

# National Conversation on Immigration

An interim report to the  
Home Affairs Committee

January 2018



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British Future and HOPE not hate

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Future...

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# Contents

Executive summary	page 3
1 Introduction	page 6
2 Why we need a national conversation on immigration	page 8
3 Common findings: control and contribution	page 11
4 Local differences	page 16
5 Migration from the EU	page 22
6 Migration from outside the EU	page 26
7 Refugees	page 29
8 Stakeholder views	page 32
9 Securing a consensus	page 36
10 The next steps	page 39
11 Appendices	
List of visits	page 40
Stakeholders who have given input	page 42
Summary of local findings	page 44
Citizens panel questions	page 73
Acknowledgements	page 76
About British Future and HOPE not hate	page 76
Notes and References	page 77
Have your say in the National Conversation	page 78

# Executive summary

Leaving the EU will mean significant changes to the UK's immigration policy, offering an opportunity to create an immigration system that works for business and public services as well as restoring public trust in the system. This confidence cannot be fully restored without engaging the public in a debate about their views and concerns. Further, recent debate around immigration has been polarised, dominated by loud voices who are either very anti- or very pro- immigration, giving little space for those in the middle to be heard. This is why British Future and HOPE not hate have come together, to involve the public in this debate through the National Conversation on Immigration. In doing this, we aim to:

- Create a robust evidence base of public views on immigration.
- Examine if it is possible to build a consensus on immigration policy and, if so, what steps are needed to do so.
- Engage those with less voice in policy decisions: for example young people and those who live outside big cities.
- Advocate for deeper, on-going public engagement from the Government by demonstrating the value of such work when done well.

## METHODOLOGY

The National Conversation on Immigration has three main components:

- 60 visits to towns and cities across the UK, chosen to offer a mix of places with different experiences of migration, as well as political and geographic variety.
- An online survey hosted on our website [www.nationalconversation.org.uk](http://www.nationalconversation.org.uk)
- A nationally representative survey of 4,000 people, which we will undertake in early 2018.

In each location we meet local stakeholders, such as the local authority, business leaders and civil society organisations, and then run a separate citizens' panel made up of members of the public recruited to be representative of the local area. Basing our conversation on a discussion guide, the citizens' panels discuss the approach that they would like to see the Government take to different types of migration. They are also asked their views about integration. Crucially, participants consider what would need to change in order for the Government to get their support for its handling of immigration.



We have been given the opportunity to work alongside the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, which is undertaking its own year-long inquiry on the future direction of immigration policy. Importantly, too, the Home Affairs Committee also wants to see if it is possible to build greater consensus behind immigration policy.

This interim report represents our findings from the first 30 visits made between February and September 2017.

## **COMMON FINDINGS**

Most of those who have taken part in the citizens' panels are what we have termed 'balancers', who see both the pressures and gains of immigration. Typically, our participants describe the benefits of migration, the skills that migrants bring to the UK and the jobs that they fill. At the same time, participants also voice their concerns and questions about migration.

These concerns include neighbourhood decline in areas with large amounts of poorly-maintained private rental accommodation housing migrant workers; pressures on the NHS and schools; social segregation; and low level anti-social behaviour. Concerns about migration numbers and the labour market impacts of migration are voiced less frequently than issues that relate to housing, integration and pressures on public services.

Contribution and control have emerged as central themes in all the citizens' panels. Participants want the migrants who come to the UK to make a contribution, through the skills they bring, the vacancies they fill and through taxation. Detailed and often abstract economic arguments about fiscal and economic impacts, describing the macroeconomic contribution that migrants make to the UK, do not resonate with members of the citizens' panels. Rather, economic contribution is seen through a 'common sense' fiscal lens, with participants having positive views about migrants who are seen as tax-payers and negative views about those who work off the books, send money home or are perceived as coming to the UK to claim benefits.

Members of the citizens' panels also want the Government to exercise greater control over migration flows. A reason that many participants feel migration flows are uncontrolled is that they do not trust the Government to enforce immigration policy.

The discussion within the citizens' panels has mostly focussed on EU migration, rather than immigration from outside the EU, which is generally a less salient issue. The latter is viewed as better controlled and in many locations, migration from outside the EU has a much lower profile.

All citizens' panels have expressed sympathy for the plight of refugees, but in many places this feels fragile and appears contingent on national and international events. Attitudes to refugees are again seen through the framework of contribution and control.

Our citizens' panels want migrants to integrate into their local communities and to learn English. Many participants also believe that migrants who come to the UK must be prepared to support themselves and feel that some new arrivals have come to this country with the specific motive of claiming benefits. Where migrants are perceived to live 'parallel lives' from the wider community, these fears are exacerbated.

## **LOCAL DIFFERENCES**

Alongside the common themes that emerged in all the citizens' panels and stakeholder discussions were striking local differences. Immigration is a more salient issue in some areas than others. There are also differences in the nature of public concerns between different areas, which are often driven by specific local conditions.

Concerns about neighbourhood decline appeared to be the predominant localised issue, though it was expressed differently from place to place. Asylum-seekers and new migrants from the EU are over-represented in cheaper, overcrowded and often badly-maintained private rental accommodation: where such housing is concentrated in particular areas, it can lead to associations between migration and neighbourhood decline. This also fuels concerns about a lack of integration.

Public opinion is often framed by everyday experiences of integration at a local level, in neighbourhoods and at a town or city level. Where residents have meaningful social contact with migrants, they are able to base their opinions on these social interactions, rather than on "community narratives" drawn solely from the media and peer group debate. Social contact between migrants and local residents is key to achieving a more constructive debate about immigration.

## SECURING A CONSENSUS

Our first 30 visits have led us to conclude that the public sees immigration on the national scale through a 'local lens' that reflects their everyday experiences. Getting immigration and integration right at a local level is key to building public support for the handling of immigration policy. Specifically, the Government needs to consider three issues if it is to build a consensus:

- 1** Deal effectively, and be seen to deal effectively, with the local impacts of immigration on public services, housing, neighbourhoods and residents' quality of life.
- 2** Encourage social integration between newcomers and longer settled residents through social contact, as this helps build trust and understanding between different groups of people.
- 3** Look at how Government might institutionalise further public engagement and dialogue, as face-to-face debate enables people to air their concerns and listen to different opinions.

We need national policy initiatives that help us get things right locally. This is key to building a consensus, and an immigration system that works for the economy, protects migrants' rights and works for local communities. We will consider these public policy interventions in more detail in the final report from the National conversation on immigration, to be published in autumn 2018.

# 1. Introduction

Over the last 15 years immigration has grown significantly as an issue of public concern in the UK, rarely dropping out of the top five issues facing the country. At the same time, both civil society and business voices have expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of current policy on a diverse range of issues, including the administration of work visas and refugee protection.

Leaving the EU will mean significant changes to the UK's immigration policy, either in 2019 or after a transition period. This 'reset' moment means that there is an opportunity to set in place an immigration system that works for business and public services such as the NHS and, crucially, which secures greater public support.

Brexit is a chance to restore trust in an immigration system that is viewed, by a significant proportion of the public, as broken. This confidence, however, cannot be fully restored without engaging the public in a debate about the future direction of immigration policy. Our public immigration debate is polarised and dominated by the loud voices of those with strongly pro- or anti-immigration views, offering little space for those in the middle to be heard. This is why British Future and HOPE not hate have come together, to involve the public in this debate through the National Conversation on Immigration.

The National Conversation on Immigration aims to engage the public in considering the approach that the Government should take to different types of migration: for example migration of skilled and low-skilled workers, family migration, students and refugees. It examines public views on the future approaches to EU migration and listens to citizens' opinions about work visas, points-based systems or adaptations to freedom of movement. The National Conversation on Immigration is also hearing views on how better to manage the impact of migration on local communities.

Most importantly, the National Conversation on Immigration aims to establish whether it is possible to build greater consensus behind immigration policy and to ascertain the steps that might be needed to do this.

The National Conversation on Immigration has drawn on UK and international experiences of public engagement in policy decisions, in particular the Canadian government's 2016 national conversation on immigration<sup>1</sup>. We have considered it important to get to the UK's smaller cities and towns and to engage those with less voice in policy decisions, for example, young people and those in deprived communities. At a time when trust in politicians and 'experts' is diminished, we also want to show that effective public engagement in crucial political decisions is both possible and cost effective. With these aims in mind, we have developed a methodology which comprises the following different components:

- An online survey hosted on our website [www.nationalconversation.org](http://www.nationalconversation.org). This is open to anyone and as of 30 September 2017 received 2,253 responses.
- A nationally representative opinion poll of 4,000 people, which we will undertake in early 2018.
- 120 meetings in 60 towns and cities across the UK, comprising a stakeholder meeting and citizens' panel in each location.

Over a 15-month period, from February 2017 to April 2018, the National Conversation on Immigration will visit 60 towns and cities across the UK. In each place we visit we hold a citizens' panel of ten members of the public recruited to be representative of the local area. Basing our conversation on a discussion guide, the citizens' panels discuss the approach that they would like to see the Government take to different types of migration. They are also asked their views about integration. Participants also consider what would need to change in order for the Government to get their support for its handling of immigration.

In each town or city, we also hold an invitation-only consultation with local stakeholders, for example the local authority, other public sector bodies, organisations working with migrants and business leaders.

We have been given the opportunity to work alongside Parliament's Home Affairs Committee, which is undertaking its own year-long inquiry on the future direction of immigration policy. Importantly, the Home Affairs Committee also wants to see if it is possible to build greater consensus behind immigration policy. The National Conversation on Immigration is extending public participation in this Inquiry. Our findings are being presented to the Home Affairs Committee, in the form of 60 local reports, this interim report, a final report in 2018, as well as oral evidence.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This is the interim report of the National Conversation on Immigration, written at its halfway point after 30 visits had been undertaken. It sets out our initial findings, which we will examine in greater detail in our final report to be published in autumn 2018.

**Section Two** of the report discusses in greater detail what we did and why we undertook the National Conversation on Immigration.

The places we have visited have had very different characteristics. We have been to small market towns as well as large cities. Each of the 30 places have had varied histories of migration. Despite these differences, **common themes** have emerged in all our visits, which we discuss in **Section Three**.

We have also been struck by some of the **local differences** in the way that people view migration, which we discuss in **Section Four**. These differences may be caused by a range of factors, such as an area's history of migration or the availability of school places. It is often these local factors which impact on public opinion, so it is important that the Government understands them and responds to them, if its handling of immigration is to command greater public confidence and support.

Views about the future direction of policy towards EU migration have dominated the discussions in our first 30 citizens' panels. **Section Five** sets out our interim findings on the changes to EU migration that the public would like to see after Brexit.

**Section Six** examines views about migration from outside the EU, highlighting the support for highly-skilled and student migration.

The citizens' panels have also considered refugee protection, which we look at in **Section Seven**.

The National Conversation on Immigration has also met many local stakeholders: council officers and elected members, other public services, business and civil society organisations, including those working with refugees and migrants. **Section Eight** summarises stakeholder views.

A key aim of the National Conversation on Immigration is to see if it is possible to build greater consensus behind immigration policy, and the steps that might be needed to do this. **Section Nine** sets out our initial ideas. Finally, **Section Ten** sets out the next steps for the National Conversation on Immigration.



## 2. Why we need a National Conversation on Immigration

The National Conversation on Immigration aims to engage the public about the future direction of immigration policy, and to see if there is common ground on which more of us can agree. Here we set out in greater detail why such a conversation is needed and how we have undertaken it.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Trust in the political class is low, and polls suggest there is little public confidence in the way immigration is handled. Ipsos MORI polling shows that those who are satisfied or very satisfied with the Government's handling of immigration has remained under 30% of the population for most of the last two decades<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, employers have expressed frustrations about the difficulty in recruiting overseas staff and the bureaucracy involved in securing Tier 2 work visas. Organisations working with refugees remain concerned about backlogs and the quality of initial asylum decisions.

Brexit offers a window of opportunity to reform immigration policy, and to put in place a system that protects genuine refugees, works for employers and commands broad public support. But this support will not be won without hearing and responding to public concerns. The National Conversation seeks to provide a conduit for these views. It aims to:

- Create a robust evidence base of public views on immigration reform.
- Examine if it is possible to build a consensus on immigration policy and, if so, what steps are needed to do this.
- Engage those with less voice in policy decisions, for example young people and those who live outside big cities.
- Contribute to increased public confidence and engagement in immigration politics in ways that engage anxieties effectively, and so build resilience against prejudice.
- Advocate for deeper, ongoing public engagement by the Government by demonstrating the value of such work when done well.

Engaging people in seeking consensus can help to restore trust in the immigration system. It can also reduce tensions in a noisy and polarised immigration debate by highlighting what we have in common.

We welcome the opportunity to increase the geographic reach of the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee's own inquiry about the future direction of immigration policy. This relationship is an opportunity to involve a greater number of people – stakeholders and ordinary members of the public – in a select committee inquiry.

### OUR APPROACH

Public engagement does not invest participants with decision-making powers. Rather it is a process of dialogue between those who do have power – the policymakers – and members of the public. There are many different ways of going about this process. Some approaches aim to gather the public's views about a particular issue or potential policy change. Alternatively, public engagement can give policymakers a mandate to carry out changes, for example the well-documented, London-wide consultation on the configuration of NHS stroke services, undertaken because policymakers wanted to provide acute care in eight specialist units.

In the UK, local authorities frequently consult about policy changes, for example about school place allocation or planning decisions. While local consultation is common, it is much more rare for national governments to undertake extensive public engagement on major policy reform, either in the UK or elsewhere. However, in 2016 the Canadian Government held its own National Conversation on Immigration which took the form of an open online survey, public opinion research, stakeholder discussions and public roundtables in all of Canada's states. We have modelled our National Conversation on Immigration on the approach taken by the Canadian Government.



## WHAT WE DID

As already noted, the National Conversation on Immigration has three main components:

- An online survey hosted on our website [www.nationalconversation.org.uk](http://www.nationalconversation.org.uk)
- A nationally representative survey of 4,000 people, which we will undertake in early 2018.
- 60 visits to towns and cities across the UK.

The National Conversation on Immigration website hosts an online survey, open to anybody. The survey explores the changes that people want to see made to immigration policy, as well as how greater consensus could be built. Although it is a survey, it explores the same issues that are discussed in the citizens' panels. For both the survey and the panel discussion we developed the set of questions to be probed with a preparatory panel in Bedford held in January 2017.

The open, online survey has so far received responses from over 2,200 people across the UK. We will present the analysis of this survey in Spring 2018 in our final report.

Over a 15-month period, from February 2017 to April 2018, the National Conversation on Immigration will visit 60 towns and cities across the UK. In most cases we visit five towns and cities in each region, with the chosen destinations given in the appendices. We have aimed for a range of destinations to reflect the different demographic, economic and political landscapes of the UK. In choosing where to visit we wanted to secure a mixture of:

- Places with different migration histories, for example, super-diverse cities, northern mill towns, areas that have experienced recent EU migration and those places which remain largely white and British.
- A range of prosperous and less prosperous areas.
- Inner cities, suburbs, large and small towns.
- Destinations that reflect the different political representation and the EU referendum choices of the UK's population.

In each place we hold an invitation-only consultation with local stakeholders such as the local authority, other public sector bodies, organisations working with migrants, other community organisations and business leaders. The stakeholders we have met so far are listed in the appendices.



## THE CITIZENS' PANELS

In each of our destinations we also hold a citizens' panel of ten members of the public recruited to be broadly representative of the local area. These are not open public meetings – our experience has shown that open meetings about immigration tend to be dominated by those who have the strongest opinions about this topical issue. Instead we use a professional recruitment company that screens potential panel members before selection. In most cases, the citizens' panels comprise five men and five women and participants are selected to be representative of their local areas in relation to their ethnic groups. We also select people to make sure we have a mix of ages and educational and employment histories in the discussion.

The National Conversation on Immigration aims to engage with as many people as possible, including those who may have very strong views on particular aspects of immigration. But we decided to screen out those with the most extreme views, both for and against immigration, from most of the citizens' panels, as their presence might risk dominating the discussion. Prior to recruitment to the citizens' panel, potential members are asked *"on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")*. Those who give a score of 1 or 2, or 9 or 10 are not included in the recruitment, although sometimes they participate because people change their scores after recruitment (we ask the same question again in the citizens' panel discussion itself). We then take a mix of scores from 3 to 8. The decision to exclude vociferous migration rejectionists or migration liberals was discussed with our preparatory citizens' panel in Bedford, who supported it. It should be noted that we are not preventing those with the strongest views from participating in the National Conversation on Immigration, as their views will be picked up in our polling and they can complete our open survey: in fact, those who score 1,2,9 and 10 were over-represented in the first responses to the online survey. We will also be holding two panels with those who score 1-3 and 8-10.

Our conversation is based on a discussion guide that we developed with the Bedford preparatory panel. Participants discuss the approach that they would like to see the Government take to different types of migration. They are also asked their views about integration. Participants also consider what would need to change in order for the Government to get their support for its handling of immigration. The questions we use in the discussion are given in the appendices to this report. The discussions last about 100 minutes and are taped and then transcribed. At least two facilitators attend each citizens' panel and at the end they compare and discuss their observations and conclusions in detail. This ensures that any individual bias is minimised.

After each visit we produce a blog and a local report, which are published online. We have also developed a number of toolkits for people to host their own conversations on immigration, specifically tailored for young people, civil society organisations and businesses. The reports of these additional conversations will feed directly into the project.

### 3. Common findings

The National Conversation on Immigration has, so far, visited 30 very different towns and cities across the UK. There are many local differences in the way that immigration is viewed, which may be a consequence of different histories of migration and the different geographies of each location. We examine these local differences in the next section of this report. What has also been striking is that common themes have emerged in all citizen' panels, which we set out below.

Most of those who have taken part in the citizens' panels are what we have termed 'balancers,' who see both the pressures and gains of immigration. Contribution and control have emerged as central themes in all the citizens' panels. Participants want the migrants who come to the UK to make a contribution, through the skills they bring, the vacancies they fill and through taxation. At the same time, members of the citizens' panels want the Government to exercise greater control over migration flows.

The discussion within the citizens' panels has mostly focussed on EU migration, rather than immigration from outside the EU, as although understandings of migration policy are patchy, the latter is viewed as better managed. In many locations, too, migration from outside the EU is a much lower profile and less salient issue, as those who have come from outside the EU are present in much lower numbers.

All citizens' panels have expressed sympathy for the plight of refugees, but in many places this feels fragile and appears contingent on national and international events. Attitudes to refugees are again seen through the framework of contribution and control and we look at this issue in Section Seven of this report.

A further issue raised in all panels is a lack of trust in the Government to deliver immigration policy, alongside the desire for greater transparency.

#### THE BALANCING MAJORITY

Almost everyone we have met in the first 30 panels see both positive impacts and challenges of immigration. Typically, participants describe the benefits of migration, in terms of the skills that migrants bring and the jobs that they fill. In many cases, the citizens' panels talk about migrant healthcare professionals working in the NHS, with migrants working this public service often seen as characterising the best qualities of migration.

*"I think immigration is positive for work, particularly within the NHS and things. I think we've got a lot of good doctors, nurses, professionals, who we wouldn't have if we didn't have immigration. But maybe some of the problems have been in the town centre, it's quite bad for immigration, the neighbourhood has got worse because certain people have moved into the community who have been brought in through immigration. But then you've got good and bad in every community – so it's not just immigration."*

Citizens' panel participant, Middlesbrough

At the same time, participants also voice their anxieties and questions about migration. These concerns vary and as the next section of the report argues, they are often driven by specific local conditions. The negative impacts of migration are seen as neighbourhood decline in areas with a lot of poorly-maintained private rental accommodation; pressures on the NHS and schools; social segregation and low level anti-social behaviour. Concerns about migration numbers and the labour market impacts of migration are voiced less frequently than issues that relate to housing and public services. Participants in the citizens' panels want migrants to integrate into their local communities and learn English. Many participants also believe that migrants who come to the UK must be prepared to support themselves and believe that some new arrivals have come to this country with the specific motive of claiming benefits.

*"I don't think any of us are saying we don't want people to come in. We are just saying people can come in if they can pay their way and integrate in our country that they want to come to."*

Citizens' panel participant, Southampton

As explained in the previous section, the citizens' panels excluded those with the most extreme positive or negative opinions about migration and reflect the majority of the population. The National Conversation on Immigration citizens' panels have shown that in a face-to-face discussion, the majority of the population have moderate and constructive views about immigration. We will test this finding further in 2018 when we will undertake a nationally representative survey.

## CONTRIBUTION

Participants see immigration as being positive when migrants bring skills and undertake important work. The contribution that migrants make to the NHS has been mentioned in every citizens' panel and often by people who had some major concerns about aspects of immigration.

