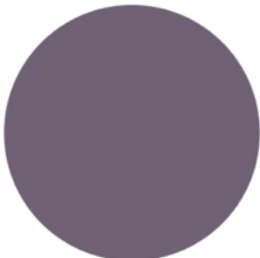
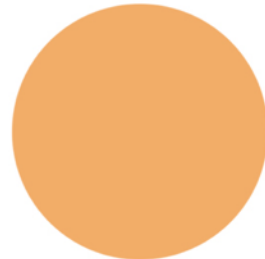
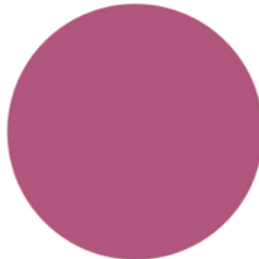
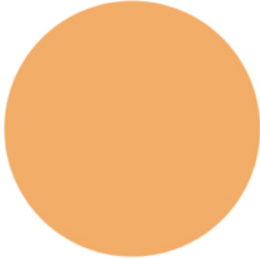




Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy



**REM**



# Religion & Ethnic Minority Role Models

*Inspiring people to be authentic, and their best*



**“Role models are important to attract underrepresented groups”**

**Diversity is not just about representing BAME people, it is about thinking differently**

**“for me a ‘good’ role model is someone who recognises that they are a role model and are happy to share their experiences”**

**“My advice to those who aspire to be leaders is to keep going.”**

**“Listen to others but follow your instincts”**

**“Our diversity is what makes us who we are, an amazing place to work, to care, to be”**

**“From the moment I entered the Civil Service, I came across the most amazing people in the world”**

**“The difference I have made to the careers and opportunities for ethnic minority staff is the thing I am most proud of.”**

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# Foreword

We are pleased to be launching the first BEIS Religion and Ethnic Minority (REM) role model guide which features staff from all different grades.

Historically we have had far too low and at times a nil representation of BME staff at the SCS. Over the last few years, REM has taken action, working with HR and management, to slowly start to build the SCS pipeline through successfully helping a number of our members to get promoted across all other grades. We have done this through the REM Network's mentoring scheme, monthly capability building coaching sessions, and through facilitating bespoke services such as mock interviews and helping individuals with the competency framework examples.

We often hear of the importance of role models in organisations and wider society. Having visible role-models who are seen by REM members, the Department and society as a whole, leading by example and helping to inspire others in their own career journeys - is vital to increasing the BME representation in the SCS.

Having visible role models, actively engaged in support of staff from diverse backgrounds is as significant as the opportunities made available to individuals to access. It actively assists in encouraging individuals irrespective of background, and their personal career journeys to recognise that nothing is out of reach - yes, you can do it too!

A cultural shift and change in behaviour is required in the civil service and slowly and surely we are getting there however there is more to be done in this space. It's important that individuals can feel comfortable bringing their whole self to work and to not feel as though their diverse backgrounds are something that ought to be masked or diluted in the workplace.

We want every REM Member to feel empowered to access career development opportunities and make a valuable contribution to BEIS. This is a platform for individuals to share their stories, recount personal anecdotes about their background and their journey into and through the Civil Service. It is a platform for individuals to share their narrative on the issues they face, how they overcame challenges, to tell us who their role models are, and what they think about the department and the civil service as a diverse place to work.

The REM Network is hugely honoured and delighted to have put together this portfolio presenting a number of individuals across all grades who are our inspiring REM Network Role Models. We were inspired by the fantastic work carried out by the Civil Service Rainbow Alliance (CSRA), who produced a document on LGB\* role models. <http://csra-uk.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CSRA-Role-Models-V3.pdf>. It was very well received and we hope that this REM initiative will be similarly inspirational, helpful and effective, with a real positive impact.

# Introduction

## **What is a role model?**

A role model can be anyone, but true role models are those who possess the qualities that we would like to have, and those who have affected us in a way that makes us want to be better people. They help us to be advocates for ourselves and others, and take a leadership position on the issues that we believe in.

A role model can be a powerful inspirational force and if you look closely enough, the behaviours they demonstrate are ones that already exist within you.

## **Why are role models from Ethnic Minority and religious background in the Civil Service important?**

We recognise the importance of a working environment where people are valued for who they are and how they are able to contribute to making the workplace an inclusive environment. Our objective for showcasing visible role models from a religious or BME background is so that we can help individuals take inspiration from others, realise their own potential and increase their own drive in wanting to achieve greater things.

We need role models from ethnic minority and religious backgrounds to share their varied and diverse stories in order to raise awareness on how success can be achieved in the workplace in its many various forms. It is these particular role models that can give us the strength to celebrate our diversity and 'bring our whole true self to work' in a professional working environment.

## **Do you have to be senior to be a role model?**

This is a question that is frequently asked. The simple answer is no. Role models can be anyone that leads by example.

There is a role model in each and every one of us. Strong leadership is required if we want to modernise and transform our workplace, and this applies across all grades.

## **Why have the REM Network launched the Role Models now?**

Change does not happen overnight, it requires a dedicated effort in promoting and encouraging individuals in the organisation to be authentic. We want to set the record straight that being authentic means that you are someone who is consistent, who knows what their values are and aligns them with how they act in order to inspire others to be themselves at work and to be the best that they can be in the workplace.



# Mandar Trivedi



## Tell us about yourself in terms of your career and background?

My dad was an East African India who grew up playing cricket and stealing neighbours' mangoes in pre-independence Kenya as the sun was setting on the British Empire. After training as a lawyer in India, his British passport allowed my parents to bring their young family to the UK. The Empire's long shadow ironically propelled me to Imperial College to read Zoology, a subject I became fascinated by as a child reading Durrell and watching Attenborough. My studies made me aware of the plight facing biodiversity, including from deforestation and climate change. I wanted to do something practical, but realised that zoologists weren't always good at seeing the bigger picture, so I went on to study applied ecology and environmental sciences, first at UEA and then at Oxford. Following a series of internships and short-term roles, I ended up developing and running projects on tropical forests and climate change in Amazonia and Indonesia; trying to find sustainable

solutions by building collaborations among local communities, scientists and conservation officials.

## What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?

I'm new to the Civil Service and I'm keen to roll up my sleeves at this crucial moment in the UK's journey. In terms of past achievements, in my previous job, I'd say that securing large-scale funding for my field site in Indonesia, home to the critically endangered Sumatran tiger and at risk from logging and fires, was the culmination of a lot of hard work and sacrifice on the part of my wife and young kids.

## What do you think it takes to be a good role model?

People that I have seen as role models are hard-working, ethical, open and don't take themselves too seriously.

