings something

unique and powerful.

I think that's what I truly believe.

That's a big change in the fast, few

years.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

Yeah, there have been so many changes,

particularly in the perception of disability and the acceptance of the

social model, absolutely and another social, social media, like you say has

been-- I know that fundraising is a key

element of BHF's processes, day-to-day work so that's I'm sure been leveraged

and we may touch upon that a little later on.

So, what about how DNI diversity and

inclusion and accessibility how has that been embedded within your teams

internally?

Right across all teams, including

recruitment processes?

URSULA: Sure.

I think overall we have a very diverse

workforce, as you suspension.

Especially with the 730 shops, which

operates with thousands of volunteers to various--

And the various fundraising teams.

It is very much driven from the

top-down, the whole diversity and inclusivity is very much from the

top down with the Executive Directors hands on involved.

We sponsor various groups as well.

Another thing T has moved from being

the work of a small team, to an organisational imperative that

provides benefits for others and challenges.

At the BHF, we are key to make it part

of our organisational culture.

When it comes to recruitment our

recruitment team uses all standard practices, by recognising the diverse

needs of individuals, when they are going through the recruitment process,

because we strongly believe that every employee should feel seen and valued.

So especially, when we are recruiting

we want to insure every future employee feels the same, so they can

demonstrate their full potential during the recruitment process.

This is something that all of us are

responsible for.

It is not just the recruitment team's

responsibility.

Anyone who is involved in the

recruitment to every employee in the organisation should actually be

responsible for it.

When it comes to accessibility, so far

our main focus has been on how to provide the right equipment, tools,

and support.

So we are actively working on learning

from others, for example we are working with tech giants such as Microsoft to

learn from them.

Given there are strong player in this

space, I know that they made a number of announcements at the Summit 2021,

as part of the five-year commitment to supporting people with disabilities.

Of course, we want to learn from the

amazing work that AbilityNet are doing as well, because it is not something

we can do alone.

That's why I'm really interested in

taking part in sessions like this, because we learn from the questions

from all of you in the audience ask us.

It is a two-way process.

It is something we have to do together.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

Yeah, it is a journey.

We're all on it.

About leveraging the expertise or the

experiences of your disabled employees.

Are you actively pursuing that?

And putting processes in place to kind

of listen to them?

And get their feedback?

URSULA: Of course, Robin.

As you say, it is a journey.

You never get there, because every day

we want to improve.

We want to show how we actually

support all of our employees, whatever their need is, so definitely yes.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

So, internally there's a lot going on.

There's a real recognition of the

importance of embracing diversity in all of its forms.

To making sure that people can access

the systems and the processes, et cetera that they need.

Are you doing anything to extended

that to external stake holders, obviously BHF is all about your

external stakeholders.

URSULA: Definitely.

If I say heart disease is something

that can effect anybody we have many interactions with people with various

needs volunteers to donors, people who take part in various fundraising

activities, people who access our services for advice and support.

Our research committee, and so on.

Prior to the pandemic most of the

interactions were face-to-face, as we know the pandemic effected the sector

because it relied on many face-to-face interactions.

At the BHF, we immediately launched

our patients-first programme supporting heart patients with those at high risk

of applications COVID-19.

We have it updated daily with new

information and received more than 12 million visits, since the beginning of

the pandemic and calls to the Nurses Help Line were up by 400%, higher than

normal in the first, few weeks of the pandemic.

We had to come up with ideas to

support these needs.

I'm a strong believer that diverse and

inclusive workforce drive innovation, we pivoted to creating many virtual

new fundraising such as my cycle, my step challenge and many more like that.

To do so, we actively listened and

learned from various external stakeholders on how we can improve on

our digital products.

For example, a few months ago we

launched customise service a product called My BHF it creates the feedback

loop But put in place continued improvement

based on the feedback to the product enhancement player.

We are making it a part of the whole

process now.

So, I think in a nutshell we

actively seek to have that diverse and inclusive product teams, and

accessibility to be part of the design process the aspects of DNI drive

better employee and customer engagement.

For me, that's really key.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

You mentioned about embedding it into

the design process.

You know you hear about "shift left"

we talked about that with Larry Goldberg a proponents of Important

accessible.

Your stake holders will often be of

the older generation.

Heart health is something we should

all be concerned about, but making sure that products are as usable as

possible for a range of different impairments will make it much more

usable, easy to use for all of your stakeholders, which has got to help

those who potentially aren't as digitally confident as others.

URSULA: Be definitely.

That's the reason we're very keen to

hear back from them, because it is that sometimes it is the accessibility, as

well as the confidence in using our products

It is the user-friendliness of the products that are so important, as

well.

We want to hear about all of that feedback.

