UNDER-REGISTERED GROUPS & INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

A qualitative study exploring the barriers and levers to electoral registration amongst groups that have traditionally been under-registered

Prepared by GfK NOP Social Research:	Amrita Sood, 020 7890 9774, amrita.sood@gfk.com Polly Hollings, 020 7890 9763, polly.hollings@gfk.com Rezina Chowdhury, 020 7890 9837, rezina.chowdhury@gfk.com
FINAL Issue:	June 2012

Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary 5
1.1 Background and objectives 5
1.2 Research Approach 5
1.3 Registration typology: attitudes and mind sets 6
1.4 Existing barriers to registration and impact of IER 10
1.5 Concerns and queries about IER 11
1.6 Communication needs 14
1.7 Compliance 17
1.8 Conclusions and Recommendations 17

2 Research Background 21
2.1 Current Registration 21
2.2 Individual Electoral Registration 22

3 Research objectives 24

4 Research Methodology 25
4.1 Focus groups and mini-groups 26
4.2 Individual depth interviews 26
4.3 Paired depth interviews 26
4.4 Online activity board 27
4.5 Strengths and limitations of qualitative research 27
4.6 The Research Process 27

5 Research Sample 35
5.1 Recruitment 35
5.2 Screeners 36
5.3 Sample demographics 36
5.4 Achieved sample 36

6 Registration typology: attitudes & mind sets 40
6.1 Typology summary 41
6.2 Registration typology: Engaged Unaware 42
6.3 Registration typology: Voters 45
6.4 Registration typology: Apathetic disengaged 47
6.5 Registration typology: Frustrated cynics 50
6.6 Registration typology: Deliberate non-voters 52
6.7 Registration typology: Vulnerable groups 54
6.8 Summary of barriers to registration 56

7 Existing barriers to registration and impact on IER 58
7.1 Lack of resonance 58
7.2 Cynicism 61

7.3 Accessibility 62
7.4 Lack of awareness 63

8 IER concerns and queries 64
8.1 Personal responsibility: queries and concerns 65
8.2 Personal responsibility: information and delivery needs 69
8.3 Security and privacy: queries and concerns 69
8.4 Security and privacy: information and delivery needs 73
8.5 Access to registration: queries and concerns 73
8.6 Access to registration: information and delivery needs 76

9 Communication needs 77
9.1 Universal communication needs: information 78
9.2 Universal communication needs: Persuasion 80
9.3 Registration typology: Engaged unaware: communication needs 82
9.4 Registration typology: Voters: communication needs 84
9.5 Registration typology: Apathetic disengaged: communication needs 84
9.6 Registration typology: Frustrated cynics: communication needs 86
9.7 Registration typology: Deliberate non-voters: communication needs 87
9.8 Registration typology: Vulnerable groups: communication needs 88

10 Compliance 89
10.1 Incentives 90
10.2 Penalties 90

11 Conclusions and Recommendations 92
11.1 Key existing challenges and opportunities 92
11.2 Potential risks of IER 93
11.3 Core universal information needs 95
11.4 Specialist information needs 96

12 Appendices 97
12.1 Group and interview discussion guide 97
12.2 Research sample and locations 108

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An overview of the key research findings

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background and objectives

The current system of registering to vote in Great Britain is based on a system of household registration whereby the 'head of household' completes an annual canvass form thereby registering individuals to vote. The Government is introducing a new voter registration system of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), which will become compulsory from 2014.

Under IER, every elector will have to register individually and provide identifying information which will be used to verify their entitlement to be included in the electoral register. These proposals aim to tackle electoral fraud to restore voters' confidence in the system by improving the accuracy and security of the register, and should also allow the Government to take steps to improve the completeness of the register. They will also, importantly, give individuals ownership and responsibility for their own registration.

Previous research has identified a number of demographic groups who are less likely to be registered to vote. Research has also shown that the introduction of IER has the potential to exacerbate levels of under-registration amongst these groups.[1] The Cabinet Office therefore commissioned GfK NOP Social Research to conduct a study to further explore the barriers to registration amongst these groups (see below for a breakdown of groups). The overall aims of the research were to explore two key questions:

1. What are the barriers to current and IER registration amongst under-registered groups?
2. What are views towards IER, what potential barriers and resistance to registering could IER bring, and what can be done to overcome/lessen these?

1.2 Research Approach

To ensure that we appropriately engaged under registered groups, and gathered detailed insight regarding the barriers and motivations to registration and IER, the research was carried out using an entirely qualitative methodology.

The sample of research participants was designed to include the following sub-groups, who have been identified in previous research as being less likely to be registered to vote:

- Young people (aged 17-24, not students)

[1] Electoral Commission (2010): *The Completeness and Accuracy of Electoral Registers in Great Britain.* March 2010. Electoral Commission, London; Wilks-Heeg (2012): *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom , A Literature Review for the Cabinet Office*. Cabinet Office, London.

- Students (aged 17-24)
- BME groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean, Gypsy Traveller)
- EU nationals (excluding the UK)
- Commonwealth citizens
- People with learning disabilities and low levels of literacy
- People with physical disabilities
- Residents in Homes of Multiple Occupancy (such as student halls, care homes, hostels)

As well as non-registrants, the research also included those who are currently registered to vote. Separate groups and interviews were conducted amongst those registered and non-registered. Participants were assigned to focus groups, mini groups, paired depths or triads and individual depths depending on their voter registration status in addition to the characteristics listed above. A spread of Socio-economic grades (SEG) were included across the groups and interviews.

It is important to note that the research was conducted at a time when the IER policy was in development and there had not been any public awareness campaign of the change to the new IER system. In order to inform the discussions and generate views and debate, show cards were developed and shown to participants, which provided examples of how IER might work [2]. The full set of show cards can be seen within the main research document in 'Research Approach'.

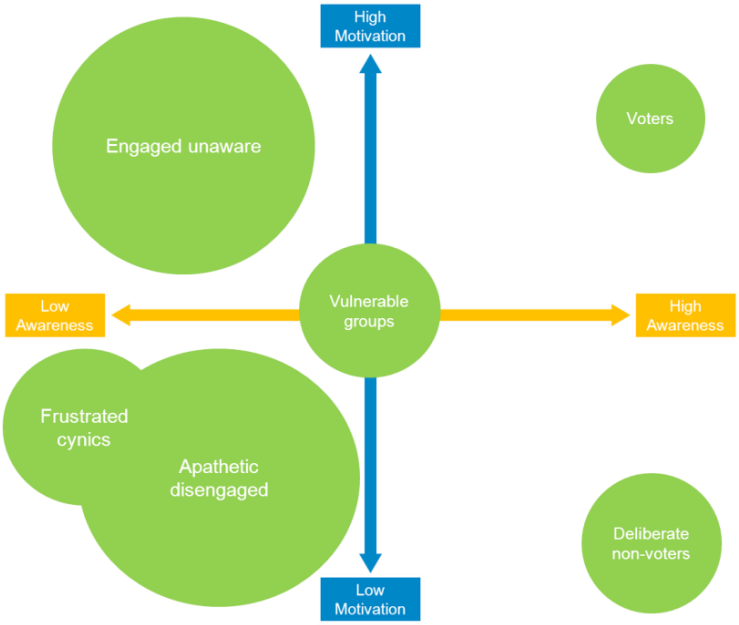
1.3 Registration typology: attitudes and mind sets

During the research it became clear that views towards IER and registering to vote in general were driven by attitudes rather than demographic characteristics. In particular, views towards IER and registration tended to be driven by two key dimensions:

- Motivation to register. It should be noted that across the research participants found it very difficult to distinguish views regarding registering to vote with views towards voting in general. Resultantly, motivation to register is closely linked with motivation to vote.
- Awareness and understanding of the registration process.

Overall, the research identified six 'types':

[2] These examples were developed to test ideas and prompt discussion and will *not* necessarily reflect the final policy/procedures for IER



This typology, describing six 'types' is based around differences in participant mind sets. We have developed these to summarise attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of various groups in the sample. Each type has been assigned a name which broadly describes voting and registration behaviour and should not be seen as a positive or negative reflection of the group it defines.

Based on qualitative findings, the typology is not statistically valid but represents patterns in the qualitative data. Although it would not be appropriate to attach a numerical value, the size of the circle representing each type broadly reflects its incidence in our sample.

Below we have provided an overview of each type including which groups this is most likely to include, their views towards voting and participation, barriers to registration and triggers to registration.

1.3.1 Engaged unaware

The *engaged unaware* typology is young in profile with students, young professionals from the commonwealth and EU most prominent.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people Commonwealth citizens EU Citizens	Value voting Politics is important BUT Lack of knowledge	Lack of understanding Few triggers Unaware of eligibility	Family influence Other benefits

1.3.2 Voters

The *voter* typology includes only a small number of our research participants and tended to be older.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Over-25s	Value voting as a: Hard-won right Duty / obligation Interest in politics	Few barriers Home-movers not re-registering	Family influence Habitual

1.3.3 Apathetic disengaged

The *Apathetic disengaged* typology included a large number of our participants.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people, all ethnicities Not UK-born	Distanced from politics and politicians Lack of understanding Apathy masks frustration and dissonance	Poor understanding Low motivation to learn	Delegate registration Persuasive influencer

1.3.4 Frustrated cynics

The *Frustrated cynics* typology included a small number of our participants.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people UK-born ethnic minorities	Strongly negative views of politics Exclusion and victimhood Poor understanding Disengagement or ideological opposition to voting	Preference to opt-out of participation Low motivation Prefer anonymity	Few triggers

1.3.5 Deliberate non-voters

The *deliberative non-voters* typology included a small number of our participants.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Over 25s Commonwealth citizens EU citizens	Ideological opposition to participation But Voting is an important right or No feeling of connection to UK politics	No need if no intention to vote	Some registered through habit or as an automatic response to receiving forms.

1.3.6 Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable groups are no more or less likely to be aware or motivated than others. However linguistic and cultural disconnection can often determine their exclusion from the electoral roll.

Typology most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
English as a second language Learning difficulties Recent arrivals to the UK	Need assistance with everyday written tasks Language-based barriers Fear engagement with 'official' channels	Reliant on others Fearful of providing information	Supportive family / friends

When looking at these types overall, it is clear to see that some barriers to registration are information and knowledge based whilst others are more entrenched and require a perceptual shift (for example, deliberate non-voters). These barriers are summarised in the table below:

Types	Barrier
Engaged unaware	Knowledge based
Frustrated cynics	Attitudinal and ideological
Apathetic disengaged	Attitudinal and knowledge based
Voters	None
Deliberate non-voters	Entrenched attitudinal and ideological
Vulnerable	Practical

1.4 Existing barriers to registration and impact of IER

Across the typology there were four over-arching barriers to registration:

Lack of resonance: lack of motivation to vote and register to vote was often driven by lack of resonance. Many participants in the research just did not engage with voting or registering to vote, or thought that it was something that other people did. The following concerns were cited:

- Lack of resonance was often based on participants not feeling they knew enough about politics and voting in general. IER could encourage personal ownership of registration which in turn could encourage people to engage in voting and politics. Easy-to-digest information about politics is likely to help people to feel confident in voting and recognise the need to register to vote.
- There was concern that those who currently relied on gatekeepers (e.g. parents) to register may be detached from the process and unlikely to get involved if it was their own responsibility. This suggests a campaign to promote personal responsibility will be needed.
- Current household enquiry forms lack a call to action because they are addressed 'to the occupier' and not a named individual. Many participants noted that they simply did not open this type of post. Personalised letters used for IER are likely to overcome this lack of call to action. For those unsure of their eligibility to vote, a personalised letter is seen as clarifying or giving 'permission' to register to vote in the UK. It is therefore clear that any letter will need to clearly detail rules regarding eligibility.
- A small number of participants who were not born in the UK described a greater interest in the politics of their home country and were not interested in registration or voting in the UK. IER is unlikely to have an impact on these views.

Cynicism: a small number of participants voiced ideological and attitudinal barriers to voting and resultantly made a conscious decision not to vote or register to vote. These tended to be older non-voters. These views are unlikely to change with the introduction of IER. Some participants across the research also described distrust

of government. Often feeling excluded from society, these participants queried government use of personal information and were particularly keen to understand the rationale for collection and use of personal identifiers under the new system of IER.

Accessibility: issues with accessibility tended to fall into two broad groups: language; and confidence in completing a registration form. For those with English as a second language there is a preference for any forms or information to be provided in different languages or include clear routes for how to access help and translation. For those who express anxiety in completing official forms there is a need for easy to read forms and communications that provide clear routes for support and help.

Lack of awareness: most participants were unaware of the need to register to vote or how the registration process works. Targeted campaigns surrounding the introduction of IER are likely to increase this awareness and personally addressed letters are likely to increase understanding of personal ownership and the process.

1.5 Concerns and queries about IER

The principle of IER and an overview of how it is likely to work in practice was explained to participants who were given time to digest the information and consider how they felt about the new registration system. It should be noted that the research was undertaken to inform the development of the policy and delivery plan for IER; the research was designed to enable a broad discussion of ideas for how IER may work. It is recognised that not all of the ideas and processes shown to participants may viable in practice and therefore, the proposals discussed should not be assumed to be confirmed policy.

The over-arching concept for the new system of IER was explained to participants using show cards (see Research Approach). In addition, examples of how a process of matching data held on the existing electoral register to data held by other trusted public authorities (e.g. the Department of Work & Pensions) could be used to simplify the transition to IER and/or to find individuals not currently registered to vote in order to invite them to register.

Participants had a number of comments, queries and concerns regarding the system. These fall broadly into three themes:

Personal responsibility

Many of the comments and queries regarding IER focused on taking personal responsibility for registering to vote. Overall this was considered to be a key benefit of IER with many suggesting that this personal ownership could result in people becoming more engaged in the registration process and voting itself. Initially participants had some concerns that IER would be complex but as the system was explained they commented that it was more straightforward than they had anticipated. However some concerns were highlighted:

- Individual registration: participants currently registered by someone else in the household worried that they simply would not register if it was their own responsibility.
- Personally addressed correspondence: a personally addressed letter was seen as important with participants noting that this would ensure they opened the letter and encourage them to take ownership of registering. Those unsure of their eligibility to register and vote further noted that a personally addressed letter could help clarify this. Whilst personally addressed letters are considered vital there is some concern regarding personal details being sent to old addresses and participants expressed the importance of using up-to-date lists or details for any data-matching exercise.
- Household enquiry form: personal responsibility was considered a key benefit of the introduction of IER but participants felt that sending out a household enquiry form negated this benefit. Specific concerns included: letters addressed 'to the occupier' would not be opened; that if the letter was opened completion would be reliant on the engagement of the individual opening the letter; and those in shared accommodation would not feel comfortable in providing other peoples' details.
- Portability: whilst portability is not a function of IER, and was not tested during the research, a small number of participants across the research spontaneously questioned whether IER would involve portable registration. There was appetite for this amongst students and frequent home movers who felt it would be convenient. These views suggest that without clear information regarding IER and its functions there is potential for misunderstanding around the issue of portability.
- Registering without a National Insurance number: participants were asked to comment on the possible process for registering to vote without a National Insurance number. For most this scenario was not considered relevant as they either knew or envisaged it would be easy to track down their National Insurance number.

Overall it is clear that there is a need for awareness-raising of the registration process and eligibility as well as some kind of campaign to encourage personal ownership. For those who currently require support and help from a gatekeeper to register clear routes for support and help need to be provided to ensure they are supported in registering under IER.

Security and privacy

When reflecting on ways in which the introduction of IER could work, participants raised a number of concerns regarding the security and privacy of their private information/personal identifiers:

- Data-matching: overall participants were comfortable and open to the idea of data-matching as a way to transfer to IER or be individually and personally invited to register but were keen to know how confidentiality and security of information would be guaranteed. A small number of participants had a strong negative reaction to this. Often distrustful and cynical towards the government, these participants showed considerable push-back towards data-matching which they considered to be 'sneaky' and 'intrusive'.
- Trusted data sources: when thinking about which data sources could be used for data-matching participants had a preference for other public and government data sources to be used. These sources were trusted and seen as having a better 'fit' with the purpose of the exercise.
- Providing personal identifiers: participants were comfortable with providing their name, address and date of birth but there was some resistance towards providing their National Insurance number. Whilst some were open to this idea others expressed concern relating their National Insurance number to the potential for identity fraud. Those most resistant to providing their National Insurance number were those already cynical towards the government, or those who were security conscious.

Overall it is clear that reassurances and transparency of data use is required. Reassurances are also needed to explain why National Insurance numbers are needed. Participants wanted to feel in control of their personal data and how it is being used. It seems clear that people are more likely to feel in control of their data and comfortable with data-matching if the process is transparent and provides strong reassurances regarding security and privacy.

Access to registration

When thinking about how they could register to vote under the new system of IER many participants assumed there would be an online option. It is clear that other tailored channels are also required. Preferences are summarised below:

- Automatic registration through data-matching: participants were positive towards this idea and considered it to be a convenient way of transferring to IER. However, receiving a letter to confirm that you had been automatically registered was considered vital.
- Registering during other transactions: participants were asked to give views on the idea of registering to vote during other transactions, for example: registering at the same time as completing a Council Tax form; when registering at the GP; or applying for a driver's license. There was positive reaction towards this idea as it was considered convenient. However, there was strong agreement that the transaction be appropriate, with most suggesting that government transactions would be the best 'fit'.
- Channel preferences: participants expected that there would be some kind of secure electronic channel for registration. Young people were particularly keen to use online channels suggesting that these be accessible via smartphones.