## Who has been a role model for you?

Like many, my first role models and inspirations were my parents. My dad was a lawyer and union rep at the National Rivers Authority, which later became the Environment Agency. He sparked my interest in environmental and social justice. My mum stepped up

**“People that I have seen as role models are hard-working, ethical, open and don't take themselves too seriously.”**

when my dad died and had her own heroic battle with cancer. My career role models have tended to be female ecologists, like Professor Georgina Mace (who devised the system used to rank and prioritise endangered species), who excelled in their fields while encouraging young and enthusiastic people like me.

### **Why do you think BAME role models are important in the modern Civil Service?**

I think it's important to attract the best people to any profession. That means going out into the community and raising awareness among those who might not feel there is a place for them. A few years ago I was at scientific conference and met the person who would be my predecessor; a charming and talented Zimbabwean woman whose career involved coming to the UK to train as a nurse at the age of 17; ground-breaking infant nutrition research; and finally advising on air quality and climate change. Meeting her was probably a key moment in realising that I might enjoy the challenge of working for the Civil Service.

### **What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

I don't think I can offer advice as I'm not in a leadership position, but my experience in work (and cricket) has been that even if you're not in a senior role you can still lead by example and provide inspiration to team-mates that enables us all to go beyond a boundary.

### **In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

It's too early to say, but I certainly feel more valued as a person than I did when I worked for NGOs, where diversity and inclusion were not given prominence. It was as if there were so many enthusiastic people queuing up for your job that employers could get away with ignoring their staff's needs. In contrast, the sense I have of the Civil Service is that there is recognition of problems and a desire to tackle them.

### **What is it like being a BAME civil servant at BEIS?**

This is an interesting question for someone who grew up the only Asian kid in a rural English school. I'm sure I was no worse off than other pupils who were different in some way, but the racial abuse I experienced gave me an aversion for labels of 'other'-ness. So I don't necessarily see myself as being a particular kind of civil servant, more as someone with a history I can draw upon to help me, and perhaps others, to navigate as we enter uncharted waters.







# Ana Osborne



**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G6, Head of Industrial  
Strategy

I am a grade 6 in the newly-formed Industrial Strategy team. I have been in the department over 13 years, during which time I have done a number of challenging, high profile and politically sensitive roles. I have done a variety of roles from policy development and delivery to Secretariat for a ministerial Star Chamber on Business Support. I am especially proud of two things; firstly the people I coach and support with application and interview practice. I have a high success rate and I think I am more pleased than they are when I hear they have been successful. Secondly I am proud that early in my career my work on the Animal Rights Extremism strategy at the height of illegal activity was recognised by the department, which nominated me for an MBE. Bringing my family to the Palace is a memory that is hard to beat.

Role models are people who I see as successful and know who they are. They help me to believe I can also achieve the same by replicating them. More personally, my role models are those who I can turn to when I have been faced with a challenging situation. In work role models are important as they give you people to aspire to. I have 2 role models, Emma Ward and Amanda Brooks. Both have a wealth of experience and a common sense way of working which I find refreshing! Outside of work my role model is my grandmother, who came to the UK from Jamaica in the early 1960s focused on giving her family the best opportunities. That sole aim continued to drive every decision she took in her life, and my brother and I are a product of her selflessness.

Thinking about each of these people, another characteristic which is important to me is the time each of these people have taken to help me personally when I have faced challenging issues.

Sadly my grandmother is no longer here but her life lessons continue to guide me in work and personal life. My role models are also my mentors, which means that I listen when they tell me things I do not want to hear.

BAME role models are important as it is good to see someone who looks like you who has done well.

These people have “been there before”, can share their experience, offer practical advice and have some understanding of your cultural background.

**“My advice to those who aspire to be leaders is to keep going.”**



My advice to those who aspire to be leaders is to keep going. We are all aware that the number of BAME senior leaders in the department falls below the average. It is important to keep challenging this. Politics is changing and the department is continually looking at ways to address low BAME representation in the SCS, through the Diversity and Inclusion strategy as well as the BAME network.

I have had many varied roles in the Civil Service and overall I have felt valued; however I am aware, and the statistics clearly show, that bias does exist. The question “What is it like being a BAME civil servant at BEIS?” I found interesting as, while I am a black woman in the Civil Service, I do not classify this as the primary characteristic that I should be defined by. However, I recognise I consciously leave my culture at the BEIS door every day and pick it back up when I leave to go home. It is a natural thing I do to become part of a wider environment. So in answer to the question “I adapt”.





# Ryan Tinggal



**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G6, Head of Office of the  
Chief Scientific Advisor  
(CSA)

## **Tell us about yourself in terms of your career and background?**

I joined the civil service and what was the then Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in 2013 as a senior policy adviser (G7). I was born in Brunei Darussalam in South East Asia and my earliest memories are of nodding donkeys and rainforest so I think it was inevitable I would end up working for a department of energy and climate change!

I was able to play a small part advising ministers on launching a world leading competitive auction for renewables which was praised by industry, NGOs and Parliament. The European Commission even described it as a “a fine example of how to promote the decarbonisation of the economy with market-based support mechanisms, at the lowest possible cost for consumers”.

After two years I moved on to be Senior Private Secretary to the then Energy Minister Andrea Leadsom MP, managing her private office team as she refined her strategic priorities and took the Energy Act 2016 through the House of Commons. In April 2016 I was fortunate enough to be promoted to G6 and my current role supporting the CSA in his engagement with teams across the department to ensure that our policies are evidence based and based on sound science and engineering advice.

Prior to DECC, I worked in a number of policy roles around Westminster with a Master's degree in Environmental Technology and a few secondments and internships in Brussels and the City respectively along the way. I started my career at the BioIndustry Association (BIA), the trade association for the UK's innovative biotech sector, working on policy for maximising UK opportunities from industrial biotechnology in a low carbon economy. I have also been fortunate enough to work on the Climate Change Act 2008; visit the CCS demo projects in Beijing and Norway; review DFID ICF spending in Indonesia; join a UKTI trade mission to USA and attend climate diplomacy meetings in Washington DC.

**“Leadership for me is partly about caring for your team and developing others as well as challenging the senior leadership team to do the right thing”**

Outside of BEIS, I serve on the fundraising committee of small military charity the Lt Dougie Dalzell Memorial Trust (DDMT) and as a volunteer mentor to a tech start up.

**What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?**

I launched a 'DECC Orals Visits' initiative for officials to sit in the House of Commons Gallery to see the Ministerial team in action at the Despatch Box and to have an informal chat with a Minister afterwards in Central Lobby. Since the initiative was launched in 2014, more than 200 officials have benefited from these visits in terms of improving their understanding of Parliament and the Orals briefing that Ministers need. It has been so well received - from Secretary of State to AOs - that it has now been mainstreamed into Private Office corporate activities.

