

Unravelling and reimagining the UK's relationship with the EU

Public engagement about Brexit in the East of England

Professor Catherine Barnard and Dr Amy Ludlow

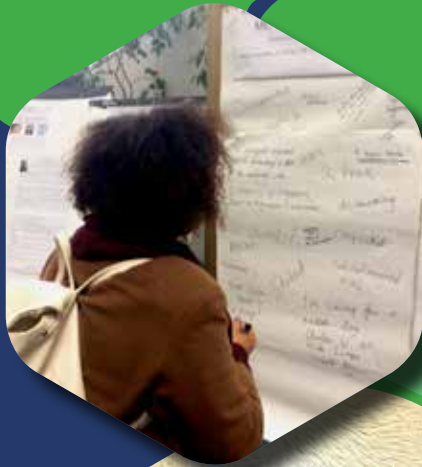
University of Cambridge and UK in a Changing Europe



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



The **UK** in a
Changing Europe



Unravelling and reimagining the UK's relationship with the EU

Public engagement about Brexit in the East of England

Professor Catherine Barnard and Dr Amy Ludlow

University of Cambridge and UK in a Changing Europe

SUMMARY

What do the public think about Brexit and the future relationship between the UK and the EU? To find out, in early 2017, we held public engagement events about Brexit across the East of England.

Our aim was to hear from as many people as possible about their personal responses to Brexit and their priorities in the future relationship between the UK and EU. We spent time in school halls, community centres, prisons, and on market squares in parts of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire, listening to different points of view, and filming the debates. We chose areas where opinions on Brexit were strongly divided, including strong Leave areas, such as Holt in North Norfolk and Boston in Lincolnshire,

as well as strong Remain areas, such as Cambridge city centre. This report describes what people told us about their views and hopes going forward.



KEY FINDINGS:

- Many of our participants felt misinformed by the referendum campaign, and some felt angry or disappointed by the conduct of politicians and the media during the campaign. But most also accepted the result and want to see a good deal for the UK.
- Young people from across the region felt especially disappointed by the referendum result; even in predominantly Leave areas, most young people said they wanted the UK to remain a full member of the EU.

- When we asked participants to indicate their preferences about the future UK-EU relationship, in an ideal world, many wanted full access to the Single Market, without free movement of persons, and with minimal or no financial contribution from the UK to the EU. But when presented with the same options as packages, representing existing models of relationship (status quo, European Economic Area, Customs Union and Hard Brexit), participants recognised that compromises had to be made and that this might lead to trade-offs.
- Two key areas for compromise emerged: free movement of persons and the size of the UK's financial contribution to the EU. Many participants were willing to give up the right to go on holiday in the EU without any restriction, including losing the right to draw on emergency healthcare in the host Member State. Free movement of services was the most consistently desired EU membership benefit. Few saw this as in tension with the UK's autonomy to make and enforce its own laws.



- Participants offered a range of reasons for voting Leave: dissatisfaction with the EU, which was seen to be out of touch, a rise in immigration to the UK, which was felt to place an unmanageable burden on public services, and feelings that British identity had been eroded. Vote Leave's 'take back control' message had traction, as did the promise of additional healthcare funding by rediverting current contributions to the EU budget.
- It was easier for participants who had voted Leave to give specific examples of how they felt the EU had over-reached itself than it was for participants who voted Remain to give concrete examples of the EU's benefits.

- Overall there was consensus that a deal closer to the European Economic Area (EEA) or 'Norway' model might be best, at least in the short term so as to enable full access to the EU Single Market.
- There was strong appetite for continued engagement about the terms of the future Brexit deal. Most participants wanted the rights of EU nationals in the UK to be guaranteed without delay. There was significant concern about racism, which some felt had worsened because of how the referendum campaigns had been carried out as well as the outcome to Leave.

BACKGROUND

A divided vote and nation

On 23 June 2016, 51.9% of the voting electorate decided that they wanted the United Kingdom to Leave the European Union. Analysis of voting patterns reveals sharp geographical divisions between Leave and Remain voters, as well divisions in terms of voters' age, race and ethnicity, and educational background. There were also important differences of opinion about what a vote for Leave or Remain meant. As [Jonathan Portes](#) argued before the referendum, two very different visions of leaving the EU were shoehorned into the 'Leave' box on the ballot paper. The first, a Soft Brexit, favoured a more internationalist position for the UK but where the UK would continue to be a member of the EU's Single Market through [membership of the European Economic Area](#) (colloquially referred to as 'doing a Norway'). The other, a Hard (or '[Clean](#)') Brexit, ruled out continued membership of the Single Market or Customs Union, falling back on World Trade Organisation rules in the absence of bespoke trading agreements with the 27 other EU Member States. Subsumed within the Remain case were a wide range of appetites for reform from within.

'Brexit means [Hard] Brexit'

In spite of these divisions and uncertainties, in her first speech as Prime Minister, Theresa May described the referendum outcome as a clear 'vote for serious change' and an unambiguous mandate for the UK to leave the EU. 'Brexit means Brexit', she said.