That's the only way we can improve the

service we provide.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

So, you touched upon COVID, I don't

think any conversation that we've had in the last 18 months hasn't talked

about it.

Because it has had such a huge impact.

Has COVID, homeworking or remote

delivery of your services had an impact on you personally, if you want to talk

about that, but certainly on BHF as a whole.

As CTO, I'm sure you're only too aware.

I know you touched upon some of these.

What's the take away, the biggest take

always that COVID, home or remote working has on you or your

organisation?

URSULA: I'll go with the personal

part first.

We're still working from home, so

since not March 2020 we're still working from home.

I've been to the office twice since

then.

Both times I have been there it has

been officially closed.

Getting used to the work from home it

is the always-on culture, especially working in technology.

I think that's the challenge I'm

finding personally.

Because I'm contactable all the time I

was before as well, but now it is very much, it is always on.

It can be exhausting too.

If I go to the organisation, when the

pandemic started the initial forecast was 49 employees work remotely, by

understanding their various needs, and insuring that they have the right

equipment, and tools.

It was the big focus on make sure they

can work from home with equipment and tools.

We did not have many accessibility

report requests we dealt with initially, because in the office we

had everything set up for them to be able to work from the office.

We had the tools.

It was a physical desk spaces and all

of those things.

But then, to shift to homeworking we

had to make sure all of that was sorted right away.

This also brought to the forefront the

accessibility to be part of the digital production team, because we needed

to fulfil a wide range of needs we focused a lot on the physical side.

Making sure people had the various

tools they needed.

Then be I started really looking at

okay, as we you have toed on before, the people who were access our

services.

It changed quickly because we went

very digital, how can we support them?

And so, as I mentioned earlier, we are

learning from our tech partners, as well as understanding what they

already have that can be used.

To what is in the pipeline, so what

sort of additional functionality is on the way, so we can continuously

improve.

It is very much working together to

understand and provide the right support.

With the various needs of

accessibility are concerned, at the same time, Robin, the current

challenge and opportunity is how do we provide this seamless service and

support in the hybrid working model?

I'm sure that's what lots of

organisations are looking at.

That's what we're looking at, as well.

This is an ongoing learning process.

Again, not something that we can do

alone.

So, we are very keen to see how others

are approaching it.

We are actually having lots of

discussions with other organisations to understand how they are approaching it.

I have to say as a Technology Leader

I think this is a brilliant opportunity to bring together that integrated

view, and structure to provide technology services.

To meet the needs of all--

I mean you touched on it earlier.

The demography, the audiences have

changed.

So, we actually had to look at

everything.

You can look at it as a challenge or

as an opportunity.

I'm really looking at it as an

opportunity.

We can get the best that way.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

Yeah, totally agree.

With regards of internal processes,

you I think you use Teams talking about Microsoft there.

You know that's a whole a whole suite

of solutions in itself if there's something Teams doesn't do, just wait

a week and it will be in there next time there's an update.

Yeah, we've got--

We're very lucky we have some really powerful tools at our disposal.

I absolute lay agree.

The opportunities that have been

realised in sort of short order, because of COVID have been enormous.

We're all reaping the benefits of it,

but like you say, there are challenges as well.

For me, as a blind person.

Not having a pair of eyes on hand all

the time can be challenging and there are technological solutions to help

with that as well, so absolutely.

URSULA: Absolutely.

As you mentioned, Microsoft are

introducing functionality so fast.

Sometimes it is just really hard to

keep up with them.

And committed to our employees saying

all of these functionalities are there.

That's something we're really trying

to keep on top of, because we want to make sure everyone has access to

updates as well.

ROBIN: Training a huge challenge

going forward.

It is fast moving absolutely.

So last week saw the publication of

the Government National Disability Strategy.

We have been talking about how much we

have come on in the last, several years.

The opportunities today, but you only

have to read that to realise quite how much still needs to be achieved.

There's some very sobering stats in there.

So, my next question is, what do you

think personally needs to change next?

If you had to give some challenges

that might still need to be addressed?

And how do you think we can tackle

those?

URSULA: I was reading that Policy

with interest.

I did a bit more additional research

as well prepping for today.

For me the big thing is embrace the

opportunity.

The various aspects of diversity and

inclusion attracts better employees and customer engagement at the end of the

day we want our employees to be fully engaged.

In return, we will get the better

customer engagement as well.

When I was doing the research, I read

this paper from Gardner how technology must play a critical strategic role.

Leveraging technology and technical

resources to help Foster and build inclusive and what they equitable

technologies that reflect the diverse workforce we serve.

I thought I was reading that with

great interest.

To see actually, what are the trends

in the wider, globally was coming our way?

And they were emphasising how we

should truly partner with HR and be innovative with talent acquisition for

development and retention.

It is quite interesting, because

really focusing that end to end process.