**What do you think it takes to be a good role model?**

Leadership. And leadership for me is partly about caring for your team and developing others as well as challenging the senior leadership team to do the right thing i.e. "speaking truth unto power".

**Who has been a role model for you?**

Nemat (Minouche) Shafik, Bank of England deputy governor and former Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Development. She is a non-British born official like me, had an international career from Washington to London tackling global poverty, and is by all accounts a formidable operator!

**Why do you think BAME role models are important in the modern Civil Service?**

My mother is an Irish catholic and my father a Muslim but I am an atheist so I don't do the R in REM but I still signed up to be a member of the REM Executive Committee! Diversity for me is a business critical issue and any barriers to diversity mean that decision-making is put at risk of groupthink, cultural disconnect and common assumptions creating blind spots. So, role models are important to attract underrepresented groups to BEIS and inspire those of us already in the civil service to keep working towards the Senior Civil Service (SCS). Improving the diversity of the civil service, particularly at the most senior grades, is a "no regrets" action which can only serve to improve our performance as a department and the delivery of our policies. We need to be representative of the people we work for – the public.

**What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

Go for it! Get a mentor, make the most of all L&D opportunities and the support available from a diversity network, and seize every interesting opportunity to work on any highly visible cross team projects (e.g. I worked on a Smart Energy work stream). And do a stint in Private Office; it's often a stepping stone towards the SCS given it teaches you ministerial handling, political awareness, senior exposure but also a high degree of visibility within the department! Also *Dress Smart* and dress the part of a leader, especially if you're dealing with ministers - jackets for ladies and a sharp suit and tie for gentlemen.

**In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

Yes – as an immigrant to your lovely country and as a BAME individual I haven't personally had any negative experiences here.



# Anoushé Husain

Who am I? Where do I fit in? Do I need to fit in? Why?

These are questions I have constantly been asking myself. In school, I was the girl with one hand, desperately trying to fit in but never quite managing. University was very similar, I certainly had a lot in common with the others but never quite fit in the group I was with. This pattern repeated itself during my Masters and my first two roles abroad until I joined the Civil Service. Something shifted when I joined the Department, something shifted in me. Instead of looking outwards, trying to work out why I wasn't fitting in with others, I asked myself: do I need to fit in at all? Why? What was making me want to fit in in the first place?

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
SEO, Senior Policy  
Advisor

I am a woman, Muslim, divorced, cancer survivor, living with visible and invisible disabilities and an aspiring Paralympian. Life has certainly thrown me some quite difficult curveballs and some amazing opportunities.

Being a civil servant at DBEIS has been liberating. Unlike where I have lived or worked previously (Luxembourg, Belgium and China), there was never an expectation of needing to fit in. Instead, my life experience and differences have been welcomed and valued. This in turn has allowed me to choose who and how I want to be, in other words, to be comfortable in my own skin.

I have now worked out that I am me, it took me a while to work out what this sentence actually meant, but here it is. Me: a passionate, driven person who cares deeply about what she does both in the office and outside. All of the labels above have helped shape me but none of them define me on their own. I choose who I want to be, when I want and how I want.

This is what I look for in a role model and who I aspire to be. Someone honest and authentic who cares deeply about what they do at the office and in their free time. Someone who knows how to empathise and self-care, who allows their vulnerability to show but at the same time, takes the lead and gives direction without hesitation. This person might be facing all sorts of challenges but they know how to go with the flow and see opportunity in every challenge they face.

**“Our diversity is what makes us who we are, an amazing place to work, to care, to be”**



I like to think that's where I'm heading. Sure I'll make mistakes on the way, how else will I learn? The key is to get back up and keep on trying. Everyone, no matter the colour of their skin or any other characteristic, has something different to bring to the Civil Service. Our diversity is what makes us who we are, an amazing place to work, to care, to be.





# Deborah Persuad



## **Tell us about yourself in terms of your career and background?**

I have been a civil servant for 25 years, working in a range of policy development and delivery roles. I have worked my way up from an administrative role to Grade 7 and been a fast streamer as well as going on secondment to a delivery agency as a strategy director and completing an MBA. As well as policy roles I am a trained coach and am in demand as a mentor.

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G7, Assistant Director,  
Europe and Strategy

## **What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?**

I have led a number of projects where policy issues have been resolved to create a good outcome for citizens – for example in protecting funding for vulnerable adult learners, creating a strong base for the provision of debt advice and protection for vulnerable consumers.

## **What do you think it takes to be a good role model?**

Role models need to be authentic and honest about the challenges that they face and how they seek to overcome them – even if they don't succeed.

## **Who has been a role model for you?**

My mother, who in overcoming adversity has consistently given of herself to others to help them achieve their goals.

## **Why do you think BAME role models are important in the modern Civil Service?**

BAME role models are important as they are few and far between in the civil service above grade 7. Sharing their experience of being able to challenge stereotypes and bias is vital to a more diverse civil service.

**“Listen to others but follow your instincts”**

## **What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

Listen to others but follow your instincts. Don't feel the need to toe the corporate line in order to succeed. Be visible, get involved, challenge the norm.

**In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

Not always!

**What is it like being a BAME civil servant at DBEIS?**

As a former BIS employee, I have felt overlooked and undervalued by my superiors, but encouraged by the support of my peers.







# Paro Konar-Thakkar



## A bit about me....

I'm originally from Calcutta so English is not my first language. I've heard that once you start dreaming in English you have become fluent but I still think I dream in Bengali.

I moved to the UK after I got married and I had no idea what to expect. My first experience of the UK was that it was a bit scary! I was burgled in the first three months and it made me miss home and my family a lot more. I felt like I didn't fit in, people are very different here - the way they dress, the way they speak and I was initially really intimidated. I was fresh off the boat, had stars in my eyes and I soon realised London was much more different than what I saw in movies..

## Department

BEIS

## Grade

SCS (G5) Energy  
Economics and Co-  
Champion of the Religion  
and Ethnic Minority (REM)

When I joined the civil service it was a similar situation. I felt intimidated and I was worried about saying the wrong thing – in my school we were taught not to question or speak up – you don't speak unless spoken to!

My first job was as an analyst on the Fast Stream and I had to work with some very senior people who expected me to speak up. In my first end year review one point of feedback was that I didn't profess an opinion which showed a lack of confidence.

A key part of my role was to communicate the analysis to ministers and senior managers so I really needed to get better at knowing how to explain the subject and being put on the spot. For me it was important to prepare, especially as I would be speaking in a different language.

