

AUTHORITY: HOW DO WE USE IT?

How can you use your authority to best effect? Being a leader gives you authority, and the right and responsibility to make decisions. Respect for your authority has to be earned. It does not automatically bring influence, followership, or even compliance.

Where a leader relies on **direct authority** to get things done, we encourage them to remember that:

- Most adults don't like being told what to do all the time. They want to learn and grow, and feel they have some control over their lives
- By delegating authority, leaders empower their teams to develop their own decision-making skills, and to use their own judgement on when to ask for help
- Strong team leadership creates followers out of free choice. It builds a trusting environment where people work creatively together on the challenges
- An over-controlling leader is unlikely to find time for the things that only the leader can do.

Some leaders can **underestimate the authority they bring to a role**. It is worth remembering that:

- You were appointed because of the knowledge, experience and track record that you bring. Your **reputational authority** conveys a right to be at the table
- Your role and expertise give you **convening authority** to bring others together to build understanding and solve cross-cutting problems
- **Relationship authority** can be far more influential than the formal exercise of power. When you work to understand where others are coming from, they are more likely to be influenced by your perspective and accept your lead
- Authority can be **shared across a team** as a consequence of building alliances
- A surprising amount of authority can flow from **how you show up**, and whether **your body language and voice encourage others to listen to you**

Authority comes in many forms. In the next three prompts we shall explore convening authority, relationship authority and how you 'show up' as someone with authority.