Registration via SMS text message was also suggested by young people. Vulnerable groups with specific needs cited preferences for face-to-face and telephone routes for registration.

- Online links: the research explored appetite for online links to an online registration form. Those online were positive towards this idea. Most suggested links from other government sites would be most appropriate but young people suggested other trusted sites that they used on a frequent basis.

It is clear that online is a desirable channel for young people but there needs to be some reassurances regarding security and links to any online registration should be appropriate and from trusted sites. Tailored channels are required for vulnerable groups.

1.6 Communication needs

The research identified a number of communication needs across the different typology. These needs are typically driven by both attitudinal barriers and knowledge-based barriers as opposed to practical barriers to registration and IER. They are summarised in the table below.

Type	Barrier	Communication needs
Engaged unaware	Knowledge based	Information
Frustrated cynics	Attitudinal and ideological	Information and persuasion
Apathetic disengaged	Attitudinal and knowledge based	Information and persuasion
Voters	None	Information
Deliberate non-voters	Entrenched attitudinal and ideological	Persuasion
Vulnerable	Practical	Support

As seen above, information was a key communication need across most types, and for most participants. The universal information needs required are detailed below

Information	Channels/messages
Publicising the change	National campaign, recognisable brand Clear call to action
Data matching	National campaign Reassuring tone

Persuasion is also important, with people requiring motivational messages to encourage them to register. Communications needs regarding persuasion include:

Persuasion	Channels/messages
Why register?	National campaign Voting as an important right Voting as a hard-won right Voting as an opportunity to be heard Voting as an opportunity to have a stake in politics Voting as a privilege Impact of policies in your local area Registration as a duty / obligation
Data matching	Positive, reassuring, non-threatening tone Myth-busting Not a 'national database' Not 'big brother' Details will not be sold or lost

Above we have outlined the over-arching universal communications needs. The table below details the communication needs as relevant to each type identified in the research.

Type	Information	Persuasion	Channels
Engaged unaware	Why register? • Explain the need to register in order to vote • Clarify eligibility How to register? • Options for ways to register – it's easy	Why register? • Registration as a route to improved credit rating • Registration as a route to 'belonging'	• TV, posters • Online advertising • Facebook • Targeted press and TV channels for commonwealth and EU citizens • Events & stalls

Voters	• Reassurance around data matching • Reassurance that the new system will be easy and straightforward	Why register? • Reasons for the change to the system	• All channels • Less emphasis on online channels than for young people • Leaflets and press
Apathetic disengaged	Politics and voting • Clarity on policies and candidates • Eligibility to vote Registration • The need to register in order to vote • Registration process • New system promotes independence	Why register? • Importance of voting • Importance of registering • Registration as a route to improved credit rating	• TV, posters • Online advertising • Facebook ads • Targeted press and TV channels for non UK-born • Events and stalls
Frustrated cynics	Politics and voting • Relevance of politics to everyday life • Clarity on policies and candidates Registration • The need to register in order to vote • Registration process	Why vote? • Importance of politics to everyday life (local issues and services) • Important to have a stake / have a say • Potential to influence	• TV, posters • Online advertising • Facebook
Deliberate non-voters	• Reassurance around data matching • Reassurance that the new system will be easy and straightforward	Why vote? • Voting as an important right • Importance of participation in the country you live in • Local issues, jobs	• TV, posters • Leaflets and press
Vulnerable groups	Emphasise ease and simplicity • New system will	Promote face to face channels • Reassurance that	• Broad mix • Meet language needs

	be straightforward	face to face channels are available to access support	• Via intermediaries

1.7 Compliance

In order to comply with the new system a balance needs to be struck between 'incentives' and 'penalties'.

Incentives: Overall participants agreed that strong and appealing incentives were likely to be those that involved and engaged communities, for example, via community events that make registration relevant at a local level. Other strong incentives focused on highlighting the ease of registration and encouraging people to want to be 'part of it' by providing statistics for how many people are currently registered. Incentives that were considered weak, and lacked appeal tended to be those with an obvious financial benefit for example, a prize draw or school vouchers for areas with the highest level of registration. Participants felt that a financial benefit did not 'fit' with the importance of registering and voting.

Penalties: Participants felt that penalties such as a financial fine would be acceptable but unlikely to be motivational unless strongly enforced. The issue of illegality was discussed across the research. Whilst some participants felt that it was acceptable for non-registration to be illegal all strongly felt that voting itself should be a choice and many thought that registration should also be an option. There was strong push-back on harsh penalties during a period of transition to IER and participants felt that any penalties should be clearly communicated in advance of implementation.

1.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations are grouped into five key areas:

1. Key existing challenges and opportunities

Opportunities and barriers to registration amongst under-registered groups that are likely to carry forward to the new system of IER include:

- The intertwined nature of registering and voting: the strong perceptual link between registration and voting raises questions about how best to encourage registration. The research suggests that increasing engagement in politics and voting could be one route to encourage registration. Another potential route is promoting the fact that registration gives you the option to vote.
- Lack of awareness of the registration process: this was high across the research and campaigns to address this are likely to impact positively especially amongst the *engaged unaware* type.
- Lack of resonance: highlighting benefits of registration is likely to engage people. This includes societal benefits (having a say, voting as duty/ obligation);

local benefits (shaping local issues and services) and personal benefits (impact on credit rating and a sense of 'belonging').

- Lack of personally addressed correspondence: where personal details are not captured in a data-matching exercise encouraging ownership of a household enquiry form is likely to be difficult. This could be tackled to some extent by a campaign to pre-warn and encourage ownership and offering other routes and opportunities for registration will be essential.
- Engaging those most cynical: for those most cynical, awareness-raising and motivational messages are likely to have limited impact on current views and behaviours. For a core number of this group a perceptual shift over time is needed to change attitudes.

2. Potential risks of IER

There are a number of potential risks which should be mitigated to ensure comfort and engagement in IER. Please note that these risks are based on the potential processes shown to participants in the research.

- Loss of gatekeeper: the loss of a proactive influencer or gatekeeper who takes responsibility for or encourages registration could be mitigated to some extent by a campaign to encourage personal ownership.
- Providing your National Insurance number: The idea of providing your National Insurance number was met with some apprehension and unease amongst some participants. Clear reassurances regarding how the number will be used, security processes, and why it is required will increase comfort levels with this.
- Concerns regarding data-matching for automatic registration and identification of people to invite to register: whilst most are comfortable with this idea there is some push back which is likely to be alleviated by clear explanation of how the process will work and how security will be guaranteed.
- Lack of awareness of IER: as expected, awareness of IER is low and a high profile campaign will be needed.

3. Access to registration

Secure online registration is expected and desired, especially by young people who also seek access to registration via mobile phone technology. Participants are open to the idea of links to online registration from trusted websites. More traditional routes to registration are desired by those without internet access and those with heightened online security concerns. Tailored engagement is required for those with support needs. There is clear appetite for registration alongside other transactions with strong preference for these to be alongside other government transactions, transparent and secure.

4. Core universal information needs

Universal information needs are driven by existing barriers to registration as well as concerns relating to IER but are all potential routes for increasing engagement in registration. These include:

- Increasing awareness of the registration process.
- Encouraging engagement in voting (and therefore registration) by providing general information about voting and politics.
- Pre-warning people about the change to IER so they know what to expect and are comfortable with registering.
- Communicating and emphasising that the new system will enable personal ownership and encourage this.
- Providing reassurances regarding: ease of registration; channels for registration available; security and data protection; how any data-matching exercise will work and be secure; how any personal identifiers will be used and kept secure.
- Highlighting the rationale for registration and associated benefits including: ease of registration; having your say; having a say on local issues; voting/ registration as a duty or right; being part of it; improved credit rating.

5. Specialist information needs

Vulnerable groups with support needs will require a tailored approach to registration. These groups need clear routes for accessing support including the provision of information in different languages. Relevant intermediaries such as community leaders, existing community networks and more formal sources such as community centres should be involved and equipped to support vulnerable groups in registration.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

An overview of the research background. This section also details the research objectives, research approach and methodology, and the sample.

2 Research Background

2.1 Current Registration

The number of eligible electors registered to vote in Great Britain has fallen from a high of 91-92% registered in 2000, to 85-87% registered as of 2011.[3] Whilst this compares well with other countries, the completeness of the register could be improved.

The decrease in the number of people registered to vote is coupled with a minority of people who believe they are registered to vote when in fact they are not. In a recent survey[4], 95% of people believed their name to be on the electoral register, with 93% saying they were registered at their current address. However, previous research carried out by the Electoral Commission has shown that self-reporting can over-estimate the numbers of people actually registered. From previous Electoral Commission research, the Cabinet Office has identified a number of demographic groups who are less likely to be registered to vote.[5] These are:

- Students
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups
- Young people
- Recent home movers
- People living in the private rented sector and/or shared households

There are clear overlaps between these groups; in particular people living in London are more likely to be living in rented accommodation and from a BME group.

Young people are the most likely to be absent from the register. Registration rates among BME groups vary enormously. Estimated rates of under-registration from the Ethnic Minority British Election Survey ranged from 16% for Pakistani communities, 17% for Indian, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean communities, and 28% for Black Africans[6]. This research also found that across all BME groups more people incorrectly thought that they were registered than were.

Further research has also found that the methods used to undertake the canvass can have a significant impact on response rate and therefore on completeness and

---

[3] Electoral Commission (2011)
[4] Electoral Commission (2012)
[5] Electoral Commission (2010): *The Completeness and Accuracy of Electoral Registers in Great Britain.* March 2010. Electoral Commission, London.
[6] Fisher, S., Heath, A., Rosenblatt, G., Sanders, D. and Sobolewska, M. (2011): *Ethnic Minority British Election Study: Electoral Registration and turnout data*. October 2011. http://www.runnymedetrust.org/news/368/272/New-data-on-BME-voting-patterns

accuracy[7]. The register also tends to decline in completeness and accuracy post-canvass, primarily due to house moves[8].

Factors external to electoral registration can also impact on registration rates for example wider policy changes or legislation. There is overwhelming evidence[9] to suggest that groups in which under-registration is most prevalent are also those in which levels of participation in all forms of civic and political activity are lowest, which can present a challenge for many organisations, including the Government.

The current system of registering to vote in Great Britain is based on a Victorian system of household registration whereby the 'head of household' completes an annual canvass form thereby registering individuals to vote. Previous research[10] has further found that the public perceives that the current system of voter registration is susceptible to fraud as individuals are not responsible for their own registration.

2.2 Individual Electoral Registration

The Government is introducing a new voter registration system of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Every elector will have to register individually and provide identifying information which will be used to verify their entitlement to be included in the electoral register. Only once their application has been verified can a person be added to the register. In June 2011 the Government published a White Paper setting out its plans to bring forward the introduction of IER and make it compulsory from 2014. These proposals aim to tackle electoral fraud to restore voters' confidence in the system by improving the accuracy and security of the register, and they will also allow the Government to take steps to improve the completeness of the register.

The Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 replaced 'household registration' with 'individual registration' in Northern Ireland. Lessons can therefore be learnt from Northern Ireland which saw a ten per cent fall in its register following the introduction of IER. It should be noted though that the Electoral Commission took the view that it was "*impossible to tell what part of the change was due to an actual increase in non-registration following the new system, and what part was due to the elimination of various sources of 'inflation' in the electoral register under the old*

[7] Wilks-Heeg,S (2012): *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom: A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme.* Cabinet Office, London.
[8] Electoral Commission (2010): *The Completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*. March 2010. Electoral Commission: London
[9] Wilks-Heeg,S (2012): *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom: A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme.* Cabinet Office, London.
[10] Electoral Commission (2010): *The Electoral Commission Public Opinion Winter Research 2010 Top line Results*, 20 December 2010. Electoral Commission: London

system of household registration"[11]. Registration has since stabilised and various initiatives have taken place to try and improve registration – such as outreach work in schools to register attainers - but the evidence suggests that IER risks exacerbating levels of non-registration among already under-registered groups.

In particular the groups identified as being at risk of being under-represented on the electoral register in Northern Ireland as a result of IER are:

- Young people and students
- People resident in areas with higher levels of social deprivation
- BME groups
- EU nationals
- People with learning and/or physical disabilities
- Residents in communal establishments such as student halls or care homes

As part of the move to IER, the Government wants to take steps to improve the completeness of the register. It is therefore currently trialling data matching pilots to test how far comparing electoral registers against other public databases will allow eligible people missing from the register to be identified and invited to register. But it would also like to make it easier, more convenient and more efficient for people to register to vote both to help improve registration rates and also to make the system more user-friendly and consistent with how people choose to engage with public services today. This will include supporting the roll out of online channels for registration and exploring scope for integrating electoral registration into other services.

The move to IER will also require people to provide personal identifiers when registering. Previous qualitative research into providing personal identifiers in order to register to vote[12] found that views of the new system of registration were generally positive with a belief that the benefits of the new system (enhanced security in particular) would outweigh any inconvenience. Most participants were happy with the idea of submitting personal identifiers and were able to provide them during form testing.

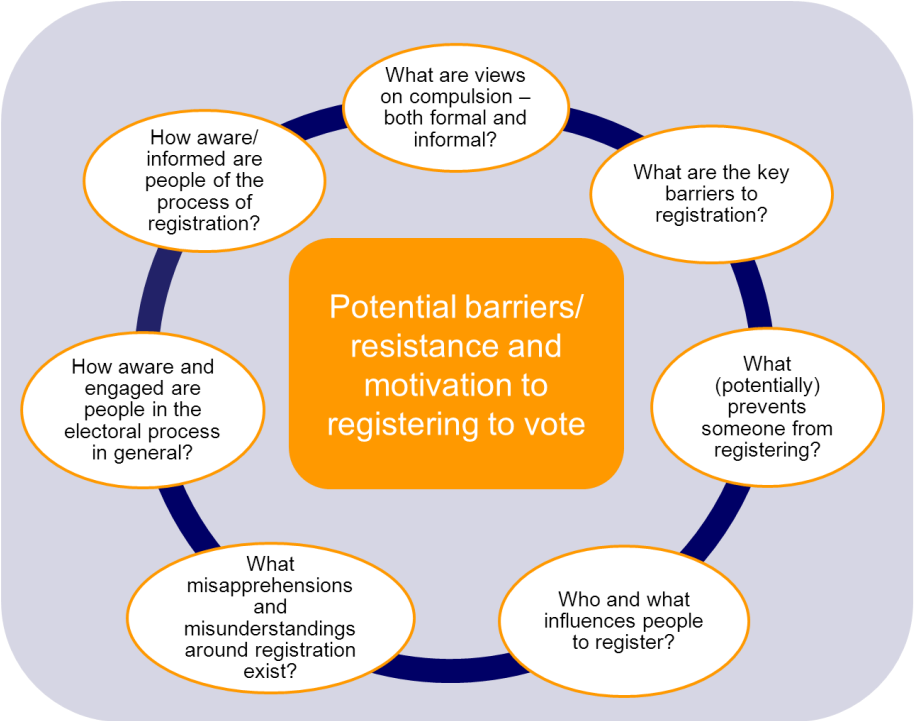
[11] PWC/Electoral Commission, 2003, p.62

[12] Ipsos MORI/Electoral Commission (2010): *Research into the collection of personal identifiers. Qualitative research study conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Electoral Commission*. Electoral Commission: London

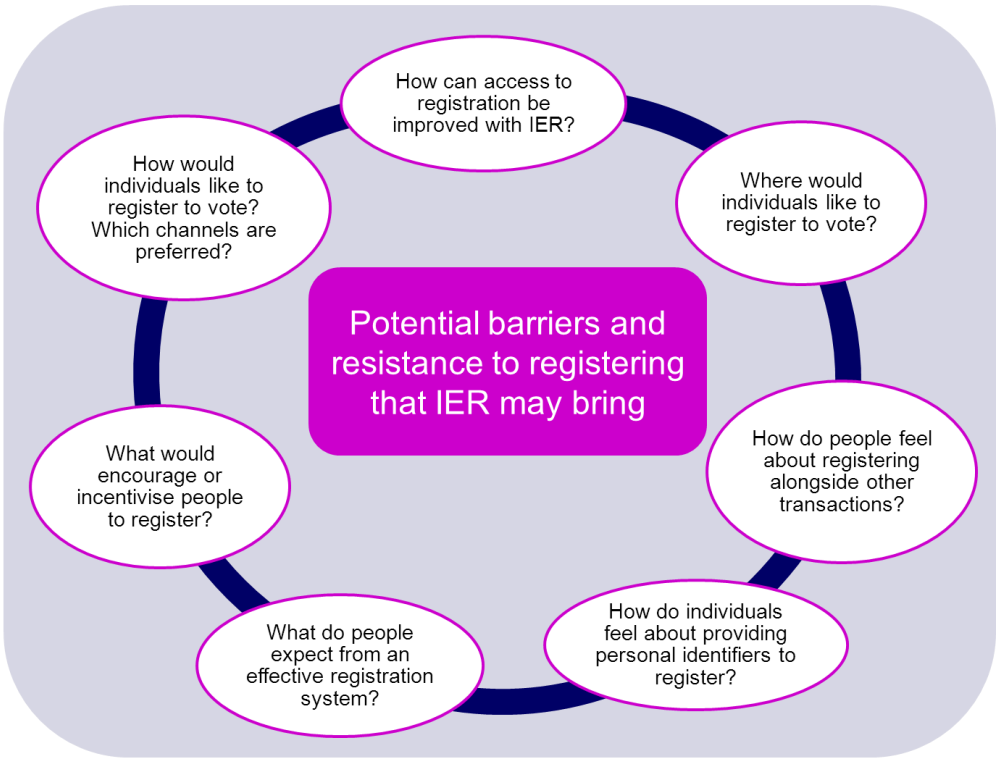
3 Research objectives

The existing research evidence clearly identifies the people currently missing from the register and those at risk of 'falling off the register' under IER. The aim of this new research was to explore further the reasons for registration amongst these groups and to identify possible means of improving registration. Based on learnings from Northern Ireland, it is assumed that some of the same groups are likely to be under-registered under IER as under the current household system. Furthermore, IER will be a new system to everyone and therefore it was particularly important to explore this new system with under-registered groups and identify any additional or new barriers or resistance that IER could bring and identify ways in which these may be overcome.