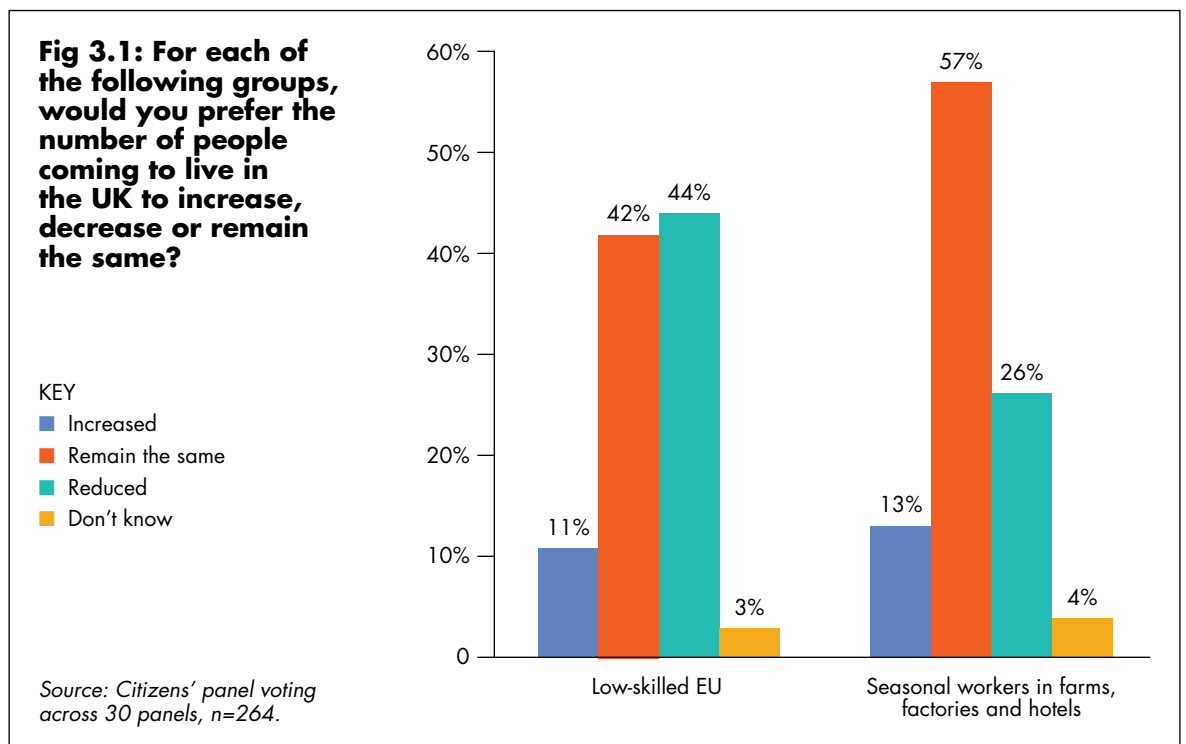
*"I'm a bit so-so about immigration. If you think about the NHS, all the consultants, a lot of the staff are foreign, that's a positive. But the negatives are that you get immigrants living on benefits."*

Citizens' panel participant, North Tyneside

Contribution is also about bringing much-needed skills to the UK. Many participants also see migrant contribution in terms of filling jobs that UK residents are unwilling to do, for example working as cleaners and fruit pickers. When asked, 44% of all citizens' panel participants wanted to reduce the numbers of generic low-skilled workers, yet this figure drops to 26% when specific 'useful' jobs are named, such as fruit-pickers (Figure 3.1). This preference was also reflected in our discussions, with participants talking about the contribution of particular groups of lower-skilled workers.

*"For the most part I think it is very good. Obviously, you mentioned the agricultural workers and you've obviously got the health care workers coming in as well, and filling in that area."*

Citizens' panel participant, Gloucester



The work ethic of EU migrants – particularly Polish nationals – has also been mentioned, with other national groups sometimes described in less favourable terms than “hard-working Poles”.

*“The Polish ones you do see them more because they’re all at the factory...My friend he’s the area manager of the meat factory and he’s in charge of a couple hundred of them [migrant workers] like. And a majority of them in Merthyr, and they crack on with it like.... They’ll always do the jobs we wouldn’t do.”*

Citizens’ panel participant, Merthyr Tydfil

Detailed and often abstract economic arguments about the fiscal and macroeconomic contribution that migrants make to the UK economy do not resonate with members of the citizens’ panels. In the 30 visits we have made so far, only one participant has quoted such economic research. Rather, economic contribution is seen through a ‘common sense’ fiscal lens, with participants having positive views about migrants who are seen as tax-payers and negative views about those who work off the books, send money home or come to the UK to claim benefits.

*“All the ones I’ve met all seem to be working and paying taxes. And you’re right about services bursting at the seams in Shetland, but these people, they’re paying money and that money should go towards providing these services and housing.”*

Citizens’ panel participant, Lerwick

However, a concern voiced in all citizens’ panels is the belief that some migrants come to the UK specifically to take advantage of the benefits system. Both EU migrants and refugees have been described as doing this, though different groups of migrants are frequently not distinguished or are conflated.

The 2015 mass movements of refugees across Europe has been interpreted as being caused by the pull of benefits. Syrians were described as refugees when they arrived in Greece, but when they moved across Europe they were seen as being drawn on this journey by the benefits system.

Participants have little knowledge about the complex restrictions that prevent most non-EU migrants from claiming benefits, nor do they know that asylum-seekers are prevented from working. They are also unaware of the academic analysis that shows that most recent EU migrants are in work. Media coverage of the academic evidence about fiscal, labour market and overall economic impacts of migration has largely not been understood and assimilated by the citizens’ panels. This suggests that complex, micro-policy changes will have little impact on changing attitudes and securing a consensus.

Rather, participants see immigration more broadly from the overall perspective of contribution, drawing on what they pick up on television, in newspapers and social media and from their peers, as well as what they see in their local communities. Media coverage and observations that resonate with their world view are taken on board, whereas that which does not is often rejected.

## **CONTROL AND TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER**

Alongside contribution, control is the other central theme that was raised at different points in all the citizens’ panels. Many of the concerns about immigration centre on the UK government’s perceived lack of control over EU migration flows. As control is such a common theme, we have delved deeper into participants’ understanding of this condition in a number of citizens’ panels.

For some participants, ‘control’ means better means of keeping records and statistical data on those entering and remaining in the UK. For others it refers to the enforcement of immigration rules. Despite numbers being at the forefront of political and media debates, participants do not always see immigration through a numeric lens. In many cases, the citizens’ panels are less concerned with controls on numbers than they are with security and the lack of criminal vetting of EU migrants.

Security and criminality have been central to many citizens’ panels discussions. Many participants see control as the vetting of would-be migrants to exclude violent extremists and those with serious criminal records.



In some citizens' panels control is interpreted as having more stringent checks at airports, as well as the enforcement of policy within the country. Many participants feel that the requirement for EU nationals to be working or self-sufficient to remain in the UK under free movement rules is not enforced at all.

Transparency and trust in the Government to deliver on its policy commitments is also a theme that has been raised in the discussions about control. A reason that many participants feel migration flows are uncontrolled is that they do not trust the Government to enforce immigration policy.

Some of this lack of trust is associated with high-profile failures in the Home Office's delivery of immigration policy - the failure to deport foreign national prisoners at the end of their sentences, for example, was mentioned in some panels. This lack of trust also relates to low levels of public trust in politicians more broadly. All our citizens' panels talked about their lack of trust in politicians, who they sometimes felt had entered politics for their own self-interest. (Many participants cited high-profile names of politicians they mistrusted, which were rarely their local MP). But participants also felt that politicians were not truthful about issues such as immigration and wanted much greater transparency.

*"We need a clear defined plan, it's got to be transparent, it has got to be visible, it's got to be monitored."*

Citizen' panel participant, Gloucester

A few participants believed that the adversarial nature of party politics made it more likely that politicians would be embellish facts or be untruthful.

*"We want a bit of honesty and not politicising immigration so much. It'll be a good day when they actually tell us the truth instead of what they want us to hear... Less politicising - a lot of good bills and good debate is shut down because people follow party lines."*

Citizens' panel participant, Northampton

Many participants argued for systems where migrants' qualifications had to meet the needs of the UK labour market. In each of the 30 citizens' panel covered by this interim report, some participants have argued for an Australian-style points based system, which appears to be shorthand for a controlled and selective immigration system that meets the economy's needs. This is something most participants feel that they did not have with EU free movement.

*"I like the Australian entry system where we pick and choose who we want rather than having the floodgate open. We want doctors, we need teachers, we need qualified skilled professionals and if you can offer those skills to this country, then come on in."*

Citizens' panel participant, Southampton

In all the panels we have held, many more people have heard about the Australian Points Based System than the UK's net migration target. Panellists are also familiar with visa applications for Canada and the U.S.A.

It is worth considering why the 'Australian Points Based System' has become such a powerful slogan that resonates with the public. For many, their only experiences with visa systems have come through visiting or migrating to Australia, and a number of citizens' panel members have relatives or friends who have emigrated; nearly 1.3 UK-born people now live in Australia<sup>3</sup>. It is much harder to get an Australian work visa for low-skilled jobs, though many people we have spoken to have experience with short term Holiday Working visas.

Further, visa applicants to Australia also have to declare any criminal record. The emphasis on criminal record checks and visibly high levels of bio-security at ports of entry into Australia also give an impression of tighter border control than in the UK.

Politicians now have to square the public's desire for control and selectivity over future EU migration, with employers' need for skilled and unskilled workers. The public do see the need for skilled and unskilled migration, but they want to see greater regulation of this. The Government needs

to consider the features of a future EU migration system that will make the public feel that the Government has immigration under control.

Our National Conversation visits show that the public see immigration control and selectivity – or a lack of these conditions - through media coverage, but also in their everyday lives, in their workplaces and what they see in their neighbourhoods. Negative national and local media coverage can promote views that immigration is uncontrolled, including the coverage of high profile policy failures such as not removing foreign national prisoners. But feelings about uncontrolled immigration from the EU are magnified when people encounter local problems such as street drinking or badly-maintained rental accommodation used to house migrant workers. It is these local impacts and local narratives that a post-Brexit immigration system needs to address if it is to give the public a sense of control.



## 4. Local differences

Alongside the common themes that emerged in the citizens' panels and stakeholder discussions were striking local differences - in the salience of immigration as an issue, the balance between the perceived benefits and disadvantages of immigration to the UK, and in the specific concerns raised by the citizens' panels.

We believe that understanding these differences and responding to specific local concerns is key to building a consensus around the future direction of immigration policy.

### SALIENCE OF IMMIGRATION AS A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION

Immigration mattered much more to some people in some areas than in others. For all the participants in March, and for many in Bolton, Bradford, Ipswich, Merthyr Tydfil and Newcastle-under-Lyme, immigration was a topic that they considered frequently and discussed with their friends and acquaintances. In other locations the majority of participants felt that immigration only became a salient issue when 'trigger events' pushed it up the news agenda: for example the EU referendum, terrorist attacks or the drowning of child refugee Aylan Kurdi. In many places, participants talked about the role of media and social media – primarily Facebook - in increasing the prominence of immigration as a topic of everyday discussion.

*"Immigration has got an image problem. What I see in the media is men aged 18-40 coming through Calais. That is what I see on a day-to-day-basis."*

Citizens' panel participant, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Participants in both the Ipswich and Southampton citizens' panels identified school place allocation day as a trigger event that made immigration a topic of conversation among their peer group.

There were also locations where immigration was rarely a prominent issue of concern for the majority of participants, for example in Dungannon, Durham, Enfield and Shetland. In Dungannon and Enfield high proportions of the population had been born overseas. Arguably, migration and diversity have become normalised aspects of everyday life. Conversely, in Durham and Shetland, the low proportion of migrants in these places meant that immigration rarely had an impact on people's everyday lives.

There were also age differences in the salience of immigration as an issue, with young members of citizens' panels much more likely to see immigration as a normal part of their lives.

### BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES

Each citizens' panel discusses the impacts of migration, on the UK and in their local area. Participants are asked 'on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")'. This leads into a debate about the benefits and problems associated with immigration. Although each citizens' panel comprises a very small sample of the local population – just ten people – we felt that the average score of the panel (Table 4.1) usually captured the tone and mood of the migration debate in each of the places we visited. As Table 4.1 shows, there are some marked differences between the average scores in different locations.

The Derry-Londonderry, Gloucester, March and Merthyr Tydfil citizens' panels scored lowest. Ballymena, Paisley and Wolverhampton scored highest. (Further information about each area is given in Table One below and in the appendices). In each case, the citizens' panel discussion and the information we gathered from the stakeholder meeting suggested some specific reasons to account for such trends, and to explain why people in some areas view migration more or less positively than elsewhere.

March, a Fenland town, experienced very rapid migration from the EU after 2000, with migrants overwhelmingly housed in badly maintained private rental accommodation. The sheer pace of change, population churn, low level anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood decline associated with private rental accommodation have caused community tensions and contributed to the high vote for Leave (71.4%) in the referendum.



The Gloucester citizens' panel members had almost no meaningful social contact with migrants. Their views about migration had been largely influenced by their consumption of social and broadcast media, as well as their perceptions of visiting the town centre. It is significant to note that those who voiced more negative views rarely had their opinions informed by close social contact with migrants.

Those who attended the Derry-Londonderry and Merthyr Tydfil panels mostly came from social grades C2 and D, or were unemployed. Participants in both panels talked of their experiences with the benefits system and of looking for work. In both places poverty and insecure employment appear to have fuelled resentment of more successful newcomers. Difficulties in signing-on and dealing with the Job Centre also appear to have led to a view that migrants have preferential access to welfare benefits. Some of the strongest-held beliefs that welfare benefits acted as 'pull' to the UK were articulated in Derry-Londonderry and Merthyr Tydfil.

*"They'll come and they'll do the jobs that the ordinary man won't do, like in restaurants, in care homes whatever. I've no problem with them if they got a job or they are paying taxes, just don't expect a free ride when you come in. They do get all the benefits that your man next door won't get, who might have four children."*

Citizens' panel participant, Derry-Londonderry

In contrast, our Ballymena citizens' panel comprised many middle-class church and chapel-goers. Although they had concerns about integration and religious extremism, this panel largely felt that the benefits of migration outweighed any negative impacts. Their views were often underpinned by their moral and religious beliefs, which determined how they should behave towards newcomers.

In Paisley it appeared that Scotland's more positive media and political discourses had impacted on the nature of everyday political discussion in public and private spaces. An internationalist labour movement and the Roman Catholic church still have a strong social influence in this part of Scotland<sup>4</sup>. Churches have been at the forefront of Syrian refugee settlement as well as initiatives to promote integration in the area. Their moral leadership may have influenced local attitudes to migration, more so than in other parts of Scotland. (Our citizens' panel included a number of practicing Christians who talked about the work of their churches). Paisley has a young, visible and successful Polish community who are well integrated into the local area.

Similar to Paisley, the Wolverhampton citizens' panel felt that the benefits of migration outweighed negative impacts. Participants were largely non-graduates who had an interesting story to tell about integration slowly happening across generations in Wolverhampton. The Black Caribbean and South

Asian communities are socially and economically integrated into the life of the city. Wolverhampton appears to have developed an inclusive 'Black Country' civic identity and strong Commonwealth and inter-faith links, which have helped it to integrate newcomers. Both the stakeholder meeting and the citizens' panel also discussed how Enoch Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech had prompted efforts to improve community relations.

*"I think there was an extra effort to bring people together – because of that legacy from the time of Enoch: there was a sense that this was not what we all wanted Wolverhampton to be known for."*

Stakeholder, Wolverhampton

## LOCALISED ISSUES

Public concerns about immigration can broadly be placed in four groups:

- Concerns about numbers and the sudden and rapid arrival of migrants.
- Cultural concerns - "they are different from us" - and integration challenges.
- Economic concerns, for example access to housing and public services, as well as labour market impacts.
- Concerns about the immigration system: control, safety and legality in relation to undocumented migration, as well as anti-social behaviour and migrant criminality.

We have also found that the themes raised in each area, including public concerns, differ from locality to locality. Although chance alone could account for these differences, our stakeholder meetings have provided contextual information which has enabled us to check the validity of the local issues raised by the citizens' panels. We have summarised these concerns in Table One and give more information in the local profiles in the appendices.

Overall, concerns about neighbourhood decline as well as low-level anti-social behaviour appeared to be the most widely-expressed of these localised issues, though articulated differently from place to place. Asylum-seekers and new migrants from the EU, for example, are over-represented in cheaper, overcrowded and often badly-maintained private rental accommodation. Where such housing is concentrated in particular areas, it can lead to associations between migration and neighbourhood decline. Overflowing bins, street drinking, and groups of men who "hang around" can add to community tensions. Negative encounters have a strong impact, and these visual manifestations of migration can quickly turn into narratives about migrants not respecting the 'British way of life':

*"There are gangs of Eastern Europeans. I don't know where they come from but it doesn't really matter. There are gangs that hang around drinking, damaging the park, damaging, breaking bottles."*

Citizens' panel participant, Newcastle-under-Lyme

The citizens' panels do not, however, ascribe blame for neighbourhood decline solely to migrants. In areas where neighbourhood decline has become a problem, participants talk about rogue landlords who exploit their tenants and profit from providing poor quality accommodation.

We have also noticed that some areas with high concentrations of migrants in private rental accommodation have not experienced neighbourhood decline or the tensions associated with street drinking and 'loitering'. On our visit to March we travelled through Peterborough and later met with representatives of Peterborough City Council at the stakeholder meeting held in the Fens. We heard about Peterborough's selective landlord licencing scheme, which applies to properties in five areas<sup>5</sup>. Cambridgeshire Constabulary employs a police officer of Czech Roma ethnicity and his work involves mediating between the Czech and Slovak Roma in the area and the wider population. A number of long-established civil society organisations undertake community mediation, or are involved in promoting social integration. While Peterborough's population includes a high proportion of migrant workers from the EU, these initiatives appear to have played a role in dealing with issues that can escalate into community tensions.

Concerns about numbers were most acute in March, in the two London panels in Enfield and Redbridge, in Southampton and in Shetland with specific reference to acute housing shortages affecting London, the South East and Shetland. Opinions about numbers and over-population - "We

are only a small island” - were often articulated alongside concerns about pressures on housing and public services. Given that the population of Redbridge has increased by 60,000 since 2001, it is unsurprising that population increase was such a central theme of the citizens’ panel discussion there:

*“I’ve lived in this area all of my life... and now getting here can take like twenty minutes, half an hour to go not far at all. And I think that’s a result of how many people we’ve got moving into the area.”*

Citizens’ panel participant, Redbridge

Generally very few of our National Conversation citizens’ panels have voiced concerns about the labour market impacts of migration. Of the 35 citizens’ panels undertaken by October 2017, just two (in Chesterfield and Northampton, both of which have many jobs in distribution) have voiced concerns about migrants undercutting wages and employment conditions. Only in a youth panel of 16-to-24-year-olds in Nottingham did participants voice worries about migrants displacing them in the job market. We feel that public concerns about the labour market impacts of EU migration are much less widely-felt than those associated with housing, neighbourhood decline or anti-social behaviour.

## IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

Reviewing what we have learned from the first 30 visits, we were also struck by the impact of integration on public perceptions of immigration. We believe that public opinion is often framed by everyday experiences of integration at a local level, in neighbourhoods and at a town or city level. In places where migrants are less well-integrated into their local communities, negative public views tend to predominate. The National Conversation on Immigration shows that getting integration right locally is key to securing consensus nationally on the direction of immigration policy.

Integration is a contested term and there is an extensive literature that has attempted to define this condition or process<sup>6</sup>. Broadly, integration can be seen as a process of mutual accommodation between different sectors of society, taking place in economic and socio-cultural domains: the workplace, school, college, local neighbourhoods, or socially through common interests. The Greater London Authority, which now has a Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, sees integration as involving fairness and equality, connectedness and togetherness, as well as participation in life in the city<sup>7</sup>.

Those who attended the citizens’ panel in Newcastle-under-Lyme saw new migrants living separated lives in a spatially demarcated part of Stoke-on-Trent. Socioeconomic differences can lead to spatial divides whereby migrant workers become concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, and we were told there was very little connectedness and togetherness. The panel felt that new migrants did not mix with the resident population and many of them did not speak much English. They appeared to be a transient group, with very little stake in the life of the Potteries towns. As such, the settled population felt these new arrivals to be interlopers in the area.

In contrast, Polish migrants in Southampton were becoming integrated into the life of the city. Those who attended the citizens’ panel had social contact with an often economically successful Polish community as friends, fellow parents, neighbours and work colleagues. This citizens’ panel did have concerns about migration – largely around population pressures - but participants balanced these with descriptions of the positive impacts that migration had brought to Southampton. The Polish community was now seen as an integral part of city life in Southampton: *“We are Poland number two,”* said one of our participants, proudly.

Integration takes place in schools, colleges and workplaces. Our citizens’ panels often felt that schools were successful in promoting integration. Participants often gave examples from their own school days, or from their children’s school. Most parents wanted their children to mix with and learn about other cultures. They saw this as essential preparation for their future.

Many participants met migrants at work, often the only place where they had meaningful contact with migrants. At the same time, many did not. In some parts of the UK there appeared to be high levels of labour market segregation by ethnicity and national group. We were often told that *“migrants do the jobs that the British don’t want to do”*. A few of our citizens’ panels also told us of employers who only employed EU nationals for certain roles, of shift patterns allocated by nationality, or production lines that were solely Polish. Analysis of the Government’s Citizenship Survey shows that the workplace is the most important place in which adults meet people of different backgrounds. We feel that businesses and policymakers both need to consider how to encourage greater levels of workplace integration. If there is to be public support for the immigration that the economy needs, greater employer involvement in integration will be needed to gain this public consent.

