

# Methodology Note

## Social Mobility Commission

### About Public First

Public First is a global strategic consultancy that helps organisations better understand public opinion, analyse economic trends, and craft new policy proposals. It has worked with some of the world's biggest companies, government departments, and major charities to produce bespoke, evidence-based reports and strategic insights. Public First is a member of the British Polling Council and a Company Partner of the Market Research Society, and adheres to their rules and guidelines.

### Research Design

This research was developed following the publication of the Social Mobility Commission's Promising Prospects Index - a data-driven categorisation of social mobility prospects for young people in different parts of the UK. To build further on this index, this research uses qualitative methods to delve deeper into not just *what* happens to people in terms of outcomes, but *how* they perceive their own areas and how that might influence their own outcomes.

Therefore, this project looked to answer the following research questions:

- What does the public in these areas understand the term 'social mobility' to mean?
- How do they think their local area contributes to their own ability to be socially mobile (as well as their children's)?
- What more would they like to see done in their local area to encourage social mobility?

Given the broad nature of social mobility, this research has been developed to include a large number of focus groups with people from different demographics, geographical areas within Rochdale and Cheshire East and those with and without children. Below, we've included a thematic breakdown for each set of focus groups followed during recruitment.

<b>'Families with school-aged children growing up'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must have child(ren) of school age (mix of primary and secondary)</li></ul>	<b>'People who have moved into the areas as adults'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must live in [LOCATION] and have moved there after the age of 18 - must have lived in [LOCATION] for over two years</li></ul>
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<p><b>‘People who have grown up and lived in the areas’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have lived in [LOCATION] for at least two years whilst they were under the age of 18 and currently live in the area</li> </ul>	<p><b>People who grew up but moved away from the areas’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have lived in [LOCATION] area for over two years when they were under 18 and now live elsewhere</li> </ul>
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## Sampling

Participants for the focus groups were recruited through an independent market research recruitment agency. This agency uses a combination of recruitment methods, including social media outreach, street recruitment and network outreach, in order to obtain a broad and diverse range of individuals. Participants of focus groups included people from 18 to 76 years old and included a wide range of occupations and social grades. A mix of gender, ethnicity and age was attained for each focus group. All participants received an incentive for their participation.

## Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Experienced Public First moderators conducted 75-minute online semi-structured focus groups (with 6 being conducted in person - 3 in each location); all focus groups followed the same discussion guide with variations only being in respect to place names. The aim of this approach is to explore perceptions, beliefs and experiences, not to quantify these or claim them to be statistically significant or wholly representative of the experiences of a population.

All participants gave consent at the point of recruitment for focus groups to be recorded and shared with a third-party transcriber. None of the participants were under the age of 18. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed. 27.5 hours of recordings were used to conduct thematic analysis, which was undertaken by the research team at Public First. Quotes included in the report are used to demonstrate consistent themes identified throughout the data.

## Limitations of the research

This research set out to understand how these groups *perceive* life in their area. Therefore, this report focuses on the role of public opinion in the development of place-based policy, especially in regards to social mobility. Notably, this is not quantitative research about outcomes but rather how people's views influence their decision-making and perceptions of their place and themselves. This means that participants may have views which may not correspond to new interventions in each area - for example, new developments or investment in each area - this could be for many reasons, including a lack of awareness or willingness to engage with new interventions.

This provides an important distinction between what people *know and experience* about their area and what is on offer or being developed. This is essential in understanding the disconnect between public policy interventions and the recognisable impact on individuals day to day lives.