There were two key overall research questions explored in this research. Firstly, **what are the barriers to current and IER registration** amongst under-registered groups? The specific objectives in relation to this question are shown in the diagram below.



The second research question addressed in the research was **to explore views of IER and any potential barriers and resistance to registering that this may bring**. The specific objectives explored in relation to the question are detailed below:



4 Research Methodology

To ensure that we appropriately engaged under registered groups, and gathered detailed insight regarding the barriers and motivations to registration and IER, the research was carried out using an entirely qualitative methodology.

To fully explore current attitudes and identify the potential effects of the changes for the various diverse audiences, it was important to understand more broadly the context for how people relate to registration. A qualitative approach enabled the research to explore this context in terms of living environment, ability to engage with institutions using various channels, the network of relevant influencers on this topic, and the practical or circumstantial barriers that may exist.

Engaging the diverse range of under-registered groups in the research required a mixed methodological approach:

Similar question areas were covered using each method[13]. The mixed method approach was designed to maximize participants' comfort in the research process, and to encourage participants to contribute fully without feeling inhibited by the format of the discussion.

4.1 Focus groups and mini-groups

Focus groups provided an interactive forum where participants were able to share their views and experiences in their own words. They created a comfortable setting for people to really consider, question and debate their views towards registration and IER. The style of the focus group was amended to suit each audience. Full focus groups were carried out with young people, each lasting 2 hours and including up to 8 participants. Mini-groups were carried out with BME participants, each lasting 1.5 hours and including up to 6 participants.

4.2 Individual depth interviews

Individual depth interviews provided a private, one to one engagement with participants, where they could open up about issues that are important to them and discuss ideas they may have been more reticent to talk about in a group setting. The individual depth interview approach enabled the researcher to understand an individual's experiences without their views being affected by other participants as in a group setting. Each individual depth interview lasted 60 minutes.

4.3 Paired depth interviews

Paired depth interviews were carried out with friendship pairs. These offered a more comfortable setting for those who are not confident discussing freely with strangers. Friendship pairs were recruited via one of the pair, who then nominated a

[13] Full discussion guides are provided in the Appendix.

friend who also met the relevant sampling criteria. Each paired depth interview lasted 60-90 minutes.

4.4 Online activity board

An online activity board was carried out as a follow-up element to the research amongst young people. All young people involved in a focus group, mini-group, paired or individual depth interview were invited to participate and around 40 young people took part. The online activity board provided opportunity to further explore the findings from the face-to-face stage of the research. Young people were asked to log-in to a secure site a couple of times a day over the course of three days.

4.5 Strengths and limitations of qualitative research

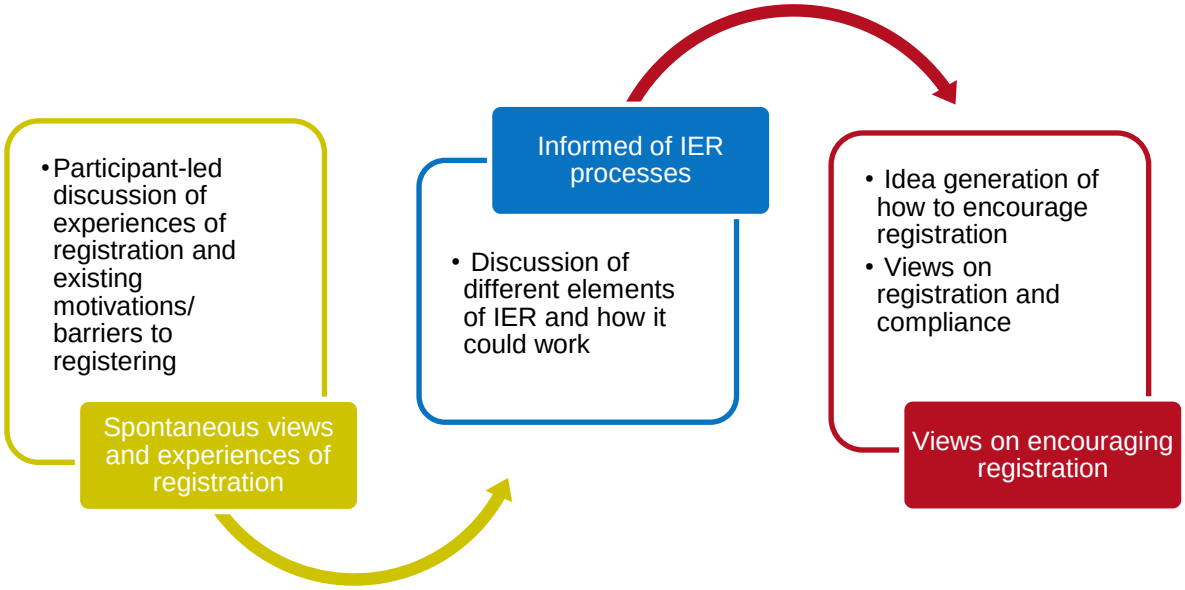
Using a qualitative methodology to explore peoples' attitudes towards voting registration and the new system of IER allowed researchers to gather rich insights regarding the barriers and potential motivations of registration. This qualitative approach created a discursive and enabling forum where people could describe, discuss and debate their attitudes and feelings towards voter registration and IER.

The main strength of this approach was that it allowed participants to give their in an open and spontaneous way. While the groups, paired depth interviews and individual depth interviews followed a clear structure, participants were not required to limit themselves to multiple choice answers, and responses were therefore full, rich and nuanced.

However, there are limitations to the approach used. Qualitative research emphasises self-expression and insight over numerical outcomes and therefore relies on detailed discussion with a relatively small sample; although the research was carried out with a range of people this sample cannot be considered representative of the general public. The findings reported in this document focus on how participants feel about registration and IER.

4.6 The Research Process

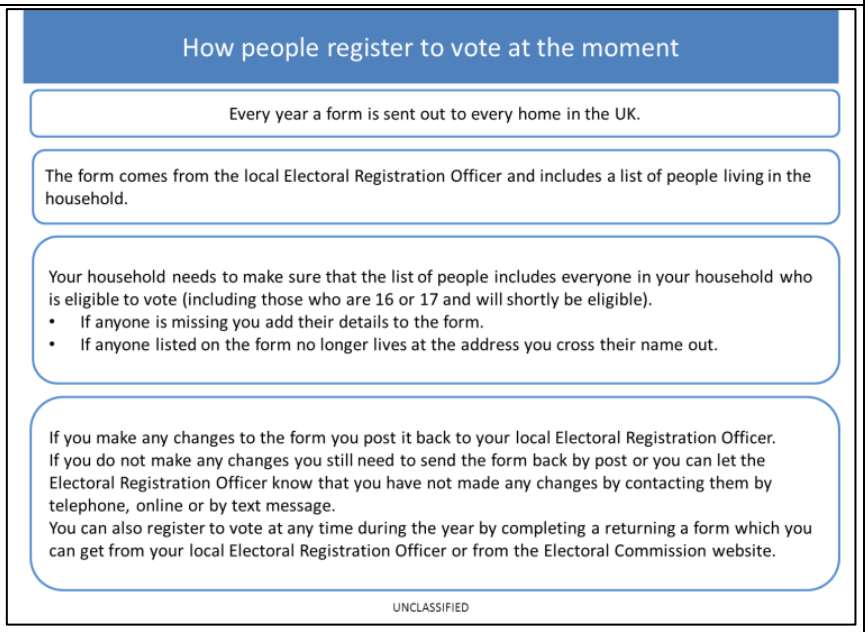
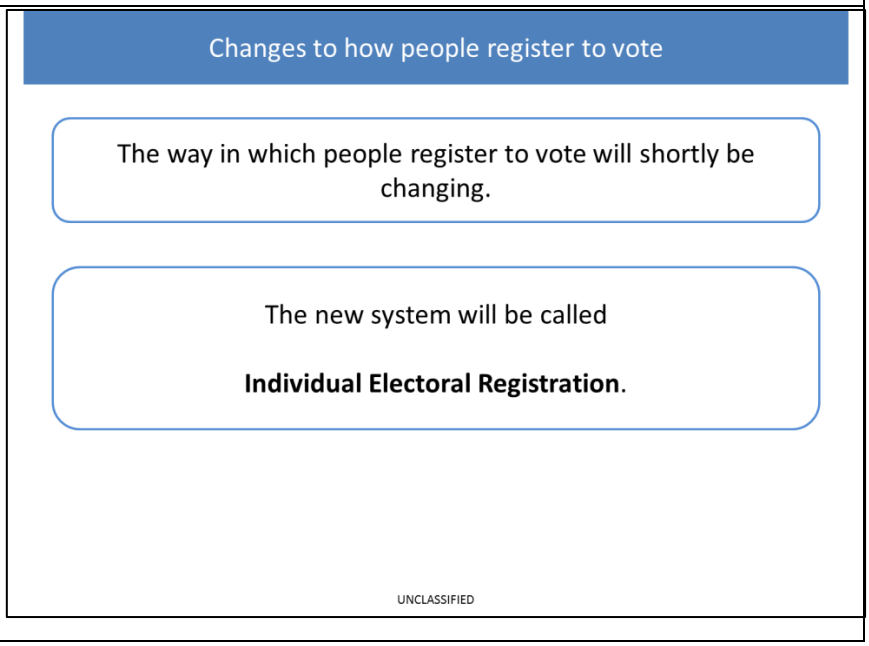
The aim of the research was to explore barriers to registration, how these could be overcome, and specifically to understand the possible impact of changing to a system of IER. To ensure the research captured detailed views of barriers, levers and IER, the research sessions followed the structure detailed below:

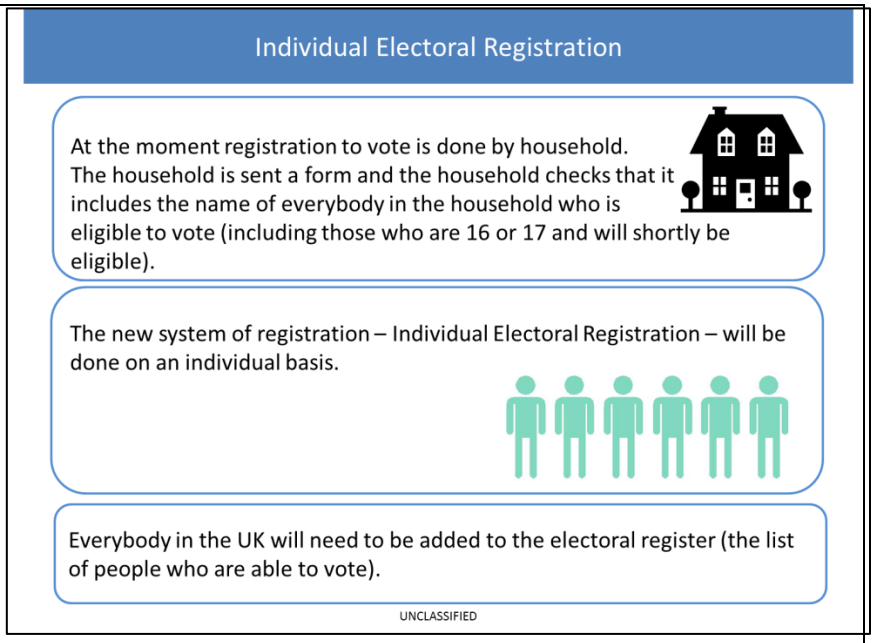
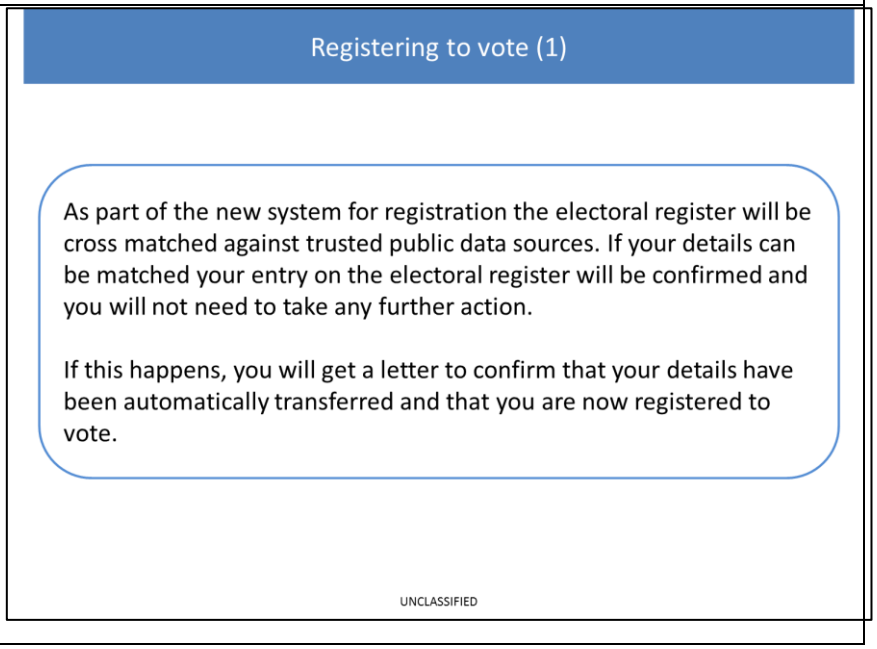


The research was conducted at a time when the IER policy was in development and therefore there had not been any public awareness campaign of the change to the new IER system. With this in mind, a key focus for the research was the second phase shown in the diagram above: informing participants of how IER could work in practice and gathering views towards this. To ensure participants fully understood the different aspects and processes relating to IER, moderators used show cards. These show cards were designed to give participants a broad understanding of how IER could work. The content does not reflect detailed policy but aims to test general ideas for IER processes. Once shown a show card participants were given time to reflect on the content and then asked to evaluate and comment on the information and think about how it would affect their behaviours and attitudes.

The show cards used in the research are shown in the table below.

Please note that the examples shown in the cards below, including any reference to organisations and departments were designed for research purposes only. These show cards do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension.

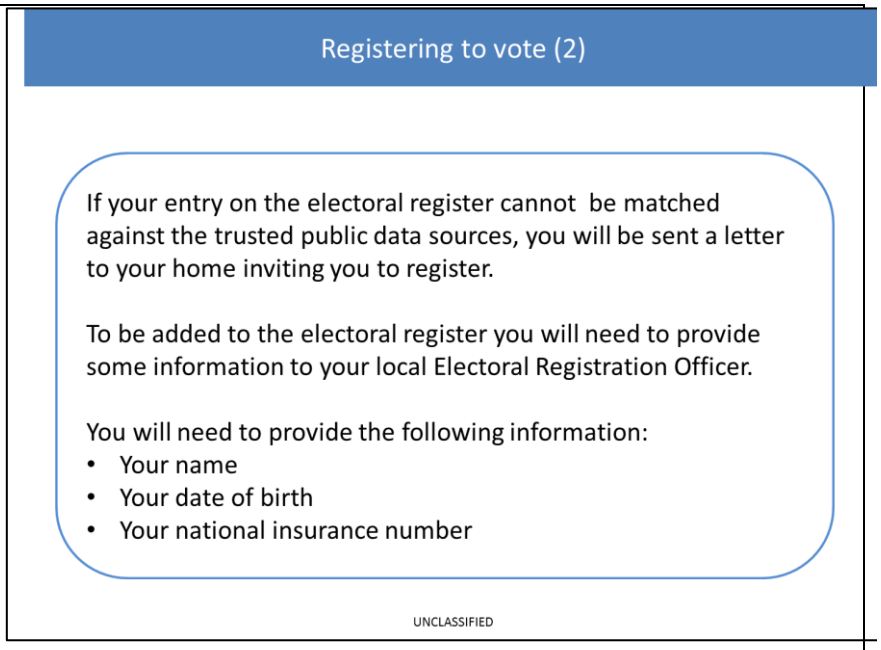
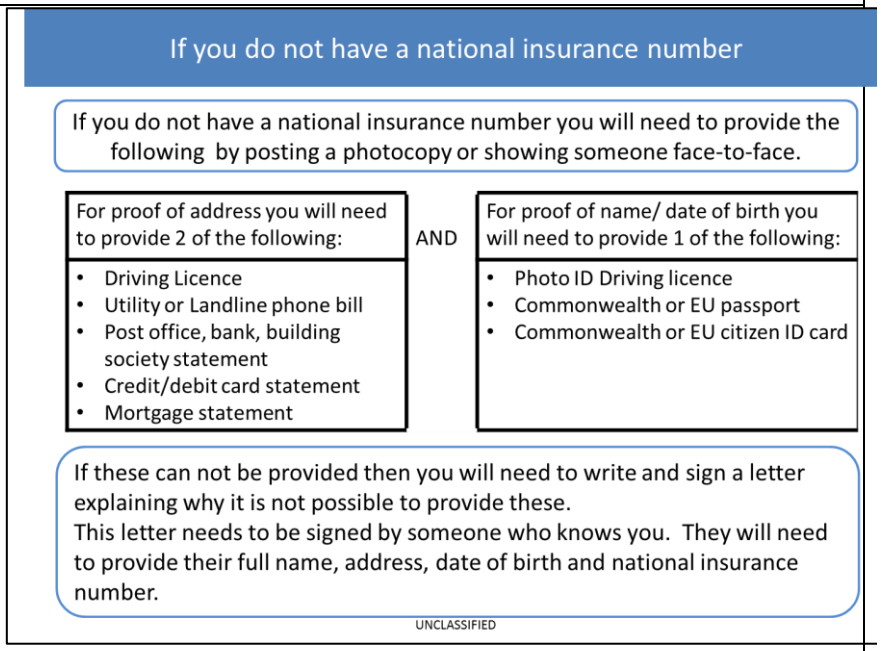
Show card number	Content	Show card
1	Clarification of the current system for registration.	
2	Introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).*	