**Table 4.1: Summary of local issues raised by citizens' panels**

Location	Impact score*	Summary of panel
Bradford	5.4	In a city with high levels of poverty, concerns about the pull of benefits and migrants getting preferential access to benefits was a major theme. Integration is an issue but Bradford's civil identity appears inclusive of minority groups.
March	4.7	Panel concerned about rapid EU migration into the area, and the concentration of migrants in overcrowded and poorly maintained private rental accommodation, with resultant neighbourhood decline. Concerns about pressure on NHS and school places, too, as well as integration.
North Tyneside	5.9	A panel that recognised some of the benefits of migration but wanted British school leavers to be better equipped with skills. The view that some migrants were not contributing to society and were drawn by benefits was the biggest concern.
Aberdeen	6.3	Participants felt Scotland was more welcoming than England. Their biggest concerns were pressures on school places and housing in areas with big migrant populations.
Enfield	6.8	This panel talked about a London identity that embraced diversity, but had views about overpopulation and pressures on housing, school places and the NHS which were similar to elsewhere in the UK.
Trowbridge	5.0	Attitudes to migrants were largely not mediated by personal contact and there were major concerns about lack of infrastructure to cope with migration.
Northampton	5.3	Criminality and labour market under-cutting were the main concerns voiced by participants.
Southampton	6.6	Overpopulation and numbers was the main concern of this panel, though the city seems to have come to accept large-scale Polish migration and has recognised its economic benefits.
Merthyr Tydfil	4.7	A deprived area with concerns about migrants getting preferential access to benefits. Participants felt that tight-knit communities were not always accepting of newcomers.
Bolton	5.2	Integration and security were the biggest concerns but participants also felt the response to the Manchester bombing had brought communities together.
North Staffordshire	5.1	The panel had strong views about neighbourhood decline in parts of Stoke where EU migrants live in private rental accommodation. Attitudes to migrants were largely not mediated by personal contact.
Dungannon	5.9	Although the town had seen very rapid EU migration, there was an acceptance that it led to economic benefits. Some voiced concerns about the impact on housing.
Derry-Londonderry	4.2	This group was sceptical about the benefits of migration and concerned that migrants had preferential access to benefits, as well as feeling that there was competition for housing and jobs.
Ballymena	6.9	The panel felt that immigration had brought more benefits than disadvantages to Northern Ireland. Pressures on public services were not mentioned. Security was their biggest concern, with worries about Brexit, the Irish border and the peace process.
Milton Keynes	5.9	Undocumented migration and lack of enforcement was the biggest concern in this BME-majority panel. Very little discussion about pressures on public services.
Ipswich	5.3	Separate male and female panels found no significant gender differences in the content of the conversations, but in how men and women talk. Neighbourhood decline and clandestine migration were debated by both groups.



Nottingham	6.5	Youth (16-24s) panel with attitudes that were more liberal. Participants saw immigration as economically and culturally beneficial. They believed that migrants and refugees should make a contribution. Heated debate about the EU referendum.
Shrewsbury	6.1	Control and contribution were the central themes. Pragmatic views about labour migration, with even more-sceptical members happy to keep freedom of movement if criminals could be weeded out.
Wolverhampton	7.1	Pro-migration, mostly non-graduate panel who had a strong story about integration slowly happening across generations in Wolverhampton.
Cambridge	5.7	Well-educated and internationalist panel whose biggest concerns were pressures on housing stock and migration numbers.
Leicester	5.7	Over half the panel had a family history of migration. Control and contribution were key themes. The panel felt community relations were good, but new arrivals had less desire to integrate than previous arrivals.
Durham	5.3	Immigration was not felt to be a big issue in the panel members' everyday lives, though control and contribution dominated the debate. A big town/gown divide, but the panel did not see international students as migrants.
Middlesbrough	5.5	Control and fixing the system dominated the debate in a town that has a large population of asylum-seekers. Concerns about young men "hanging around" were voiced, but attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers did not seem markedly different to elsewhere in the UK.
Paisley	7.9	Non-graduate panel which thought that the benefits outweighed any negative impacts associated with migration.
Lerwick	6.5	A pragmatic group, with housing pressures their biggest concern about migration.
Redbridge	6.1	Most of this group had migrant and refugee forebears, and were content with immigration just as long as migrants were contributing. Population pressure was their greatest concern.
Chesterfield	5.5	Concerns about job displacement and wage depression raised by this panel.
Gloucester	5.1	This group had major concerns about many aspects of immigration policy. Although Gloucester is a reasonably ethnically diverse city, the panel had little social contact with migrants.

\* Average (mean) panel response to impact question "On a scale of 1-10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")."

## SECURING CONSENSUS BY DEALING WITH LOCAL ISSUES

Many studies into attitudes to immigration have highlighted that people perceive immigration as a national concern. From our visits, however, we have concluded that the public sees immigration on the national scale through a 'local lens' that reflects their everyday experiences.

Immigration is a more salient issue in some areas more than others, and there are differences in the balances between positive and negative views. As we have shown, there are also differences in the nature of public concerns between different areas. Many of these negatives can be closely linked to specific local issues, for example neighbourhood decline in Aberdeen and March, or school place shortages in Enfield. In places where migrants are less well integrated into their local communities, negative public views tend to predominate. Promoting integration and dealing with the local impacts of population growth on housing and public services is key to securing a consensus for future immigration policies.

## 5. Migration from the EU

The discussion within the citizens' panels has mostly focussed on EU migration, rather than immigration from outside the EU, as the latter is viewed as being better controlled and has a lower profile.

Participants see EU migration through a lens of contribution and control. Participants want the migrants who come to the UK to make a contribution, through the skills they bring, the vacancies they fill and through taxation. At the same time, members of the citizens' panels feel that the UK government has exercised little control over EU migration, and want the Government to exercise greater control and vetting of migration flows.

Despite being at the forefront of political and media debates, most participants do not see EU migration through a numeric lens. People are less concerned with rates of immigration than they are with control and contribution, and ensuring a fair system that meets economic needs. As already noted, most citizens' panel participants are balancers and acknowledge both the pressures and gains of migration from the EU. We have described some of these public concerns in the previous section. Some of the negative impacts associated with EU migration include pressures on schools and the NHS, and the neighbourhood decline associated with badly maintained private rental accommodation. Participants have also voiced concerns about integration and low-level anti-social behaviour such as street drinking. Labour market impacts of EU migration have not been high on the agenda for members of the citizens' panels.

Although most participants want to see some changes to policy covering EU migration, there is universal support for EU nationals currently living in the UK. All panels agree that all EU nationals who are law abiding and can support themselves should be able to stay. Even the participants who have expressed the most sceptical views about EU migration, without exception, feel it would be unfair to require EU nationals who have made the UK their home to be asked to leave.

### THE CHANGES PEOPLE WANT

Participants in the citizens' panels are asked about the policy changes that they want in relation to migration from the EU. Often participants just request "tighter controls". When we have asked what better control means to our panellists, they have specific suggestions, which include:

- Background checks of prospective migrants from the EU and the exclusion of those with serious and unspent criminal records.
- Retaining freedom of movement for EU migrants with a job offer.
- The introduction of a system similar to the Australian-style points-based system.
- The requirement to speak English before being allowed to enter the UK.

*"I think what should happen is a proper background check on any criminal activity. If they have any criminal background that's very important! You try to get into America with a conviction and you've got problems."*

Citizens' panel participant, Southampton

Foremost among the policy changes that citizens' panels wanted were restrictions on EU nationals' entitlement to benefits and social housing, as well as for future policy changes to be properly enforced. They wanted restrictions placed on EU nationals' access to benefits until they had lived in the UK for a period of time and had made a fiscal contribution through taxation.

*"Anybody who is in the country at the moment, any foreign national who has come in and working, I have no problem with them being here. But anyone who wants to come in after Brexit, they should have had sponsorship and they must be working. No benefits for anyone who is not going to work."*

Citizens' panel participant, Dungannon



We have asked each citizens' panel what they know about the regulations governing free movement from the EU and access to benefits. The majority of people do not know that there are regulations that require EU nationals to be in employment, to be self-sufficient or to be a student in order to remain in the UK under EU law<sup>8</sup>. Where participants do know about these regulations, they feel the regulations are not enforced. Most people also do not know that there are restrictions on EU nationals' access to benefits, requiring migrants to have worked in the UK and to be 'habitually resident'. Instead, most participants think that free movement means that any EU national could move here and immediately claim benefits. Participants are also generally unaware of the academic analysis that shows that most recent EU migrants are in work. This raises important questions about how immigration statistics and policy are communicated and understood by the public. This is an issue that the National Conversation on Immigration will consider in greater depth in its final report.

After discussing the changes that citizens' panel members want to make to immigration policy for EU nationals, we then present some of the options that the Government is considering and ask participants to vote on their preferred options (Figure 5.1). These are:

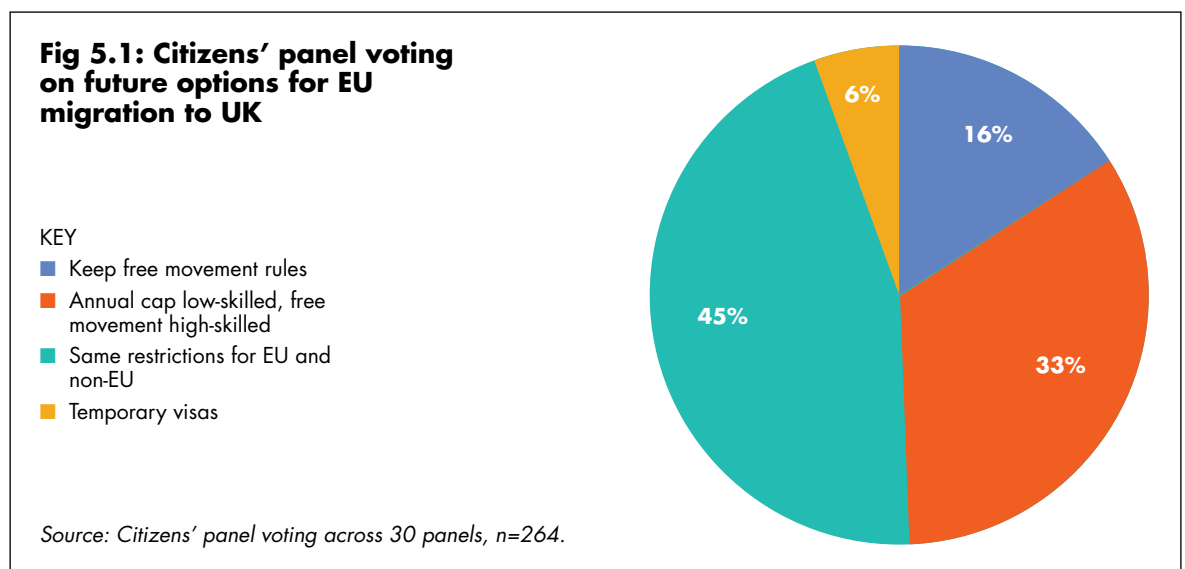
**Option one** – keep free movement rules for EU migrants in the UK and for UK nationals who want to live in the EU.

**Option two** – set an annual cap covering EU migrants in low-skilled jobs, but not for EU nationals in highly-skilled work.

**Option three** – apply the same restrictions on immigration for EU migrants and those coming from outside the EU, even if it means more restrictions placed on British citizens who might want to live in the EU.

**Option four** – offer temporary visas lasting a maximum of three years to EU nationals.

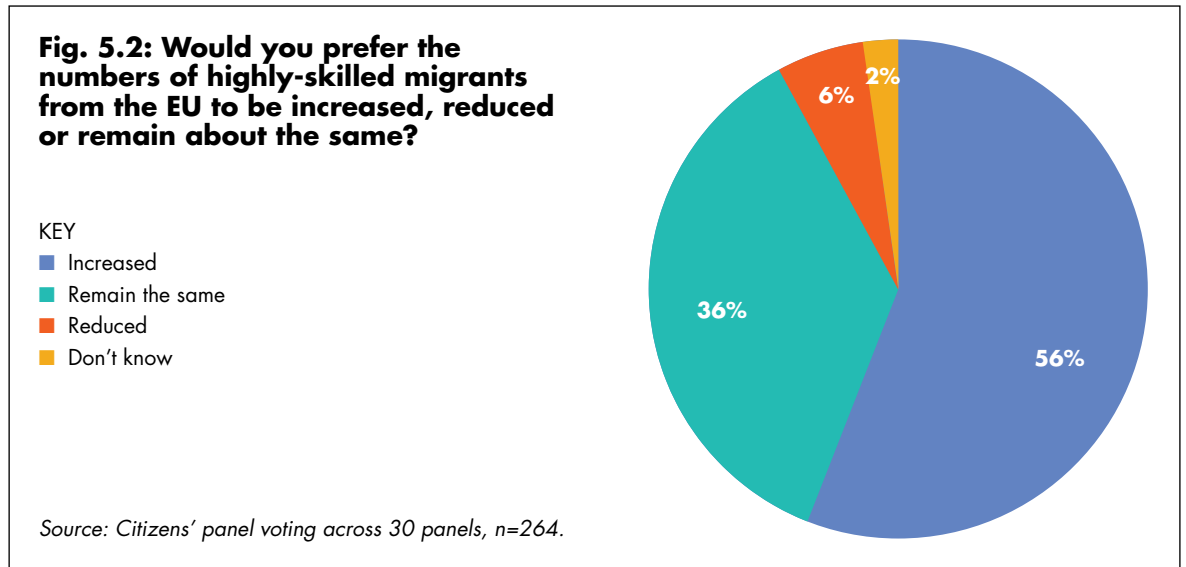
Some 15% of participants want to keep the current rules governing migration from the EU – these are usually younger and more educated people.



The majority of those consulted through our citizens' panels do want changes to EU migration policy as Figure 5.1 illustrates. At the time of writing there is a small preference for a system that treats EU and non-EU labour migrants the same, even if this means more restrictions on British nationals who might want to live in the EU. Those who chose this option often feel this would be a fairer system as it treats everyone the in the same manner, irrespective of their ethnicity or national origin. People's decisions are often expressed in terms of fairness and equality. Participants also make reference to the UK's Commonwealth links when choosing this option. Those participants whose forebears came from Commonwealth countries themselves also tend to favour this option. Although the majority of participants are not familiar with current immigration rules for non-EU nationals, the 'treat everyone the same' system may be popular because participants perceive that the stricter controls that apply to non-EU migrants would apply to those from the EU.

A third of participants (33%) chose option two (Figure 5.1) which proposes a quota system covering low-skilled EU migrants but keeping freedom of movement for those filling higher-skilled jobs. Participants are told that in such a system, quotas could be set higher or lower as the economy required. The overwhelming majority of participants (92%) are happy for the levels of high-skilled

migration from the EU to be increased or to remain the same (Figure 5.2), a trend supported by British Future polling over a number of years<sup>9</sup>. However, as shown in Fig 3.1 earlier, participants want tighter controls on the numbers of over low-skilled or seasonal workers.



Those who opt for a system that keeps some free movement but brings in controls covering low-skilled migration tend to be those participants who express economically pragmatic views and understand some of the trade-offs that the UK may need to accept in the Brexit negotiations. For example, such participants are willing to accept fewer restrictions on migration from the EU if it enables UK business to have greater access to the single market. Sometimes these participants ran their own businesses, or work in sectors which employ many EU migrants.

When asked what kind of jobs people classify as 'low skilled', most participants believe these are jobs for which no qualifications are required, such as cleaning, fruit picking or bar work. Jobs such as nursing, care work or operating machinery are not classified as low skilled work. High-skilled jobs are thought to be specialists such as doctors or engineers.

In rural market towns where participants work in food and farming themselves, or know of people who do so, there was often a preference for option two. In March, Cambridgeshire, a Fenland town, where the citizens' panel was very sceptical about many aspects of EU migration, participants generally chose this option. They understood that the farms and food processing factories on which the local economy depended needed a supply of labour from the EU. What they wanted, however, were more controls over this migration flow, alongside policy changes to deal with some of the social impacts of migration.

*"Yes, we do need the lower skilled workers. However do we need quite so many? Higher skills, we definitely need them. However it is that influx from the lower end that causes the issues."*

Citizens' panel participant, March

Participants are told that quotas can be set higher or lower as the economy needs. Where they can see that migrants are coming to fill jobs that they perceive as essential, they will generally support this type of migration flow. This accounts for smaller proportions of participants wanting to reduce the levels of seasonal workers compared to generic low-skilled workers, as shown in Figure 5.3. The majority of participants (70%) are happy for the numbers of seasonal workers in farms, factories and hotels to be increased or to remain at the same level. Naming the job – such as a farm worker – may account for this increased level of public support for seasonal migration, as participants see these jobs as important for the economy. We have also found that in rural areas or places that depend on tourism there is stronger support for the migration of seasonal workers.

There has been very little support for temporary visa regimes, with just 5% of participants choosing option four. Participants had a range of objections to temporary visa regimes; most importantly they had little confidence in the Government's ability to enforce the regulations.

*“It’s just keeping track of everybody isn’t it? These people can quite easily slip under the radar, and they won’t comply and therefore you have thousands of illegal immigrants, you know, that have been lost.”*

Citizens’ panel participant, Gloucester

Participants had a number of other criticisms of temporary visas regimes. Some of them did not view a three-year visa as temporary. Many saw temporary visas as being unfair to migrant workers who had put down roots in their local communities and wanted to settle in the UK. A number of participants also used economic arguments, stating that temporary visa regimes meant that employers risked losing good workers.

## **PRAGMATISM**

Overall, the citizens’ panel discussion on EU migration has shown that participants have constructive and pragmatic views. They want the UK government to exercise fair controls over EU migration, and much of their concern about this migration flow is that it is seen as uncontrolled. Participants also want action to deal with some of the local social impacts of migration, and they want EU migrants to integrate into their new communities. At the same time, the citizens’ panellists are willing to accept high-skilled migration from the EU, and also lower-skilled migration, where participants see that EU nationals are undertaking jobs that they view as essential.

There is public support for EU migration, providing a future system is seen as controlled and well-managed – including with regard to the Government’s management of the local impacts of migration. This presents an obvious delivery challenge to the Home Office and other government departments such as Education and Communities and Local Government, as well as to councils.

There is also a communications challenge in getting greater public consent for EU migration. Many of the changes that people want, for example, restrictions on EU nationals’ access to benefits, are similar to existing policy. Citizens’ panel participants are not aware of most aspects of immigration policy. They mainly remember and absorb facts about immigration policy when they are supported by the narratives they tell themselves about immigration, a phenomenon known as ‘cognitive bias’. The communications challenge is, therefore, to shift these personal and community narratives. We will explore this issue in greater detail in our final report, but we believe that local integration is crucial to this aim, particularly with regard to positive social interactions between migrants and UK nationals.

## 6. Migration from outside the EU

Although half of all international migration has come from outside the EU in recent years, this is not such a salient issue among most members of our citizens' panels. Non-EU migration is generally seen as better controlled and few people have raised concerns about the impacts or the rates of non-EU migration. At the same time knowledge of the regulations covering work, student or family migration from outside the EU is low.

Participants' knowledge of the policies governing immigration from outside of the EU is patchy, and usually only those with direct experiences of visa application processes are able to explain the costs and regulations relating to student, family and work migration. Perceptions of border control tend to be built from people's experiences at airports and ports, but most people we have spoken to are aware that there is a regulated visa process that looks at contribution and skill, a system with which most participants feel comfortable. As already mentioned, control and contribution have been key demands from our citizens' panels, largely framing the way much migration is seen. Through this frame, economic migration from outside the EU is well supported.

### MIGRATION FOR WORK

Few participants want to reduce skilled migration from outside of the EU: just 6% of our sample so far, compared with 89% who are happy for numbers to be increased or to remain at the same level (Figure 6.1). There appear to be four reasons that may account for this support for highly-skilled migration from outside the EU: economic contribution; a belief that high skilled migration is better controlled; associations with the NHS; and a familiarity or preference for English-speaking migrants from the Commonwealth.

The preference for highly skilled workers is also supported with pragmatic economic reasoning, as most people believe that skilled individuals are more able to contribute economically. Migration from outside the EU is also seen as better controlled, despite participants having little or no knowledge of the regulations.

*"If you're coming from outside of the EU to work, same as if you went from here to work, there's quite a high bar. The EU one is obviously different, you can come here as long as you have an EU passport."*

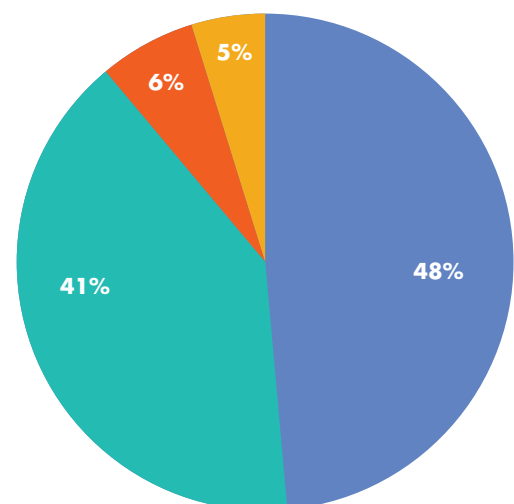
Citizens' panel participant, Paisley

We think that there is also public support for non-EU work migration because it is associated with flows from countries with which Britain has historic connections through the Commonwealth. When asked for examples of non-EU migrants, participants often give examples of migrant workers in the NHS, with some of them talking about positive encounters with doctors and nurses from outside the EU in healthcare settings.

**Figure 6.1: Would you prefer the number of highly-skilled migrants from outside the EU to be increased, reduced or remain about the same?**

KEY

- Increased
- Remain the same
- Reduced
- Don't know



Source: Citizens' panel voting across first 30 panels, n=264

## STUDENT MIGRATION

Citizens' panels across the country generally do not see international students as migrants, rather as part of the general student population. For most participants, migration is seen as a permanent or semi-permanent condition. As they perceive that most international students return home at the end of their course, this group does not fit their definition of a migrant.

International students are generally viewed as contributors and are perceived to be an asset. Their higher fees are seen as cross-subsidising the education of UK students, as well contributing to the local economy.

*"I think any city which has a significant student population, those people do contribute. The only people I ever see spending the real money in town are the Chinese students in designer shops. It may not be what we're traditionally used to but now Loughborough it's a dynamic place, with all of its new eateries. Without the university, it would really be a bit of a dead town."*

Citizens' panel participant, Leicester

Some participants also believe international students offer a pool of talent which could be beneficial if they remain as skilled workers after their courses finish.