One of my key achievements was when I worked on the Low Carbon Transition Plan on and developed a new approach to modelling our policies impacts on gas and electricity bills. This was new analysis and it changed how we communicated with the public. The challenge was to try to present the analysis simply enough without losing the meaning. I had to present this work to Ed Miliband several times and it was often harrowing but also very rewarding!

**“I think to be a  
good role model  
you need to be  
doing something  
you believe in”**

Being promoted to SCS has to be my proudest moment. I didn't expect it! I thought some big shot consultant would get it. There are not many people like me (part timer, female, ethnic minority) in senior roles.

I think to be a good role model you need to be doing something you believe in. You can't ask people to do it unless you can convey a sense of belief and confidence.

As a leader in the organisation, I really care about management and I love managing a happy team.

### **My role model...**

My father is my role model. He grew with very little and was from a farming background. His father was a farmer and my father grew up in a little village outside Calcutta without running water or electricity. He worked his way up by teaching privately to fund his education. He had nothing and he slept outside people's houses. He got to the position of bank manager entirely through his own hard work and positive attitude.

When I was 12 he took me and my sister to one of the poorer parts of Calcutta to show me where he lived while he first started working. It was a small room which he shared with three other men; this was the most he could afford at the time. He said to me that you don't have to stop at somewhere. He raised my sister and I as 'boys'. In India there isn't the sort of equality for men and women that there is here and he really encouraged us both to speak up.

### **What diversity means to me..**

Diversity means different ways of thinking. You can't have all of the senior people in an organisation thinking exactly the same way, otherwise you will always come up with the same answers.

We hear that there is no glass ceiling but the Civil service is currently not representative of the people that we are serve.

Diversity is not just about representing BAME people, it is about thinking differently. In India, we had a different type of deprivation. We had three hour power cuts in India...and we would just go out and play cricket!

My advice to be people who aspire to be leaders is to not let anything hold you back and find your unique selling point. Mine is working collaboratively. I like to bring everybody with me

### **My experience of the Civil Service....**

I love what I do it is fun and I love the analysis! I really enjoy the public service element of it and ensuring that our seniors have robust evidence to make decisions.

In a lot of cases I am the only person of colour in the team. Observing people has helped me to get on here; I've learned a lot about the way the British use language and have learned to read between the lines. But I'll never lose the connection I have with India. It means I bring the emotional side of things into the way I work and love speaking to people.





# Luis Castro



**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
SCS (G5) Head of Portfolio  
Office

I have a mixed heritage – I was born in Mexico City to Spanish parents. I lived there until I was 11 when my family moved back to a small town in Spain where I went to Uni and studied Industrial Engineering. This led me to a job working on wind farms and solar panel facilities. A couple of years after that I was ready for a change and moved to UK. I think that it's because of these changes that I have always been very aware of how you might be perceived; I was a Spaniard in Mexico, Mexican in Spain and EU National here in the UK.

When I came to London I spoke to some English (apparently with a strong Gringo) and I managed to find myself on the BT Graduate scheme and while there ended up working in nearly every department (from global customers to network deployment) picking up useful transferable skills on the way.

Moving from a huge bustling city to a small town in Northern Spain and then the UK is a great way to learn about change and how to embrace it and make the most of it. I guess it also taught me that 'what you see isn't all that there is' and there are always other ways and other views that explain the world.

After BT, I was offered a position at Goldman Sachs, working on security and tech projects. Everyone I worked with was great, but it didn't afford me with the sort of job satisfaction that I was seeking and it's hard to keep motivated when you don't truly believe in what you do so I ended up taking a redundancy package.

Thankfully, I had also started an evening degree over the course of three years in Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CSR), the driver being that I wanted to work in something meaningful and sustainable...which took me to the Civil Service.

First at Ofgem E-serve, delivering a number of DBEIS schemes (ECO, FITs, RO, RHI) and in July 2015, here at the Portfolio Office at DBEIS in an attempt to get closer to where the policy and schemes were being devised and help us get better at Delivery

Reflecting on my career, I'd say my key achievement has been finding a career that I love,

**“A good role model is honest and is someone that can be him or herself. I am a supporter of bringing your whole self to work.”**

I'm pleased that I was able to make a clear decision about being in a job that made me happy, and foregoing the 'bright lights'. At Goldman Sachs I worked out what I didn't like. I think you learn more from what goes wrong than what goes right. I would have never got the CSR degree and ended up here.

I once heard someone say 'the better is the enemy of the good' and I am an advocate of making things fit for purpose rather than waiting until something is perfect and probably too complex.

A good role model is honest and is someone that can be him or herself. I am a supporter of bringing your whole self to work. I see the benefit of putting yourself 'out there', especially when it's a bit scary. I thought this when I accepted to be the DBEIS LGBT Network Champion for example but the experience has been great.

A good leader is able to put themselves in the others shoes, is visible and presents a compelling vision of the future that everyone can see. Trust in your team is paramount and a good leader needs to listen, let people get on and use their talents,

I have a lot of role models, but one who comes to mind (controversially given recent accusations) is the ex-President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva', who served in office between 2003 and 2011. He started out repairing machines in a factory, went on to be the Leader of the Steel Union and then President of Brazil. I admire how Lula knew his priorities, stood for the rights of others and was driven by a passion to help his country to develop. He showed great tenacity, by running for President three times, finally winning the fourth time.

My experience of being a 'foreigner' in the UK Civil Service is great. I'm allowed to do my job the best way I know and I am given space to try and improve things.

I also have an accent, which some people can see as way of not fitting in, but it cuts through class/socio-economic background and it means I can't be placed the way other people are, and I make the most of it.

The advice I would give to BAME Civil Servants who aspire to be leaders is to get out there and **'go for it'**. Play to your strengths, be yourself and don't feel like you have to fit in. The Civil Service is a better place because of those that don't fit in.





# Akeela Bashir



## Tell us about yourself in terms of your career and background?

I'm Akeela Bashir, currently working as Private Secretary to Katrina Williams – Director General International Science and Resilience. I have been in DECC (now BEIS) since January 2014 and previous to that I was working at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
HEO, Private Secretary

I was born in Pakistan, migrated with my family to England in 1980, but never settled here on permanent basis due to family circumstances which unfortunately required constant travel between the two countries during my vital years of education. When in England I attended school here and when in Pakistan I was put into school there. Looking at it now, the only advantage to this was that I can speak at least three languages English, Urdu and Punjabi written and oral, and I'm familiar with cultures, the good and the bad. Though

I must say, life at that point seemed very tough being in England and getting used to here, I was faced with language barriers, abuse, bullying and harassment /racism to say the least in schools and daily life. My family lived opposite a pub - dad was a shop owner and I can let you imagine the rest!