3	Clarification that IER will move from a current household system to a new individual system.*	
4	Explanation of how data-matching with trusted public data sources could be used to automatically transfer those already on the Electoral Register without any need for action by the citizen.*	

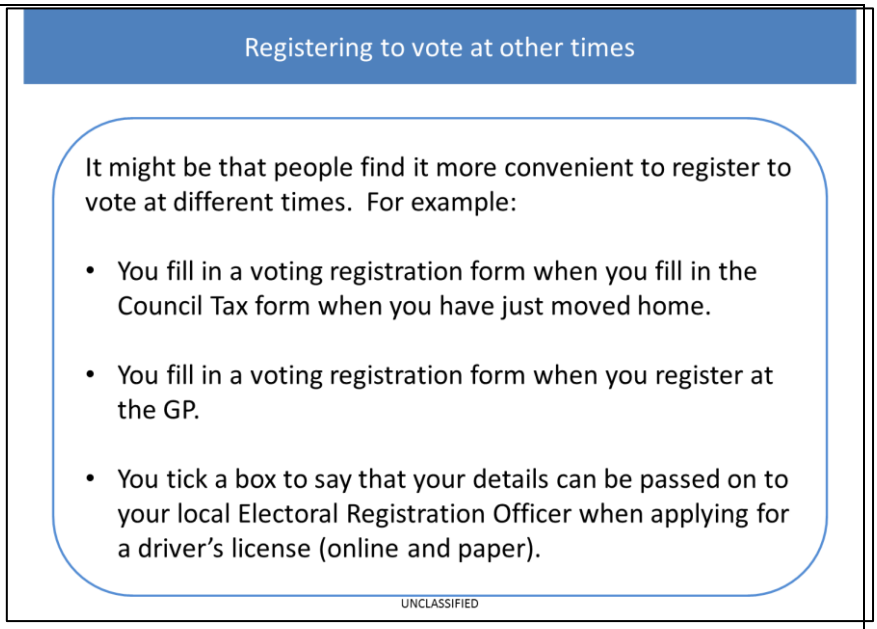
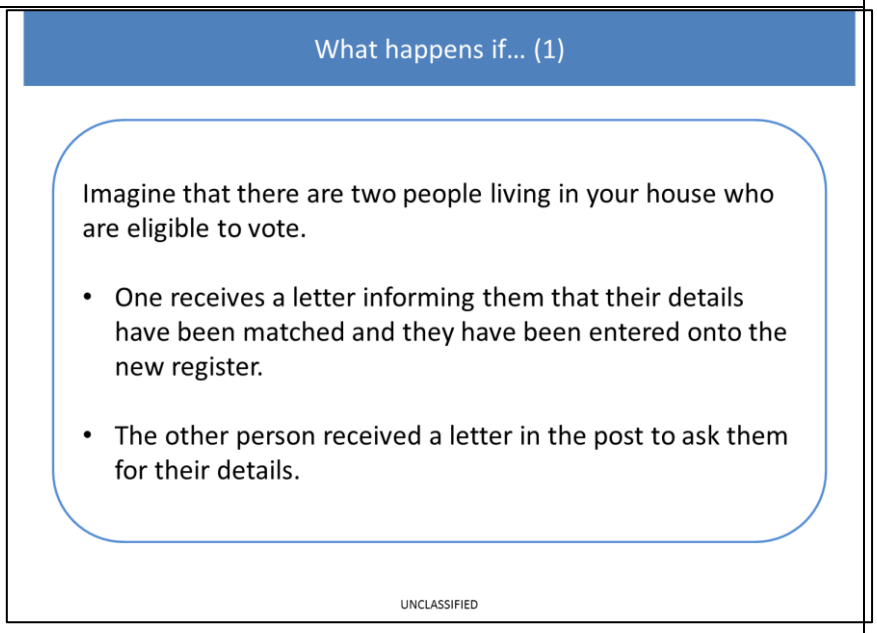
* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

5	Examples of how data-matching could automatically transfer those already on the Electoral Register.*	**Confirming existing records examples (1)** Sarah receives Child Benefit and so her details are held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). She has also been registered to vote at her address since she moved there 3 years ago. When Individual Electoral Registration comes in the electoral register is checked against data from the DWP. Because Sarah's details (name and address) on the electoral register match those in the DWP data Sarah is automatically put on the electoral register. She receives a letter in the post to let her know that this has happened. Eric registered to vote at the last annual canvass and so his local Electoral Registration Officer already had his details (name and address). When the new system for registering to vote (Individual Electoral Registration) comes in his details are checked against data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP also have Eric's details because he pays taxes through his employer. Because the details held by the Electoral Registration Officer and the DWP are the same Eric is automatically put on the electoral register. He receives a letter in the post to let him know that this has happened. UNCLASSIFIED
6	Examples of how data-matching could identify people not currently on the register and prompt a letter inviting these people to register to vote to be sent.*	**Confirming existing records examples (2)** Emma is not currently registered to vote. She has recently applied to the Student Loans Company for a loan and so they have a record of her details. As part of the new system of Individual Electoral Registration, the electoral register is checked against data from the Student Loans Company. The Electoral Registration Officer sees that Emma lives in the area but is not yet registered to vote and uses the details from the Student Loan Company (name and address) to write out to her and to invite her to register to vote. Tom is not currently registered to vote. As part of the new system of Individual Electoral Registration, the electoral register is checked against data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Tom's details are in the DWP data because he gets housing benefit. The Electoral Registration Officer identifies that Tom might be eligible to register to vote and so uses the details from the DWP data (name and address) to write out to Tom and to invite him to register to vote. UNCLASSIFIED

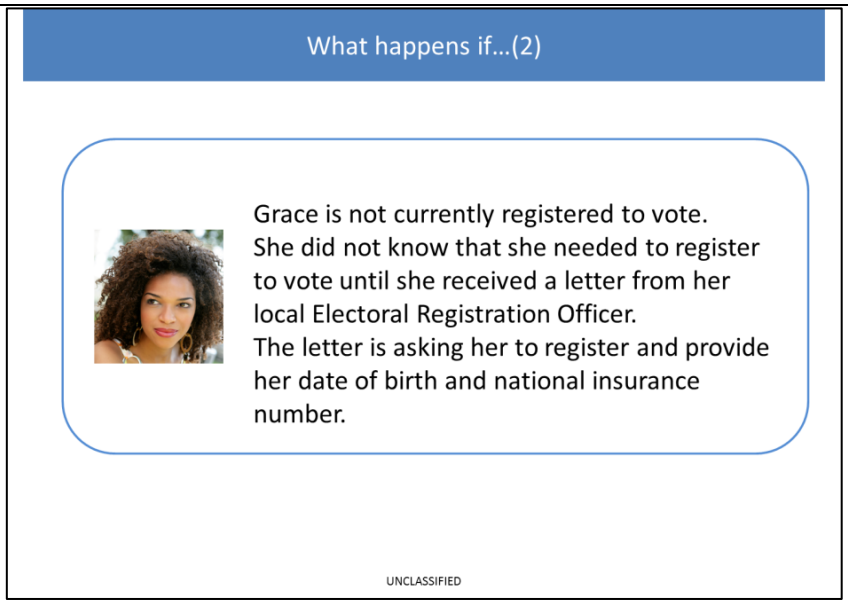
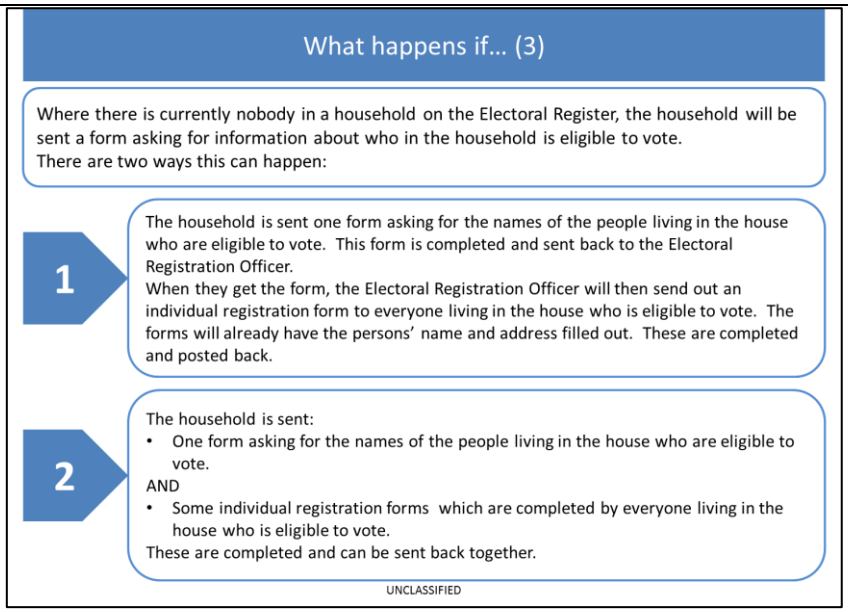
* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

7	Clarification of the personal identifiers that individuals would need to provide to register under IER (if not automatically transferred via a data-matching process).*	
8	The potential process for those who are unable to provide a National Insurance number when registering to vote.*	

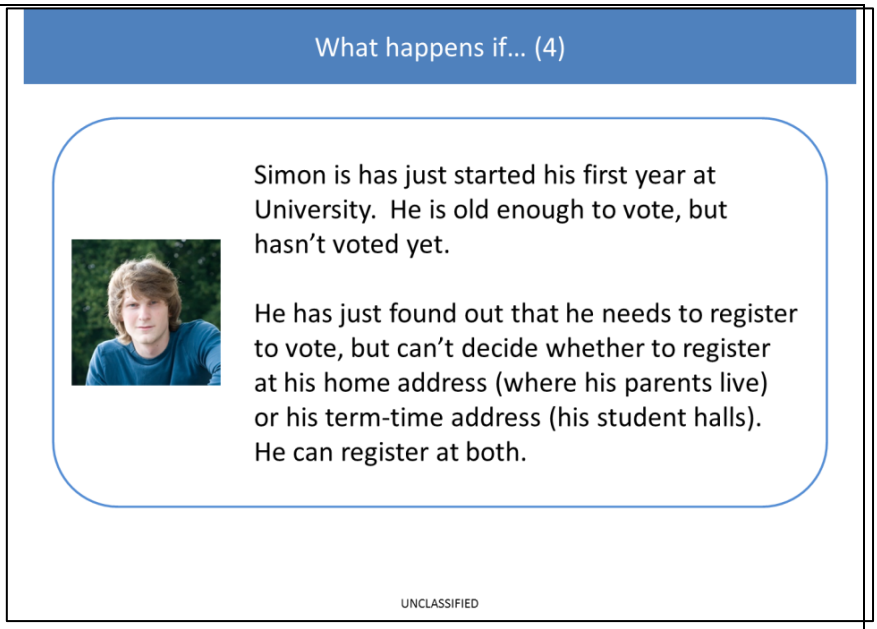
* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

9	Introducing the idea of registering to vote during other transactions.*	
10	A scenario to explore views towards the potential situation where one member of a household is automatically registered via a data-matching exercise and another member is not (and receives a letter inviting them to register).*	

* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

11	A scenario to explore how people feel about providing personal identifiers (name, date of birth and National Insurance number).*	
12	Explanation of how a household enquiry form would be used for households not on the Electoral Register. This includes two potential scenarios for completion of this form and subsequent completion of individual registration forms.*	

* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

13	A scenario to explain that students can register at their home and term-time address.*	

* These show cards were designed for research purposes only and do not necessarily reflect how any policy will work in practice, but were used during the research to generate discussion and ensure participant comprehension

5 Research Sample

As described in the methodology section above, a mixed mode approach was applied to ensure that we appropriately engaged with under-registered groups. Overall, 11 focus groups, 15 mini groups, 11 paired depths and triads and 26 individual depths were conducted. The research took place across England (including the North East, North West, Midlands, South East and South West), Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland between the 14th and 30th March 2012.

5.1 Recruitment

A number of the target groups for this research can be more difficult to engage in research, and for this reason a range of recruitment approaches were used. Participants were recruited in each of the locations using a 'free-find' recruitment method, which involved networking, street recruitment and 'snowballing'. In addition, we made use of specialist agencies with experience of similar recruitment. Two qualitative recruitment agencies with individual expertise in recruitment of hard to reach participants, young people and BMEs, were used to recruit for their allocated sample.

5.2 Screeners

Participants' eligibility to take part was established by the use of a recruitment screening questionnaire, administered by the recruiter to each individual participant. The screening questionnaire included a verification of voting registration status, demographic characteristics and living circumstances. During recruitment those who may have a heightened awareness of voting registration or political engagement, such as journalists and those working in local or national government, were excluded from the research.

5.3 Sample demographics

The sample was designed to include the following sub-groups, who were identified as being less likely to be registered to vote as outlined in the research background section of this report:

- Young people (aged 17-24, not students)
- Students (aged 17-24)
- BME groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean, Gypsy Travellers)
- EU nationals (excluding the UK)
- Commonwealth citizens
- People with learning disabilities and low levels of literacy
- People with physical disabilities
- Residents in Home of Multiple Occupancy (such as student halls, care homes, hostels)

As well as non-registrants, the research also included those who are currently registered to vote. Separate groups and depths were held with those who were registered and non-registered. Participants were assigned to focus groups, mini groups, paired depths or triads and individual depths depending on their voter registration status in addition to the characteristics listed above. A spread of socio-economic groups was included across the research.

5.4 Achieved sample

The table below shows the breakdown of the focus groups, mini groups, paired depth interviews or triads and individual depth interviews achieved.

Method and units	Non-registered	Registered	Sub groups covered
11 x Focus groups (mainly single sex) GB	2 x Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, females) 2 x Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, males) 1 x Students not living in halls (aged 17-24, males) 2 x Young BMEs (aged 17-24, females) 1 x Young BMEs (aged 17-24, males)	1 x Young people (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, males) 1 x Young people (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, females) 1 x Young BMEs (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, females)	• Physical disabilities • Communal establishments/ HMOs • Home movers • Spread of SEG BC1C2DE
15 x Mini groups (single sex or mixed) GB	1 x South Asian (Indian, aged 25 and over, mixed gender) 1 x South Asian (Pakistani, aged 25 and over, males) 1 x South Asian (Bangladeshi, aged 25 and over, females) 1 x Black African (males) 1 x Black African (aged 25 and over, females) 1x Black Caribbean (aged 25 and over, mixed gender) 2 x Young BMEs (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, males) 1 x Students living in halls (aged 17-24, mixed gender) 1 x Students not living in halls (aged 17-24, mixed gender) 1 x Gypsy Traveller 1 x Commonwealth nationals aged 25-44 (mixed gender)	1 x South Asian (mixed gender) 1 x Black African (aged 25 and over, males) 1 x Black Caribbean (females)[a]	• Good spread of age • Physical disabilities • Communal establishments/ HMOs • Home movers • Spread of SEG BC1C2DE • English as a second language
11 x Paired depths and	1 x Young people (aged 17-24, non–students)	1 x Black African (males) 1 x Black African	• Good spread of age

Triads (all single sex) GB	2 x Black African (females) 1 x Black African (males) 1 x EU nationals (females) 1 x Young BMEs (aged 17-24, non-students, males)	(females) 1 x EU nationals (females) 1 x Black Caribbean (males) 1 x Black Caribbean (females)	• Communal establishments/ HMOs • Home movers • Spread of SEG BC1C2DE
20 x In depth interviews in GB	6 x EU nationals 5 x Physical disability 3 x learning difficulty/low literacy	4 x Physically disabled 2 x Young people (aged 17-24, non-students)	• Good spread of age and gender • Communal establishments/ HMOs • Home movers • Spread of SEG BC1C2DE
6 x In depth interviews in N. Ireland	1 x Young people (aged 17-24) 1x Resident in area of high levels of deprivation 1x Living in Communal establishment	1x Young people (aged 17-24) 1x Resident in area of high levels of deprivation 1x Living in Communal establishment	• Good spread of age and gender

[a] Due to the hard to reach nature of participants, this mini group was under-attended. It has been supplemented by an additional paired depth interview.

[b] Some groups and interviews were separated by gender, this was to help ensure that all participants would feel comfortable with the research process and be open and frank in their views.