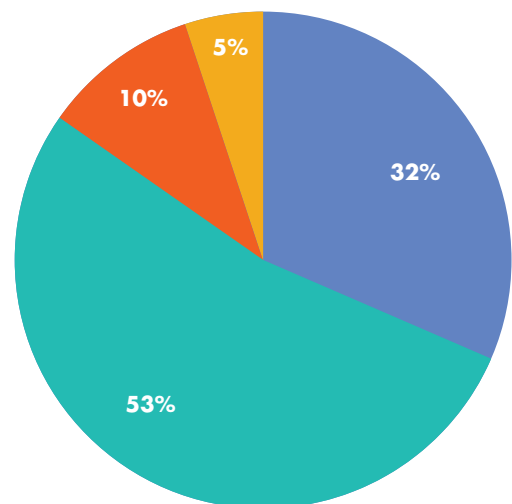
Support for international students is reflected in participants' opinions on their numbers (Figure 6.2). Some 85% of the citizens' panel participants were happy for the numbers of international students coming to the UK to be increased or to remain at the same level.

This is not to say that the citizens' panels expressed no concerns at all about international student migration. Occasionally, participants voiced concerns about 'rogue universities' where the student visa route was used by individuals to migrate to the UK and work illegally. In some of the citizens' panels, parents felt that international students could compete with their own children for a university place and prevent British students getting into the best universities. We were also told in Durham that the university there was "not interested in local people".

A more significant concern were 'town versus gown' tensions, although all participants were careful to point out that it was university policy rather than international students that were the focus of their concerns. Some participants in university towns – Aberdeen, Durham, Leicester and Nottingham – felt that universities and students were "taking over" parts of cities. They felt that newly-build student accommodation had come to dominate certain neighbourhoods, which become ghost towns in university vacations, and added to local housing pressures. Again, these views were held by a minority of our citizens' panel participants. Although there is currently strong public support for international students, universities and policy makers need to be aware of these concerns, as public consent for student migration should not be taken for granted. Steps must be taken to address 'town-gown' divides and deal with issues that irritate the local population. Above all, universities must be seen to be part of local communities and committed to educating local students.

**Figure 6.2: Would you prefer the number of international students coming to the UK to be increased, reduced or remain about the same?**

KEY  
■ Increased  
■ Remain the same  
■ Reduced  
■ Don't know



Source: Citizens' panel voting across first 30 panels, n=264.

## FAMILY MIGRATION

As noted above, migration from outside the EU is a less salient issue than EU migration and family migration is rarely raised spontaneously in our citizens' panels. There is a consensus that UK nationals and labour migrants, international students and refugees should be allowed to bring in a spouse, civil partner or a dependent child. However, many of our panels have recounted stories about extended family migration, concerned that lenient regulations on family migration lead to the rapid migration of large family networks, adding to pressures on public services.

*"I have no issues with the ones joining their husbands.... But what do you class as family? Do you class cousins and you know, you hear these scenarios where one comes over, and then they all come over and they're distant, second, third cousins. I can appreciate your husband and your children joining you but where do you draw the line?"*

Citizens' panel participant, Trowbridge

Yet family migration rules are strict, with visas usually restricted to immediate family. Entry is dependent on passing an English language test. The UK-based spouse or parent also has to meet a minimum income threshold in order to bring in immediate family. The Leicester and Wolverhampton citizens' panels included participants who have had to fulfil these obligations themselves or had family members who had done so. When the participants described the process of applying for a family visa, others in the group expressed surprise at the costs and bureaucracy involved.

While most citizens' panels have generally supported the minimum income threshold, we have noted regional differences in attitudes towards this requirement when it has been discussed. In some areas of the country where wages are lower than the national average, the current minimum income requirement of £18,600 to bring in a spouse or civil partner has been considered too high by some participants. Our citizens' panels in Derry-Londonderry, Durham and Middlesbrough, for example, felt this threshold was above average earnings and could pose unfair barriers to family unity.





# 7. Refugees

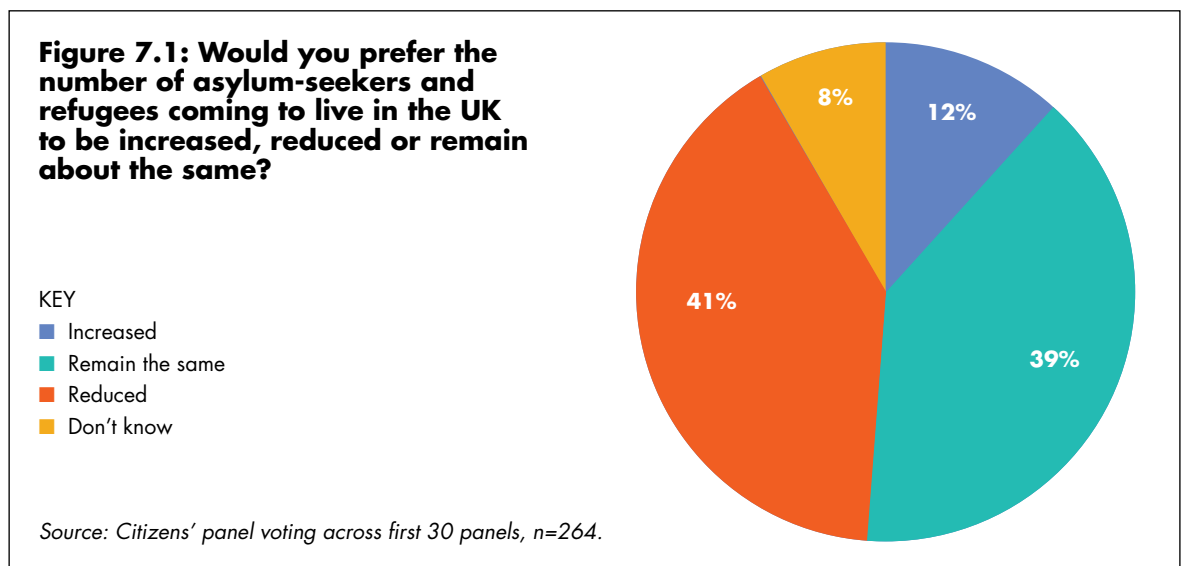
In all of our citizens' panels, participants are asked about their opinions on asylum-seekers and refugees and their views on how the Government handles refugee protection and integration. We have found that many people hold complex views about refugees, which cut across their educational background, income, age and ethnicity.

The majority of participants voice their sympathy for the plight of refugees fleeing war and persecution. The overwhelming majority of participants believe that the UK should take in refugees and that the Government should do as much as it can to help refugees, particularly women and children. Compassionate but controlled policy towards refugees was a common demand of many citizens' panels.

*"We do need immigration, and we also need compassion as well, for people who need refuge. I think it should be controlled but it should be controlled with a heart, but not some open door policy."*

Citizens' panel participant, Durham

'Compassion with controls' is a sentiment that is expressed when the citizens' panels are asked about their preferences on future numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees (Figure 7.1). To date, a small majority wants to increase numbers or keep them at the same level.



Empathy has emerged most strongly in some surprising places. For example in Merthyr Tydfil, where our panel was generally sceptical about the benefits of immigration, participants drew on Britain's proud history of taking in refugees during the Second World War.

## IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ON PUBLIC OPINION

Sympathy for refugees, however, is fragile and contingent on national and international events. Public debate over the age of young people evacuated from Calais as 'child refugees' in late 2016 and brought to the UK has been mentioned in every citizens' panel to date as evidence of failings in immigration control. This event seems to have severely dented public support for refugees.

*"You thought it would be refugee children coming in, but they were adult men. Although they were escaping from something bad, it made our country look like a joke."*

Citizens' panel participant, North Tyneside



Control and contribution are central themes of most citizens' panel discussions and refugees has tended to be viewed as a group that is not making a contribution. They are often viewed as being benefit dependent and drawn to the UK by the perceived generosity of its benefit system. Most participants are unaware of restrictions prohibiting asylum seekers from working and feel that refugees, as with any other group of migrants, should be contributing. The movement of refugees across Europe appears to have reinforced this view, with participants questioning the motives for such a journey.

*"The thing that comes to mind is that they're supposed to claim refugee status in the first EU country they arrive in, not trample all the way across Europe to try to come into Britain. So why is that not being enforced?"*

Citizens' panel participant, Middlesbrough

Security concerns were often linked to asylum-seekers, who are generally depicted as young men of Middle Eastern descent. While many participants acknowledge that refugees from the Middle East are often fleeing from ISIS, they sometimes argue that refugee flows could include extremist 'fifth columns'. This sentiment was heightened following the attacks on Manchester and London:

*"I'd have to say straight off I don't know what limits are already in place, there's the safety aspect, as we are very aware of now. With what's been going on over the last couple of weeks, there's going to have to be more monitoring of people coming in from other countries - maybe different levels for people coming in from different countries. I think the biggest thing is going to have to be the safety aspect of people coming in."*

Citizens' panel participant, Ballymena

There has always been proportionally more asylum applications lodged by men and boys in the UK than by women and girls. Although there are differences across countries of origin, in 2015 some 73% of primary asylum applicants were male<sup>10</sup>. The gender balance of asylum applicants is an issue that citizens' panels notice from media coverage and sometimes through their everyday experiences in dispersal areas. Many of the citizens' panels then conclude that male asylum applicants have different motives for entering the UK:

*"You see them coming in on the news, this all men and young boys. Where are all the women and children, if it's the families that are in desperate need for safety?"*

Citizens' panel participant, Durham

## **INTEGRATION**

Attitudes towards asylum-seekers and refugees seem to have little to do with the number of asylum seekers living in each place, and attitudes have been fairly consistent across the country. On the whole, very few people have reported direct contact with asylum seekers or refugees, including in dispersal areas such as Bradford or Middlesbrough. Our citizens' panel in Bolton was the only one where significant numbers of participants knew or had worked with refugees. Refugee issues have been no more salient in dispersal areas than elsewhere. However citizens' panels in dispersal areas were more likely to report concerns about occasional negative encounters, generally young men 'hanging about' on the streets, which can make some people - particularly women - feel threatened.

As in many other places we visited, there were some gendered differences in attitudes to migration, with female panel members in dispersal areas such as Middlesbrough and Leicester reporting that they felt intimidated by groups of young men, often described as asylum-seekers, 'hanging around' in town centres.

*"If you go into Leicester town you'll find there's a lot of males, you can tell they're from wherever, there are a lot of males hanging around. And you think 'why are you all around here?' If you're here to do a job, why do you hang around Leicester town centre? You notice it a lot more now, when I walk around, there are lots of frightening men hanging around. And I thought - brilliant, I'm going to get harassed. That slightly unnerves me."*

Citizens' panel participant, Leicester

Stakeholders argued for a more consistent approach to refugee integration, and felt that refugees must be included in England's planned integration strategy. Given that around half of asylum-seekers are eventually granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK, stakeholders felt that an integration strategy must also consider asylum-seekers. They wanted asylum-seekers to be given access to free English language classes in England and not have to wait until refugee status or leave to remain has been granted. While charities provide free English language classes in some areas, such provision is not available everywhere. Some stakeholders felt that English language classes could provide an orientation to life in the UK, better making young male asylum-seekers aware of cultural norms, particularly around behaviour to women.

Many citizens' panels also gave their opinions about refugee integration. They expressed surprise when told that rules prevent almost all asylum-seekers from working. Participants did not see work as a pull factor for asylum-seekers. Rather, they largely applied pragmatic reasoning to argue against this policy: arguing that allowing people to work would enable asylum-seekers to integrate and make a contribution, as well as preventing some of the misunderstandings attached to bored young men 'hanging around'.

*"I'd let them work, legitimately, and ensure they've got what they need to survive – they would make themselves self-sustainable."*

Citizens' panel participant, Middlesbrough

## 8. Stakeholder views

As well as running citizens' panels in each place we have visited we have held meetings with local stakeholders. They comprised elected members and officers from local authorities and other public sector bodies such as the police and the NHS, universities, as well as civil society organisations, businesses and organisations representing business interests. In some places the local MP sent a representative to the meeting. A full list of the stakeholders we met in our first 30 visits is given in the appendices.

The purpose of these meetings has been to find out about the local areas and gather contextual information that will help us better to interpret what the citizens' panels tell us. We also wanted to hear stakeholders' views about the policy changes that they wanted and have set these views out below.

### EU MIGRATION

As with the citizens' panels, EU migration dominated the stakeholder discussions. We heard of the difficulties that some sectors of the economy are experiencing in recruiting sufficient staff. These staff shortages also extend to the NHS and social care in many parts of the UK.

The NHS, councils and business groups had two key demands in relation to EU migration. Firstly, they were concerned about losing their current EU staff and wanted the Government to take immediate steps to secure the status of EU nationals in the UK. Secondly, most stakeholders recognised that immigration policy would change after the UK leaves the EU. They wanted the policy that was to be put in its place to guarantee them access to a supply of flexible labour from the EU, but without time-consuming bureaucracy and costs associated with non-EU migration. Small businesses and certain sectors such as the construction industry felt they would lose out to larger corporations reliant on agency recruitment were there to be significant restrictions on EU migration.

We discussed a range of options that the Government might introduce to regulate EU migration after Brexit. These included reforms within free movement, such as restricting access to benefits for EU nationals or allowing free movement for EU nationals who had a definite job offer. Other options that the Government might consider include quotas, regional visas or temporary visas for certain jobs. We found that there was little appetite for regional visas – stakeholders felt they would not work for industrial sectors such as construction where business needs to move workers around the UK. Stakeholders in some of the UK's smaller cities also feared that a regional visa system would risk them losing out to London and the UK's regional centres.

Setting in place temporary visa regimes for EU nationals is an option that has been considered by the Government<sup>11</sup>. We discussed this approach with both the citizens' panels and stakeholders. Employers did not want temporary visa regimes for EU nationals, as they wanted to be able to keep and invest in hard-working and skilled staff. Reforms within free movement was the policy option most favoured by stakeholders.

### WORK AND STUDENT MIGRATION FROM OUTSIDE THE EU

We also heard many of the frustrations that employers face when trying to recruit skilled staff from outside the EU through Tier 2 visa routes. The most widely stated criticism of Tier 2 (General) visas concerned the overall cap on employer Restricted Certificates of Sponsorship, currently set at £20,700 per year and allocated monthly. Bureaucracy and lengthy processing times were also seen as issues. NHS employers and universities that we met explained that they had recruited staff to fill vacant posts but had to wait in a queue to obtain the required Restricted Certificate of Sponsorship.

Some stakeholders felt that visas, alongside the Immigration Skills Charge<sup>12</sup> and the Immigration Health Surcharge<sup>13</sup> were too expensive and were a barrier to recruiting the skilled staff that they needed. At the same time, employers felt that the Immigration Skills Charge was ineffective in incentivising the training of British staff to fill skilled jobs.

Employers also felt that the Home Office did not understand the needs of business. In particular they found the process of bringing in staff through Tier 2 routes to be time consuming and bureaucratic and was particularly burdensome for small business.

*“Every person we bring in through Tier 2 feels like a battle.”*

(NHS human resources manager).

In some places university staff were among our stakeholder groups, usually representatives from international offices. They wanted the re-opening of post-study work visas for non-EU graduates and post-graduates. This demand was also shared by business and NHS stakeholders who felt that it would enable them to recruit skilled staff who were already in the UK. University stakeholders also wanted students taken out of the Government’s net migration target, a widely voiced policy demand. Their concern was not about the direct impact of including students in the target, as there are no quotas for non-EU students. Rather, they felt that the inclusion of students in a target to reduce migration sent out a negative message that students were not welcome in the UK.

*“The debate about immigration and the net migration target mean that students in India are now looking elsewhere, to our competitors.”*

(University marketing manager)

## **ASYLUM**

A significant number of our stakeholders have been representatives of civil society and faith organisations working with asylum-seekers and refugees. They, too, voiced concerns and wanted to see a number of changes to immigration policy which we have summarised below:

- Poor quality of initial decision-making on asylum applications.
- Lengthy waits for initial asylum decisions in some cases, with delays lasting last many months and years.
- Lack of access to funded legal advice for those appealing against a negative initial decision.
- Rules that allowed the indefinite detention of refused asylum-seekers who cannot easily be returned.
- Failure by the UK Government to take the full quota of unaccompanied refugee children and young people who qualify for admission to the UK under the Dubs Amendment (Section 67) of the Immigration Act 2016.
- Practical and legal barriers to refugee family reunion, including for Syrian refugees admitted to the UK through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.
- Wrongful denial of asylum support (Section 95 support) leading to destitution.
- The non-uprating of Section 95 cash support, currently set at £35 per person per week.
- Home Office mistakes made in allocating Section 95 support, leading to destitution.
- Poor quality asylum accommodation.
- Little funding for initiatives to help refugees who arrive in the UK through their own arrangements to integrate, in contrast to the support offered to those who arrive through the Gateway Programme and the Syrian Vulnerable persons Resettlement Scheme.
- Skills Funding Agency rules, applying to England, which prevent asylum-seekers from attending subsidised – usually free – English language classes.
- Rules that prevent most asylum-seekers from working, inhibiting integration and contributing to poor mental health.
- Delays in getting Home Office documentation and National Insurance Numbers once refugee status has been granted, preventing new refugees from getting work, housing and benefits within the 28 day grace period in which they are allowed to remain in asylum accommodation.
- Little communication between the COMPASS asylum support housing providers<sup>14</sup> (G4S, Serco and Clearsprings) and receiving councils and local charities. Councils such as Bradford and Middlesbrough felt they have little say in the numbers of asylum-seekers housed in their area, the conditions of the accommodation or where people are housed. Poor coordination between housing providers and councils means the latter cannot refer them to organisations that provide integration support.

*“Our generosity is spilling; it’s been pushed and stretched. And the affordability of housing here has made it a very appealing proposition for people to come and seek additional housing for asylum-seekers, which places additional pressures on the city that will reach a tipping point. We are a very welcoming city, we’re very proud of our history of accepting people fleeing violence and oppression. But there will come a point where there is a struggle to maintain that in light of the fact that we cannot afford it.”*

Council officer

We asked all stakeholders for the one or two changes they would like to see introduced to improve the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees. About half of the changes that stakeholders wanted related to integration rather than the process of asylum determination. As the previous section of this report argues, there is often public support for initiatives to improve refugee integration. In particular, many citizens’ panel participants feel that asylum-seekers should be allowed to work, arguing that this policy change would promote their integration and enable them to make an economic contribution to the UK.

## **STAKEHOLDER AND CITIZEN CONSENSUS**

Many of the above concerns have been voiced elsewhere, in the media and in campaigns organised by employers and by civil society. We will present a more detailed analysis of stakeholder views in our final report. Brexit presents an opportunity to address these concerns and put in place an immigration system that works for employers and protects refugees, but also has broader public support. But such policy changes will not be enacted unless advocates of immigration reform can show greater public support for these demands.

In some areas, stakeholders recognise that this public support is needed to bring about changes, and that action needs to be taken to get more of the public onside. In other areas, there appears to be some disjuncture between the views of the public and of stakeholders – be they business groups or organisations working with refugees. In some cases these organisations are simply not aware of the strength of public concerns about aspects of immigration policy. In other instances, stakeholders were unaware of political realities and that politicians pay more attention to views that can show majority support.

Some stakeholders also feel that facts and myth busting exercises can help build public support for policy change. But evidence from our citizens’ panels shows that facts and figures about work migration from the EU or refugee protection are not effective in changing attitudes. Participants are sceptical of ‘experts’ and are not convinced by lectures. For those who are struggling to make ends meet, being told by a London-based business leader that *“immigration is good for the economy”* may trigger further mistrust, and the thought *“it’s working better for you than me”*.

There is a low level of trust in data, which may have been made worse by the use of statistics by both sides in the EU referendum campaign. Research also shows that people tend to disbelieve statistics that run counter to their common sense or worldview. Although many of our business stakeholders stressed their difficulties recruiting staff, in many parts of northern England there is a strong historic memory of the 1980s recession when many people lost their jobs. Being told that employers cannot fill vacancies in Bolton, Chesterfield, Merthyr Tydfil and Middlesbrough does not chime with local views.

In Lerwick and Paisley we also spent time discussing issues around population. There is a need to attract workers to many parts of Scotland, due to rural population decline and an ageing population. This issue has been discussed by Scottish Government and by local authorities that want to attract migrants from elsewhere in the UK and further afield. Although this demographic issue has received media coverage, there has been no ‘public conversation’ about this or attempts to engage the public. For our Lerwick and Paisley participants, Scotland’s demographic needs simply did not resonate with them. Instead, when we raised the need to attract new migrants to the area, participants brought up their concerns about housing pressures.

Evidence suggests that some sectors of the economy are facing significant labour shortages. Rural Scotland does need to attract people of working age. The concerns that civil society and faith organisations raised about refugees were backed up with research. Yet these are not always concerns shared by the public. On some issues, however, there is consensus and our conversations have shown public support for a number of key asks from advocates of immigration reform. There was widespread support among our citizens’ panels for giving asylum seekers the right to work and

volunteer, for greater provision of English language classes, and supporting access for international students. But there are also real anxieties about immigration that will not be changed by offering evidence alone.

Overall, the stakeholders we met had a clear view of the policy changes they wanted. In many locations, stakeholders knew that they would have to build greater public support for such changes. However, in some places there was a disconnect between stakeholders' views and local public opinion, or a lack of awareness that in order to achieve their desired policy changes, advocates for immigration reform will need to get more of the public onside.