Then came another difficult hurdle where my mother arranged my marriage with my first cousin who was in the armed forces in Pakistan- according to my mother that was the best choice for me despite having ample trouble with her own family and being through a miserable arranged marriage herself. I went ahead and bowed under the pressure. This then required me to travel around Pakistan with my husband. I enjoyed the high lifestyle including being dolled up as an officer's wife, attending social events left right and centre and a whole load of other perks, but something was missing in my life. I wanted to have a real life and to work, wanted to bring up my kids in the best of environments where they would be free to do anything they want, get the best of education and have the opportunity to flourish and the confidence to make their own decisions in life.

I returned back to England in 2001 with my two kids, and through a good friend (who was a Civil Servant at Court Service), joined the Royal Courts of Justice as a security officer. I quickly built up good working relationships and ended up as an admin officer in the Court Fees room

**“From the moment I entered the Civil Service, I came across the most amazing people in the world”**



At the time I became aware that Defra was carrying out an external recruitment drive- I jumped at the chance and applied because I had heard they were a flexible Department. And at that stage of my life with two young boys flexibility was critical for me. I wanted to work and juggle my home life being a single parent. From the moment I entered the Civil Service, I came across the most amazing people in the world- honest, hardworking and full of enthusiasm and talent, working with passion and zest on the policies that make a real difference in ordinary people's lives.

**What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?**

I am proud of being a Civil Servant and I'm proud of working with and for some of the best and the nicest people in the world. At Defra, I was head-hunted by the Secretary of State's Principal Private Secretary to become Diary Secretary to the Secretary of State, I think that has to be the headline of my career so far. I have completed a foundation degree in Government and am now in the middle of studying for level 7 diploma in Human Resources, once complete it will be a big achievement for me.

**What do you think it takes to be a good role model?**

An honest, hardworking, authentic leader who has integrity and respect for all and leads from the front. An example of this is Katrina Williams in BEIS, she is an amazing leader, inspirational, full of knowledge and skills and has respect and time for everybody. Even though she is extremely busy she shares her wealth of knowledge readily with all.

**Who has been a role model for you?**

I have had various role models through my time in the Civil Service, but I would like to mention three people: Martin Nesbit, he was a Director at Defra –he was brilliant and displayed positive leadership behaviours in every sense, supported me through tough times encouraging me to keep going, my mentor Edward Corse, his coaching and mentoring support has been phenomenal and now my DG Katrina Williams, she is simply the best.

**Why do you think BAME role models are important in the modern Civil Service?**

BAME role models are important because they will help guide and support people in the right direction, they will inspire future leaders to follow in their good footsteps.

**What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

Please be yourself, have integrity, respect, share your knowledge and skills and be nice to people. We are lucky to be working in a wonderful organisation where everyone is and can be a role model.

**In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

Yes most definitely

**What is it like being a BAME civil servant at BEIS?**

It's great, I feel positive and we are very lucky to have lots of opportunities to develop and nurture our careers.



# Harshbir Sangha

**Tell us about yourself in terms of your career and background?**

I started my Civil Service career in DWP, with a short stint on the frontline – dealing with Incapacity Benefits - and then shifting to the Disability Policy Division to work on the sponsorship team looking at Independent Living Funds, Vaccine Damage Payments and the Motability Scheme. I then moved to the DWP's Fraud and Error Strategy Division, where I had the opportunity to work on the very first ever Task Force set up by the then Permanent Secretary (Leigh Lewis) to help reduce the level of official error in the benefits system. The intensity of the work, especially the pace with which we had to analyse and develop the work programme of the Task Force and deliver results set me up nicely for stints in the Private Office and then to work on a range of different issues at the Government Equalities Office, including leading key elements of the Equality Act 2010.

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G7, Head of Strategy,  
Science: Skills and  
Engagement

**What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?**

The achievements that I am most proud of:

- getting the opportunity to help set up the first ever Official Error Task Force in DWP and delivering savings of over £40m in its first year of operation
- faced with many challenges successfully leading the Public Sector Equality Duty clauses of the Equality Bill through Parliament
- getting the opportunity to lead and shape the equality and diversity agenda for ex-BIS and being recognised with an MBE for my services to Equality and Diversity (this only encourages me to do more as there is a lot of work that needs to be done collectively across the Civil Service and beyond)
- also more recently, having the opportunity to Co-Chair the BAME network of ex-BIS

**“for me a ‘good’ role model is someone who recognises that they are a role model and are happy to share their experiences”**



## **What do you think it takes to be a good role model?**

I think everyone is a role model, so for me a 'good' role model is someone who recognises that they are a role model and are happy to share their experiences (both positive and also negative – to ensure others don't make the same mistakes) with others.

## **Who has been a role model for you?**

For me, from a very young age it was my uncle (Iqbal Singh) who sadly passed away couple of years ago. He defied everything to learn new skills and languages not only becoming a respected political figure amongst the Asian community, but also getting to grips with technology to launch his own community radio station. He always used to say – *if someone else can, why not me?* He never gave up until the end.

## **Why do you think BAME role models are important in the modern Civil Service?**

First and foremost, the lack of BAME role models in the Civil Service tells its own story – we don't need to analyse the diversity data to understand the gap in representation from BAME colleagues at different levels of the Civil Service (especially in the SCS). To change this trend, we need people to come forward and share their stories to encourage others to follow or surpass them.

## **What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

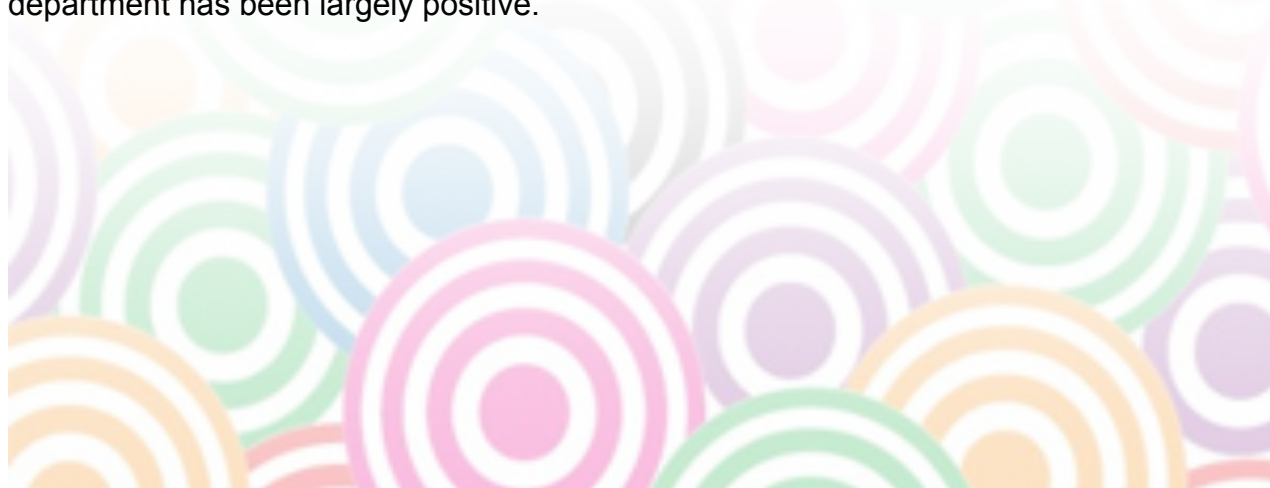
Get a mentor (someone who has done it) – and they don't need to be from a BAME background. More importantly - just don't give up, believe in your abilities and keep going!