Throughout the research report we have included case study stories from participants included in the research. These provide real life examples of peoples' views and attitudes. To ensure participant confidentiality, each case study story has been given a pseudonym.

FINDINGS

Detailed discussion of the findings.

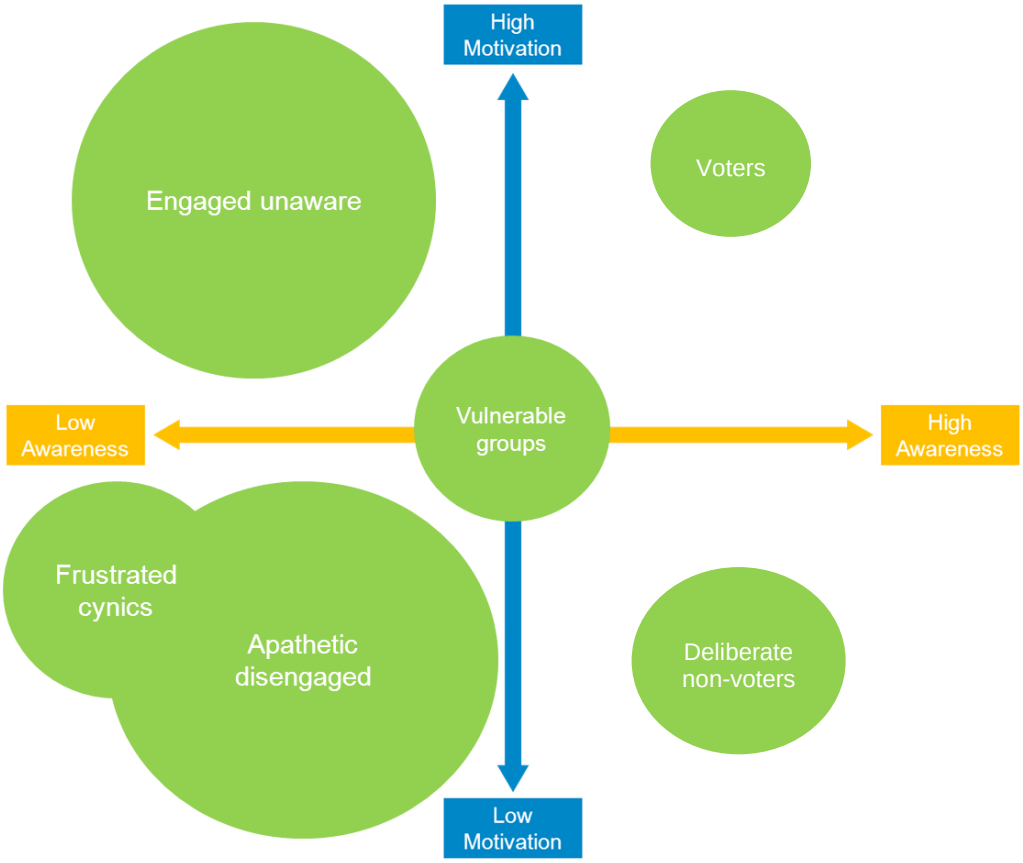
6 Registration typology: attitudes & mind sets

As detailed in the sample structure above, the research took place with specific demographic groups who have previously been identified as under-registered. This provided opportunity to explore reactions towards IER across these different groups, and ensured we included a good spread of individuals in the research.

During the research it became clear that views towards IER and registering to vote in general were driven by attitudes rather than demographic characteristics. In particular, views towards IER and registration tended to be driven by two key dimensions:

1. Motivation to register. It should be noted that across the research participants found it very difficult to distinguish views regarding registering to vote with views towards voting in general. Resultantly, motivation to register is closely linked with motivation to vote.
2. Awareness and understanding of the registration process.

Overall, the research identified six typology:



These six typology are based on participant mind sets. We have developed these to summarise attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of various groups in the sample. Each type has been assigned a name which broadly describes voting and registration behaviour and should not be seen as a positive or negative reflection of the group it defines.

Based on qualitative findings, typology are not statistically valid but represent patterns in the qualitative data. Although it would not be appropriate to attach a numerical value, the size of the circle representing each type broadly reflects its incidence in our sample.

Whilst the typology do not necessarily 'map' directly to demographic groups, there are some patterns which are discussed later within this chapter. It should also be stressed that the typology are not based on whether participants were registered or unregistered, although a couple of the typology are more likely to be registered than others. It was clear during the research that being registered did not mean that you were engaged in the process or aware of how it could work. For example, a number of young people knew they were registered because their parents had done this for them; as a result they lacked information regarding how registration worked and some were also disengaged from politics; although they had been registered by a parent they were not interested in voting.

6.1 Typology summary

From the diagram above it is evident that *voters* are people with relatively high awareness of voter registration and are also motivated to use their vote.

Those who are motivated to vote but lack awareness of the voter registration system can be defined as *engaged unaware*.

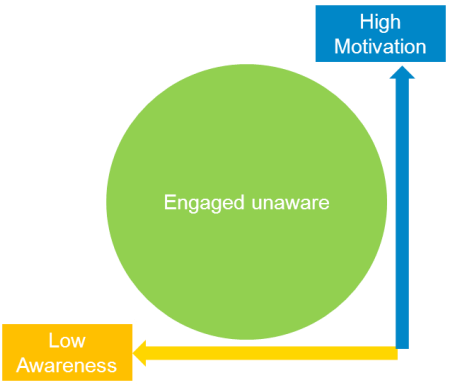
Those on the other end of the motivation axis include *deliberate non-voters, apathetic disengaged* and *frustrated cynics*. While they have varying degrees of awareness of voter registration, they all lack the motivation to vote.

Located in the centre of the awareness and motivation axes are the *vulnerable groups* which include those with language difficulties. This group are characterised by their specific needs, rather than by motivation or awareness, and so have not been placed on the axes.

This registration typology helps to predict attitudes to registration, voting and participation more generally, as well as triggers and barriers to registration, attitudes to IER, and communications needs in relation to IER. Each of these types have different barrier and triggers to registration and these are discussed in detail below.

6.2 Registration typology: Engaged Unaware

The *engaged unaware* type is young in profile with students, young professionals from the commonwealth and EU most prominent.



Across the sample, a large number of participants fell in to this type. This type is characterised by people who have low awareness of registering to vote but express interest and engagement in registering and voting itself.
The table below summarises the key attributes of this type which are then discussed.

Type most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people Commonwealth citizens EU Citizens	Value voting Politics is important BUT Lack of knowledge	Lack of understanding Few triggers Unaware of eligibility	Family influence Other benefits

6.2.1 Voting and participation

These participants felt that voting was important to them and they placed a strong value on it. This type saw voting in elections as an opportunity to be heard. Some people within this type were unaware of their eligibility to vote and this was felt particularly amongst commonwealth citizens who also explained rather different experiences of voting in their country of birth.

Case Study:
Alex talked about a public holiday on polling day in South Africa so everyone was able to vote in the midst of what felt like a festival. He felt that there was not sense of occasion in the UK and that elections came and went unnoticed and unmentioned. He felt motivated to register to vote but he knew others who could easily be put off if there was no incentive or too much bureaucracy.

"I think it's a very passive procedure. If you're interested you will always find out where it is, but if you're not interested then no-one's going to provide you information."

Case Study:

Badrul felt that elections could be easy to miss in the UK. He's from Bangladesh where governments change frequently and polling stations have queues from morning until late at night. He reminisced about the electric atmosphere and exciting days before and after a general election. He's keen to be active in politics in the UK but he's not sure whether he can vote in elections here.

The *engaged unaware* type believed in the importance and relevance of politics but sometimes this was combined with a lack of knowledge and understanding of politics. This was usually the case amongst young people who felt strongly about certain issues but felt that there was nothing they could do about it, usually because they had no knowledge about voter registration. This dissonance results in cynicism and anger at one end of the spectrum and passivity on the other.

Case Study:
Luke felt that it was really important to vote but he was really worried that he would make the wrong choice. This was because he didn't feel he knew enough about the political parties, and their policies to make an informed choice. He was also unaware that students could register to vote at their term address[14] so he didn't vote at the last election.

6.2.2 Barriers to registration

The main barrier to registration for the engaged unaware type was a lack of understanding regarding the registration process. Young people had little knowledge and awareness of registration forms; and with few triggers to register during the electoral cycle, they lacked a reason to enquire further. Many were just unaware that there was a registration process and having not thought about it before, assumed that you did not need to register to vote.

Quote:
"Why do I need to register; they know who I am."

Black Caribbean, London

For Commonwealth and EU citizens the lack of understanding was more to do with eligibility. Often they were unaware that they could register to vote or vote in some elections.

Quote:

[14] Students are often able to register at home and at their term-time address (http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register_to_vote/students.aspx)

"How can you get on that list?"

EU National, Cardiff

Case Study:
Vanessa arrived from Malaysia 8 years ago and she's still not sure whether she's allowed to vote. One of her flat mates said she could vote in local elections but not in general elections.

"[It's] like you have voting rights, but up to a certain level - certain things. I heard of this for local area elections only; I'm not sure, maybe I've got the wrong information".

6.2.3 Triggers to registration

Family influences were very strong amongst young people, who often talked about adopting the same attitudes and behaviours around voting intention as their parents. Family influence has been found to be important in other studies of voting intention[15]. Other people they knew who take voting seriously also had a positive influence on their likelihood of voting. Conversely, being in the company of people who had a negative attitude towards voting could also influence young people, making them less likely to invest time in registering to vote and absorb some of the cynical discourse around politics and politicians.

Quote:
"Because I feel that people shouldn't complain if they are not going to vote. Like women died for the vote, my nan always says this and like if you are going to complain about inflation and tax increases, can't complain if you don't vote."

Young person, Cardiff

Resultantly, for this type, while the positive influence of family and friends can act as beneficial triggers, there should be some wariness about the impact of potential negative attitudes. It is clear that where there is a risk of negative influence on registration or voting behaviour then other related benefits need to be emphasised. For example the idea that registering to vote could lead to financial benefits such as a better credit rating which would help with getting a mortgage or a loan. There could also be an advantage in being on the electoral register when job seeking, for

[15] Print, M, Saha, L and Edwards, K (2004) *Youth Electoral Study: Enrolment and Voting*

example when an employment agency or future employer wants to check their residential address to see if they really live there.

The research identified that another potential trigger for this type could be to convey voter registration as a rite of passage in a similar vein to when a young person gets a provisional driving licence or starts their first paid job.

Case Study:
Amy, who is currently registered to vote, mentioned receiving a card from the local mayor on her sixteenth birthday. She admitted that she did not really understand politics but she voted because she felt engaged in her local area and she felt it was important to vote.

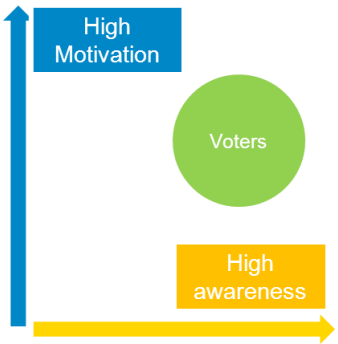
"I've got a birthday card from the Mayor of {Borough name] before; I think it was on my 16th birthday; it was in a nice pretty envelope and everything; they knew my whole name. I felt like good 'cause I can say I got a card from the Mayor, not that I knew who it was but I felt a bit special, no-one else had sent anything like that to me before."

Being acknowledged by a local official on the occasion of her sixteenth birthday may have played a critical role in ensuring her future engagement with local democracy, marking one of the differences between a young *voter* and a young person who is *engaged unaware*. This could be extended to other local, respected officials sending birthday cards to eighteen year olds, e.g. Member of Parliament to highlight the fact that they have a new responsibility, which is to exercise their newly acquired democratic right.

6.3 Registration typology: Voters

The *Voter* type includes only a small number of our research participants and tended to be older.

This type is characterized by those who have high engagement in registering to vote and voting. These participants were highly motivated to vote and could recall voting on numerous previous occasions.



Participants within this type also had good awareness of the registration process.

In summary, *Voters* are likely to be aged over 25 and actively participating in elections.

Type most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Over-25s	Value voting: Hard-won right Duty / obligation Interest in politics	Few barriers Home-movers not re-registering	Family influence Habitual

6.3.1 Voting and participation

Across the research, participants within the *voters* type placed a strong value on voting and participation in elections. They vote because they see it as a duty to vote. Some also regarded voting as a hard-won right, denied to many around the world and made particularly salient by events in the Arab world from the beginning of 2011.

Quote:
"In this country, we have a right to say what you want. In this country, you vote for them."

South Asian, Manchester

Within this group there were also those who are interested in politics because they felt it was relevant to their lives. They also believed that using their vote meant they could have a say in what happens both locally and nationally.

6.3.2 Barriers to registration

There were relatively few barriers for this group of *voters* who tended to be motivated to overcome any barriers that they could come across. However, home-movers sometimes lacked understanding of the need to re-register. Sometimes re-registering was considered a lower priority when compared to switching over direct debits and notifying energy suppliers. One participant mentioned that their bank offered to notify their address change to others.

Quote:
"When I once moved, I changed my address on the HSBC website, and they asked do you want to let the others know that you've changed your address, like the Nectar cards and those kinds of things, so perhaps they can include the credit companies, I don't know which company ……Because I think sometimes when you move it's always a hassle to remember who to notify, there's just so many things to remember so just make it was easy as possible."

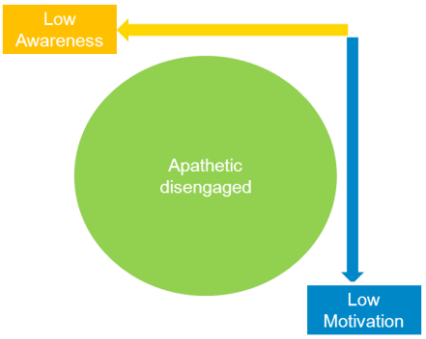
Commonwealth, London

6.3.3 Triggers to registration

Voters tended to have been influenced early on by family and friends, so, registering to vote becomes automatic and habitual, embedded over a number of years.

6.4 Registration typology: Apathetic disengaged

The *apathetic disengaged* type included a large number of our participants.



This type is characterised by those who currently lack engagement with registering to vote and more widely with voting and politics.

Participants within this type lack motivation to register and vote, but also have low awareness of the registration process.

The *apathetic disengaged* type typically includes young people of all ethnicities and those who were not born in the UK.

Type most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people, all ethnicities Not UK-born	Distance from politics and politicians Lack of understanding Apathy masks frustration and dissonance	Poor understanding Low motivation to learn	Delegate registration Persuasive influencer

6.4.1 Voting and participation

Participants within the *apathetic disengaged* type felt distant from politics and politicians and thought that current issues being debated were not relevant them. However, there was a feeling amongst some that certain issues might become more relevant to them as they get older e.g. employment, pensions.

Quote:
"I think as you get older, things start to affect you more with like tax, like a lot of money issues don't really seem a problem right now if you have student loans and are supported by parents, but as you get older you'd probably take a more personal interest in it because it affects you a lot more."

Student, Brighton

When thinking about issues that they felt were personally relevant they tended to be more focussed on the local and the immediate, for examples things that have a direct impact on their day to day lives such as student loans and university fees.

One of the reasons for their lack of engagement with the voting process was that they believed that politicians are out of touch. This ranged from a passive rage to anger amongst several participants with some expressing futility of the democratic process. The research suggests that for some, their apparent apathy is just a veneer masking frustration and dissonance. This view is summarised aptly by the following quotes:

Quote:
"I think they're detached from us rather than me being detached from it."

Student, Brighton

Quote:
"This is one of the problems I think, these are people who are so detached are making decisions that affect everyone, but obviously they don't really know you; they're not drinking Asda priced cider. (in reference to minimum pricing for alcohol)."

Student, Brighton

For some, the disengagement stemmed from a lack of knowledge and understanding of politics, combined with a lack of desire and motivation to engage with it at all.

Quote:
"You find it quite difficult to get involved; it seems like you need to know so much about and I know very little about it so trying to get into it, it's just the getting into it, I guess once I get into I'd probably be quite interested in it."

Student, Brighton

Quote:
"I have no idea about politics; people are chatting about it and I've no idea what they're saying; it might be interesting if I followed it but it just doesn't seem very well presented in front of me, like it doesn't seem like it wants to be a part of my life; it seems like it's for people who follow it."

Student, Brighton

For some voting was seen as something 'other people do'. Some young people mentioned that older people were more likely to understand the debates and politics in general. These participants felt that in order to vote, they needed to be more informed.

Quote:
"I don't feel informed about who to vote for, but I guess I'd have to read up a lot about it before I can a proper decision."

Young Person, London

6.4.2 Barriers to registration

Amongst *apathetic disengaged*, it is clear that their lack of understanding of politics is a barrier to engagement with various political debates and how they can influence these. They also lack the motivation to vote with some expressing frustration that politicians promise things before elections but do not deliver on gaining office. With this in mind this type feels disillusioned in voting, and feels that voting does not really make any difference to their lives.

Quote:
"All the things that they say, I've been watching the news and they're gonna do this, when it comes to the vote, everything they said to try and get our votes they don't do it."

Black Caribbean, London

Quote:
"I think if I go [to vote] it is wasting my time…I go to vote and then nothing will happen. Nobody will help us."