Economic and refugee protection stakeholders will continue to advocate for changes to immigration policy. There will always be a space for campaigners to raise issues and put options on the table that may otherwise go unheard. But alongside this, we felt that in many parts of the UK, advocates would be more successful if they acknowledged public opinion and worked with local residents, thus securing greater consensus.

## 9. Securing a consensus

The National Conversation on Immigration has enabled us to see how the public form their views on immigration based on narratives drawn from the national press and national political debate, but also from people's lived local experience. If the Government is to have an immigration policy that works for the economy and has broader public support, it needs to consider both the nature of national political debate and local issues.

All of our citizens' panels have commented about the effects of negative media coverage on attitudes, whether in the tabloid press or on social media. But as long as media coverage remains lawful and does not promulgate race hatred, there is little that a democratic government can do to influence how the media portrays migrants and migration. However, the claims of national politicians also influence public attitudes to immigration and politicians can help us to build consensus on immigration policy. They can also get things wrong. National media coverage can push politicians into making policy announcements that aim to sound 'tough' but risk creating a vicious circle. As such 'tough talk' can reinforce views that that immigration is a problem and, in turn, prompt even more uncompromising statements. Over-promising on immigration control, then failing to deliver, can damage public trust; in our visits we have heard many criticisms of the Government for doing this. At the same time, over-enthusiastic support for immigration and cultural diversity will have little impact on attitudes if politicians do not also listen to and address public concerns.

Over the last 25 years, the standard political response to public concern about immigration has been to change policy, often at a micro-level. Our citizens' panels have consistently indicated, however, that policy changes alone will not be enough to deal with their concerns. Some fundamental concerns about immigration relate to wider issues such as housing and public funding for services like the NHS. Citizens' panel discussions all begin by asking members of the public about the impacts of immigration, but often the topics discussed relate to things that cannot be resolved by changing immigration policy in isolation from other policy areas.

Public knowledge of immigration policy is selective and limited. For example, the evidence from our citizens' panels suggests that most people do not know that most non-EU migrants have to pay a health surcharge; nor are they aware of the regulations governing non-EU family migration. We ask our participants if they have heard of the Government's net migration target, a headline indicator of immigration policy. In the first 30 citizens' panels, just one or two people out of ten have heard of the net migration target. Of those who have, fewer still know what it comprises, but are usually aware that the target has never been met. This has not made them any more confident about the Government's ability to control immigration but has instead fostered mistrust.

Conversely, most participants have heard of the Australian Points Based System and also know that asylum-seekers are meant to apply for asylum at their point of entry into the EU. There is a 'cognitive bias' or selectivity in what our participants know<sup>15</sup>. Research shows that people remember facts that support their world view or the narratives they tell themselves, while forgetting or ignoring those that do not. This may explain why so many of our citizens' panel participants know about the EU's Dublin 3 Agreement regulations on asylum applications – while knowing nothing about the net migration target.

Immigration policy is important and politicians need to give consideration to their public statements on the issue. But this alone will not be enough to build a consensus on the direction of immigration policy. After 30 conversations across the UK with local citizens and stakeholders, we believe that the Government also needs to get it right locally. Specifically there are three issues, discussed in more detail below, that the Government needs to consider if it is to build a consensus:

- 1** The local impacts of immigration on public services, housing, neighbourhoods and quality of life.
- 2** Social integration, as this helps communities accommodate new arrivals and reduces migrants being viewed as transient interlopers who are not part of the local community.
- 3** How to institutionalise public engagement and dialogue, as face-to-face conversations enable people to air their concerns and listen to different opinions.



## 1. DEALING WITH LOCAL IMPACTS

The greatest concern raised about immigration, consistently, has been the impact of immigration on public services and housing. While not all participants blame increased strains on resources solely on immigration, it is an obvious point of tension around the country. The impact that immigration is perceived to have on public services clearly needs to be addressed, and will not be countered by changes to immigration policy alone. Making sure that local issues are addressed, that there are sufficient school places and that GP appointment systems are user-friendly would address some immigration concerns. These two issues are outside the scope of immigration policy.

Poorly-maintained and overcrowded private rental accommodation, neighbourhood decline and low-level anti-social behaviour have also emerged as points of tension. Not all private rental accommodation is well-regulated by local authorities, which sometimes argue that they do not have the funds to fully undertake this obligation. Few local authorities have licensing schemes for private rental accommodation, although there are successful examples of councils that have taken action to halt the worst excesses of the private rental market, such as in Newham. In England, local housing regulation could be paid for through the Controlling Migration Fund. This was introduced to ease pressure on public services and to pay for additional immigration enforcement in local areas that have experienced rapid immigration. Some of our stakeholders have given examples where this fund has been used to tackle local issues that cause tensions. In March, Cambridgeshire, for example, we heard of positive steps being taken to increase the availability of ESOL provision and to tackle problems with street drinking. However, we have also met local authorities that have been reluctant to apply for the fund. Arguably, the Government and the devolved administrations need to consider if targeted funds such as the Controlling Migration Fund, in their current form and at their current scale, are sufficient to deal with the local impacts of immigration.

Stakeholders have also suggested holding employers of migrant workers accountable for some of the impacts of rapid population growth on local infrastructure. There needs to be more consideration of the responsibilities of business in places where migration for work has a direct and marked impact on population growth.

## 2. INTEGRATION

Social integration matters. Our first 30 visits suggest that public opinion is often framed by everyday experiences of integration at a local level, in neighbourhoods and at a town or city level. Where residents have meaningful social contact with migrants, they are able to base their opinions on these interactions, rather than on what we have called “community narratives” drawn from the media and peer group debate. In places where migrants are less well-integrated into their local communities, negative public views tend to predominate. The National Conversation on Immigration has found that getting integration right locally is key to securing a consensus on the direction of immigration policy.

In earlier parts of this report we have examined cognitive bias in public understandings of immigration policy. Citizens’ panel participants are not aware of most aspects of immigration policy, therefore policy change by itself is unlikely to change their levels of support for immigration policy. Participants remember and believe facts about immigration policy when they are supported by the narratives they tell themselves about immigration. The challenge is to shift these personal and community narratives. Social integration is crucial to this aim, particularly positive social interactions between migrants and UK residents, which have the potential to recast personal and community narratives about immigration.

Integration policy covers many different areas and in our final report we will consider this issue in much greater detail. But our citizens’ panels and stakeholder meetings considered that English language fluency is a facilitator of social integration. Panellists felt that migrants should be obliged to learn English, but there needs to be enough classes in all parts of the UK to help them achieve such an obligation. The Government also needs to think about ways to help those who work long hours to learn English, perhaps by involving employers.

Community spirit and neighbourliness were also raised by many of the citizens’ panels, who felt that strongly networked communities were better at absorbing newcomers. Our final report will consider how the Government and local civil society might work with individuals to build better-networked and stronger communities.

Many citizens’ panels also talked about migrants that they perceived as living separate lives. Some participants wanted new migrants to adopt our cultural practices and national celebrations. A number of people, often younger participants and those who live in more diverse areas, enjoyed their everyday exposure to different cultures. There is a huge and contested literature about cultural integration, and the desire from politicians to promote British values has not always translated

well into public policy. But shared experiences and common values are important, as is feeling that we belong to and have a stake in the UK. Our final report will consider how we foster cultural integration to bring us together, rather than to divide.

### **3. DIALOGUE**

The conversations we have had across the country have not only been insightful and informative; for many participants they have also been cathartic. The polarised nature of much of the immigration debate in recent years has left the 'moderate majority' without a voice. Many people we have spoken to on citizens' panels have been anxious that by airing their views on immigration they might be labelled racist.

Conversations about immigration *can* be prejudiced. But feeling unable to air any concern about immigration has frustrated many who feel angry and suppressed by 'PC culture' and can then seek other outlets to express their concerns. Dialogue helps to build resilience to hatred and extremism.

The National Conversation on Immigration has shown that in face-to-face discussion most people have nuanced and balanced views about immigration. It is possible to have a decent conversation on immigration which does not reproduce the often-polarised media debate or descend into prejudice. We have found that there is common ground for an immigration system that works for us all. The challenge now is to consider how such dialogue could be institutionalised – how this National Conversation on Immigration might be adopted and taken forward by the Government.

# 10. The next steps

This interim report sets out the findings from the first 30 visits made by the National Conversation on Immigration, made between February and September 2017. We have been to many different locations but common themes have emerged. In our discussions, we have seen that people have moderate and constructive views and see both the pressures and gains of migration. Contribution and control have emerged as central themes in all the citizens' panels. Participants want the migrants who come to the UK to make a contribution, through the skills they bring, the vacancies they fill and through taxation. At the same time, our citizens' panels want the Government to exercise greater control over migration flows.

We have also seen some marked local differences in the issues raised by participants in the National Conversation on Immigration. These local differences often relate to specific local concerns. We believe that responding to these local pressure points and issues is key to building a consensus around the future direction of immigration policy.

Over the next six months we will undertake our remaining 30 visits. We have set up an online survey, which will remain open for anyone in the UK to complete. We will also undertake a nationally representative survey of public opinion. Findings from these activities will be set out in our final report in autumn 2018.

That report will also consider public policy interventions in more detail. It will examine how the local impacts of immigration, on public services, housing, neighbourhoods and the quality of life, might better be managed. Our final report will also consider how to promote social integration. Crucially, and central to this project, we will also consider how to institutionalise dialogue about immigration. We need national policy initiatives that help us get things right locally. This is key to building a consensus on an immigration system that works for us all.

# 11 Appendices

## MAP OF VISITS



## LIST OF VISITS

### East of England

- Basildon (December 2017)
- Bedford (preparatory panel January 2017 and final panel in March 2018)
- Cambridge (July 2017)
- Ipswich (male and female panels, June 2017)
- March (February 2017)

### East Midlands

- Chesterfield (September 2017)
- Leicester (July 2017)
- Lincoln (March 2018)
- Northampton (April 2017)
- Nottingham (16-24 youth panel, June 2017)

### Greater London

- Greater London stakeholder meeting (April 2017)
- Bexley (December 2017)
- Hammersmith and Fulham (November 2017)
- Enfield (March 2017)
- Redbridge (September 2017)
- Sutton (January 2018)

### North West

- Bolton (May 2017)
- Carlisle (October 2017)
- Knowsley (January 2018)
- Liverpool stakeholder meeting (January 2018)
- Macclesfield (January 2018)
- Preston (January 2018)

### North East

- Berwick-upon-Tweed (March 2018)
- Durham (July 2017)
- Middlesbrough (July 2017)
- Newcastle stakeholder meeting (March 2018)
- North Tyneside (February 2017)

### South East

- Banbury (March 2018)
- Folkestone (October 2017)
- Guildford (November 2017)
- Milton Keynes (BME majority panel, June 2017)
- Southampton (May 2017)
- Uckfield (February 2018)

### South West

- Bristol (open panel, October 2017)
- Exeter (January 2018)
- Gloucester (September 2017)
- Penzance (January 2018)
- Trowbridge (March 2017)
- Yeovil (March 2017)

### West Midlands

- Kidderminster (November 2017)
- Newcastle-under-Lyme (May 2017)
- Shrewsbury (July 2017)
- Sutton Coldfield (October 2017)
- Wolverhampton (July 2017)

### Yorkshire and Humberside

- Bradford (February 2017)
- Grimsby (March 2018)
- Harrogate (November 2017)
- Hull (November 2017)
- Sheffield (two panels, September 2017)

### Northern Ireland

- Belfast stakeholder meeting (June 2017)
- Ballymena (June 2017)
- Derry/Londonderry (June 2017)
- Dungannon (June 2017)

### Scotland

- Aberdeen (March 2017)
- Dumfries (October 2017)
- Edinburgh (March 2018)
- Lerwick (August 2017)
- Paisley (August 2017)

### Wales

- Aberystwyth (February 2018)
- Merthyr Tydfil (May 2017)
- Newport (November 2017)
- Swansea (November 2017)
- Wrexham (February 2018)

## STAKEHOLDERS WHO HAVE GIVEN INPUT: FEBRUARY-SEPTEMBER 2017

Aber Arts  
Aberdeen City Council  
Aberdeenshire Council  
Aberdeen University  
African Communities Association of Bolton  
AgeUK  
Amnesty International  
Aramathea Trust  
Asley Community Housing  
Bahai Leicester  
Ballymena Intercultural Forum  
Barnardos  
Bath Spa University  
BEGIN - Nottingham  
Belfast City Council  
BOAS Trust  
Bradford Chamber of Commerce  
Bradford Council  
Bright Blue  
Business West  
Cambridge Ethnic Communities Forum  
Cambridge Refugee Resettlement  
Cambridge Stays  
Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Chinese Welfare Association, Northern Ireland  
CitizensUK  
CLEAR, Southampton  
COEMO, Bradford  
COSLA  
Community Aid Enfield  
Coram Children's Legal Centre  
Council of Faith in Leicester  
Derbyshire County Council  
Detention Action  
Diocese of Durham  
Diocese of Paisley  
Durham County Council  
Early Years Temporary Accommodation Project, Enfield  
East Lancashire NHS Trust  
East Midlands Chamber of Commerce  
East of England Strategic Migration Partnership  
Enfield Council  
Enfield Race Equality Council  
Enfield Saheli Association  
ERMS UK  
EU Welcome  
Faithful Neighbours (Diocese of Bradford)  
Faiths Forum for London  
Fenland District Council  
FRESH  
InCommunities  
Institute for Public Policy Research  
GEMS, Northern Ireland  
Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers  
Grampian Regional Equality Council  
Greater Manchester NHS Trust  
Health and Social Care Partnership Inverclyde  
Humans of Wolverhampton  
Indian Community Centre  
Ipswich and Suffolk Race Equality Council  
Job Centre Plus, Aberdeen  
John Ellerman Foundation  
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust  
Justice First  
Leicester Mamas  
Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation  
Leicester Quaker Meeting  
London First  
Manchester City of Sanctuary  
Methodist Asylum Project, Middlesbrough  
Middlesbrough City of Sanctuary  
Middlesbrough Council  
Middlesex University  
Minority Housing Project, Aberdeen  
Migrant Resource Centre  
Migrants Organise  
Migration Matters Trust  
Migration Yorkshire  
Mojatu  
Muslim Welfare Association, Chesterfield  
Newcastle City of Sanctuary  
Northamptonshire Race Equality Council  
North East England Chamber of Commerce  
North East Refugee Service  
Northern Ireland Centre for Racial Equality  
North Tyneside Council  
North Tyneside CAB  
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum  
Nottingham Trent University  
Office of Mhairi Black MP  
Office of Alan Campbell MP  
Office of Mike Gapes MP  
Office of Richard Graham MP  
Office of Toby Perkins MP  
Office of Naz Shah MP  
Open University  
Peterborough City Council  
Polish Centre, Shrewsbury



Praxis  
Refugee Action  
Refugee and Migrant Centre, Black County and  
Birmingham  
Refugee Council  
Refugees Welcome Milton Keynes  
Regional Asylum Activism  
Renfrewshire Community Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
Renfrewshire Polish Association  
Romanian Chaplaincy  
Rosmini Centre, Wisbech  
Sharing Voices  
Shelter  
Shetland Council  
Shropshire Council  
Shropshire Supports Refugees  
Southampton City Council  
South Tyrone Empowerment Project  
South West Migrant Workers Forum  
South West Strategic Migration Partnership  
Suffolk Chamber of Commerce  
Suffolk Refugee Support  
The Challenge  
The3million  
Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Foundation for  
Peace

Trust for London  
TUC  
Unite the Union  
United Nations High Commissioner for  
Refugees  
Universities UK  
University of Cambridge  
University of Gloucestershire  
University of Leicester  
University of Suffolk  
University of the West of Scotland  
USDAW  
Valley Steps  
Victim Support  
Wales TUC  
Walking With  
West London Mental Health NHS Trust  
West Midlands Ambulance Service  
Wiltshire Community Forum  
Wiltshire Race Equality Council  
Wolverhampton City Council  
Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary  
Women of Wolverhampton  
Yorkshire Housing

Plus 21 individuals who came in a personal  
capacity

## Summary of local findings



## ABERDEEN

### Background

- Population: 230,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 17.5%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Bangladeshi, Chinese, Polish, Romanian.
- Unemployment rate: 5.0% (GB: 4.7%)<sup>16</sup>.
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: horticulture, construction, transport and fish processing.

### Key findings

At 17.5%, Aberdeen is the local authority with the highest proportion of overseas-born residents in Scotland. Its migrant and minority ethnic population is diverse and includes long-settled Bangladeshi and Chinese communities. There are two universities in the city, between them educating nearly 7,000 international students. Migrants from EU form a growing population in Aberdeen, as well as in the surrounding countryside where many of them are employed in Scotland's soft fruit industry. Rent is expensive in Aberdeen and as a consequence many Eastern European migrant workers have settled where housing is affordable, most usually in deprived neighbourhoods such as Tillydrone and Torry. Here, population increase has caused school place shortages.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.3, with a range from 4 to 7.

Most of the Aberdeen citizen's panel balanced the benefits of migration with concerns about pressures on the school system. Participants described situations where parents had not been able to get their children into a school of their choice. Additionally some members of the panel felt their own children's education might suffer if there were large numbers of children who did not speak English in Aberdeen's schools. This panel included two university students, who had largely positive views about immigration and who saw few negative impacts.

Many of the issues raised in the discussion were similar to those brought up in England. Migration was seen as beneficial where migrants were making an economic contribution, but uncontrolled' and 'unvetted' migration flows were seen more negatively. Some participants felt that freedom of movement within the EU exposed communities to an increased risk of crime and terrorism. Fears about crime were more forcefully articulated than in other places we have visited.

The panel felt that Scotland was more tolerant and welcoming to migrants than England. Migration was general discussed in a more positive manner, by those who held political office and in everyday conversations. There was a lively debate about whether Scottish Government should have control over immigration policy, with the panel divided on this issue. Trust to manage the borders, rather than unionist sentiments, were the main reason that half the citizens' panel did not support the devolution of immigration control to the Scottish Government.

Trust, transparency and political accountability were also major themes in this discussion. Many participants felt they were being duped or lied to by the Westminster and Scottish Government. There was a strong desire for politicians to be more open and truthful about immigration, and to admit to mistakes where they had been made.

*"We need to know about the good points, the bad things and the grey areas...Ask a question and the prime minister should answer it straight."*

Citizens' panel participant, Aberdeen

## BALLYMENA

### Background

- Population: 30,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2014: 3.5%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles and Romanians.
- Unemployment rate: 2.5% of the working age population<sup>17</sup>.
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: meat and other food processing, hospitality.

### Key findings

The Troubles and the loss of key industries meant that there was little international migration to Ballymena until relatively recently. While EU migrants have settled in the town, the proportion of the population born outside the UK or Ireland is still far below most other parts of the UK.

Participants were asked “on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is ‘very negative’, 10 is ‘very positive’)”. The average score for the panel was 6.9, with a range from 5 to 8.

The citizens’ panel mostly comprised those who had professional or managerial roles in their working lives and were reasonably prosperous. Generally, participants believed that immigration had brought more benefits than disadvantages to Northern Ireland. This may reflect the higher level of education of this panel and their greater levels of financial security, with migrants not seen as a threat to their economic wellbeing. Recent migration to Northern Ireland was interpreted as a vote of confidence in the peace process. Significantly, the pressures that migration can place on public services and housing were hardly mentioned, even after prompting. Panel members also drew on their own experiences of migration and that of family and friends, and these views also impacted on how they judged the impacts of migration.

There was sympathy for refugees, with most of the panel agreeing that “we should do as much as we can.” This support was stronger than in most other places that the National Conversation on Immigration has visited and may reflect the middle-class and religiously observant composition of the citizens’ panel. Some participants attended churches that had appeals for Syrian and other groups of refugees and talked about this in the discussion. But this underlying sentiment was balanced with security concerns, with migration flows from the Middle East considered a security risk because they might bring in terrorists. All panel members wanted much greater vetting of asylum-seekers. Overall, security was this citizens’ panel’s biggest concern in relation to migration.

There was a lengthy debate about integration. Participants felt that people were fairly welcoming and tolerant in Ballymena and that local churches had helped integration by running language classes and events to welcome new arrivals. But they also felt that religious divides could sometimes hinder integration, as new migrants could be caught between sectarian divides and not be aware of some of the signifiers and emblems of these divisions.

Some participants felt Muslims were not well integrated in mainland Britain. But compared with citizens’ panels that we have held in England, participants in the three Northern Ireland panels (Ballymena, Derry-Londonderry and Dungannon) had fewer concerns about integration. That many parts of Northern Ireland are segregated by religion and political tradition may have influenced such views. Participants also talked about their own experiences of migration and of integrating into a new society as a way of explaining that social integration sometimes runs against human nature.

The panel also discussed how immigration across the UK-Ireland land border might be managed when the UK left the EU. The group included those who had voted Leave and Remain in the EU referendum. As with the other citizens’ panels in Northern Ireland, there was some anxiety about the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland, with some concerns about the impact on the peace process and the economy, although these anxieties seemed to be less acutely felt than in Derry-Londonderry and Dungannon.

*“Lorries are going backward and forwards all the time, lots of good from here are shipped from Dublin. Now we have an extra safety issue. It’s not the IRA they’re worried about anymore, it’s people coming in from other parts of Europe and Syria. I don’t know what they will have to do, but they’ll have to do it gently.”*

Citizens’ panel participant, Ballymena

## BOLTON

### Background

- Population: 281,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 13%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Pakistani, Indian, Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian.
- Unemployment rate: 5.4% (GB: 4.7%).

### Key Findings

Bolton saw large migration from Pakistan and India which began in the 1950s and continues to this day. Bolton has also been a destination for EU migrants arriving from Hungary, Poland and Lithuania, and is a dispersal area for asylum-seekers.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.2 with a range from 3 to 10.