Six months later, in a [speech](#) at Lancaster House in January 2017, the Prime Minister restated her position that the Government would honour the referendum result. She argued that the public had voted to leave the EU 'with their eyes open'. It was, she said, 'a vote to restore, as we see it, our parliamentary democracy, national self-

determination, and to become even more global and internationalist in action and in spirit.' And so, her Government would seek 'a new and equal partnership – between an independent, self-governing, Global Britain and our friends and allies in the EU.' A Soft Brexit was ruled out: 'Not partial membership of the European Union, associate membership of the European Union, or anything that leaves us half-in, half-out. We do not seek to adopt a model already enjoyed by other countries. We do not seek to hold on to bits of membership as we leave.' The Prime Minister's speech, and the [White Paper](#) that accompanied it, have set the UK on a path towards a Hard Brexit.





APPROACH

Within this evolving and complex landscape, we hosted a series of events to talk to members of our local community about how they voted and why, and what they consider important in the future deal between the UK and EU. Our ambitions were never to obtain a picture of public opinion that is generalisable to the national population, but rather to engage people local to our university base in Cambridge to get a better sense of views in the Eastern region. This is part of UK in a Changing Europe's broader commitments to knowledge exchange and the stimulation of public debate.

Between 5 January and 2 February 2017, we hosted a total of [9 public engagement events](#) and spent 4 days interviewing people on the streets and in markets, shops and cafes in the Cambridgeshire towns of Cambridge, Peterborough and Wisbech; in Holt and Sheringham in North Norfolk; and in Spalding and Boston in Lincolnshire. We wanted to learn about the views and expectations of a diverse group of people within our local area. To this end, we held engagement events in a range of venues and in partnership with different organisations, including (state and private) schools, a prison, the University of the Third Age, and a small community group that runs courses in English as a foreign language. We chose locations where there were significant differences in the referendum vote. In Holt and Sheringham, for example, 58.9% of voters voted to Leave and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) had strong council support. Cambridge, by contrast, returned one of the most pro-Remain outcomes of the referendum, with 73.8% of voters voting to Remain.

The size of event audiences varied from our smallest, of around 15 people at an event for men at a local prison, to over 400 at a University of the Third Age event in Cambridge. Most events were attended by around 100 people and lasted an hour and a half. In some cases, we limited participation to people who were members of our host venue's community (e.g. only sixth form students were invited to two of our school events and only people in prison attended our two prison events). But all other events were open to the general public and were advertised as widely as possible through social media accounts and email lists (our own and those

of our hosts), and by posters that were put up in the local area and sent to local businesses. Save for two of our engagement events in prisons, which were necessarily segregated on grounds of gender, and those conducted with school students during the day, all other events attracted a good range of participants in terms of age and gender. Cambridge based groups were more diverse, especially racially, than the groups who attended events in Lincolnshire or Norfolk but this was expected, given the differences in diversity of local populations in those areas as a whole. Our event at the English as a foreign language class enabled us to capture the perspectives of some non-nationals, most of whom had arrived to the UK within the last year. Around half of the class cohort we met were EU nationals; others were from third (i.e. non-EU) countries.

Our engagement events followed roughly the same format. After personal introductions, an overview of what we hoped to learn, and a show of hands about how participants had voted in the referendum, we showed a [short film](#) of some of the conversations we had with people on the streets of Cambridge and Wisbech in December 2016. The film explored three questions:



1. **What do you think about Brexit?**
2. **What do you want from a future relationship between the UK, EU and other European countries?**
3. **What is your message to Theresa May and her Government?**

We found that the film stimulated lively, whole group debate. In some cases, we also kick-started discussion by asking participants to brainstorm the

words they associated with the EU, and with Brexit, or the key arguments in favour of Leave or Remain.

After around 30 minutes of discussion, participants were invited to form small groups. Each group was given two charts (Annex A and B). These were developed by Professors [David Howarth](#) and [Jonathan Grant](#), together with colleagues from RAND Europe. Both charts list seven aspects of the UK's relationship with the EU that were significant in pre-referendum debates. These are: people's rights to holiday in other EU countries; people's rights to live and work in other EU countries; the UK's financial contribution to the EU; the UK's freedom to make trade deals with countries outside the EU; business freedoms to trade in services within the EU Single Market; business freedoms to trade in goods within the EU Single Market; and the question of who has the power to make, interpret and impose law.

For each of the seven aspects of the UK's relationship with the EU, between two and four different options were listed. The different options reflect existing models of relationship with the EU: the status quo (i.e. full EU membership), European Economic Area (EEA) membership, Customs Union membership and Hard Brexit (i.e. non-membership of the EU). We used straightforward but precise language to describe the different options. We also tried to make clear what each option would be like in practice, through everyday examples (e.g. 'UK banks can operate in Spain, and Spanish banks can operate in the UK' to illustrate free movement of services). Embedded within each option was an assumption of reciprocity – that the rights enjoyed by UK nationals in EU countries would be enjoyed to the same extent as EU nationals in the UK.

In the first chart (Annex A), which was used in the first small group activity, options were unlabelled. Participants were simply invited to consider each of the seven aspects of the UK-EU relationship and circle which option they preferred in an ideal world. At the end of this exercise, we asked for a show of hands to see how people's preferences were reflected in the tables. We then presented participants with the second chart (Annex B), which listed the same options across the same aspects of the UK-EU relationship, but this time as packages, explicitly reflecting either the status quo, EEA, Customs Union or Hard Brexit. Participants were

asked to consider the packages in light of their preferences on the first table. They were invited to articulate what mattered most, and what they were prepared to sacrifice. Most sessions ended with a discussion of the trading off exercise and, where time permitted, we asked people to give a one sentence message about Brexit for Theresa May and her Government.