## **In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

Yes, I'm proud being a civil servant.

## **What is it like being a BAME civil servant at DBEIS?**

Ex-BIS is a proudly diverse department and my personal experience of working in the department has been largely positive.





# Angela Patel



**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G6, Head RO  
and EIs  
Exemption Team

My name is Angela, I am a mother of two and was born in the UK with parents from the state of Gujarat in India. When my parents came to the UK in the 60s, it was a tough time for them as a large part of the population was hostile towards immigrants, particularly those of colour

I was born in Bradford and went to a predominately white school in a working class area. I didn't feel picked on or threatened as I was bright and popular being good at sport representing the school in several areas. My parents spoke to us in Gujarati at home but at school I didn't really talk about my Asian background as I felt this was a better way to fit it and adapt to my surroundings (though the situation now is completely different for my own children at school).

Like many other British Indian households, the expectation from a very young age was that my siblings and I would go to university – I ended at the University of Lancaster and studied biochemistry for my first degree. I then went on to study for a masters in toxicology at the University of Birmingham. One of my first achievements was securing a position after graduating as a part-time lecturer at an FE college in Birmingham teaching chemistry up to A-level!

I then started to look for full-time jobs and ended up coming 'down south' to work as an environmental toxicologist in the private sector. This was a fabulous opportunity including several months working in China advising the World Bank but I wanted a change.

I applied for a job at the Department of Health as an HSO scientist. Like other professions in the Civil Service, I had the opportunity to move up the career ladder as a scientist and was promoted to SSO but was keen to move into policy where the number of opportunities was greater. I was working for 2 fabulous women at Grade 5 and Grade 6 who encouraged me to apply for my first Grade 7 post. I was hesitant as this would entail a promotion as well as switching from science to a policy role but with their support and coaching I was successful. I moved to another G7 role as the Head of science policy at the Department of Health but the support from senior management this time was poor and I moved on

**“I think a role model needs to be able to adapt to different types of people and get everybody to perform at their best.”**

level transfer to a policy job at DEFRA. I went on to work on a number of high profile policy areas in Defra and despite significant achievements in these roles, there was little encouragement to go for promotion which put doubt into my mind about my own capabilities. Through my own initiative, I applied for Grade 6 posts and seemed to get interviews easily though not always succeeding at getting the job. I was successful in securing my current role as a G6 in BEIS on loan. I'm proud of myself for not letting some manager's lack of support and encouragement stopping me from reaching my goals.

I think a role model needs to be able to adapt to different types of people and get everybody to perform at their best. They need to be genuine and able to relate to others. The former head of the Civil Service, Sir Gus O'Donnell is a role model of mine. I got to meet him a few times when I was on the META leadership programme. He demonstrated pride and passion for the civil service but in a way that connects with people. I remember he was talking to us about leadership but in the context of a football match on the TV the night before. I was impressed at the way he was able to convey very strong messages about the inequality of opportunity in the civil service in a way that made us also think hard about unfairness in everyday things.

My advice to people who want to progress in an organisation – know when you need to adapt your style to the environment you are working in, develop a thick skin as there will be plenty of knock-backs but most importantly, have self-belief. I think the Civil Service can offer a career path for people of all backgrounds but that there is still more work to do to ensure senior grades are more representative of the society we serve.





# Rahimah Elaheebucus



My career began in the Ministry of Defence. I have worked in the Defence College, Department of Energy, DTI/ BERR/BIS. I am now a Senior Policy Adviser having worked my way up from a junior post.

The achievements in my time in the Civil Service are:

- The youngest Chief Typing Manager in the Civil Service
- Winning BIS's diversity award whilst working in Science Research Base
- Winning the University of Surrey Mentor and Mentee of the Year (twice whilst being sponsored by DTI)
- Working with scientific civil servants in various roles and developing the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) concept for the civil service
- Producing and publishing a booklet for careleavers
- Chair of the BAME group in BIS for 4 years then co-chair for another 2 years
- Being awarded an MBE

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
SEO, Senior Policy  
Advisor

## What does it take to be a good role model

Being visible, good listener, supportive, passionate, selfless, devoted, demonstrating patience, good leadership, thinking before you act and above all humble

## Who has been a role Model for you?

Michelle Obama

## Why do you think BAME role models are important in the Civil Service?

Role Models are important if we can achieve parity with those from a white background then any BAME who adheres to being a good role model (see above) would be useful.

**“Hitch your wagon to your star’, be ambitious, don’t be put off”**

## What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?

‘Hitch your wagon to your star’, be ambitious, don’t be put off (I was refused support to do an MBA so did it off my own bat)



**In your experience as a BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service.**

Looking back on my career I feel I have achieved some personal successes but have not been particularly valued on a day to day basis – Would I have been more valued, as as a nurse or teacher? Possibly

**What is it like to being a BAME civil servant at DBEIS**

It has been an uphill struggle, but then DTI/BERR/BIS was a dysfunctional organisation anyway.





# David Rigal



**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G7, Internal  
Communications Manager

I was born into one of the oldest Jewish families in the UK, one which was active on social issues for many generations supporting refugees coming to the UK 150 years ago, children in poverty a century ago, then those fleeing Nazi persecution and those wanting to leave the old USSR. It is not surprising I have always held views that supported diversity and was active from my university years first tackling overt racism and then supporting the diversity agenda.

I have worked as a social worker in a voluntary and professional capacity. I have been a volunteer mentor and councillor as well as delivering diversity training. With me, work to support diversity is part of my being, I cannot walk away I have to be involved in challenging the issues that still exist in the Civil Service. Inequality is wrong and I am not willing to ignore it. It is axiomatic to whom I really am.