The citizens' panel generally had balanced views on immigration, acknowledging that immigration had brought both positive and negative effects to Bolton and nationally. All participants felt immigration was an important issue, which they spoke about regularly. It was clear that the panels' attitudes towards immigration were significantly shaped by how they saw EU migration and free movement rules, as well as integration.

Asylum-seekers and EU migrant tend to be clustered in certain parts of Bolton, in an area that still has a large Pakistani community. The citizens' panel discussed residential segregation. They wanted asylum-seekers to be dispersed more evenly across the UK, so that deprived areas did not face disproportionate burdens. Unlike almost all the other places visited by the National Conversation on Immigration, most of the citizens' panel in Bolton had contact with refugees and asylum seekers in both personal and professional capacities. They were sympathetic to those who had experienced war and persecution, and understood that the criteria for granting refugee status were tough. They wanted the Government to do more to help refugees to integrate. However, many participants were sceptical about the genuineness of some asylum claims and felt the UK should take its refugees from places close to source countries.

Our visit to the town was within 48 hours of the Manchester attacks where a suicide bomber killed 23 people, and injured 116. Bolton is just ten miles from Manchester and many panel members had attended local vigils. The terrorist lived in Manchester and was of Libyan descent, which impacted in the discussion. This citizens' panel unanimously agreed that the terrorist attack had brought people of different backgrounds together. They felt that most people knew that the perpetrator did not represent the wider Muslim community. At the same time, the Manchester attack had heightened their concerns about immigration, and showed the need for increased security checks on migrants.

*"It's really hard for me as a Muslim now because every time we feel like we're getting a step close to being properly integrated, some stupid person does something that then puts us ten steps back."*

Citizens' panel participant



## BRADFORD

### Background

- Population: 531,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 15.3%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Pakistani, Polish, Czech and Slovak Roma.
- Unemployment rate: 6.1% (GB: 4.7%)

### Key findings

Bradford is an ethnically diverse city with a long history of immigration. While 65% of the district's residents identify as White British, Bradford has the largest population of people of Pakistani ethnicity (20% of the population) of any local authority in the UK. Many of them are from the Mirpur region of Pakistani Kashmir, a migration which began in the 1950s and continues to this day. Although the Pakistani community is now experiencing a degree of upward social mobility and moving out to the more prosperous parts of the district, those of South Asian ethnicity remain disproportionately concentrated in the centre of the city, particularly in and around Manningham. Here they are often living side-by-side with EU migrants and refugees. Bradford is home to an estimated 15,000 Czech and Slovak Roma, the largest community in the UK. Home Office statistics show nearly 800 asylum-seekers were housed in the city in June 2017.

Bradford's history of migration and integration has been documented in a number of studies and reports<sup>18</sup>. Media coverage still portrays Bradford as a city characterised by poor race relations, religious extremism and deep-seated class, ethnic, religious and residential divides. While Bradford does face many long-standing social and economic challenges, it also has a vibrant civil society, with many organisations working hard to bring people of different backgrounds together, bridging Bradford's residential divides.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.4, with a range from 4 to 7.

As with most other places visited by the National Conversation on Immigration, control and contribution were major themes of the citizens' panel discussion. While some participants wanted reductions in the numbers of low-skilled migrants, there was no resentment of migrants who were working and paying taxes. The biggest concern of this panel was a perception that migrants received preferential access to benefits and social housing. Some of the participants had insecure jobs and had been in and out of employment and they talked about their own experiences of claiming benefits. It was clear that difficulties in dealing with the welfare system had fuelled a view that migrants received better treatment.

There was lengthy discussion about integration, with the citizens' panel feeling that Bradford had a reputation of a divided city because people of different ethnic backgrounds lived in different areas. Many participants felt that this was an unfair portrayal of their city because people from different backgrounds mixed at work and at school, not just in the streets where they lived. Attitudes about race and diversity had shifted and it was no longer socially acceptable to voice prejudiced opinions. Festivals such as Eid brought Bradford's residents together, with Eid and Diwali now part of the city's shared heritage. The panel believed that many Bradford schools were successful in promoting integration.

This is not to say that this panel had no concerns about integration. They believed that new arrivals must respect the law and observe British values. Participants also felt that it was possible to live in the centre of Bradford without speaking English and felt that migrants had a responsibility to learn the language. While all the citizens' panel members had friends and work colleagues of south Asian ethnicity, far fewer had social contact with EU migrants or refugees.

*"I'm a great-grandmother. My great-grandson gets to celebrate Eid at school; he learns about other cultures and he brings pictures home about different festivals. If my dad was alive now he would say 'why the heck are you doing this?' But things have changed now, attitudes are different"*

Citizens' panel participant, Bradford



## CAMBRIDGE

### Background

- Population: 280,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 26.4%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles and Indians, but Cambridge's migrant population is increasingly super-diverse.
- Unemployment rate of the working age population: 3.6% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: biosciences and pharmaceuticals, education, health and social care, hospitality, IT.

### Key findings

The prosperity of Cambridge, low levels of unemployment and the structure of its economy mean that it has always been an attractive destination for migrant workers. International migrants into the city include entrepreneurs and academics coming to work in the university or in IT, pharmaceuticals and bioscience. Cambridge's economy also relies on EU nationals to fill low-skilled jobs, particularly in the hospitality sector.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.7, with a range from 3 to 8.

This citizens' panel took a pragmatic approach to those who came to work, but some of them had concerns about population growth and pressures on housing stock, particularly participants who had young families or who were seeking to buy property. This is unsurprising given high housing costs and an acute shortage of accommodation in Cambridge.

Many participants felt that migration had made Cambridge a culturally richer and more interesting city, as well as contributing to the success of the university and the local economy.

The discussion was more heated and polarised than in many places we have visited. In many ways, the discussion we held with the citizens' panel reflected local conditions in Cambridge. About half the participants believed that the economic and cultural benefits of migration far outweighed any disadvantages. However, there were other panel members who had more sceptical views, and were particularly concerned about housing pressures.

Most participants did not see international students in Cambridge as migrants as they assumed they were in the UK for a limited period and then returned to their home countries. Both the citizens' panel and stakeholder meeting felt that community relations were generally good in Cambridge. Many of the migrants who came to Cambridge found it easy to fit into city life, as they arrived speaking English and to fill highly-skilled jobs in the NHS, the university or in local business.

*"I think what people forget is that we're a tiny, tiny island. We're so small so I don't think it's about quantity, I think it's about being realistic...If you drive around there's still a few green places, but we still are a really, really small island, and I think that just has to be taken into account. It's not about how many people, it's about where we're going to put them. I want a house for my child, two children, I think when they grow up, it really, really worries me. People struggle to have houses now, it's not going to get better you know realistically it's just not"*

Citizens' panel participant, Cambridge

## CHESTERFIELD

### Background

- Population: 70,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 4.9%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles.
- Unemployment rate of the working age population: 5.4% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: distribution, including Sports Direct and Royal Mail; NHS.

### Key findings

An improving economy and unfilled jobs have brought migrant workers to the area, mostly from Poland. When Sports Direct set up its distribution centre near Chesterfield it promised jobs to local people. However, the company used an employment agency to recruit many of its staff, who were largely migrant workers from Poland. At the time this move caused tension in the area. Social contact between the new arrivals and local community, as well as the publicity given to Sports Direct's poor working conditions<sup>19</sup>, seems to have diffused a little of this conflict, with many local people feeling sympathy to those who work at this distribution depot.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.5, with a range from 2 to 8.

The majority of the citizens' panel balanced the positive impacts of migration with their concerns, but for some of them the negative impacts were greater than the positive ones. Participants felt that migrants made a major contribution to the NHS, but at the same time, a growing population put extra pressure on GPs surgeries and hospitals.

The panel had major concerns about job displacement and wage depression, making reference to Sports Direct and voicing the opinion that migrant workers were willing to work for lower wages. These opinions were more strongly articulated than in almost all other places that the National Conversation on Immigration has visited, where the labour market impacts of migration have not been a major theme of discussions.

While there was sympathy for refugee families, almost everyone expressed concern about the movement of refugees and migrants across Europe, citing this as evidence that people were drawn westwards by the generosity of the benefits system in northern Europe.

Participants felt that community relations were good in Chesterfield and most of them knew migrants as well as members of minority ethnic and faith communities. There was a consensus that local communities needed to reach out and welcome new arrivals, with some participants describing their experience of doing this. This provoked a debate about the responsibility of migrants and receiving communities, with some participants feeling that migrants need to take on British cultural forms and celebrations.

*"At the end of the day, we are going to go through massive turmoil, coming out of EU. If we're going to do it, we have got to do it right... They need to suck it up and get on with it."*

Citizens' panel participant, Chesterfield

## DERRY-LONDONDERRY

### Background

- Population: 95,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2014: 2.5%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles and Romanians.
- Unemployment rate: 5.2% of the working age population<sup>20</sup>.
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: hospitality.

### Key findings

The Troubles and the loss of key industries meant that there was little international migration to Derry-Londonderry until recently, with the main population movement being the emigration of the city's residents. In recent years, boosted by the peace process, there has been investment in Derry-Londonderry's economy, with new jobs generated in IT and tourism. Nevertheless, unemployment is the highest in Northern Ireland and the city has attracted comparatively few international migrants.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 4.2, with a range from 2 to 8.

Most of the panel were balancers, citing the benefits of migration alongside their concerns. However, the Derry-Londonderry citizens' panel also included migration sceptics. The panel had strong views about immigration and particular concerns about competition for jobs and social housing. Preferential access to welfare benefits and concerns that migrants posed a security risk were also raised in the discussion.

As we have progressed with the National Conversation on Immigration, it has become evident that the concerns that are held about immigration often reflect local pressure points. It was therefore not surprising that in Derry-Londonderry competition for social housing was a dominant theme of the discussion, as housing statistics indicate a considerable mismatch between the supply and demand for social housing in the Derry and Strabane council area<sup>21</sup>.

The discussion about integration was more nuanced and was not characterised by strongly-held views about EU migration. Participants believed that it was a duty for new migrants to learn English. They also felt that Muslims who lived in Northern Ireland were better integrated than elsewhere in the UK. Integration was seen as a two-way relationship, with local communities having a duty to welcome new arrivals, an opinion that was voiced more strongly than in England. There was also an acceptance that it is human nature to want to socialise with people who are similar in background, with fewer concerns about social segregation than in other panels that we have held outside Northern Ireland.

Participants discussed immigration control and the UK-Ireland land border after Brexit. There was a great deal of anxiety about the impact on Derry-Londonderry of leaving the EU, in relation to the economy, EU grant aid and the peace process. While a few participants felt that a hard border was inevitable most did not, explaining how it would affect their daily lives. Overall, participants felt they were being given very little information about Brexit and this was contributing to their anxiety about the future.

*"I work as a public servant and we've been affected very heavily by immigration. But I've another point of view, when we had our first child it was foreign people that saved my wife's life. She had a post-partum haemorrhage. So from a personal point of view, I agree there are a few problems that come, but there are positives, so two sides. The cancer centre would not work without them."*

Citizens' panel participant, Derry-Londonderry

## DUNGANNON

### Background

- Population: 16,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2014: 11%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: East Timorese, Portuguese, Poles, Lithuanians.
- Unemployment rate: 1.6%<sup>22</sup>.
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: meat processing, poultry production.

### Key findings

Dungannon has experienced some of the highest levels of migration in Northern Ireland, with the immigrant population of the town increasing tenfold between 2001 and 2011. Those born outside the UK or Ireland are now estimated to make up about 11% of Dungannon's population. The first arrivals in the early 2000s came from Portugal, including a number of Portuguese citizens of East Timorese, Brazilian or African origin, and more recently from Poland and Lithuania, recruited through agencies to work in the town's meat processing factory.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.9, with a range from 3 to 10.

Overall, attitudes to immigration in Dungannon were quite distinct from similar areas in the UK such as March and Trowbridge, small towns which have also seen the arrival of EU migration to work in food processing. In Dungannon we found that migrant workers were seen positively: the town's meat processing factory would not be able to operate without them.

The citizens' panel raised some concerns that migration had added to pressures on the NHS and schools. But Dungannon does not seem to have experienced the neighbourhood decline associated with over-crowded and poorly maintained private rental accommodation for migrant workers. Nor have there been the community tensions triggered by street drinking. It is significant to note that the EU nationals who migrated to Dungannon have mostly done so as family groups, rather than as single persons. Moreover, they seem better integrated than in other parts of the UK, putting down roots, buying their own homes and being clear in their intention to stay. Many of the Portuguese nationals who have arrived in Dungannon are practising Roman Catholics, with the church and sports clubs facilitating social integration.

Similar to other citizens' panels we held in Northern Ireland, participants in Dungannon recounted stories of friends and relatives living and working abroad. They felt that an Irish history of emigration and immigration made them more empathetic and welcoming to migrants. There was also a greater understanding of the reciprocal benefits of freedom of movement within the EU. Brexit was also a major topic of conversation, much more so than in mainland Britain. The citizens' panel was anxious that leaving the EU posed an economic risk to Dungannon's economy. They were also worried that moves to put in place a hard land border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland could jeopardise the peace process.

*"I think because we're living in this area we just don't notice it [immigration]. But if you go elsewhere they're like 'Oh Dungannon - that's like Lithuania!' But if we didn't have the immigrant population that we have here, we wouldn't have Dungannon meats, all the major industry that we have here which does support the town and keeps shops in the town, keeps restaurants, keeps things going."*

Citizens' panel participant, Dungannon

## DURHAM

### Background

- Population: 50,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 2.9% (County Durham estimate).
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles, Indians.
- Unemployment rate: 5.7% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: education and hospitality.

### Key findings

The university dominates Durham and draws students and staff from across the UK and wider, with nearly 4,800 international students. University staff and students are the main source of ethnic diversity in County Durham, which has experienced comparatively little international migration. Asylum-seekers are not dispersed to County Durham, although the local authority has agreed to house Syrian refugees, with churches playing a major role in organising for their reception.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.3, with a range from 4 to 7.

For most of the citizens' panel, immigration was not an issue they considered frequently as they rarely came into contact with migrants. The international students who lived in Durham were seen as part of the student population rather than as a migrant group.

The majority of participants were 'balancers' and saw advantages as well as disadvantages of migration. Their biggest concerns were the uncontrolled and un-vetted nature of migration flows from the EU, as well as perceptions that some migrants, particularly refugees, were attracted to the UK for its generous benefits.

Opinions were divided about the UK's policy towards refugees. One participant made a strong argument for greater compassion towards this group of people, while other members qualified their underlying sympathy for refugees with concerns about numbers and the seemingly overwhelming problem of refugee flight. The movement of refugees across Europe in 2015 was discussed, with some participants arguing that the UK's benefits system was acting as a pull factor, encouraging refugees to move westwards.

*"I think immigration is beneficial for any country, but I don't think it's policed right. I spent a lot of time in Australia and I think they've got it sort of spot on, and I think here we've been quite lax and letting them on to the benefit system instead of getting them on to jobs and helping the economy."*

Citizens' panel participant, Durham

## ENFIELD

### Background

- Population: 332,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 36%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Cypriot, Indian.
- Unemployment rate: 6.3% of the working age population (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: retail, health and social care.

### Key findings

Enfield has long-established Cypriot and South Asian communities who were joined by Kurds and Somalis in the 1990s. Larger properties and lower house prices, relative to many other parts of London, have seen Enfield become an attractive place to live for families and outward migration from inner London has contributed to the growing diversity of the local authority. More recently, migrants from the new member states of the EU have moved to the local authority, adding a further layer to the waves of migration.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.8, with a range from 5 to 8.

The group were generally comfortable with migration, which was seen as a normal part of day-to-day life. There was a broad understanding among the group that attitudes to, and experiences of, immigration in London were different to those in other areas of the country due to a longer history of immigration and higher levels of diversity than elsewhere in the UK. The group were generally comfortable with migration, which was seen as a normal part of day-to-day life.

But the panel also balanced the positive impacts of immigration with some concerns which mirrored what we have heard in other areas of the UK: that immigration put pressures on school places, public services such as the NHS and on housing, particularly with London's tight housing market. Older members of the citizens' panel were more concerned about the impact of immigration on public services, including panel members who identified as migrants themselves.

Participants were generally sympathetic to the principle that those fleeing war and persecution should be offered protection. Many referred to "human" responsibilities to welcome refugees. However, as in other parts of the UK it was clear that support for refugee protection was contingent on external events. One participant spoke about child refugees evacuated to the UK from Calais, whose age was disputed in the media, and how this coverage had affected her own commitment to refugees.

The panel felt that Londoners generally got along well but older participants felt that integration is a process that takes time.

In much of the discussions, there was little distinction between EU and non-EU migration, perhaps reflecting the diversity of immigration to Enfield.

*"Generation one or two, we struggle. Come generation three or four we've all merged into the potpourri."*

Citizen's panel participant, Enfield



## GLOUCESTER

### Background

- Population: 129,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 10.2%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles.
- Unemployment rate of the working age population: 4.1% (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

Small numbers of migrants from south Asia and the Caribbean settled in Gloucester in the 1950s and 1960s. More recently, the city has seen the arrival of asylum-seekers, international students and migrant workers from the EU. This has made Gloucester the most ethnically diverse urban settlement in the county, although the overseas born population is still below the national average.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.1 with a range from 3 to 8.

The citizens' panel comprised balancers who cited both positive and negative impacts of migration. They felt that migrants made a positive contribution to the economy and to the NHS, but had concerns about the pressures that migration placed on schools and public services. For some of the panel, there were more negative impacts than positive.

Within Gloucester, many of the new migrants have settled in the Barton and Tredworth, an inner city ward which has seen waves of migration. A significant part of the debate was about integration in this area, although none of the participants lived there. They felt that landlords neglected the properties they rented to migrant workers in these areas and much of the accommodation was overcrowded. This had led to neighbourhood decline. Some participants also reported feeling threatened by groups of young men 'hanging around' in Barton Street and outside the GL1 leisure centre. In contrast, those who attended the stakeholders meeting argued that Barton and Tredworth epitomised successful multiculturalism<sup>23</sup>.

Few members of the citizens' panel had social contact with migrants as friends, neighbours or work colleagues. Their views about migration were largely formed by what they read in the media, and what they saw in central Gloucester and other UK towns and cities. Similar to Trowbridge, migrants were often described as a nameless 'them'. Participants' views appeared to be 'local narratives' that were being reproduced within peer groups.

*"I'm a bit on the fence really because I live in a very small town outside Gloucester. There isn't any visibility of immigration whatsoever, so it's purely based on what you hear in the media which is, you know, biased one way or the other, so it's very difficult to make up a valid opinion based on that."*

Citizens' panel participant, Gloucester

## IPSWICH

### Background

- Population: 180,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 10%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Black Caribbean, Indian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Afghan and Filipino.
- Unemployment rate: 5% (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

There is a long history of immigration into Ipswich although, more recently, Ipswich has seen the arrival of refugees, international students, Filipino healthcare staff as well as eastern European migrant workers. Refugees started arriving in Ipswich in the 1990s, with significant numbers coming as clandestine entrants through the nearby ports or in freight traffic along motorways. Local refugee groups estimate that about 2,000 refugees live in and around Ipswich, with the largest groups coming from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Suffolk County Council had agreed to take 230 Syrian refugees over five years through the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. Many of the refugees who live in Ipswich as well as new arrivals from eastern Europe have settled in the north east of the town in an area with large amounts of private rental accommodation.

We held two citizens' panels in Ipswich, one with women and one with men, to understand more about how gender affects how we see immigration. The panels were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panels was 5.3, with a range from 3 to 8.

Almost everyone on both panels saw positives and negatives of immigration, believing that migrants made a contribution to the economy but voicing concerns about the draw of benefits and pressures on public services. We were also conscious that there was a hierarchy of preferences towards recent migrants, with the Portuguese and Poles put ahead of Romanians, who were seen to be less well-integrated.

National events and local media coverage made immigration a topic of everyday conversation, most recently as a consequence of the London and Manchester terrorist attacks. Both panels were concerned about undocumented migration, referring to a recent incident when migrants were apprehended arriving on the Suffolk coast by boat.

It would be easy to overestimate the differences between our gendered panels. Both our male and female panels mostly saw the same benefits of immigration, and shared many concerns. Responses to issues such as refugee rights or the treatment of undocumented migrants were talked about with more emotion on the female panel, whereas men tended to spend more time debating the impact of immigration on the economy. Differences that did emerge between our gendered panels were not so much about *what* was said, but *how*. The discussion on the men's panel was lively and people challenged each other on different aspects. At times the conversation was confrontational, but the male panel did find common ground on most issues. In contrast, the female panel was less argumentative. Participants listened to each other to a greater extent and there were no voices that dominated the discussion. However, at times it felt like the participants were holding back.

*"What I see is a country that's not equipped with the resources – I work in education as well – and we've had a lad turn up last week who can't speak a word of English and we've had to use our own students in the classroom to interpret.... I'm not saying they shouldn't be here because I'm quite an inclusive person but I just don't think the country has been equipped in regards to housing, education, public services."*

(Female citizens' panel participant, Ipswich).

## LEICESTER

### Background

- Population: 348,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 35%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: South Asian, Black Caribbean, Somali, Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 5.2% of the working age population (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of migrants: hospitality, clothing and footwear, food processing.

### Key findings

Leicester was the first city where those of White British ethnicity were in a minority – 45.1% of the population at the time of the 2011 Census. In the period after the Second World War, Polish ex-combatants settled in the city and soon after were joined by migrants from Ireland, South Asia and the Caribbean. When Idi Amin expelled Ugandan Asians in 1972, about a quarter of those who settled in the UK came to Leicester and soon made a large economic contribution to the city. More recently, Leicester has seen the arrival of asylum-seekers, international students and EU nationals, whose numbers include Somalis with EU passports.