The acquisition, development and

retention.

And as an immediate next step, this is

quite important, because as a tech leader, it is how do we retain our

talent we have?

How do we really give them the right

support?

And achieve this, we have to insure

that we have clearly defined goals.

Make sure the positive impact, the

different viewpoints every individual bring to a team, because I've been

talking about the diverse teams brings better employee engagement and all of

that.

But I don't think we have really,

truly monitoring and capturing and measuring this yet.

It is something I'm really keen to

start doing that, because we can quantify it and show the benefit.

And of course, a final definitely more

learning from others, identify opportunities to collaborate.

Because, this is something we cannot

achieve on our own.

We can do more achieve more together.

It is a few points there, Robin.

ROBIN: That's fantastic.

Gathering that information really

valuable MI is a tricky one.

Many organisations don't do it and are

reluctant.

Yes, if it is done well, it can be

incredibly powerful.

Yeah, let's hope that organisations

are able to encourage people to disclose, then to help them meet their

particular needs across All-Protected characteristics, not just disability.

Is this spooky, because we finish off

then, with a question or comment from our last month's guest which was

Richard Morton, who was of CDDO the Central Digital Data Office of the

Government.

Talking about the Disability Strategy.

It is pretty much to the last point

He was ask how does BHF go about a culture of accessibility and

inclusion within the organisation?

Have you got any sort of top tips or

take away, although you have already give us several?

URSULA: I think I would say culture.

It has been driven on by hands on

support by the executives.

Get everyone to believe in it.

The executive advise to drive it,

give that leadership.

We have to get everyone in the

organisation to truly believe in it.

Learn from others.

Continuously improve our approach,

because that is how we can truly embed in the organisational culture.

As you mentioned earlier, Robin, it is

a journey.

So we have to keep ongoing it.

Practically training and process steps

to insure that accessibilityson the responsibility of the HR and

technology team.

We all responsible for it collectively.

It is something we need to incorporate

into our processes as a Norm, and do the culture as a Norm.

ROBIN: Yeah, no small fete there

Amazing and I'm sure you're on the journey that never ends, but yes,

that's fantastic let's finish off then with a question or comment to pass on

to next month's guest which is going to be Lauren Chief Research

and Innovation at the brilliant digital inclusion agency in Sweden but that

delivers services across Europe and the IAAP.

International Association of

professional a big Europe theme in next month's guest to it Susannah.

Have you got any comment to pass on?

URSULA: I would like to ask what is

the biggest challenge and opportunity she for sees in the next steps of

embedding the culture of accessibility within the organisation?

In Sweden and, indeed across Europe

too.

ROBIN: Brilliant you're basically

passing the question on.

That's great.

Let's hope she gives a great answer

like you did.

Thank you so much I wish we could talk

for another half an hour.

Amazing Ursula.

Best of luck with the continuing

journey.

And, yeah, keeping all of those stores a flow.

It is tough out there, isn't it?

And carrying-on delivering amazing

services to help us all stay healthy.

Thank you very much.

URSULA: Thank you very much Robin and

the team.

And see you soon.

Thank you.

ROBIN: Thank you, and I'll pass back

to Mark.

Thanks, Mark.

MARK: Thank you for that fascinating

insight Ursula.

Wonderful work at BHF and the

wonderful scope of work you're dealing with within that team as well, so

fantastic I will just wrap-up with a couple of pointers we have had some

great questions, which you guys will be answering afterwards and we'll be

folding that into the show notes.

There's a fair number of there, that I

can will draw out some of the themes that you touched on in your

conversation.

And give more detail how you are going

about things in the BHF will be really interesting.

We talked about training, we talked

about culture.

We offer training so I will just

mention that quick.

We have a discount code for anyone on

the this webinar to get a 10% discount on the training we run.

To give you a flavour of the sorts of

things.

Accessibility for designers and

creating accessible document and presentation and creating accessible

graphic and don't And screen reading for accessibility

for those who need to know how about accessibility they are 90-minute

sessions and can broke them at Www AbilityNet.

org/UK/training and where to get further support.

>> A newsletter.

If you're on the newsletter it is a great way to keep up to date with

accessibility news.

We have a YouTube channel all of our

webinars and podcast-type don't ends up on YouTube.

We have a podcast.

This episode will be published through

our podcast link AbilityNet.

UK/podcast and a range of services and you can take a look at that and then

finally we run a regular programme of webinars free sessions, on a range of

topics.

If you haven't seen that have a look

at AbilityNet.

org UK/webinars.

Thank you so much Ursula for all of

your insights and Robin, again thank you for leading these conversations

and helping us all understand a bit better how we will actually deliver an

accessible world for people around us and all of the challenges that come

with it.

So thank everyone and thanks for

joining us all of the participants.

Take care.