All of our engagement events were fast paced and most attracted large audiences. This made the process of data collection challenging. We took detailed field notes where possible although this was difficult since we were also compering the events. At some events we were assisted by a small team of PhD students, which made it possible for us to take more careful notes and to benefit from their reflections on the discussions. Completed preference and trade off charts were retained and five of the nine engagement events were filmed. From this it has been possible to assemble a good account of people's views and priorities. However, the use of technology, through for example the digital completion of charts or the use of polling apps, would have improved the depth and completeness of our analysis.



FINDINGS

Limited knowledge of the EU

‘Did you know that the most Googled question after the referendum was “what is the EU?”?’

(Participant at Gresham’s School, Norfolk)

One of the most striking findings of our engagement work has been how limited many people’s knowledge is about the EU. Though some participants had more detailed expertise, many people, across all of our engagement events, had a lot of unanswered questions about the EU. These questions were often fundamental: about how the EU is structured, what its key institutions are, what they do, and how much power they have; what the Single Market is and the nature of the four freedoms that operate within it; what the UK contributes to the EU and the ways and extent to which the UK benefits from EU membership.

For some, the EU felt removed and detached from their day to day realities. At most of our events we sought to engage participants in conversations about how they, personally, thought the EU affected their lives. Participants often struggled to articulate specific examples, whether positive or negative, about the EU’s impact. As one participant at HMP Peterborough put it, ‘The EU doesn’t really affect me and what I do in my life’.

Where participants were able to give specific examples of how the EU affected them, the most common negative examples were that the EU prevented children from playing conkers in the school playground and prohibited the sale of ‘bendy bananas’. Beyond these more infamous examples, one participant at our event in Boston criticised the Working Time Directive. At both of our events in Spalding, students argued that EU migrants had made local roads more dangerous because of what they described as poorer driving standards and different attitudes to drink driving.

Younger participants were generally more likely to share positive examples of how the EU affected them personally, though young and old alike talked about the benefits of no mobile phone roaming charges across the EU. The most commonly cited examples of positive EU impacts given by young people were the Erasmus exchange programme and equal fees for UK students studying in the EU. One group of students in Spalding also highlighted a more diverse range of high-street shops (including brands originating in other EU countries, such as Zara) as a benefit of EU membership that they welcomed.

Overall though, participants generally found it difficult to express, concretely, what difference membership of the EU made for them personally. For most, the EU was described as a distant organisation: an organisation about which they knew little but felt, somewhat intangibly, shaped their lives and the country in which they lived, either for better or for worse.



Frustrated and misinformed

'The Brexit campaign was a complete mess. The consequences of a vote either way were not spelled out [...] the process that led us to Brexit was definitely not our finest hour.'

(Participant at Gresham's School, Norfolk)

'I didn't realise "out" didn't just mean "out".'

(Participant at HMP Peterborough, Cambridgeshire)

Many participants felt confused or, in some cases, deliberately misled, by what was offered in the EU referendum. Consistent with Jonathan Portes' argument above that different visions of leaving and remaining in the EU were 'shoehorned' into two boxes on the ballot paper, participants reported significant misunderstanding about what 'Leave' and 'Remain' meant in the referendum, and what 'Leave' and 'Remain' mean now in the process of 'Brexiting'. When presented with charts describing the UK's current relationship with the EU, and how it could be reconfigured under EEA, Customs Union and 'Hard Brexit' arrangements, many participants expressed surprise about what the different options looked like in practice. Despite the list including some of the highest profile issues in pre-referendum debates, such as free movement of persons and the UK's financial contribution to the EU budget, some people who voted Remain did not know the status quo position across the different aspects of the relationship that were listed. Likewise, some people who self-identified as 'Hard Brexiters' had not considered that a Hard Brexit might make it impossible to have access to the Single Market on the same terms as the UK now enjoys.

Participants also expressed frustration about the referendum process. The question on the ballot paper was described as 'ridiculous', 'disingenuous'

and 'oversimplified', 'cover[ing] too many issues in one umbrella question' and 'making no space for realistic preparation in the case of a Leave majority'. Some participants felt that people had not understood, because it had been properly explained, that voting in the referendum was different to voting in a normal political election because in this case, every vote truly counted.

Some participants reported expectations about what would happen after the referendum that were legally, if not also politically, unavoidably impossible from the outset. Many expected a vote to Leave to mean that the UK would leave the EU immediately. Several participants across different events variously described an expectation that 'all Eastern Europeans would be sent back the day after the referendum.' They could not understand the delay or why some people were describing the process of leaving as so complex. As one participant in Boston put it, 'Out should just mean out – what it says on the tin.' Once again speaks to a lack of accurate information and insufficient public discussion as to the practical and legal implications of Brexit.



Politicians, the media, and the campaigns

‘Politicians were like, “They won’t understand [what the referendum is about], baffle them with bullshit and they’ll keep quiet”.’