I hope this makes me a role model and a call for everyone to get involved in this or similar areas. If I had one message it would be - do not hang back and let someone else take the responsibility. It is up to all of us to take this on and my faith which reminds us that 'you were once slaves in Egypt' teaches that everyone should take on the duty to make improvements where there is inequality. We should not be asking 'who will do this for me?' we should be asking 'What can I do?'

Among the many things I have done in the Civil Service is to organise effective training to allow ethnic minority staff to get promotion, mentor over 20 ethnic minority staff to be successfully promoted, worked with a large number of staff to challenge box markings or bullying and harassment and challenge management over a range of inequalities and bring diversity issues to the top of the agenda. Some of this has been absolutely fundamental and in the creation of DECC (now DBEIS) it was Iris and I who successfully battled to allow staff networks to be created.

**“The difference I have made to the careers and opportunities for ethnic minority staff is the thing I am most proud of.”**

I am lucky to have worked under the leadership of Carlton Young and Iris Anderson. I have been privileged to be involved in this for about 15 years almost all my time in

the civil service. My appetite to take forward the diversity agenda is undiminished, there is so much to do.

I believe that what I have done has made a difference to individual staff and ethnic minority staff across a range of departments. I do not believe I can have asked for more than the opportunity to do this. What I have done in my work and the environmental and energy efficiency gains that have been made through the areas I have worked in are important, but the difference I have made to the careers and opportunities for ethnic minority staff is the thing I am most proud of.

The role models of the future need to do more than just develop their careers, they must 'be mindful of the needs of others' and lead on taking the diversity challenge forward until it is no longer an issue. If I can inspire others to do the same and make some progress than that is all I could wish for.







# Damitha Adikaari

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G5 (SCS) Head of  
Engineering

I grew up in Sri Lanka, about 40 miles away from Colombo. I am from an underprivileged background, and like many others lived through a Marxist rebellion which attempted to overthrow Government, and a separatist civil war. I have always been good at exams and, free education based on academic merit allowed me to first get into a good school and then into University. My childhood involved waking up at 4:15 AM on school day mornings to catch the 5 AM bus to school, and we did not have access to electricity till I was 15!

One thing the civil unrest and war brought was time, along with significant disruption to life. There were school and University closures for extended periods and I used these to good effect; improved my English through reading, exhausting the literature at the local library. I also worked for a jewellery manufacturer for two years as a management trainee, managing a 35 strong team, a useful first job. After A-levels I took on a degree in electrical engineering, graduated with a first class and started work a

week later, at the first privately owned and operated power plant in Sri Lanka as an operations engineer. I was promoted to Chief Engineer within two years and was responsible for the plant operation and management which had a workforce of 60. This opportunity shaped my management style, candid and objective, and shaped the engineer in me.

Four years later, I wanted to do something different. Research on renewable electricity looked interesting. A couple of applications later, I was at Surrey University investigating 'how to make solar power cheaper using Laser'.

Complications around facilities slowed progress. My engineering and hands-on background helped, and I managed to find solutions to help me pack a lot of work to the latter year and half of my research, completing on time. I stayed on to do research at the University for another five years, and by then was finding that the drive for quick wins in academic research was stifling free thinking. I then spotted an opportunity at DECC (now DBEIS) to work with David Mackay, the then Chief Scientific Advisor, and joined his team as a G7 electrical engineer. A year later I was leading the Central Engineering team, and since May 2015, I have been acting as the Deputy Director for Engineering and Innovation, also known as Head of Engineering.

**“I think having the right balance of self-belief and self-awareness is key to realising an individual's potential.”**

DECC was a great place to work; so much talent around and with so many opportunities for many. I found DECC a welcoming place, have never experienced discrimination of any sort or form due to being from an unusual background.

I think role models are important. In my younger years, I was inspired to be an engineer by a first cousin of a friend, an engineer, an academic and an expert in the field. I think everyone can help someone else in terms of career, bringing in a different perspective to situations. I see great value in mentoring and coaching and imparting knowledge.

In respect to diversity – I think it is a natural part of the human race - everybody's wired differently. There is a spectrum of capability within any group and different points of view. I am generally uncomfortable with positive discrimination and I don't think that being prescriptive about what an organisation looks like is optimal. I think diversity of thought is what makes a society better, and increasing awareness of opportunities and empowering people to achieve what they can and want is more sustainable than the use of metrics and quotas.

Individually, I think having the right balance of self-belief and self-awareness is key to realising an individual's potential. It's about identifying the weaknesses and accurately understanding what one's capable of. As for being a foreigner in the civil service, even after four years – I enjoy it here; sometimes I still struggle with my use of English; I don't always get the gravity of the words I use to communicate!





# Jas Jandu



## A bit about myself

I was born into a Punjabi Sikh family in South East London. I had a relatively strict upbringing - home life was centred around my extended family, so there was no hanging around with mates after school hours etc - so at times I felt different from my peers. However, the benefits included an in-built group of best friends (thanks cousins!) and an understanding of the culture and customs associated with the birthplace of my ancestors.

**Department**  
BEIS

**Grade**  
G7, Programme Manager

I studied politics at University (Queen Mary University of London) which when coupled with a desire to work for the greater good meant that becoming a Civil Servant seemed a natural next step. Although I failed to get onto the Fast Stream, I persevered and managed to get a job as an AO at HM Treasury just as the financial crisis was hitting. It was a

fascinating place to work and I made the most of my opportunities there – including being a delegate liaison officer when we hosted the G20 Finance Summit in the UK. I was promoted to EO after a short while and worked as a policy advisor in the European team. I moved to DECC (now DBEIS) as an HEO in 2010 to the Energy Market Assessment team (the predecessor to the Electricity Market Reform programme), where I was part of the team that set up the Civil Service award winning EMR Programme Management Office. I went on promotion to SEO to the Green Deal and then came back to EMR a couple of years later as a G7. And I'm still here.

## What have been the achievements in your time in the Civil Service of which you're most proud?

I am proud to have worked on the Electricity Market Reform programme. Looking back it's amazing how much was achieved in such a short time. I'm proud to have been one of the many people who contributed to its successful implementation.

Outside the day job, I have always found time to make a corporate contribution. As a member of the REM Executive Committee, I am proud to have helped to set up the hugely successful monthly coaching initiative and I have assisted numerous colleagues with applications and interview preparation and have always mentored junior colleagues.

**“Get yourself a mentor, and seriously consider mentoring others. In my own experience, it has been a great way of paying it forward.”**

Last year I set up the DECC Schools Outreach Programme alongside former REM Chair, Tania Celani, which has since won a Civil Service Live award – working with a fantastic cross-departmental team of volunteers, arranging visits to schools from underrepresented groups with the ultimate aim of creating a department which represents the wider society we serve.