Participants were asked “on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is ‘very negative’, 10 is ‘very positive’)”. The average score for the panel was 5.7, with a range from 4 to 8.

Migration and the presence of migrants in Leicester were seen as a normal part of everyday life in this city. While their experiences and media coverage prompted panel member to think or talk about immigration on occasions, it was not an issue that dominated the panel’s concerns and thoughts. The majority of the Leicester citizens’ panel were ‘balancers’ who described the benefits as well as their views about negative impacts. Both the benefits and disadvantages of migration were seen in economic and fiscal terms, in relation to the skills migrants brought to the UK, their contribution as tax-payers or the drain on the exchequer as benefit claimants. The citizens’ panel saw international students making a positive contribution to both Leicester itself and to the county of Leicestershire, although there was some disagreement about how much money entered the local economy.

Both the stakeholder meeting and the citizens’ panel felt that community relations were good in Leicester. The Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, was seen as a positive voice for immigration and integration. Both groups felt that Leicester has a strong civic identity which embraces the contribution of its East African Asians and other Commonwealth migrants. Festivals once associated with particular ethnic or faith groups are now celebrated by the wider community.

There was sympathy for genuine refugees seeking safety, but this was qualified with concerns about security. The case of age-disputed children who were evacuated from Calais was raised in the discussion, as evidence that refugees were not being rigorously vetted. It was mostly female members of the panel who raised concerns about asylum-seekers, with some of them talking about groups of young male asylum-seekers who ‘hung around’ in the city centre.

Over half of the panel had direct experiences of migration, having moved to the UK themselves or having close family members who had done so. These experiences were brought up at various points in the discussion. There was a view that immigration had worked better for everyone in the past, but more recent migrants included those who did not integrate or share British values. Participants felt that there was now a risk that the city was becoming more segregated over time, rather than more integrated.

While community relations were good, there was a consensus that a small minority held prejudiced views. Additionally, the opinions and actions of a tiny minority of religious extremists had caused Leicester’s Asians to be seen differently by the white population, irrespective of their religion.

*“They can’t tell whether someone’s Muslim or Sikh. When a situation like terrorism occurs and is committed by one Islamic sect, everybody’s put in that category. It’s 000.1%, but as white society, they see all Asians as Muslims because they can’t tell the difference.”*

Citizens’ panel participant

## LERWICK, SHETLAND

### Background

- Population: 24,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 5%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Hungarian, Polish, Thai, Chinese.
- Unemployment rate: 2.5% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of migrants: oil and gas, fisheries, aquaculture, fish processing, health and social care, construction and tourism.

### Key findings

North Sea oil and a growing aquaculture industry means that Shetland has a healthy economy which has attracted migrants, whether from elsewhere in the UK or overseas. The largest overseas-born population are Hungarians who are undertaking high- and low-skilled work in Shetland. Unique to this part of the UK are migrants who have come to marry men (and sometimes women) who live in isolated areas and have not been able to meet a local partner.

Not included in the statistics, however, are Shetland's short-term migrants, who intend to stay for less than a year and are not included in Annual Population Survey data. Tourism and the oil industry employ many workers on short-term contracts, including international migrants.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.5, with a range from 1 to 10.

Most participants cited positive views about immigration alongside concerns about housing pressure. However, two members of this citizens' panel had views that were more negative. As a mainly rural community, both stakeholders and the citizens' panel felt that Shetland was a place where people got along well.

The majority of this panel believed that migrants had brought skills and made an important economic contribution to Shetland, but pressures on housing and, to a lesser extent, the NHS emerged as concerns. As a result of a shortage of housing – and of construction workers - property is expensive and rents are high in Shetland. There was an interesting debate between those who felt that migrants were culpable and those who felt that the Government and local council had failed to provide adequate housing. Dealing with Shetland's housing shortage would go a long way to address residents' concerns about immigration.

The views voiced by this citizens' panel were similar to those articulated elsewhere in the UK, with contribution and control being key themes of the discussion. Most participants wanted to increase the numbers of high-skilled workers but reduce the numbers of migrants coming to take up low-skilled employment. However, there was more support for seasonal migrant workers than in many places we have visited: participants were happy for the number of seasonal migrants to be increased, which is likely to reflect their importance to the tourism and oil economy.

The citizens' panel was clear that they did not hold a great deal of faith in the Westminster or Scottish governments, nor the local authority, to handle immigration. Shetland and Orkney have traditionally opposed Scottish independence, so it was not surprising that there was no support from the Shetland citizens' panel for the Scottish Government being given powers over immigration policy.

*"I think it's not all positive but it's certainly positive.... All the ones I've met all seem to be working and paying taxes. And you're right about services bursting at the seams, but these people, they're paying money and that money should go towards providing these services and housing."*

Citizens' panel participant, Shetland

## MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

### Background

- Population: 23,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 6%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Polish, Romanian, Lithuanian.
- Unemployment rate: 3.4% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of migrants: farming, food packing and food processing.

### Key findings

March is a town in the Fens, the UK's agricultural heartland. This area is a major producer of cereals and vegetables, which in turn supports a large food packing and processing industry. The farms and factories of the Fens have always relied on outsiders. But the intensification of agriculture, greater consumption of processed food and just-in-time food production has required a larger workforce and this demand has largely been met by EU migrants. Migration into the Fens has been rapid, with the overseas-born population in the Fenland district increasing by 177% between 2001 and 2011.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 4.7, with a range from 2 to 7.

The citizens' panel lived in March and in neighbouring Wisbech. Participants had a large range of views, with three people having very sceptical views about migration, as well as two people who were willing to challenge some of the more negative statements.

EU migration dominated the citizens' panel discussion. Concerns about EU migration and the desire for it to be brought under UK Government control had undoubtedly contributed to a large Leave vote in the EU referendum: some 71.4% of votes were for Leave in the Fenland district council area. The scale and pace of migration was seen as putting pressure on housing supply, as well as schools and GP surgeries. Neighbourhood decline was another prominent theme of the discussion. Of the 11,500 dwellings in Wisbech, 1,100 are thought to be houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) - essentially private-rental accommodation for migrant workers, much of it of poor quality and overcrowded. Both the citizens' panel and the stakeholder meeting wanted stronger powers to regulate landlords.

There were concerns that young single migrant workers kept to themselves, often hanging out on the street and rarely speaking English, which many on our panel - especially women - found intimidating.

Despite some strong views, many members of the citizens' panel had friends, neighbours and work colleagues who were migrants. Participants had also come to know migrants as fellow parents at their children's schools. They knew migrant workers who were making an effort to 'join in' and become part of the local community. Even the most sceptical members of this citizens' panel were of the opinion that EU nationals who lived and worked here must be allowed to remain in the UK. At the same time, both the citizens' panel and local stakeholders believed that there were real tensions, particularly in Wisbech. Too many migrants lack fluent English and lead separate lives from the majority community.

While businesses has profited from migration to the Fens, many local residents are not seeing the benefits of migration. It is clear that local infrastructure needs to keep up with the pace of change if public concerns are to be eased.

*"Everyone who is working, who is putting into the pot, who doesn't have a criminal record, they should stay here after Brexit."*

Citizens' panel participant, March

## MERTHYR TYDFIL

### Background

- Population: 59,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 3%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles, Portuguese, Filipino.
- Unemployment rate: 5.7% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: food processing, particularly meat packing and health and social care.

### Key findings

This area was once a major producer of coal, iron and steel, with these industries attracting migrant workers from elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, as well as from continental Europe. Merthyr Tydfil's isolation and competition from abroad has meant the end of these traditional industries. While new jobs have been created, it remains one of the most deprived towns in the UK and its population experiences multi-dimensional disadvantages.

Merthyr Tydfil's economic problems have also meant that levels of recent international migration have been lower than in many other places in the UK. But in the late 1990s nearly 200 Portuguese workers were recruited by an employment agency to work in the meat-processing factory in the town. After Poland joined the EU, Polish workers were also recruited. The factory operates round the clock, with around 1,000 workers on site at any given time, 50-60% of whom are migrant workers.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1-10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 4.7 with a range from 2 to 8.

Most of the citizens' panel cited both positive and negative impacts of migration, although some participants had more sceptical views and mostly dwelt on the negative.

This citizen's panel's biggest concern centred on welfare benefits, which they felt attracted migrants to come to the UK. Rules that allow UK child benefit to be sent overseas was a policy that this panel particularly opposed. Participants also believed that migrants received preferential treatment within the welfare system. Some participants also felt that migrants were prioritised over British citizens in NHS waiting lists and for the allocation of social housing, while others told of their own difficulties negotiating the welfare system. This appears to have led to resentment of others and the view that migrants receive preferential treatment.

Stakeholders told us that attitudes to immigration in Merthyr Tydfil and in other Welsh Valley towns were largely due to the area's poverty and isolation, alongside a lack of meaningful social contact with migrant and minority ethnic communities. We were told that attitudes in close-knit Valleys communities are very parochial, with a strong sense of belonging attached to a small local area. These sentiments were echoed in the citizens' panel, with one participant telling of her experience of moving to another Valley community where she felt an outsider: "close-knit does not always mean close".

Despite Merthyr's long history of migration, a strong Valleys identity and an active and internationalist labour movement, it is a town where new arrivals and longer-settled residents are struggling to accommodate each other, in the context of deprivation and changing patterns of employment.

*"I'm a bit half and half about migration. Some come here and work, but I don't really agree with those who come over and send all their money over to their families and take benefits and don't want to work. And I think they're just too many in the country. I've got no problem against them individually, and I've had Czech lodgers, and they're nice people, a lot more straight than a lot of British people, but I just think they're too many in the country."*

Citizens' panel participant, Merthyr Tydfil



## MIDDLESBROUGH

### Background

- Population: 140,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 9.4%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Pakistani, Irish, Yemeni, Polish, Romanian.
- Unemployment rate: 8.9% of the working age population (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

Of the five local authorities in the Tees Valley, Middlesbrough has the most diverse population, as a consequence of historic migration, the more recent arrival of asylum-seekers and a small number of international students at Teesside University. About 600 asylum-seekers were being housed and supported by the Home Office when we visited Middlesbrough, although at times, this number has been higher. The treatment of asylum-seekers in Middlesbrough has been the focus of media coverage in relation to the numbers dispersed there by the Home Office, as well as the identification of asylum accommodation in the 'red front door' debacle<sup>24</sup>.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.5, with a range from 4 to 7.

The Middlesbrough panel raised issues that were common to many areas. Most of the group were 'balancers' who cited both positive and negative outcomes of migration. As with many other panels, contribution and control were central themes of the discussion. Migration was seen as beneficial where migrants were making an economic contribution, but 'uncontrolled' migration flows were seen as negative.

There was a consensus that international students at Teesside University were not seen as migrants by the local population. This panel felt that international students made an economic contribution to the area, with no-one wanting to reduce their numbers

With Middlesbrough hosting relatively large numbers of asylum-seekers, policy towards refugees formed a major part of the discussion for the Middlesbrough panel. Yet many of the views held by the Middlesbrough panel seemed similar to those held elsewhere in the UK. Concerns about asylum-seekers were balanced against recognition that they had fled war and persecution and deserved sympathy.

Much asylum accommodation is concentrated in particular parts of the town centre. Here they form a visible group; prevented from working, many asylum-seekers have little else to do but to loiter on the streets. This has provoked anxiety or hostility among longer-settled residents, including among some of those who attended the citizens' panel. There was broad support on the citizens' panel for offering asylum-seekers the right to work. This would improve quality of life for those seeking asylum, alleviate some of the concerns about the public behaviour of these young men, as well as enabling asylum-seekers to make an economic contribution.

While people of different backgrounds generally got on well in Middlesbrough, participants were concerned about residential segregation, with most asylum-seekers and many EU nationals living in the town centre. The stakeholders we met felt that more could be done to help asylum seekers integrate, but their transient nature and lack of English and money posed many challenges.

*"I've Syrian neighbours and Romanian neighbours and they're all really nice and friendly but then if you go out of central Middlesbrough ... its quite gang-y, and different communities have, like left and right - they're all, it's quite intimidating walking down there, it's a lot of ... people there, they all stick together, people do feel intimidated, I feel intimidated at times, but on a one-to-one basis I don't really notice."*

Citizens' panel participant, Middlesbrough

## MILTON KEYNES

### Background

- Population: 264,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 20%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Indian, Polish, Ghanaian, Zimbabwean, Somali.
- Unemployment rate: 4.2% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: distribution, education, health and social care.

### Key findings

Milton Keynes was developed as a purpose built town to ease the overspill of London. Planned as a realisation of garden city idealism, its layout consists of a number of 'grid squares' of housing estates constructed around town centres. Low unemployment, cheaper housing and a fast train line to London have made it attractive both to international migrants and those who have moved out of London. Between 2001 and 2011, the foreign born population of Milton Keynes increased by 125%.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.9, with a range from 3 to 10.

The Milton Keynes citizens' panel was deliberately recruited to have a majority (6 out of 10) participants who were from minority ethnic groups. We did this to see how such a demographic composition might impact on the nature of the discussion. While many participants made reference to their family history of migration, this did not often make them more sympathetic to new arrivals. Instead a comparison was made between past waves of migrants, mostly from the Commonwealth, who were seen to integrate, and new arrivals who were perceived as being reluctant to do so.

Most of the citizens' panel wanted greater controls on migrants from the EU, with many calling for cuts to the numbers of low-skilled EU nationals and criminal record checks on would-be migrants. Significantly, there was almost no discussion about pressures on public services associated with population growth and migration, although the citizens' panel included a number of parents and older people, who in other places have raised such issues as 'life-cycle' concerns.

Undocumented migration emerged as this citizens' panel's greatest concern, with participants recounting stories of clandestine migrants who had been found hiding in lorries travelling up the nearby motorway. These incidents had been covered in the local paper but, in one case, a participant who worked in transport had come into direct contact with a clandestine migrant.

The citizens' panel and stakeholder meeting also discussed the impact of Milton Keynes' built environment on community relations. Both groups felt that the layout of Milton Keynes, with its distinct town centres, can help to forge a sense of community as residents share public space and civic amenities. But some of these town centres can become identified with particular ethnic groups, for example Fishermead with the Somali community. Perceptions about residential segregation in Milton Keynes can have an impact of public views on integration and belonging.

*"I came to this country in 1956 and when I first came here it was an entirely different country. At that time people who came here, they wanted to integrate, they came here for the right reasons. They understood the values of this country."*

Citizens' panel participant, Milton Keynes

## NORTHAMPTON

### Background

- Population: 223,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 17%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Zimbabwean, Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 4.5% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: distribution and transport.

### Key findings

There is a long history of immigration to Northampton – visible Black Caribbean presence dates back to the 1950s and long-settled Bangladeshi and Zimbabwean communities live in the town. More recently the town has seen a significant amount of migration from eastern Europe which has caused some tension.

In-migration from elsewhere in the UK has also heightened Northampton's divisions, with substantial investment to attract new residents, including a new railway station, a new university campus and cultural quarter with gallery space and cafes. At the same time the town has been little action by the council to deal with the impacts of international migration.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.3 with a range from 1 to 8.

Most people in the group were 'balancers', weighing up the benefits of immigration against what they saw as negative impacts. There were, however, a few members of panel who had largely negative attitudes. The risks posed by uncontrolled migration flows formed a large part of the discussion. Participants felt that foreign criminals had taken advantage of free movement and entered the UK. This citizens' panel argued strongly for criminal record checks on EU migrants if the Government is to regain public trust in the way it handles immigration.

Cultural concerns featured more strongly in the discussion than they have in other parts of the country. While some of the remarks stereotyped whole groups, they were not challenged by other participants.

The citizens' panel discussion mostly centred on EU migration. The view that EU migrants undercut wages and drove down working condition was articulated strongly by many panel members, much more so than in previous panel discussions. Participants included those who worked in distribution and transport and their own experiences were shared with the panel.

*"There's plenty of people out there in the market looking for jobs but employers, they don't want to have to deal with people's flexibility. 'You do as we tell you, you do it'. Great. 'You don't - you go home'"*

Citizens' panel participant, Northampton

## NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

### Background

- Population: 251,000 (Stoke-on-Trent); 127,000 (Newcastle-under-Lyme).
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 13.2% (Stoke-on-Trent); 2.5% (Newcastle-under-Lyme).
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Pakistani, Polish, Romanian.
- Unemployment rate: 5.8% (Stoke-on-Trent); 4.1% (Newcastle-under-Lyme); (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

The Potteries of North Staffordshire comprise six town centres and spans two local authority areas: Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. The citizens' panel was held in Newcastle-under-Lyme, although its participants lived in both local authorities.

The decline of the Potteries' traditional industries meant that there was little international migration to the area until relatively recently. However, an estimated 6,000 EU nationals are estimated to live in this part of North Staffordshire, many of whom are living in neighbourhoods where there is affordable rental accommodation. Asylum-seekers are also dispersed to Stoke-on-Trent, with nearly 1,000 living there in June 2017. Two universities – Keele and Staffordshire – educate over 2,500 international students between them.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.1, with a range from 4 to 7.

This citizens' panel voiced some strong opinions about neighbourhood decline in parts of Stoke-on-Trent where EU nationals live in private rental accommodation. They felt intimidated by street drinking, complained of littering and were concerned that neither landlords nor tenants maintained their properties. Greater regulation of the private rental sector was a key demand of this panel.

It was notable that few members of this citizens' panel had migrants as friends and work colleagues. In this respect, the views of panel members were not being informed or mediated by close personal contact. Social and print media had informed the opinions some panel members, as well as the opinions of family, friends and acquaintances. Immigration was an issue that many participants discussed with their friends and relatives. A few had tried to research immigration online, but had been unable to find trusted and accessible sources of information. This prompted an interesting debate about reliable and unreliable sources of evidence about immigration, as well as the role of social media in disseminating hateful and prejudiced views about migrants and minorities.

There was also a discussion about the Manchester bombing that occurred three days before the citizens' panel. While participants asserted that it was only a tiny minority of people, they were open in stating that this terrorist attack had negatively impacted on their views on immigration. For some panel members, violent religious extremism was seen as an outcome of accepting migrants from certain countries North Africa and the Middle East.

*"You get ghettoized areas, where one immigrant group moves into an area and others follow. It kind of clashes with the culture. Then you have an area where it's mostly British people."*

Citizens' panel participant, North Staffordshire

## NORTH TYNESIDE

### Background

- Population: 202,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 6%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 6.0% (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

North Tyneside is made up of a number of towns which together form a continuous built up area bordering Newcastle. The citizens' panel was held in Whitley Bay. In the past, mining and maritime industries provided much employment in the area. Despite the loss of these traditional industries, the proportion of the working-age population in work is higher in North Tyneside than elsewhere in the North East.

The loss of its traditional industries and on-going economic weakness has meant that there has been less international migration to the North East compared to other English regions. Just 6% of North Tyneside's population is estimated to have been born abroad, lower than the UK average of 14.1%. There are Bangladeshi, Indian and Chinese communities in North Tyneside whose members include UK-born citizens as well as newer arrivals. There is also a significant Polish community. With three universities in the area, North Tyneside is also home to many international students. Small numbers of asylum-seekers are also housed in North Tyneside by the Home Office.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.9, with a range from 5 to 8.

All of the members of this panel described many benefits of migration alongside views about its disadvantages. As in other parts of the UK, contribution was a major theme of the discussion. The citizens' panel was happy for migrants who had a job to come to the UK, but participants were concerned that some migrants came to the UK because of the generosity of its benefits provision. Concerns about the pull of welfare benefits featured more prominently in the discussion than in many other parts of the UK.

This citizens' panel also balanced their views on refugee protection. Participants supported the principle that the UK should give sanctuary to those fleeing war and persecution. They also felt that refugees were made to feel welcome in the North East. But the citizens' panel also expressed concerns about the situation in Calais, which they associated with criminality. Participants believed that the arrival of the age-disputed young people from Calais was evidence of a lack of vetting of would-be migrants.

Both the citizens' panel and the stakeholder meeting also raised the issue of skills and training for those living in the UK. Both groups felt that not enough was being done to equip local school leavers with the skills they need to find work. As a consequence, employers were more likely to turn to migrants to fill vacancies, particularly in the construction and hospitality sectors. Lack of employer investment in training and over-reliance by business on migrant workers was a strong theme of the discussion in North Tyneside, more so than in many other parts of the UK.

*"There is so much emphasis on going to university that we have forgotten about the 50% who don't."*

Citizens' panel participant, North Tyneside

## NOTTINGHAM

### Background

- Population: 315,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 23%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: South Asian, Polish, Romanian.
- Unemployment rate: 7.7% of the working age population (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large numbers of new migrants: education, health and social care, retail.

### Key findings

Like most big urban areas, Nottingham has a long history of immigration which includes post-war arrivals from the Caribbean and South Asia. A long-settled Polish community has recently been joined by new arrivals from elsewhere in Eastern Europe. It is estimated that about 6,000 refugees live in the city and in December 2016 nearly 1,000 asylum-seekers were being supported by the Home Office in the city of Nottingham. Together, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council have also agreed to provide homes for 500 Syrian refugees over five years who have been accepted under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. There are also two universities in Nottingham and between them they are educating nearly 11,000 international students.

This citizens' panel was different from most of the previous panels as we specifically recruited young people aged between 16 and 25 years. Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.5, with a range from 5 to 8.

Participants felt that migration brought more advantages than disadvantages to Nottingham. The benefits of migration were seen in both economic and cultural terms. Compared with the mixed-age panels we have held, this panel placed much greater emphasis on the cultural benefits that migration had brought to the UK.