(Participant at HMP Peterborough, Cambridgeshire)

In this context of confusion, and mis- or partial information, there was almost universal dissatisfaction about the role that some politicians and media played in disseminating information and campaigning. At all of our events, participants were frustrated about a lack of clear and impartial information about the EU and Brexit. Many said ‘I had no idea what I was voting for’ or ‘I didn’t know what I was voting for. What do Leave and Remain even mean?’

The nature of the domestic referendum campaign on both sides was described as ‘hideous’, ‘full of lies’ and ‘a spectacular failure of true political debate’. Participants felt that the media presented ‘too many messy, emotive and conflicting versions of the truth’. Some participants criticised ‘Brussels’: ‘Why didn’t Brussels take a lead? Why didn’t they come over here and talk up the positive arguments for Remain?’ For some, this exacerbated problems with the EU’s image as ‘very cold’, ‘arrogant’, ‘self-important’ and ‘detached’. David Cameron was described as ‘weak and out of touch’. In some cases, politicians were more broadly criticised for being dishonest and ‘hiding behind an EU demon’: allowing the EU to take the blame for policies that were, in fact, domestic choices and, in so doing, obscuring the facts about what might change as a result of a vote to Leave.

Many felt that short-term political agendas had been furthered at the expense of constructive and evidence-led debate. The focus had been on ‘persuasive rhetoric rather than factual information’. As one participant in HMP Peterborough put it, ‘Too many politicians are trying to make a point, rather than solve a problem.’ Another participant elsewhere described the situation as a ‘seething



morass of information and emotion’, provoking people to ‘vote for passion’s sake’ rather than using the referendum as an opportunity to enable informed and level-headed decision-making. ‘The volume of howling drowned out intelligent debate’, said one participant in Holt, Norfolk. Some felt that some Leave voters voted for ‘xenophobically driven’ reasons; ‘flames’ that had been ‘fanned’ by what were seen as irresponsible political narratives and media coverage. Others deeply resented this stereotype. We return to this point overleaf.



Motivations for voting Leave or Remain

'It seems like opinions are really polarised and binary. It's hard to find transitions and bridges to join them together and build a common middle ground.'

(Participant at The Perse School, Cambridge)

At each of our events we discussed what participants saw as the main factors that motivated people to vote Leave or Remain. The most commonly cited reasons offered for a Leave vote were border and migration control, regaining control for the UK over law and policy, increased spending on the NHS (based on a [subsequently withdrawn](#) Leave campaign pledge to invest an extra £350 million a week in the NHS from the money saved by Brexit), and racism. The most commonly cited reasons for Remain votes were free trade, a concern for stability, and a fear of change.

When we asked how participants themselves voted in the referendum and why, two predominant narratives emerged on each side of the debate. The first key reason given for voting Remain was inertia; that there was no good reason to change the status quo of full EU membership. This was typified by statements from participants such as:

'I voted in because I saw no good reason to vote out.'

The second key reason for voting Remain was a belief in collaboration as the best means by which growth and peace could be achieved. One EU national student at the English as a Foreign Language class in Cambridge described a pragmatic case for collaboration in economic terms:

'Brexit is about the UK thinking it is better on its own. The UK has a lot of rich resources and they want to have these resources only for UK nationals. They don't want to share with Europe. But England needs to exchange resources to be strong.'

Similarly, on the theme of necessary collaboration, two participants at HMP Peterborough said:

'British thinking has always been very selfish – about what I can gain from others. If I'm not gaining, then I'm not interested. If things are not working perfectly for us then get rid [...] just do what's good for us, as if our chances of doing well aren't really tied up with everyone else's.'

And:

'We haven't got enough land to grow our own potatoes so we need to be in. We need each other.'

The role of the EU in securing peace was most positively and firmly advocated at our events by younger participants. In Holt, Norfolk, one student argued that:

'The EU is important because it is a unifying political and peaceful project.'

Another young person in Holt said:

'There are two different visions of why Britain is great. One is that it used to be great and is no longer great because of the EU. But another is that maybe participating in the grand peace project of the EU was part of what made the UK great.'

On the Leave side, most participants explained their desire for the UK to leave the EU in terms of control. The control narrative had two dimensions; one focused on specific areas of the existing UK-EU relationship that were considered unacceptable (particularly loss of law making power and loss of control over borders), and a second, focused on national politics and a feeling that citizens had lost control of national policy, culture and identity.

The first sub-dimension of loss of control was typified by statements from participants such as:

'Do we want to be in a club that wants to take our power away and turns this country into a county council?'

And:

'We had a referendum to take us into the EU. What we've got now is completely different to

what we voted for. The EU has changed beyond recognition. The UK wants back control of itself – its laws and its borders.'

The second dimension was typified by statements about how the decision to Leave had been a 'protest vote', or 'an angry vote'; an expression of frustration and alienation about broken public services and a 'broken politics' and 'widespread discontent about broader issues'. As one participant in Boston, Lincolnshire explained:

'People want change – any change, big change, something that means we are counted, that our voices and our lives matter. That gets the establishment to sit up and listen. We can't go on like this.'

For some people then, the referendum said less than might be thought about the EU as such:

'It wasn't an answer to the question that was asked.'



A desire for change was also linked in many cases to hardship that our participants, or others they knew, were experiencing following the financial crisis and the Government's policy response of austerity. In Peterborough, one participant said:

'If everyone could get a council house and see a doctor then half the people who voted to leave wouldn't have done so.'