South Asian, Manchester

6.4.3 Triggers to registration

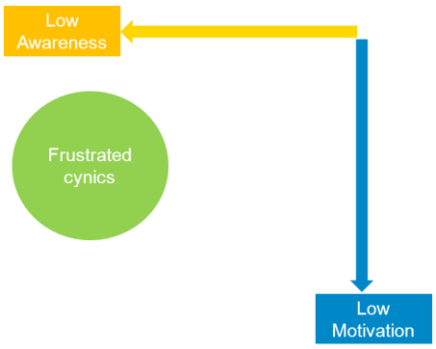
Currently this type needs the presence of someone else in the household to register on their behalf, as they are unlikely to be motivated to register by themselves. A persuasive and influential person in the same household would be key in encouraging them to vote, once registered.

6.5 Registration typology: Frustrated cynics

The *frustrated cynics* type include a small number of our participants.

This type is characterised by those who have both low awareness of the registration process and low motivation to register and vote.

Young people and UK-born ethnic minorities tend to dominate this group.



Type most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Young people UK-born ethnic minorities	Strongly negative views of politics Exclusion and victimhood Poor understanding Disengagement or ideological opposition to voting	Preference to opt-out of participation Low motivation Prefer anonymity	Few triggers

6.5.1 Voting and participation

Frustrated cynics hold very negative views of politics and politicians and are cynical about politicians' motivations. Their lives can be financially precarious with no immediate hopes for the future which leads to a sense of exclusion and victimhood.

Case Study:

Warren is 19 years old and lives with three flat mates in a London suburb. Despite his self-confessed disengagement with the political process, he talked at length about the recent AV referendum and the Coalition government, citing names of ministers and their policies. It was clear he was really engaged in the political

discourse, keeping up with the news and current affairs. However, the more he spoke about politics, the angrier he became. He strongly believed that voting in elections would not change anything as politicians could choose not to listen. All he cares about now is holding on to his job and paying his rent. He fears for the future and thinks that registering to vote is the least of his concerns.

For others a poor understanding of politics, combined with a cynicism, exacerbates their disenchantment with the political process.

Quote:
"I don't vote. I agree with voting and I don't agree with voting if that makes any sense. To me they just seem to argue. I can remember somebody being at my door a couple of years ago, the way they come around to campaign, trying to get the votes. My response was "I am not really interested". You can argue out amongst yourselves basically. I don't know much about the politics and things or anything behind it."

Resident in area of high deprivation, Northern Ireland

Quote:
"I don't know about it to notice any difference between who's in power; it's just like I don't really know much about it at all; no matter who's in power it just feels the same ... I'd just be sitting there going ah right."

Student, Brighton

This disengagement often leads to an ideological opposition to voting and participation more generally with many expressing the view that nothing changes for them as a result of voting so they cannot see why they should get involved.

Quote:
"It depends on what's happening at the time as well. If there were a lot of negative things happening at the time I think you don't want to be bothered to go out and vote because you think, it's not making any difference. It hasn't made much of a difference in my life because I've not had it handed to me on a plate….. So they're not actually giving us anything, it's all promises, it's all words, but you've really just got to go out there and find it for yourself."

Black Caribbean, London

6.5.2 Barriers to registration

This type holds overtly negative view of politics and the system, and would prefer to opt-out of participation. This is a major barrier as they need to be convinced that politics and voting is relevant to their day to day life.

Participants within this type were not particularly motivated to overcome practical barriers and so would probably not make the effort to register to vote if it requires some activity on their part.

For some anonymity and the ability to stay under the radar of authority was attractive and preferred.

Quote:
"Once you've registered, if there's a bill that you haven't paid they'll find you, so therefore that's another percentage of why people aren't doing it because once you've signed and said yes you will, they know where you are…"

Black Caribbean, London

6.5.3 Triggers to registration

Across the research it was clear that there were few triggers to registration for this type. It was apparent that they cannot see any direct benefits to registering to vote and voting in elections. They are unlikely to be persuaded to register by friends and family, especially if they share the same views. Although some were aware of potential benefits to registration other than the ability to vote - such as helping to develop a credit rating - these were outweighed by a sense of frustration with politics and, for some, a preference for anonymity from authority.

Quote:
"To be honest if this generation ain't voting, the generation that you're seeing coming up now they ain't voting; they're not gonna vote."

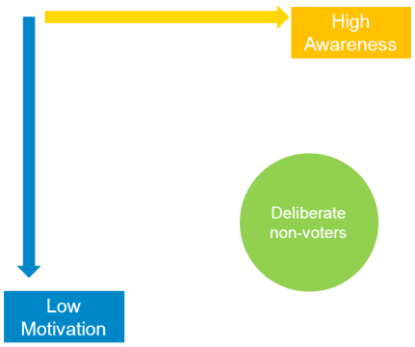
Black Caribbean, London

6.6 Registration typology: Deliberate non-voters

The *deliberative non-voters* type includes a small number of our participants.

This type is characterised by those who have a high awareness of the voter registration process but are less motivated to participate and consciously decide not to engage in voting or registration.

Deliberate non-voters include Commonwealth and EU citizens as well those aged 25 and over.



Type most likely to include:	Views on voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
Over 25s Commonwealth citizens EU citizens	Ideological opposition to participation But Voting is an important right or No feeling of connection to UK politics	No need if no intention to vote	Some registered through habit or as an automatic response to receiving forms.

6.6.1 Voting and participation

One of the reasons that *deliberate non-voters* choose not to vote is usually due to an ideological opposition to voting, based on dissatisfaction with politics and politicians. However, this was not necessarily linked to their decision to register; some amongst this group were registered.

Deliberate non-voters tended to be dissatisfied about key political issues, such as the cuts in public spending. They may have voted in the past and feel it is an important right but feel disengaged following the outcome of the recent elections.

Quote:
"I'm 32, I've voted once and that was last year because you had to because there was such a big thing, so therefore I went down there and voted and then when I heard – I was like, OK, it hadn't made no difference."

Black Caribbean, London

EU and Commonwealth citizens in particular felt a lack of connection with UK politics and some expressed that they would prefer to vote in another country where they understood the political landscape more.

Quote:
"I'm really interested in history, but politics is a bit different. It's too much for me, in my country, the politics, and, uh, when I came here to start, like, a new life, it was not the first thing that I was interested in."

Commonwealth, London

A couple of EU and Commonwealth citizens had tried to get involved in UK politics but with limited success. Where this had occurred, it had further encouraged them to prefer to engage with the politics in their home country rather than the politics in the UK.

6.6.2 Barriers to registration

Some participants within this type rationalised that they did not need to register if they did not intend to vote, so saw little benefit in going through the process. This was of particular salience amongst Commonwealth and EU citizens who were often unclear on whether they were eligible to vote in the first instance.

6.6.3 Triggers to registration

A few *deliberate non*-voters were registered to vote so that they could exercise their right to vote if they choose to. Some had registered through habit, or as an automatic response to receiving the forms, or to establish their right to vote should they choose to do so. This was particularly the case for UK-born voters aged over 25. However, it was clear that amongst this type, registration did not automatically mean that they would vote.

6.7 Registration typology: Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable groups make up the final registration type.
They are no more or less likely to be aware or motivated than others. However linguistic and cultural disconnection can often determine their exclusion from the electoral roll.

Type most likely to include:	Voting and participation	Barriers to registration	Triggers to registration
English as a second language Learning difficulties Recent arrivals to the UK	Need assistance with everyday written tasks Language-based barriers Fear engagement with 'official' channels	Reliant on others Fearful of providing information	Supportive family / friends

6.7.1 Experiences and mind set

Many of the participants within the *vulnerable group* type noted that they required assistance with everyday written tasks. This support was typically sought from family members or others in the community.

Case Study:
Robert is disabled following a spinal injury and also has some learning difficulties. He relies on his carers to help him in his day to day activities. Someone came around and told him he was not registered to vote. But Robert told him he had attempted to register to vote by telephone on two occasions, each time unsuccessfully. He also filled out the form and got his carer to post it for him.

Quote:
"I'm dependent on carers an awful lot and so they forget, they lose it and they say on yeah we did post it, so I've got that little bit at the back of me mind so I'm all for automatically, well for disabled people anyway."

Disabled, Brighton

Amongst this type there were often language-based barriers to accessing key services with electoral registration being one of them.

Case Study:
Saira does not speak any English and relies on others to interpret for her. She feels excluded and forgotten when it comes to voter registration because of the language barrier. She doesn't feel part of the community here and feels that she doesn't understand what's going on around her. She said she wants to know how to register because she's eager to vote but so far no-one has come to her to explain how to do this.

Some participants within this type were fearful of engaging with 'official' channels because they felt they may be breaching rules and conditions of their right to remain in the UK. These views were often the result of not fully understanding the registration system and eligibility. To register, these participants would need reassurances and support.

Case Study:
Ibrahim lives with his 80 year old father. While his father is registered to vote, Ibrahim's name is not on the electoral roll. Whenever the electoral registration form arrives, Ibrahim verifies his father's details but is anxious about adding his own details to the list. Despite his strong desire to be included on the electoral roll and vote in elections, Ibrahim feels that he does not have permission to make any changes to the form. He believes that this will invalidate the form and cause

problems for his father. He is desperate to register to vote but does not know how to register.

6.7.2 Barriers to registration

Many participants within this type expressed concern in completing official forms in general for fear that they would complete it wrongly. This made them anxious about any form-filling and resultantly, many were often reliant on others to help with 'official' forms.

In discussing their need for support, participants voiced a number of concerns or difficulties in accessing help and support. Firstly, some felt embarrassed to ask for support or help. Others felt reluctant to provide information on official forms in case it had a negative impact on their employment, housing or benefits entitlements this was partly driven by fear of putting something wrong on the form, whilst others were generally anxious about their status in the UK. Finally, some expressed concerns that the job of informing and helping people to register to vote could easily manipulated by less scrupulous people with a different political agenda.

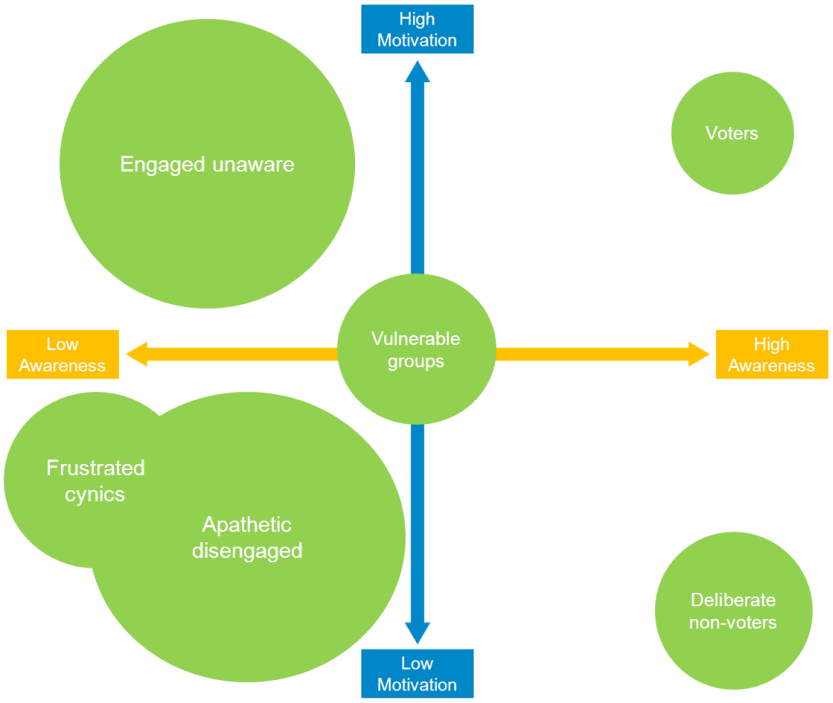
6.7.3 Triggers to registration

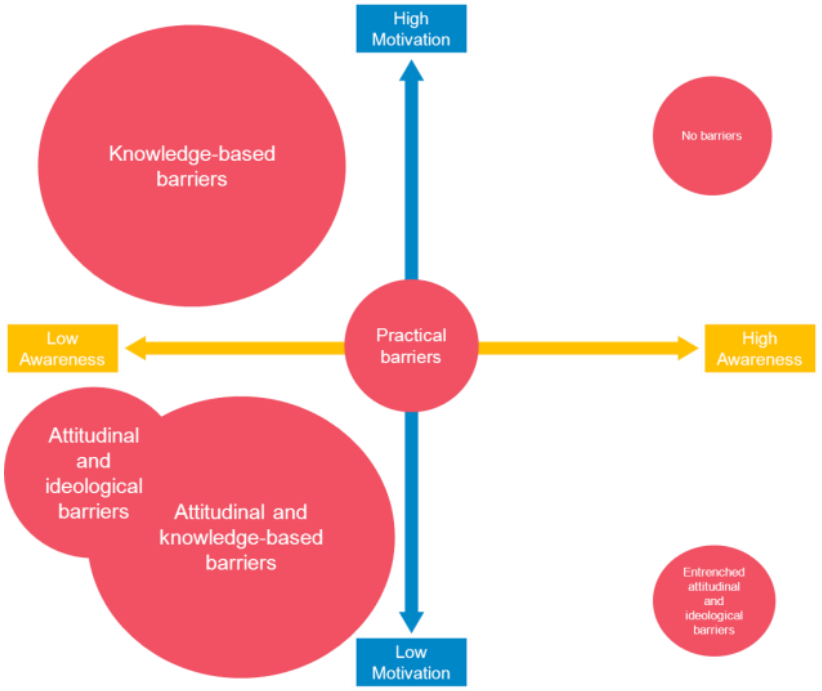
For those who felt isolated and excluded by language, the presence of a supportive person to help complete official forms would encourage registration.

6.8 Summary of barriers to registration

When looking at the typology overall, it is clear to see that some barriers to registration are information and knowledge based (for example, *engaged unaware* simply need to be informed about how to register and the benefits of doing so), whilst others are more entrenched and require a perceptual shift (for example, *deliberate non-voters*). These barriers are summarised in the table and diagrams below and discussed further in the next chapter.

Type	Barrier
Engaged unaware	Knowledge based
Frustrated cynics	Attitudinal and ideological
Apathetic disengaged	Attitudinal and knowledge based
Voters	None
Deliberate non voters	Entrenched attitudinal and ideological
Vulnerable	Practical

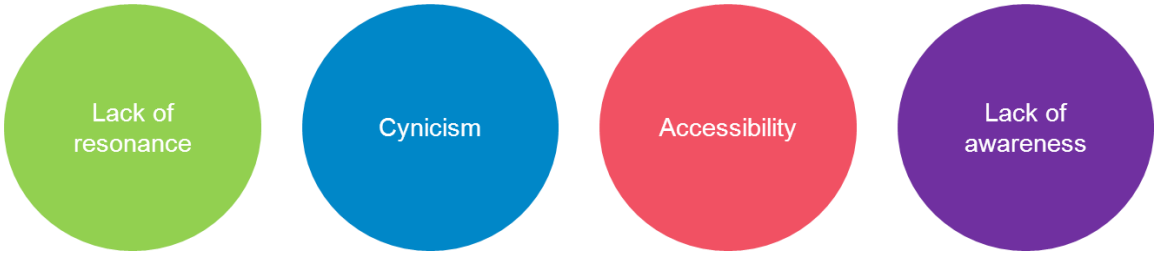




7 Existing barriers to registration and impact on IER

Across the typology it is clear that there are four over-arching barriers to registration. This section of the report looks at each of these barriers and explores the impact that these are likely to have on IER.

The four key barriers identified during the research are:



7.1 Lack of resonance

As seen in the typology described in the previous section, a lack of motivation to vote and register to vote was often driven by lack of resonance. Many participants in the research just did not engage with voting or registering to vote, or thought that it was something that other people did.

This lack of resonance was often described as a feeling of apathy with people commenting that their vote would not make any difference or feeling disillusioned with politics and unmotivated to vote or register to vote.

Quote:
"I don't think my vote will make a difference."

Student, Nottingham

Quote:
"You only hear bad things about politics."

Young Person, Nottingham

This sense of apathy was cited across the different sample groups in the research but commonly reported amongst younger people in general. It was clear during the research that this apathy whilst sometimes driven by ideological and attitudinal barriers to voting often masked low self-efficacy in voting and politics. Young people described how they felt they did not know enough about politics to feel confident in voting and in turn voiced lack of engagement in registering to vote.

Quote:
"Why should we go down there to vote if we don't know what we are voting for."

Young Person, Nottingham

Quote:
"I don't really know much about politics to be honest."

Low Literacy, Nottingham

Low self-efficacy was also reported by some people who had recently moved to the UK and felt they did not know much about UK politics.

Participants felt that IER could encourage people to take personal ownership of registering to vote and in turn encourage them to engage in voting and politics. However, it is clear that there is some need for easy-to-digest information about politics to enable people to feel confident in voting and recognise the need to register to vote.

Lack of resonance was also mentioned in relation to having little experience or involvement in registering to vote before. Those who had not previously registered or who had been reliant on gate-keepers such as parents to register on their behalf felt detached from the process. Registering to vote was something that they had not really thought about before, and they were not engaged or familiar with the notion or act of registration.

There was some concern amongst participants that those who had previously relied on gate-keepers to register them would be unlikely to register themselves under IER because they were not familiar with the process or simply were not engaged enough with voting to register to vote. It is clear that the introduction of IER needs to include a campaign to encourage personal ownership of registration.

Little experience or involvement in registering to vote was also associated with the way in which people are currently invited to register. Across the research there was much discussion regarding receiving letters address 'to the occupier'. Many participants noted that they were unlikely to open letters with this salutation. This was often because they considered 'to the occupier' post to be junk mail. Some younger people noted that they did not always open post.