This is not to say that participants had no concerns about immigration. The impact of migration on the labour market, particularly young people's ability to find work, was a particular concern of this group. This youth panel also shared other panels' concerns around security. In addition, participants felt strongly that migrants must be making a contribution to British society and they wanted increased criminal vetting of would-be migrants.

There was no discussion of pressures on public services, and no negative anecdotes were given on how immigration had adversely affected panel members themselves or people they knew. This may in part have been reflective of their age and current lack of interaction with public services.

Participants felt that Nottingham was a friendly city where people of different backgrounds generally got on well. They saw a generational gap in attitudes to immigration between themselves and their families, an outcome of growing up at a time when Nottingham was more diverse. The young people viewed immigration as a constant and a part of their life that had "always been that way," and perceived the older generation as seeing immigration as a change to their lives. The EU referendum had been an area of conflict and division within some of our participants' families, and had provoked arguments about immigration.

*"It's kind of part of our life that's always been here. There is a generation that see it [migration] as an imposition and as something unnatural... I feel like the older generation were raised with timelier prejudices and they were more prevalent. Younger people are raised to be more tolerant to other cultures and races."*

Citizens' panel participant, Nottingham



## PAISLEY

### Background

- Population: 76,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 6.9%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles.
- Unemployment rate of the working age population: 4.9% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: hospitality.

### Key findings

While Paisley's traditional industries drew migrants from Ireland, there was very little international migration into the town in the 20th century. In 2001, just over 1% of Renfrewshire's population was from a minority ethnic group; even by Census 2011 this had only risen to 3%, lower than Scotland's average. But in recent years, the size of Paisley's Polish community has grown and a small number of international students live in Paisley, many of whom are studying at the University of the West of Scotland. Asylum-seekers are not dispersed to Renfrewshire although the council has taken in nearly 100 Syrian refugees, making it one of the most generous local authorities in the UK.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 7.9, with a range from 6 to 9.

The Paisley panel had largely positive attitudes towards migration, although they also had some concerns, for example, about residential segregation and integration, and the 'pull' of the UK benefits system. However, a characteristic of this largely non-graduate citizens' panel was that participants recognised the economic and labour market contribution of migrants, and felt that these benefits outweighed any negative impacts associated with migration.

As in all citizens' panel discussions, participants voted on the options for dealing with EU migration after Brexit. A majority wanted to keep freedom of movement, because they felt that it had brought more benefits than disadvantages.

The Paisley citizens' panel was sympathetic to the plight of refugees, much more so than most other citizens' panels. Immigration detention, specifically the detention of asylum-seekers, was an issue raised in the stakeholder meeting, with some of them opposed to indefinite detention or holding women and children. (Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre is located about 20 miles from Paisley). But when we asked the citizens' panel if detention was ever something that was discussed, no-one responded and not one participant knew of Dungavel.

The citizens' panel then discussed whether the Scottish Government should be given control of immigration policy. Opinions were divided: some participants wanted Scotland to have such powers, while others did not have sufficient confidence in the Scottish Government to control the borders.

While the citizens' panel had positive views on immigration, its participants felt that not everyone who lived in Paisley shared their opinion, with xenophobic posts shared on local social media groups. This led on to a debate about differences in attitudes to migration between Scotland and England. Participants felt that national media and political discourses about immigration were more positive and welcoming in Scotland, compared with other parts of the UK, with such narratives having some impact on public opinion.

Some participants were the descendants of Irish immigrants and made reference to their family history, which they felt made them empathetic to new migrants. The Roman Catholic Church has a strong presence in Paisley and has been at the forefront of Syrian refugee settlement as well as initiatives to promote integration in the area. The moral leadership of the churches may have influenced local attitudes to migration, with the citizens' panel including a number of practicing Christians who talked about this work with migrants and refugees.

*"I think we could go from one extreme to another, I think potentially we could be doing more for refugees, but again, I think, because you don't want an influx all at the same time, you want it more controlled... it will help with integration."*

Citizens' panel participant, Paisley

## REDBRIDGE

### Background

- Population: 302,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 42.1%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: British Asians, Poles.
- Unemployment rate of the working age population: 5.0% (GB: 4.7%).

### Key findings

Generations of immigrants settled in Redbridge in a journey from the East End of London to the Home Counties. Many of its residents have Irish ancestors and there is a large Jewish community. The Bangladeshi community in Redbridge is growing as they, too, move out of central London to more affluent neighbourhoods. This trend, alongside increased longevity, has led to population growth, with Redbridge's residents numbering 241,000 in 2001 and growing to 299,000 in 2016.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.1, with a range from 3 to 8.

Contribution was a central theme of the citizens' panel discussion, with participants largely content with international migration, just as long as migrants were working.

The biggest concern of this citizens' panel was population pressure. This is understandable given that the population of Redbridge has grown by 24% in the last 15 years; participants were concerned about housing pressures and a lack of school places. They felt that the Government has not put the infrastructure in place to deal with population growth and were careful to say it was "not the fault of the migrants."

There was a discussion about future options for EU migration, with participants sceptical about plans for short-term visas. They had had little confidence in the ability of the Government to enforce a short-term visa regime for EU nationals, feeling that there would be many overstayers. Some participants also voiced concern that employers would lose good workers if there were no options to renew visas or settle in the UK and become a citizen.

Almost all members of the citizens' panel made reference to their own family history of migration at different points in the discussion. Some of the older participants felt that immigration had worked better for the UK in the past, although not everyone agreed with this. There was a debate between two Jewish panel members who held different opinions about whether London's Jewish communities were well integrated, socially and economically. Integration was equated with community spirit and neighbourliness.

*"I think that's one of the biggest problems we've got in our country. We don't even talk to our next-door neighbours now, wherever they are. To have somebody from a foreign land, try to integrate with them, and it's not always our side of it, it's them as well."*

Citizens' panel participant, Redbridge

## SHREWSBURY

### Background

- Population: 72,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 7%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 3.3 % of the working age population (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: distribution and food processing.

### Key findings

Shrewsbury is a market town and a commercial centre for Shropshire and much of mid-Wales. Employment in the town reflects this position, with retail, tourism and distribution providing significant numbers of jobs. Unemployment is low and there are no large spatial and economic divides in Shrewsbury compared with similar towns. As a consequence, new migrants have not clustered in particular areas where there is available rental accommodation.

Despite a healthy economy, good transport links and its proximity to Telford and Birmingham, Shrewsbury's migrant and minority ethnic population is very small. About 7% of the population has been born outside the UK, including some new migrants from eastern Europe. The town opened its first mosque in 2013 and there are a number of civil society organisations working to promote the integration of migrant workers and refugees.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.1, with a range from 2 to 8.

This citizens' panel took a largely positive and pragmatic view of labour migration. They were comfortable for the numbers of low- and high-skilled workers to stay the same or be increased, as long as migrants were vetted and paying taxes, and the economy needed them.

Some participants voiced strong opinions about migrant criminality and the lack of criminal record checks on migrants from the EU. However, even these participants were happy to keep levels of high- and low-skilled labour migration at the same level if those with criminal convictions could be excluded.

The citizens' panel was sympathetic to the plight of refugees, but had some concerns, particularly about the situation in Calais, which they saw as evidence of a lack of state control over migration flows. Most participants felt that asylum-seekers should be allowed to work so as to help them integrate.

Although the population of migrants in Shrewsbury is small, compared with elsewhere in the UK, most of the citizens' panel had work colleagues who were migrants. In this respect, migration was seen as normal aspect of life in Shrewsbury. Participants felt that there were few integration problems in Shrewsbury and people generally got on well. They felt this was because the number of recent arrivals was small and new migrants were not clustered in particular parts of town. This is not to say that there were no integration concerns raised by this pane, however: many people felt that residential segregation was a problem in the UK, including in nearby Telford and Wolverhampton.

Overall the discussion was dominated by three 'Cs': control, criminality and contribution. For panel members in Shrewsbury, securing greater support for immigration policy needs to address these three issues.

*"I think there's a difference here between immigrants and immigration. And I think it's the immigration policy that is broken. I have no issue with immigrants, but I do have an issue with the way that it's managed. And I think that, for me, is markedly different and we don't really seem to have control over the border."*

Citizens' panel participant, Shrewsbury

## SOUTHAMPTON

### Background

- Population: 249,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 23%.
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 5.2% (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: education, health and social care, food processing, engineering.

### Key findings

As a port, Southampton has had a long history of immigration and emigration, although 91% of its population was still of white British ethnicity at the time of the 2001 census. More recently, an estimated 20,000 Poles – about one in ten of the total population – have made their home in Southampton, with the centres of this community being suburbs such as St Mary's and Shirley.

The citizens' panel were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 6.6 with a range from 5 to 8.

There was a wide acknowledgement that migration had brought economic benefits to Southampton, as well as broad respect for migrant workers who were contributing to the community. The group saw immigration as having a positive impact on the city, reviving areas that were previously run down. And despite some concerns around residential segregation of the Polish community, participants generally felt that people of different backgrounds got on well. Southampton's Poles appear to be accepted, with participants telling of their trips to the Polish delicatessen and stating "We are Poland number two."

Unusually, this citizens' panel had detailed discussion about the trade-offs between greater controls on low-skilled migration and the price of goods and services. Most citizens' panels do not make these links, even when prompted.

Over-population emerged as the biggest concern of this panel; this is unsurprising given that Southampton is part of a continuously built up area from Bournemouth to Brighton. Some participants argued that the UK was "too full" and that the number of migrants coming to the UK should be reduced.

This citizens' panel also discussed integration in some depth and agreed that migrants themselves, receiving communities, councils and the Government all had responsibilities when it came to integration. With such a large Polish population it is possible to live and work in Southampton without speaking much English by depending on family, friends and work colleagues to translate. At the time of the 2011 Census over 5,000 people in Southampton did not speak English well or at all, including many adults from Poland. This panel included two Polish migrants who talked about those from their own communities who worked long hours with co-nationals and had learned very little English.

*"People want it all don't they? They want the cheapest flight tickets, they want the cheapest taxis, the cheapest hotels. But ultimately it comes at a cost that they don't necessarily see, and this is the price that it comes at. That we can't offer British workers the top wage. That we can't offer you now, a hotel worker, 20-30 grand a year. So it'll be a lower paid wage which, like we've said, British people aren't willing to work for."*

Citizens' panel participant, Southampton

## TROWBRIDGE

### Background

- Population: 35,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016: 9% (Wiltshire).
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups: Poles and Moroccans.
- Unemployment rate: 3.2 % of the working age population (Wiltshire) (GB: 4.7%).
- Industrial sectors employing large proportions of new migrants: food processing and farming.

### Key findings

Trowbridge's population is largely of white British ethnicity, although there are also small but long-established Moroccan and Bangladeshi communities. More recently the town has seen the arrival of migrant workers from Poland and other EU countries, mostly to take up low-paid jobs in meat processing. Levels of employment are above the national average and Wiltshire is generally seen as a prosperous county, however the indices of multiple deprivation identify Trowbridge as the most deprived part of Wiltshire.

The citizens' panel was asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 5.0 with a range from 1 to 7.

Most of the citizens' panel were 'balancers' and believed that migration had brought benefits but also led to negative impacts such as additional pressures on schools and housing. However, two panel members had more negative views, expressing strong opinions that welfare benefits acted as a pull factor - "soft-touch Britain" - encouraging migration to the UK. Some of their remarks targeted specific groups, such as refugees and Muslims, although the opinions of these two participants were politely challenged by other panel members.

While migration was an issue that clearly concerned a few citizens' panel members, most participants rarely considered migration and did not often discuss it. Knowledge of migration was limited and most of the negative statements by panel members had not arisen from personal experiences or direct contact with migrants, who were portrayed as a nameless 'them'. Nor could some of the statements be linked directly to media coverage. Rather, these views appeared to be 'local narratives' that were being reproduced within peer groups.

Participants wanted additional investment in housing, healthcare and education if migration was to remain at current levels. Some panel members wanted electoral promises on immigration to be set out openly and in clear simple English, which would help them understand immigration better and regain some of their support in the way the government handles immigration.

*"You don't see too much of it round these parts. You're more sheltered from it [migration]. You don't know the impact it has on schools. I do worry about the impact it has on schools, but to me it hasn't been too noted."*

Citizens' panel participants, Trowbridge

## WOLVERHAMPTON

### Background

- Population: 256,000.
- Percentage of the population born overseas, 2016 : 20.2%
- Major migrant and minority ethnic groups : .Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Polish.
- Unemployment rate: 7.2% (GB : 4.7).

### Key findings

Wolverhampton has a long and enduring history of immigration. By 1851, one in eight of its inhabitants were Irish. In the 1950s and 1960s Wolverhampton became home to many Commonwealth migrants and the city's population continues to reflect this settlement, with a large Sikh community. In recent years, Wolverhampton has become increasingly super-diverse, as a consequence of the dispersal of asylum-seekers and the arrival of international students. The city has also taken in around 200 Syrian refugees, settled through the vulnerable people's relocation programme.

Participants were asked "on a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK including your local area? (1 is 'very negative', 10 is 'very positive')". The average score for the panel was 7.1, with a range from 5 to 10.

The benefits of migration largely outweighed the disadvantages for this mostly non-graduate panel. For them immigration was part of the everyday life of this city.

Enoch Powell was the MP for Wolverhampton South West from 1950-1974 and drew from his observations in his constituency for his infamous 'Rivers of blood' speech made in Birmingham in April 1968. Yet the speech had some positive outcomes; in Wolverhampton it led to better inter-faith dialogue and promoted efforts to improve community relations. Fifty years on, Wolverhampton has developed an inclusive 'Black Country' civic identity and strong Commonwealth and inter-faith links, which are still being utilised to integrate newcomers.

Those who arrived in the past are largely well-integrated into the life of the city and community relations were generally felt to be good. The citizens' panel members told a strong story of integration slowly happening across generations in Wolverhampton and a city that understood itself today to be a very different place to that of Enoch Powell's speech.

Recent EU migration was not the major issue of concern that it has been in other towns and cities, nor were there anxieties about numbers. Both the local stakeholders and the citizens' panel felt, however, that more effort was needed to help newly arrived asylum-seekers and migrant workers to integrate. There was an undercurrent of sympathy for those fleeing war and persecution, but it was clear that some panel members felt confused and threatened by large groups of young male asylum-seekers who "hang around" in the city centre.

*"When it is the first generation, from personal experience, they come over and keep to themselves. Its only when the children are going to school, they are being educated and there is integration. They are in the system of education, English becoming the first language. When they go home they still speak their own language, but that will tend to disappear in the second and third generation, there is a lot more integration afterwards."*

Citizens' panel participant, Wolverhampton



# Citizens panel questions

Below are the common questions that we used in each citizens' panel. The questions guided the discussion, alongside voting packs that were used to collect information about views on the impacts of immigration, options for EU migration and immigration numbers. We also included questions relevant for particular towns and cities, for example extra questions on refugee protection and integration in Middlesbrough.

## GENERAL VIEWS

- On a scale of 1–10, do you feel that immigration has had a positive or negative impact on the UK, including your local area? (with 1 being “very negative”, 10 being “very positive”).
- Maybe you could say why you gave this score? – discussion.
- What do you think have been the positive and negative impacts of immigration into the local area?
- Where do you get your information about immigration?
- Is immigration an important issue for you? How often do you talk about immigration among your colleagues, friends and family?

## EU MIGRATION

- What changes would you like to see made to EU migration after the UK leaves the EU?
- Do you expect the numbers of EU migrants to go down?
- Is Brexit something you still discuss?

The Government is looking at a number of policy options, which are likely to cover the options summarised in your voting packs. Could you tick which option you think the Government should adopt?

The Government should keep free movement rules for EU migrants in the UK and for UK nationals who want to live in the EU.	
The Government should set an annual cap covering EU migrants in low-skilled jobs, but not for EU nationals in highly-skilled work	
The Government should apply the same restrictions on immigration for EU migrants and those coming from outside the EU, even if it means more restrictions placed on British citizens who might want to live in the EU.	
The Government should only offer temporary visas lasting a maximum of three years to EU nationals.	

- Why did you make that choice?
- What do you think would happen locally if the number of EU migrants dropped off a lot?
- The Government is look at offering short-term visas for EU migrants – both those coming to do low-skilled and high-skilled work. Do you think there are any disadvantages of offering short-term visas of say two or three years?
- EU immigration will be part of the Brexit negotiations. We don't know how they will go; there will have to be give-and-take on both sides. It is important that British businesses have tariff free access to the single market. If accepting fewer restrictions on EU migration is a compromise we have to accept to enable British businesses (particularly smaller ones) to get a better deal, is that something you would be prepared to accept?

- An estimated 3 million EU migrants currently live in the UK and 1.2 million British citizens live in other EU countries as a result of free movement rules. Now that the UK is going to leave the EU, what do you think should happen to them? (Optional).
- How should the Government and others better manage the local impacts of migration on public services and housing?

## MIGRATION FROM OUTSIDE THE EU

In recent years about half of immigration has come from outside the EU, with migrants arriving through work visa routes to fill highly-skilled jobs, as students, to join their family or as asylum-seekers and refugees. In a minute we will talk about refugees, but now I want to talk about migration from outside the EU.

- Do you think the Government has got its approach right about non-EU work migration? Is this a live issue in this area?

## ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- Please write down, on page three of your packs, five words that come into your head when you hear the word refugee. Maybe you would like to share what you wrote?
- Are there any policies you would want to see changed for asylum-seekers and refugees?
- Do you think the UK does enough to help people fleeing war or persecution?

## BORDER CONTROL AND IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

- What changes would you like to see, so that we get more control? What does the phrase 'better control' mean to you?
- On page three of your packs you have got a case study of an undocumented or illegal immigrant who we have called 'H'. It's a real story. Everyone's story is different, but I would like to ask you to read through the story and tell us how H should be treated. When you have finished reading please write few notes on your sheet and we'll have a discussion.
- What would you do about H?
- Border control is something we pay for out of taxation. Locating undocumented migrants, detaining then removing them is very expensive. At the moment 0.2% of public spending goes on the whole immigration system, which covers visas, what happens at the airport, the asylum-system, detention and deportation. Would you be willing to pay £5 per year more for a better immigration system that removed more undocumented migrants?

## OVERALL NUMBERS

- Could you turn to your packs. For each of the following groups, please vote on whether you would prefer the Government to increase the number of people coming to live in the UK, reduce it, or to let the numbers remain about the same.

	Increased	Reduced	Remain about the same
High skilled workers from the EU			
Low-skilled workers from the EU			
Seasonal workers employed on farms and in food factories and hotels			
High-skilled workers from outside the EU			
Asylum-seekers and refugees			

Non-British immediate family members (spouses, civil partners, children under 18 and other dependent relatives)			
Non-British university and college students			

- Does anyone want to give their views on the choice they made?
- The Government has a target to reduce immigration – the net migration target. How many of you have heard about this target?
- There have been some criticisms of this policy, as it means the Government treats all types of migrants the same way. Do you think the Government should keep an overall net migration target, have different targets for different types of migrants, or no targets at all?

## **INTEGRATION AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Let's move on to talk about what happens to migrants after they have arrived here.

- In this area, do you think migrants are generally well-integrated in their new neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces? Do you have migrants and refugees among your friends and work colleagues?
- How do you think the Government should best encourage integration?
- What about local councils and employers?
- What responsibilities should migrants have to integrate?
- And what about us, as receiving communities? Are there things we should be doing to help new arrivals?

## **FINALLY...**

- Some people find it difficult to talk about immigration – they may be worried about being accused of racism, for example. Obviously we don't think this – or else we would not be here, talking about immigration with you. But we wanted to know what you thought the boundaries were between a decent discussion about migration and one that was racist? How do we keep the discussion decent?
- We are now on to the most important question and it would be good to get everyone's opinion. If the Government was to get your trust and broad support for how it handles immigration, what one or two things would need to change?
- Is there anything important that you think we have not talked about?

# Acknowledgements

British Future and HOPE not hate would like to thank our funders who have made this project possible: the Jo Cox Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Social Change Initiative. We are also grateful for input of our project's advisory panel, particularly Professor Rob Ford of Manchester University.

The National Conversation on Immigration has collaborated with the Commons Home Affairs Committee and we would like to thank Yvette Cooper MP and her committee for this opportunity, as well as the committee's clerks, particularly Phil Jones. We would also like to thank our citizens' panel recruiters, DJS Research, especially Holly Slater and Anthea Thompson.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have given up their time to talk to us or fill in our survey. Between them, they have shown that consensus is possible.

## ABOUT US

### British Future

British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank seeking to involve people in an open conversation which addresses people's hopes and fears about identity and integration, migration and opportunity, so that we feel confident about Britain's Future.

We want to ensure that we engage those who are anxious about cultural identity and economic opportunity in Britain today, as well as those who already feel confident about our society, so that we can together identify workable solutions to make Britain the country we want to live in.

Jill Rutter is Director of Strategy and Relationships at British Future

### HOPE not hate

HOPE not hate uses research, education and public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism, and helps to build communities that are inclusive, celebrate shared identities and are resilient to hate

Hate is often the consequence of a loss of hope and an articulation of despair, but given an alternative, especially one that understands and addresses their anger, most people will choose HOPE over hate. Our job is to expose and undermine groups that preach hate,

intolerance and division whilst uniting communities around what they have in common.

We aim to take a part in building a society that celebrates rather than scapegoats our differences.

Rosie Carter is Research Officer at HOPE not hate

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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# NATIONAL CONVERSATION

## Have your say in the National Conversation

Immigration is being talked about everywhere. On TV, on the bus, in the tabloids, down the pub, at work, in Parliament. Many of us have strong opinions on immigration, but some of the voices in this conversation have been louder than others. We want to make sure that everyone gets a say in this debate, and to make sure they are heard.

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