There was a strong sense that many politicians simply were not seeing and were not listening to people and what they wanted for their futures. In Cambridge, some participants described how they

saw that some politicians had become lost, focusing so much on 'macro level' economic issues that they forgot about the 'micro-picture' of insecurity and:

'The experiences of the man on the street where his son can't get a job, their family can't get a house, their children are now at schools or living in communities where it feels like English is the minority language and every second shop is an Eastern European off-licence.'



'People feel scared and unsupported', said another participant in Holt, Norfolk.

Many participants linked a 'longing for change' as they saw it expressed in the referendum to feelings of voicelessness, particularly because votes in general elections were not converting in a meaningful way into seats in Parliament. These feelings were exacerbated by the sense among some participants that some politicians (and in some cases 'the establishment' more broadly) had conducted themselves arrogantly during the pre-referendum period. As one participant in Peterborough put it:

'The Government banked on us staying in and thought they were home and dry. They had no contingency plan for Brexit and now they are panicking.'

For some participants who voted Leave, dissatisfactions with an eroded sense of national identity were enmeshed with concerns about public services and the state of domestic politics. As one woman in HMP Peterborough described it,

'We're not allowed to be proud of our culture anymore. We can't display our flag because it upsets people. You don't walk around topless in Dubai. When in Rome.'

National identity was felt to have been diminished by a range of factors that, for some people during the referendum debates, found focus in EU nationals, particularly from the 2004 EU accession countries, such as Poland and Lithuania. Many participants, on both sides of the vote, saw the key tension within the referendum debate as between free trade and border control. One participant from Boston put the challenge explicitly in these terms, arguing that:

'There are two main issues, immigration and the economy. You can't keep both things happy. Either you control your borders or you have free trade.'

Many people across all of our engagement events felt that the focus on immigration during the referendum debates had been excessive and unhelpful. But for others, particularly those who made the over-stretched public services arguments most strongly, it was only by limiting the number of people who were coming into the UK that things could improve. Some participants who held this view saw the situation as one of needing 'to turn off the tap', 'pause for breath, regroup and build ourselves back up'. A participant in Boston described how:

'The majority of housing association places we build are for Eastern Europeans. I'm not racist but [...] we just can't cope anymore.'

Other participants, though, expressed serious concern about what they saw as 'racist undercurrents' in some of the debate about free movement of persons. Some presented impassioned arguments about how:

'Brexit has let people with underground racism bring it to light.'

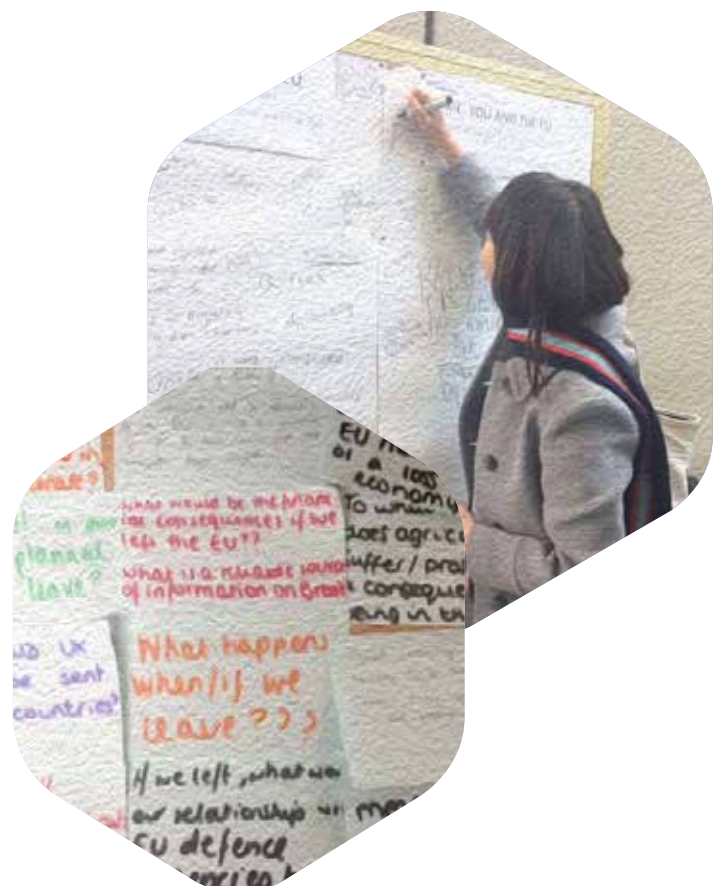
Some were angry that what they saw as the fallout from poor government policy decision making had come to be directed at EU nationals. As a participant

in Peterborough put it:

'It's the failings of government to sort out the housing system and the NHS that are driving racist views. There are lots of small minded people who cut up other people on the roads like that man said on the film. It's impossible to know whether they are foreign or not but people just assume that because it's convenient to have someone else to blame when things are difficult.'

Where views among our participants were at their most consensual was in a feeling that things were 'out of balance'. This sentiment was expressed in many different ways: 'it needs to be a two-way street', 'we need a neutral relationship between the EU and UK', 'whatever's agreed it needs to suit both sides, give and take', 'we need a level playing field.'