Quote:
"Post isn't a good idea as students never look at their mail."

Student, Nottingham

Those who lived in rented or shared accommodation also mentioned that 'to the occupier' post was likely to be left unopened as nobody within the household would be likely to take ownership of this. In some cases this type of post was set to one side for the landlord. In other households this type of post was 'binned' or simply left on the side for somebody else to deal with. Participants in shared accommodation further noted that if they were the person to open the letter, they would have some reservations in completing the form. These participants did not feel comfortable in taking responsibility for completing the details of others living in the household – especially where they might not know the other residents very well. They did not feel comfortable in making a decision about whether other individuals should be registered to vote.

Participants feel that individually addressed letters are likely to be opened and in a shared household and will enable individuals to decide whether to register. This will ensure that those in a household who want to register are able to do so without concern about other residents. However, it is clear that if future household enquiry forms are addressed 'to the occupier' they are unlikely to be opened. Some participants suggest clarifying the importance of the letter by some indication on the envelope itself.

Queries or lack of clarity regarding eligibility for registering to vote often resulted in low resonance amongst some participants. Where participants did not realise or were not sure if they could vote, there was low engagement in registering to vote. This was often mentioned by EU and Commonwealth nationals who did not know whether they were eligible. Whilst often engaged in voting in their home country, these participants noted that they did not come across information about eligibility and had not been given any information when they arrived in the country.

Only a couple of EU and Commonwealth participants included in the research knew about their eligibility. These participants had found out via word of mouth from friends or family already living in the UK. Some participants noted that proactively finding out about eligibility had not been a key priority when moving to the UK, with visas, work and accommodation taking precedence.

Receiving personally addressed letters under the new IER system was seen positively as a way of clarifying or giving people 'permission' that they could register to vote in the UK. With this in mind it is evident that any letters would need to clearly detail rules regarding eligibility.

Finally, there was a lack of resonance amongst some people who were not born in the UK. This included those who had lived in the UK for a long period of time as well as those newer to the UK including Commonwealth and EU nationals. These participants noted that they were more interested in following the politics of their home country and would not consider voting in the UK.

Quote:
"I haven't been interested in voting in this country as it is different to mine so I don't have too much information about it."

EU National, Nottingham

Quote:
"I moved to this country because there's a better system, I can earn better, I can make a better living, but it doesn't influence me who is at the power... it's more for the people from the country that matter, because for me it doesn't affect me so much."

EU National, Cardiff

The introduction of IER is likely to have little impact on these views. They are unlikely to register to vote because they simply prefer to engage in politics in their home country. However, it should be noted that this view was voiced by a very small sample of participants.

7.2 Cynicism

Cynicism towards voting results in lack of engagement in registering to vote and was voiced in a number of ways.

A small number of participants voiced ideological and attitudinal barriers to voting and resultantly made a conscious decision not to vote or register to vote. These tended to be older non-voters.

These views are likely to remain a barrier under the new system of IER. Changing these views requires a perceptual shift which is unlikely to be achieved via a new registration process.

Other participants who expressed a cynical view towards registering to vote and voting often based these views on a distrust of government. These participants noted that they would choose not to share personal data with the government and had a strong preference for anonymity. These participants were most likely to mention the government as 'big brother' and raise concerns with why the government wanted their personal information. Across the research sample, those who voiced these concerns were most likely to be young UK-born ethnic minorities and Gypsy Travellers. These groups also felt excluded from society in general and felt that the government often victimised them rather than encouraged voting by engaging them or listening to their views.

Again, these views are likely to remain a barrier with the introduction of IER. However, this group does strongly highlight the importance of clearly communicating why personal identifiers are needed and how they will be used.

7.3 Accessibility

Across the research it was clear that problems with accessibility were currently a barrier to registration. Issues with accessibility tended to fall into two broad groups: language and confidence in completing a registration form. These issues were most likely to be reported by those with English as a second language, those with low literacy and disabled people.

Concerns regarding the language used in the registration form often focused on the form being provided in English. Those with English as a second language noted that they would be more likely to engage and understand the form if it was provided in their mother tongue language. The research found that when these participants received any communications in English they tended to do one of two things. If the form looked like 'junk mail' it would go in the bin. However, if the form looked official and important the participants would find someone who was able to translate or help them understand the form. For some participants this could be a family member or a neighbour. For others they might take the form to a local community centre where somebody could help.

Preference is for letters to be provided in a range of languages so that those with English as a second language can read and engage with IER themselves. However, it is clear that for this group the letter needs to be clearly official to ensure they seek help with any translation.

Confidence in completing the form was a key concern for some. These participants tended to be anxious when it came to completing official forms and worried that they would do something wrong or misunderstand what the form was asking. These participants did not want to provide the wrong information so would sometimes seek help in completing the form from family or friends. However, many mentioned that it was embarrassing to ask for help so would put it off or try and complete the form themselves. Some noted that the language used in the form was technical and seemed jargon-heavy citing words such as 'proxy' and 'electoral' as problematic. This further made it difficult for them to understand the form and added to their worry that they would complete it incorrectly.

Clear and easy to read letters and forms are required, especially for these participants to reflect their needs. Confidence in completing the form and accessing support and help are likely to be increased if the letter identifies clear reassurances and clear routes for support.

The research further suggests that existing anxieties amongst vulnerable groups regarding completion of the form are likely to be reinforced by any move towards digital channels; fear of the unknown. These vulnerable participants have a strong preference of accessing support and providing information in a face-to-face environment.

7.4 Lack of awareness

Most participants across the research were unaware of the need to register to vote or how the registration process works. Those who were registered often only had faint memories of how this had happened or had been registered by somebody else in their household.

Quote:
"I found a poll card [in my home] with my details on it. I did not register to vote so I'm not sure whether my parents have done it for me, or if I have been automatically registered. It says nothing on the card about registering, just information about where my nearest polling station is."

Young Person, Online Board

Quote:
"My mum did most of it for me so I couldn't really tell you personally how..."

Young Person, Northern Ireland

Quote:
"Personally I am not so aware... it is just because maybe I have elder people in the house to guide us because they went through that experience it is a bit more easier."

Young South Asian, Glasgow

Quote:
"Previously it would have been the head of the household who for me is my dad who has filled it in. And because I haven't done it myself I really don't have a clue of the procedures or what is involved when it comes to registering. This way if I am doing it myself I will have no choice but I don't know what the process is."

Young South Asian, Glasgow

Awareness was highest amongst older people who were engaged in voting and politics but in general there was low awareness across the research sample.

Awareness of registering to vote is likely to remain low without any communications or campaign. However, participants agree that receiving a personally addressed letter and having personal responsibility for registering will increase awareness.

Most students across the research were unaware that they could register at their university address and their home address. Anecdotal evidence has previously suggested that in some cases students in student halls have been 'block registered' by an individual in charge of the halls. However, none of the students included in this research mentioned being registered automatically by their university; those who were registered tended to have been registered at home by their parents.

Many students felt that they would prefer to register at home where they felt more part of the community or were more aware of local issues affecting their family; informing students of the options of where they can register may increase resonance in registration and voting.

Quote:
"I'd register at home as I think I know the area well and would be a bit more involved."

Student, Nottingham

8 IER concerns and queries

The principle of IER and an overview of how it is likely to work in practice was explained to participants who were given time to digest the information and consider how they felt about the new registration system.

It should be noted that the research was undertaken to inform the development of the policy and delivery plan for IER; the research was designed to enable a broad discussion of ideas for how IER may work. It is recognised that not all of the ideas and processes shown to participants may viable in practice and therefore, the proposals discussed should not be assumed to be confirmed policy.

The information shown to participants is included in the introductory chapter and referred to throughout this chapter.

Participants had a number of comments, queries and concerns regarding the system. These fall broadly into three themes:

8.1 Personal responsibility: queries and concerns

The over-arching concept for the new system of IER was explained to participants using show card 3 (see Research Approach above). This was followed by show card 4 which provided an explanation of how a data-matching exercise could be used to transfer those on the existing Electoral Register to the new IER system. To fully explain how this process could work, participants were provided with two case study examples (see show card 5).

Participants were then given information about how a data-matching exercise could identify details of individuals who are not currently registered to vote, but who could be invited to register to vote. The show card and two case study examples below were used to describe how this would work. The information provided to participants can be seen in show cards 6 and 7.

After reviewing this information many of the comments and queries regarding IER focused on taking personal responsibility for registering to vote. Overall this was considered to be a key benefit of IER, with people being able to take ownership of whether they registered to vote with many suggesting that this personal ownership could result in people becoming more engaged in the registration process and voting itself.

Quote:

"You should fill it in yourselves…then you know what's going on, you understand…if it's the head of the family…if they're not interested in it then the family has got no chance of getting interest in it either."

South Asian, Manchester

Initially participants had some concerns that IER would be complex but as the system was explained they commented that it was more straightforward than they had anticipated. However some concerns were highlighted and are discussed below.

8.1.1 Individual registration

Concerns regarding being individually responsible for registering to vote often focused on the loss of reliance or influence from gate-keepers. Those who were currently registered by someone else in the household worried that they simply would not register if it was their own responsibility.

Quote:
"If me and my brother weren't put down by our Dad we'd never do it ourselves."
Student, Nottingham

Another concern regarding individual registration came from those who currently take responsibility for completing the household registration form, or envisaged that they were most to complete the form in their current living arrangement (although had not taken responsibility for completing the form previously). These participants envisaged they would take ownership because they were the most interested or because they had the best English language skills in the household. These participants suggested that even under the new system of IER they would end up completing all the individual forms for the household. These participants then queried the value of introducing IER when for them it would not have any difference apart from increasing the number of forms to be completed, which they thought would be administratively costly for the government and environmentally unfriendly.

8.1.2 Personally addressed correspondence

As already discussed, the role of a personally addressed letter was seen as key across the research. Participants felt that this would ensure they opened the letter and encourage them to take ownership of registering.

Quote:
"You would actually see it because it is addressed to you."
Young Person, Nottingham

Quote:
"If the letter was sent out to you instead of somebody else to fill it in for you, you feel a wee bit more important so maybe you want to put your views across a wee bit more. You feel a wee bit more strongly about it if it is sent out to an individual. You feel part of it instead of the head of the household getting it because really you don't see much of the paperwork or what they are writing down for you."
Living in communal establishment, Northern Ireland

Those who were unsure of their eligibility to register and vote further noted that a personally addressed letter could clarify whether they were able to vote and register to vote. It should be noted that this raises the potential for misunderstanding regarding eligibility; especially where any data-matching exercises could result in people who are not eligible to register being sent personally addressed letters. It is clear that the content of any communications will need to clarify rules regarding eligibility to negate this potential for confusion.

For some, the personally addressed letter was also seen as 'official' with some noting that if they 'were on paper' they felt more official themselves and part of the community.

However, some concerns were expressed that personally addressed letters, especially if they contained any personal details, be sent to up to date and correct addresses. There was some fear that letters could be sent to old addresses which could result in personal details 'ending up in the wrong hands'. Here the recency of any public data sources used for cross-matching purposes became a key consideration and participants sought reassurances that up to date lists and addresses would be used.

8.1.3 Household enquiry form

During the research participants were also asked to comment on the IER process for inviting those who were not captured during any data-matching process to register to vote. In this instance, a form similar to the current household enquiry form would be sent to unregistered households.

Personal responsibility was considered a key benefit of the introduction of IER but participants felt that sending out a household enquiry form negated this benefit. Whilst they understood the rationale for sending the household enquiry form in some situations, they reported a number of concerns with this approach. This included concerns that letters addressed 'to the occupier' would not be opened; that if the letter was opened completion would be reliant on the engagement of the individual opening the letter; and those in shared accommodation not feeling comfortable in providing other peoples' details.

The research explored two options for administration of the household enquiry form:

1. Household enquiry form to be sent to the household, completed and returned to the Electoral Registration Officer and then individual registration forms, populated with individual details sent to each individual.
2. Household enquiry form to be sent to the household alongside blank individual registration forms. All to be completed and returned to the Electoral Registration Officer.

Show card 12 was used to describe these options.

Overall there were mixed views on which of these options was preferred. Those who voiced a preference for the first option valued receiving an individual registration form personally addressed which was pre-populated with their details. They felt that people would be more likely to open and complete a personally addressed letter and liked the idea of seeing their details correctly written down on an official letter. However, participants also saw the drawbacks to this option; there were mixed views on whether the initial household enquiry form would actually be opened and completed. This was a particular concern amongst shared or rented households, where 'to the occupier post' was not always opened. These participants also envisaged that even if opened, completion of the form would be reliant of the person opening the form being engaged in the registration process and again, concerns regarding completing other peoples' details were raised. With these concerns in mind, some participants preferred the second option detailed above. These participants felt that blank forms meant that people within the

household would have an option to complete their own form and return it rather than rely on an additional step in the process.

Quote:
"It's easier because there's no back and forth, back and forth. It's over and done with one time."

Low Literacy, Nottingham

8.1.4 Portability

Whilst portability is not a function of IER, and was not tested during the research, a small number of participants across the research spontaneously raised this. These participants questioned whether IER would involve portable registration which could then be carried with the individual regardless of where they lived rather than linking registration between the individual and their postal address. There was appetite for this type of portable registration amongst students and frequent home movers who felt it would be convenient. Frequent home movers in particular felt it would be valuable and remove the need for them to register each time they moved. The sample included those who moved on a very frequent basis and for whom registering to vote was not always top of mind. A couple of these frequent home movers noted that they still preferred to be registered where their parents lived as it provided a more stable address.

Overall, these views suggest that without clear information regarding IER and its' functions there is potential for misunderstanding around the issue of portability.

8.1.5 Registering without a National Insurance Number

Participants were asked to comment on the possible process for registering to vote without a National Insurance number. The scenario presented to participants is can be seen in show card 8.

For most this scenario was not considered relevant as they either knew or envisaged it would be easy to track down their National Insurance number. It should be noted that Gypsy Traveller participants commented that some people in their community might not have a National Insurance number as they may have been born 'on the road' and never been registered.

Quote:
"If they haven't got the birthdate in the older community, or they haven't got, you know, a National Insurance number, then they're going to say, 'well that doesn't even apply to me'."

Gypsy Traveller, South East

On reviewing the process for registering with a National Insurance number, participants agreed that the process was complex and time consuming. Whilst most agreed that it was highly unlikely they would need to follow this process (as they felt they would be able to provide their National Insurance number), they

agreed that they would be put off by the effort required and suggested that only somebody who was dedicated to registering to vote would complete the process.

8.2 Personal responsibility: information and delivery needs

Looking at overall concerns regarding personal responsibility it is clear that there is a need for awareness-raising of the registration process and eligibility. Whilst participants are positive towards the idea of personal responsibility and taking ownership of registering to vote, there are concerns that this may exclude those who currently rely on a gate-keeper. This suggests that some kind of campaign to encourage personal ownership is also required.

For those who currently require support and help from a gatekeeper to register clear routes for support and help need to be provided to ensure they are supported in registering under IER. This is relevant to those with low literacy needs, those with English as a second language and those with disabilities that affect accessibility to registration.

8.3 Security and privacy: queries and concerns

When reflecting on ways in which the introduction of IER could work, participants raised a number of concerns regarding the security and privacy of their private information; personal identifiers. Much of this was in relation to the security of using data-matching and privacy of their National Insurance number. Specific concerns are discussed in detail below.

8.3.1 Data matching

As discussed earlier, during the research participants were given information about how a data-matching exercise could be used in two ways as part of the transition to IER. The two scenarios described to participants were:

1. As part of the new system for registration the electoral register will be cross matched against trusted public data sources. If your details can be matched your entry on the electoral register will be confirmed and you will not need to take any further action. If this happens, you will get a letter to confirm that your details have been automatically transferred and that you are now registered to vote.
2. If your entry on the electoral register cannot be matched against the trusted public data sources, you will be sent a letter to your home inviting you to register. To be added to the electoral register you will need to provide some information to your local Electoral Registration Officer. You will need to provide the following information: your name; your date of birth; and your national insurance number.

Overall many participants were comfortable with both of these data-matching scenarios. Whilst these participants were keen to know how confidentiality and

security of information would be guaranteed, they were open to the idea of data-matching as a way to transfer to IER or be individually and personally invited to register. Many commented that the government had access to their information anyway, so did not feel that this was something unexpected or that they would be unduly worried about.

Quote:
"It's what you have to do everywhere, everywhere you are going, everybody asks the same thing, that's why I bring my passport, because you have to prove who you are, your date of birth, or, and the National Insurance number, so it's the standard thing that you have to have with you."

EU National, Cardiff

Quote:
"If they're data you've already put out there then it's obviously nothing to worry about is it? If you're getting it from a reliable pool of data…I think if you've not done anything wrong and you're not trying to cheat anyone really and you get taxes and benefits then it should be fine."

Young Person, Leeds

Quote:
"I think it's excellent, it's cost-effective, but still they have to send him or her a letter just to make her aware."

EU National, Cardiff

However, the importance of reassurances regarding security and privacy should not be underestimated. All participants wanted to know how their data would be used and sought clarification and reassurance regarding where the data would be gathered from, where it would be stored, who would have access and how it would be kept safe.

Quote:
"I want to know where it is coming from and who is going to see the information."

Young Person, Leeds

Quote:
"I want guarantees that they are going to protect my data."