### **What do you think it takes to be a good role model?**

A good role model leads by example and is open to new ideas and ways of thinking. I think BAME role models in particular are important in inspiring people from underrepresented backgrounds to progress up the organisation.

### **Who has been a role model for you?**

Tina Fey is an incredibly successful female comic, writer and actress. She started out in a time when there was very little diversity in the heavily male dominated world of comedy (being part- Greek meant she also didn't fit the All-American female ideal) but she has gone on to break down barriers and stereotypes, creating and starring in critically acclaimed TV shows and has shown that you shouldn't just accept the status quo.

### **What would be your advice to BAME civil servants who aspire to be leaders in the organisation?**

Get yourself a mentor, and seriously consider mentoring others. In my own experience, it has been a great way of paying it forward. I have been lucky enough to have met people along the way who have taken the time to support, advise and nurture me. I think it's also incredibly valuable to continually seek feedback and to not dwell on failure - bouncing back is a skill we can all hone.

### **In your experience as BAME individual have you felt valued within the Civil Service?**

I have not experienced barriers working in the Civil Service, I think it's a brilliant place to work and the fact that no two days are the same suits my personality – but I recognise there is still more to do to improve representation at senior levels, so we can have diversity of experiences, thoughts and ideas.



# Conclusion

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this booklet, and been inspired by the stories from just some of our colleagues from a range of BAME and religious backgrounds from both former DECC and former BIS. Some of you will know one or more of them. You may have worked with them, or simply seen them around the office. But as you will have seen, each of them has a unique story, a wealth of experience and the courage to step forward as a role model for our new Department.

Having read their stories, we can be proud of their achievements, admire their tenacity in overcoming so many different forms of adversity and appreciate the depth and breadth of understanding they bring to their work as Civil Servants.

We want BEIS to be a truly diverse and inclusive environment, but we still have some way to go in achieving that aim. If we are to get there we cannot rely only on the role models whose stories you have read here. We should all be a part of this. So, as Akeela put it so well at the end of her piece:

“Please be yourself, have integrity, respect, share your knowledge and skills and be nice to people.”

And remember – we can all be role models. If, having read the stories in this booklet you too would like to step forward and share yours, do please get in touch with the REM network [– we want this to be a living, growing document that showcases the best of our talent and the fantastic people who will help shape the future of the Civil Service].”

James Maskell

Religion & Ethnic Minority Champion





# Acknowledgements

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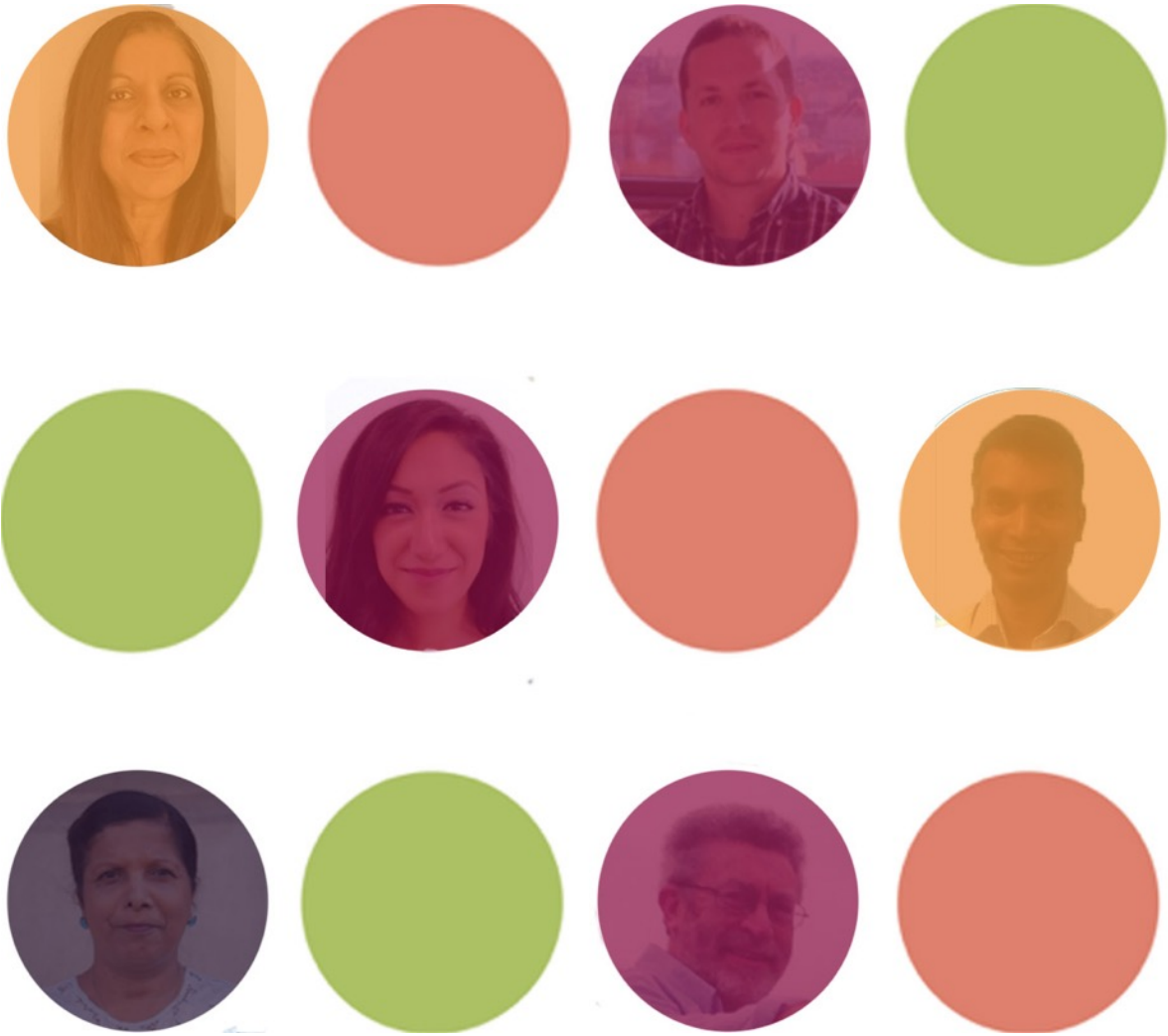
This guide was produced in October 2016.

“Our diversity is what makes us who we are, an amazing place to work, to care, to be”

“My advice to those who aspire to be leaders is to keep going.”

“Hitch your wagon to your star’, be ambitious, don’t be put off”

“The difference I have made to the careers and opportunities for ethnic minority staff is the thing I am most



# Religion & Ethnic Minority Role Models



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy



**REM**