There was a sense among a significant proportion of our participants that the balance between UK and EU interests was not playing out as fairly as they would like. The EU that the UK had signed up to in 1973 now looked considerably different and there was a sense among many participants that some explicit reappraisal and rebalancing was warranted. Whether this happened inside or outside of the EU's membership though was a separate question, over which opinions were strongly divided.



Freedom of movement: the key battleground

‘We want free trade, but at the right price.’

(Participant at The Perse School, Cambridge)

What emerged from discussions with our participants was a view that free movement, particularly the free movement of persons, was, however regrettably, the essential ‘battleground’ on which the EU referendum was fought. This was supported by people’s preferences and trade-offs as they were expressed in our charts that described the current UK and EU relationship and possible alternative models (see charts in Annexes A and B).

When we asked participants to indicate their preferences about a future UK-EU relationship in an ideal world (see Annex A), many wanted full access to the Single Market, without free movement of persons, and with minimal or no financial contribution from the UK to the EU. However, when presented with the second chart (see Annex B) and asked to balance their preferences with a view to choosing one of the existing models (status quo, European Economic Area [EEA], Customs Union or Hard Brexit), the majority of participants at all engagement events preferred options that represented either EEA membership or the status quo (i.e. full EU membership).

Discussion in small groups during and after the trade-offs exercise, together with evidence of movement in choices from chart one to chart two, indicate that free movement of services and goods were the aspects of the UK-EU relationship that pulled most strongly towards the status quo or membership of the EEA: many people were prepared to give up their preferences in respect of other aspects of the relationship in order to secure these trade benefits. Some participants saw free movement of services as key to the UK’s ongoing prosperity, linking this to the UK’s strong services market. Others described free movement of services as ‘low risk’ or ‘a win-win’ for the UK. Few, if any, participants saw free movement of services or goods as potentially necessarily compromising the UK’s power to make and enforce its own laws (another of the seven aspects of the EU-UK relationship on the chart). Many participants



were willing to give up the right to go on holiday in the EU without any restriction, including losing the right to draw on emergency healthcare in the host Member State.

We found little knowledge or appetite for discussing the harmonisation of detailed rules (about things like packaging standards) that is necessary for free movement of services or goods as potentially necessarily compromising the UK’s power to make and enforce its own laws. We also found that most participants struggled with questions of EU membership cost and benefit. Despite our best attempts to give numbers in terms that felt tangible

(per household per week), many participants described the numbers as 'confusing and useless'. They wanted to know more precisely and directly how the money that the UK gave to the EU came back to the UK. They were unpersuaded by an analogy of gym membership: that the value of belonging to a gym, for which a monthly or annual fee is paid, may not reside only in the number of minutes spent in the gym for which you would otherwise pay, but rather in the wellbeing benefits, the social connections that are made, or the convenience of being able to turn up whenever you wish.

Most commonly, the two key aspects of the UK-EU relationship over which compromise had to be struck were free movement of persons and the size of the UK's contribution to the EU budget. In cases where the EEA option was chosen, it was a more limited right of free movement for people (that EU nationals can only come to the UK and access public services if they have a job) and a reduced financial contribution (of £5 billion rather than £10 billion) that guided people's decision-making. Many participants expressed a desire for the UK to be able to make its own trade deals but very few advanced a specific rationale for this and the trade deals freedom was mostly readily traded away in favour of free movement of goods or services.

Although many participants were motivated to choose EEA rather than the status quo because of its more limited rights of free movement for people, this was most often discussed by participants in terms of rebalancing. The referendum vote was not, as one participant put it, 'a case of pulling up the draw bridge on the world' and there was an almost universal desire among participants for people who were economically active, or who wanted to study in the UK, to be able to continue to come. What seemed important to participants across all events was that whoever came to the UK came to be economically productive. As a participant in Peterborough put it,

'It's not really all about immigration. I don't care who comes into our country as long as they are working. We're going over to their country too.'

Some participants thought there ought to be a more careful matching of migrants' skills and the UK's needs. The Australian visa system was discussed by participants at several of our events. Many also



wanted there to be 'proper checks' to stop people who have been convicted of serious criminal offences from coming into the UK. Some wanted there to be a requirement for all migrating EU nationals to have their own health insurance, prove that they could speak English and to take an English driving test. Debates about the migration of EU nationals were often within the broader context of all migration to the UK. Some participants argued that the refugee crisis had caused people to vote Leave:

'I think a lot voted Leave because of refugees. We've been told to take 90,000. David Cameron's London borough has a housing waiting list of a million.'

Others questioned why debates about migration were focused only on EU nationals:

'If we're going to blame foreigners then why not blame all foreigners, not just people from the EU?'

Messages to Theresa May

'I don't feel as scared about the future now as I did immediately after the referendum, but it does feel like the calm before the storm. Like we are all being lulled into a false sense that things will be alright.'

(Participant at Boston Grammar School, Lincolnshire)

Most of our engagement events finished with discussion about the messages people would like to send to Theresa May and her Government. From this, emerged helpful insights into how participants were currently feeling.

First, regret was expressed, in some places on both sides of the debate, about how the referendum campaign had been conducted. There was a sense among participants that the tone of the referendum debate and, in the case of some Remain voters also its outcome, had damaged or diminished the UK's international standing. As one participant in Holt put it:

'A little bit of the light of the beacon of Britain has gone out.'

Some participants, especially those living in communities where many EU nationals also live, reported feeling embarrassed or awkward about the referendum outcome. This was especially the case in Cambridge, and in Boston, where one school teacher said:

'There are lots of Eastern European children at my school. I feel that the Brexit outcome has betrayed them. It feels awkward and difficult and embarrassing.'

Many participants were concerned about racism or bad feeling among groups from different countries within their communities. One participant in Holt described the UK post-referendum as 'Divided

Britain'. In this context, some felt it important to emphasise the valuable contributions of people who come to the UK from other countries, arguing, for example, that 'British success is built on migrants' or that 'Eastern Europeans are some of the hardest working people I know'. Some also shared stories of where they had been told negative things about a group of non-nationals and, through direct personal experience, had come to see those things as unfounded. For example, in Peterborough, one man told us that he had been 'told that Poles are racist but then I lived next door to one and liked him and so we used to go to the gym together'.

We did not find evidence of significant concern about hostility from the local population among the recently arrived non-nationals in the English as a Foreign Language class. One of the students at the class who had lived in the UK for a year said that he had 'never felt unwelcome in the UK'. When we asked why, he said 'Unlike people who live here I can just go home if things get too bad.' This may suggest that the views of EU nationals who have lived in the UK for longer periods are likely to be less positive. There was clear consensus and strong feeling across all of our engagement activities that the Government should act quickly to protect the rights of EU nationals who were already resident and working in the UK. Counterintuitively perhaps, we were told in Boston that the town had been able to secure additional funding for improvement:

'Boston got the label of being the most racist town in Britain. Weirdly the Brexit vote has generated a platform, given us some leverage to get some positive change and investment.'

Second, there was generally significant anxiety among our participants. Some anxiety was about uncertainty and the 'eerie quietness' that had 'descended' since the referendum decision. One participant in Boston described it as 'like the calm before the storm' and 'like [...] being lulled into a false sense that things will be alright'. In addition to concerns about harmonious community relations, specific anxieties were raised about Ireland, and the possibility of renewed conflict there, and about the disintegration of the UK, in light of the strength of the Remain vote in Scotland. There was also real concern about the cost of Brexit and whether

this had been accounted for. As one participant in Peterborough put it:

'We're on our arse as a country. It's costing money for all this Brexit carry on. Who is counting the cost of that?'

There was strong and widespread appetite for continued engagement by politicians as important decisions are made moving forward.

Third, beyond anxiety, we also found anger and resentment. This was expressed by some of the 48% who voted Remain, but it was most strongly expressed by young people. Many of the young people we met expressed anger because a decision had been taken over which they had no say, but with which they would have to live for the rest of their lives. As one (German) student in Holt put it:

'How can it be that a 12-year-old who will be living this future gets no say but an 85-year-old who won't be here much longer is allowed to make their choice?'

Another student in Cambridge argued:

'My options and my future have been ignored by people who voted out. People who will be dead in a few years were allowed a say, but I wasn't as someone who is going to have to live with these decisions for the rest of my life.'

Though some young people saw the benefits of listening to the older generation who could remember a time when the UK was not part of the EU, or when the EU did not exist, many were frustrated as what many saw as a decision motivated by a 'backwards-looking nostalgia for something that never really existed'.





CONCLUSIONS

We found that it was generally much easier for participants who had voted Leave to give specific examples of how they felt the EU had over-reached itself than it was for participants who voted Remain to give concrete examples of the EU's benefits. Similarly, when we talked with participants in more abstract ways about why people might have voted Leave or Remain, reasons in favour of Remain were generally more diffusely, and non-specifically articulated than reasons to Leave, often linked to higher values and ideals, rather than down-to-earth, practical examples of positive impact in day-to-day life. This may be a reflection of the different ways in which the Leave and Remain campaigns were conducted. We wonder whether this might also be because, subsumed within the Remain campaign from the start was a moderate middle ground, which recognised that the EU did not always get everything right, but which urged reform from within.

Through these engagement activities it has also become increasingly clear that the technocratic integration advocated by Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the EU, may have become the EU's Achilles' heel, at least in the UK. According to the 'Monnet method', national rules should be harmonised in more technical areas, such as limiting the amount of noise a lawnmower can make or the amount of water that can be used to flush a toilet.

While this might make logical sense to those keen to pursue market integration because such rules are necessary to enable free movement of lawnmowers and sanitaryware across the EU, this method has provided fertile ground for stories of bendy bananas and playground conker banning to take root. The Leave campaign successfully capitalised on this. The Remain campaign had no simple appealing response.

But while there is still appetite to chew over what happened last summer, we found that there is also some pragmatism and a willingness to look to the future. When we looked at substance of what people want, we found a striking degree of moderate consensus: a desire for Single Market access with a rebalanced free movement of persons that enables greater migration control alongside fairly liberal access to the UK labour market for those with skills and a job already organised. That said, despite Theresa May's claim that the country is coming together, discussions with our participants revealed deep wounds and a divided society, generationally and geographically. It's going to require some skilful political leadership to heal those wounds. Building on the areas of consensus recognised by our participants might be the way to deliver this.

Aspect of UK's relationship with the EU

Rank the cards in preference order (1 = most preferred option, 4 = least preferred option)

	1	2	3	4
People's rights to holiday in other EU countries	UK citizens can go on holiday to any EU country and can use health services in emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens can go on holiday to any EU country but need health insurance for emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a visa to go on holiday to any EU country and need health insurance for emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	
People's rights to live and work in other EU countries	UK citizens can go to other EU countries to look for work, and they can live, work and access public services in other EU countries without restrictions . People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens can go to EU countries to look for work, but they can access public services only if they have a job in the EU . People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a work permit to work and use public services in the EU. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	
The UK's financial contribution to the EU	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. £18 billion of that total goes to the EU each year. This is about £13 per household per week.	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. £10 billion of that total goes to the EU each year. This is about £7 per household per week	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. £5 billion of that total goes to the EU each year. This is about £3.50 per household per week	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. No payment goes to the EU.
The UK's freedom to make trade deals with countries outside of the EU	The UK can only make trade deals with countries outside the EU when EU countries are also part of the deal .	The UK can make its own trade deals with countries outside the EU.		
Business' freedoms to trade in services within the EU Single Market	UK businesses are able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks can operate in Spain, and Spanish banks can operate in the UK.	UK businesses are not able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are not able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks cannot operate in Spain, and Spanish banks cannot operate in the UK.		
Business' freedoms to trade in goods within the EU Single Market	UK businesses can sell goods to people in EU countries without extra costs or barriers . EU businesses have the same rights in the UK	UK businesses face some extra costs when they trade goods in the EU. EU businesses face the same costs to trade goods in the UK.	UK businesses incur high costs when they trade goods in the EU. EU businesses face the same costs to trade goods in the UK.	
Who has the power to make, interpret and impose law	EU laws about trade, the environment, employment, consumer protection and extradition apply in the UK and are interpreted by EU courts in ways that apply to the UK. Other laws are UK laws.	EU laws about trade only apply in the UK and are interpreted by EU courts in ways that apply to the UK. Other laws are UK laws.	No EU laws apply in the UK and no EU court rulings apply in the UK.	

**Aspect
of UK's
relationship
with the EU**

Which package do you prefer?

	Status quo – full EU membership	European Economic Area	Customs Union	Hard Brexit
People's rights to holiday in other EU countries	UK citizens can go on holiday to any EU country and can use health services in emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens can go on holiday to any EU country and can use health services in emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a visa to go on holiday to any EU country and need health insurance for emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a visa to go on holiday to any EU country and need health insurance for emergencies. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.
People's rights to live and work in other EU countries	UK citizens can go to other EU countries to look for work, and they can live, work and access public services in other EU countries without restrictions . People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens can go to EU countries to look for work, but they can access public services only if they have a job in the EU . People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a work permit to work and use public services in the EU. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.	UK citizens need a work permit to work and use public services in the EU. People from other EU countries have the same rights in the UK.
The UK's financial contribution to the EU	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. £10 billion of that total goes to the EU each year. This is about £7 per household per week	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. £5 billion of that total goes to the EU each year. This is about £3.50 per household per week	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. No payment goes to the EU.	Total UK government spending is £772 billion per year. No payment goes to the EU.
The UK's freedom to make trade deals with countries outside of the EU	The UK can only make trade deals with countries outside the EU when EU countries are also part of the deal .	The UK can make its own trade deals with countries outside the EU.	The UK can only make trade deals with countries outside the EU when EU countries are also part of the deal .	The UK can make its own trade deals with countries outside the EU.
Business' freedoms to trade in services within the EU Single Market	UK businesses are able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks can operate in Spain, and Spanish banks can operate in the UK.	UK businesses are able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks can operate in Spain, and Spanish banks can operate in the UK.	UK businesses are not able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are not able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks cannot operate in Spain, and Spanish banks cannot operate in the UK.	UK businesses are not able to provide services in EU countries and EU businesses are not able to provide services in the UK. For example, UK banks cannot operate in Spain, and Spanish banks cannot operate in the UK.
Business' freedoms to trade in goods within the EU Single Market	UK businesses can sell goods to people in EU countries without extra costs or barriers . EU businesses have the same rights in the UK	UK businesses face some extra costs when they trade goods in the EU. EU businesses face the same costs to trade goods in the UK.	UK businesses face some extra costs when they trade goods in the EU. EU businesses face the same costs to trade goods in the UK.	UK businesses incur high costs when they trade goods in the EU. EU businesses face the same costs to trade goods in the UK.
Who has the power to make, interpret and impose law	EU laws about trade, the environment, employment, consumer protection and extradition apply in the UK and are interpreted by EU courts in ways that apply to the UK. Other laws are UK laws.	EU laws about trade only apply in the UK and are interpreted by EU courts in ways that apply to the UK. Other laws are UK laws.	EU laws about trade only apply in the UK and are interpreted by EU courts in ways that apply to the UK. Other laws are UK laws.	No EU laws apply in the UK and no EU court rulings apply in the UK.





Many thanks to everyone who participated in our engagement events.

Special thanks to colleagues and partner organisations who supported us, particularly:

- **The Perse School, Cambridge**
- **ESOL Café, Chesterton, Cambridge**
- **HMP Peterborough**
- **Gresham's School, Holt**
- **Spalding High School, Lincolnshire**
- **Boston Grammar School, Lincolnshire**
- **University of the Third Age**