BME, Birmingham

Quote:
"The most important thing I would like to know would be that my details were kept safe and who has access to these details."

Young Person, Online Board

Even those who were more security-minded agreed that the convenience of data-matching outweighed security concerns but made this assessment on the basis that any data-matching would be carried out by the government and be secure, safe and subject to data security rules.

Quote:
"It's not a problem as someone else has your data and it's just checking the information…it's probably official and not some random people so it's probably safe."

Low Literacy, Nottingham

Quote:
"I think if they mentioned data protection that is all I'd need. I wouldn't need any other guarantee as long as there was data protection involved."

Disabled, Leeds

Whilst many were open to the idea of data-matching some were adamantly against this. These participants tended to be those who were cynical and distrustful of government. They expressed considerable push back towards their data being accessed or cross-matched noting that they found this 'sneaky' and 'intrusive'. These participants were unwilling for their personal data to be used in this way and wanted to maintain their anonymity.

8.3.2 Trusted data sources

When thinking about which data sources could be used for data-matching overall participants had a preference for other public and government data sources to be used. These sources were trusted and seen as having a better 'fit' with the purpose of the exercise.

Quote:
"I think as long as you know it is getting passed on to somebody who is trusted then you don't mind passing on information especially if you are saving time for yourself. As long as the information is going to a more trusted place."

Young South Asian, Glasgow

The research specifically asked about data-matching with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) lists which was seen as an appropriate source. Others also mentioned lists from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), Council Tax and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) as being appropriate. There were mixed views about the use of lists from the National Health Service (NHS) or General Practitioners (GP). Because these lists were associated with health related information participants were reticent about these being used or sought reassurances that their health notes could not be accessed. Amongst students there were mixed views regarding the usefulness of using the Student Loans Company list as many mentioned that this was registered at their parents' home address and therefore unlikely to reach them at a term time address.

Overall participants were not keen on the idea of data-matching via private data sources. Most did not trust this approach and felt that there would be a hidden benefit to the private company which they were not comfortable with.

Only a few young people mention being comfortable with private sources such as banks, insurers and credit reference agencies noting that that these types of organisations would be audited and closely watched.

8.3.3 Providing personal identifiers

Across the sample participants were comfortable with providing their name, address and date of birth. However, there was some resistance towards provide their National Insurance number.

Some participants were open to the idea of providing their National Insurance number. These participants tended to be familiar with providing this on a number of occasions and so it did not come as a surprise to them that they might need to provide it for another government transaction.

However, others expressed concern about this, noting that their National Insurance number was a key piece of private information and if in the wrong hands could lead to identity fraud.

Quote:

"The National Insurance number is something that people can use against them, other people could use it to go and get a job or anything like that, so there'd be people who wouldn't really be too confident in sharing that information."

Disabled, Leeds

With this in mind participants sought reassurances about how their National Insurance number would be used and kept safe.

Some participants further questioned the need for their National Insurance number. These participants queried the relevance of providing the number and why it was needed to simply register to vote. Most of this push back came from groups who were already cynical towards the government, or were security conscious.

8.4 Security and privacy: information and delivery needs

Looking at overall concerns regarding security and privacy of personal information, it is clear that reassurances and transparency of data use is required. Specifically, reassurances regarding: how data will be used; which details will be accessed and shared; who will have access; and responsibility for ensuring security. Reassurances are also needed to explain why National Insurance numbers are needed.

Concerns relating to data-matching also suggest that people want to feel in control of their personal data and how it is being used. Participants suggested that they be provided with advance warning that the data-matching is going to happen, with some further suggesting it be an opt-in exercise. It seems clear that people are more likely to feel in control of their data and comfortable with data-matching if the process is transparent and provides strong reassurances regarding security and privacy.

8.5 Access to registration: queries and concerns

When thinking about how they could register to vote under the new system of IER many participants assumed there would be an online option. It is clear that other tailored channels are also required. Preferences for registering are discussed below.

8.5.1 Automatic registration through data matching

Participants were positive towards the idea of automatic registration through data-matching and considered it to be a convenient way of transferring to IER. However, receiving a letter to confirm that you had been automatically registered was considered vital.

The research explored the potential impact of one member of a household being automatically registered and one member not being automatically registered (and receiving a letter inviting them to register). Participants felt that this scenario was most likely to result in them worrying why one person had not been automatically registered and start raising concerns about their data being out of date or incorrect. Participants did not feel that it would dispose them to think negatively towards registering, but more likely to raise questions about why they could not be automatically registered.

8.5.2 Registering during other transactions

Participants were asked to give their views on the idea of registering to vote during other transactions. Show card 9 shows the examples provided to participants which included registering at the same time as completing a Council Tax form, when registering at the GP or applying for a driver's license.

There was positive reaction towards the idea of registering to vote alongside other transactions. Again, the key benefit of this option was the convenience it offered. However, participants were keen to note that the transaction should be appropriate to registering to vote, and with this in mind suggested that government transactions were most likely to offer an appropriate opportunity.

A number of suggestions deemed as appropriate were provided across the research including, when registering for Council Tax, applying for a provisional driver's license from the DVLA, registration at University, applying for a passport, and registering for a new GP or dentist.

There was some discussion around how this idea would work in practice. Some participants envisaged that they would simply be provided with a separate registration form to complete at the same time. Others suggested that this be achieved by providing a tick box on the original form being completed (e.g. request for provisional driver's license) which they could tick if they were happy for their details to be passed to the Electoral Registration Officer. They likened this to the tick box which is often seen on forms for organ donation. Overall, the tick box idea was positively received although it was agreed that it would need to be accompanied by a clear explanation of how and which data would be shared.

Whilst participants felt that registering during other transactions was a good idea they did feel that this should be limited to a few key transactions. They felt that they would be likely to disengage if they saw this on every form they completed.

8.5.3 Channel preferences

When IER was introduced to participants many at first glance read it as 'Individual Electronic Registration'. The idea of registering online was not surprising for participants – although not all wanted to register this way – and it is clear that participants expected that there would be some kind of electronic channel for registration involved in a change to the system for registering.

Quote:
"I think it just means everyone registers themselves online."

Young Person, Leeds

Across the research young people assumed that they would be able to register to vote online. They considered this a basic expectation and envisaged an easy to use and secure online page where they would answer a few questions and submit. As part of this, young people wanted to be able to use the online site via their smartphone as this provided a quick and convenient option for them. There were a

few suggestions for a smartphone application or use of a QR code[16] which could be scanned via their smartphone. These suggestions caused some debate in the research with some querying whether an app which would only be used once would really be any quicker than accessing an online page. However, it was clear that young people expect access to registration via technologies they use daily and have easy access to.

It should be noted that online access was also positively received by older people within the research sample.

Registering to vote via SMS text message was also suggested by young people. The envisaged process for this would be to receive an official letter inviting them to register but then having the option to register via text message.

Other channels for registration were preferred by participants who had specific needs. These are participants would fit in to the 'vulnerable' type so typically those who had English as a second language, low literacy, low confidence in completing official forms, or disabled people. Amongst these participants there was a preference for face-to-face and telephone routes for registration.

Quote:
"It would be awkward for me because of the writing…my condition means that I can be stuck at home so the telephone is the simple way of doing it."

Disabled, Birmingham

Face-to-face options for registration were preferred by those who felt more comfortable dealing with people face-to-face or who required support in registering or completing any forms. Face-to-face venues suggested included Community Centres (especially for those looking for translation help), Citizens Advice Bureau, Post Office, Library, and the School that their children attend.

Telephone was a preferred option for those who were familiar with dealing with government and official organisations this way and comfortable with this channel.

Across the research there were those who did not have specific needs but simply did not feel confident or comfortable in registering online. These participants noted that they would prefer to register by completing a form and sending it back by post.

8.5.4 Online links

The research explored appetite for online links to an online registration form. Online participants felt that this would be a good idea with young people in

[16] A QR code is a '*two-dimensional barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR reading devices, that link directly to text, emails, websites, phone numbers and more'* (http://www.whatisaqrcode.co.uk/)

particular noting that more people needed to be aware of registering to vote, and that online was an ideal way to provide this information to young people.

Overall participants were keen that any online link be appropriate and felt that if the link came from another government site it would be trusted. Government sites mentioned across the research included directgov, NHS sites and the Home Office (particularly for Commonwealth and EU nationals).

There were mixed views regarding the use of Facebook and Twitter. Whilst many felt that this provided a good avenue for raising awareness and targeting young people others noted that they often ignored pop ups or adverts on these websites as they were typically 'junk' and not trusted.

Quote:

"No. I love Facebook to death but it is a social networking site and it has been proved to be hacked left, right and centre at the minute and if anybody ever gets the data it can be used in multiple of different ways. It is a brilliant site but I just don't think it is strong enough to keep that safe."

Young person, Northern Ireland

Some young people suggested some other places where links could be made available including: YouTube, Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, and Skype. These typically reflect the sites that young people use every day.

Participants were keen to note that they would not expect or want to see links on every site they visited but felt that a few well-chosen places would work best. There was some concern that littering a website with links could 'cheapen' the act of registering to vote and had the potential to disengage people.

8.6 Access to registration: information and delivery needs

Overall, when looking at the concerns relating to ways to register it is clear that online is a desirable channel for young people but there needs to be some reassurances regarding security and links to any online registration should be appropriate and from trusted sites.

Tailored channels are clearly required for vulnerable groups.

Whilst people are open to the idea of registering alongside other transactions these should also be appropriate, with government transactions feeling the most relevant.

9 Communication needs

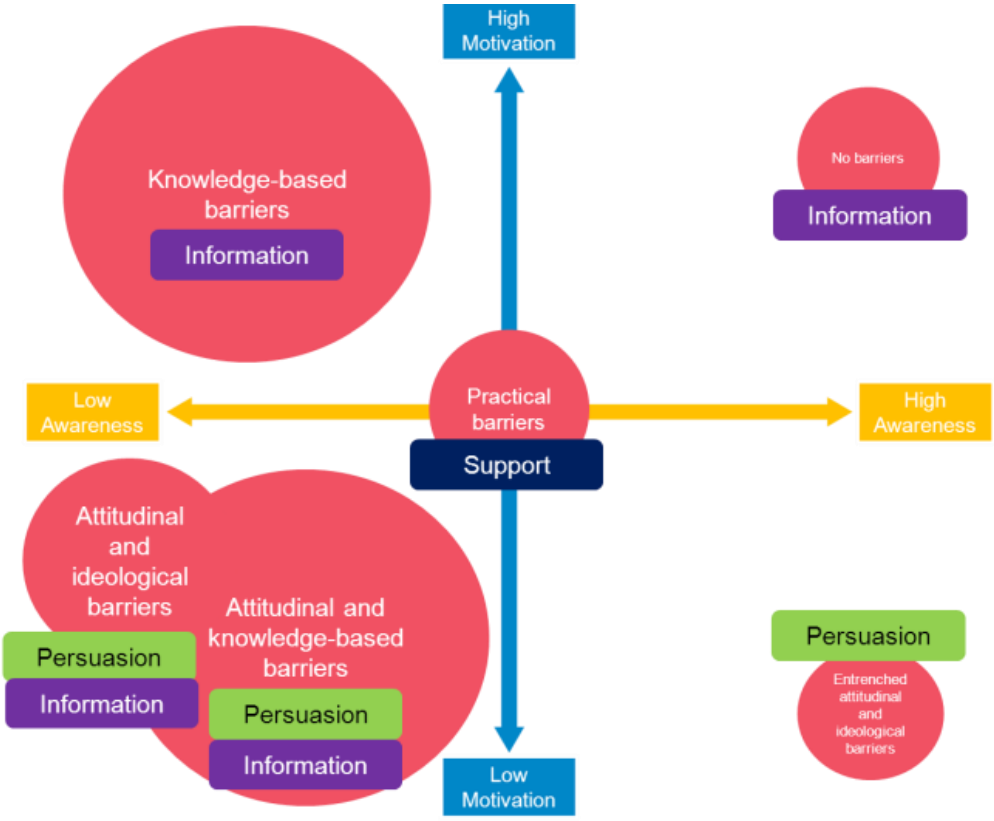
Overall, the research identified a number of communication needs across the different types. These needs are typically driven by both attitudinal barriers and knowledge-based barriers as opposed to practical barriers to registration and IER.

The communication needs identified reflect these attitudinal and knowledge–based barriers and the impact that these are likely to have on the introduction of IER and the processes for this implementation. There is also a strong emphasis on overcoming these barriers by addressing needs regarding wider motivations for registering and voting. Overall the communication needs fall into three key categories:

1. Information
2. Persuasion
3. Support

A number of these needs are universal, whilst some are more type-specific. These needs are detailed in the table and diagram below, and fully discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Type	Barrier	Communication needs
Engaged unaware	Knowledge based	Information
Frustrated cynics	Attitudinal and ideological	Information and persuasion
Apathetic disengaged	Attitudinal and knowledge based	Information and persuasion
Voters	None	Information
Deliberate non voters	Entrenched attitudinal and ideological	Persuasion
Vulnerable	Practical	Support



9.1 Universal communication needs: information

Across the research it was clear that most participants needed detailed information and explanation regarding the change to IER. For most , the provision of information was considered a good way to not only clarify the change to IER but also to generate interest in registration or simply educate people that there is a need to register if you intend to vote. The one type for whom this was least relevant was the *deliberate non-voters* who would require information about any change, but were unlikely to be motivated to register by information provision alone.

Overall, there were two main elements to the information needs relating to IER: publicising the change and; clear explanation of the data matching process.

Information	Channels/messages
Publicising the change	National campaign, recognisable brand Clear call to action
Data matching	National campaign Reassuring tone

9.1.1 Publicising the change

It is clear that everyone needs to be told that the system of voter registration will be changing from household registration to IER. The Electoral Commission will be given the responsibility for managing this campaign as part of the introduction of IER. Since the research has taken place, the 2012 Queen's speech has mentioned this so there may already be awareness amongst a minority. However, for the vast majority, the new system of voter registration will need to be explained clearly so that people are ready and are clear on what is required and what the change will entail.

There needs to be a clear call to action with a national campaign and participants were keen to note that the digital switchover campaign had been successful and suggested something similar. With this in mind, any campaign would require a recognisable brand and message.

9.1.2 Data matching

A key area of concern and queries was the role of data-matching in the introduction of IER and it is clear that any campaign will need to explain what to expect in terms of the data-matching in order to avoid surprises. This includes an explanation of how much data would be transferred and whether any limits would be set on this. Across the research participants expressed some reservations around security and privacy of personal details so any information provision would need to provide reassurances regarding this.

It is also important to explain the data sources used for data-matching to dispel any doubts regarding the provenance of their personal details. For example, participants were keen to know whether they would be checked and transferred from a trusted data source such as a government database or from somewhere else. Hand in hand with this is the need for reassurances around who would be making the transfer and participants sought clarification that their details would not be sold or used for sales and marketing purposes.

Any national campaign will need to be reassuring as well as informative so that people feel empowered by the change rather than imposed upon.

9.2 Universal communication needs: Persuasion

It is clear that some of the types identified by the research need some degree of persuasion to register. The main types identified as being in need of persuasion include:

- *Frustrated cynics*
- *Apathetic disengaged*
- *Deliberate non- voters*

However, it is likely that all of the types would benefit from some element of persuasion to reinforce the reasons for registering and encouraging take-up.

Overall, there are two areas where persuasion can play a role in encouraging registration under the new IER system:

1. Why register: rationale for why people should register.
2. Data-matching: emphasis of why data-matching is preferable and is being used and how this will make the change to IER easier for the general public.

Persuasion	Channels/messages
Why register?	National campaign Voting as an important right Voting as a hard-won right Voting as an opportunity to be heard Voting as an opportunity to have a stake in politics Voting as a privilege Impact of policies in your local area Registration as a duty / obligation
Data matching	Positive, reassuring, non-threatening tone Myth-busting Not a 'national database' Not 'big brother' Details will not be sold or lost

9.2.1 Why register

A key step in encouraging registration under IER is ensuring that people understand that there is a need to register and engendering a belief in the importance of voting. The research suggests that a national campaign needs to be

persuasive and that there are a number of routes for encouraging engagement in registration.

Popular ideas generated by participants focused on voting as a right coupled with making your voice heard. Two examples are provided below:

- Reminding people that voting is a hard won right and an opportunity to be heard.
- Reminding people that voting is a privilege and is an opportunity to have a stake in politics.

Overall, participants also felt that it was motivating to think of registration as an obligation and a duty.

For others, a focus on their local area was seen as the most motivating message. This was particularly the case for those who felt a close affinity to their local area. For these people, a message around impact on local policies may act as a strong driver, but this may require some examples and anecdotes from recent victories within local communities. Here, people are likely to be motivated by examples where local people have affected change by using their vote.

9.2.2 Data-matching

With regards to data-matching there needs to be an emphasis on the benefits in terms of ease and simplicity for the elector. As already discussed, there need to be some reassurances around how data-matching will work and with this in mind, the tone of any campaign should be positive, reassuring, non-threatening. Some cited the Self-assessment advertisement for HMRC presented by Moira Stuart[17] as a particularly memorable and reassuring one. This was often considered good practice as it was not only reassuring, but had also warned people about the need to complete a self-assessment form in advance so they were not surprised when it actually happened/ was requested.

The research indicates that any national campaign should also include an element of myth-busting around these oft-cited concerns:

That IER is building a new national database: people need to be reassured that no new database will be created and therefore it is important to exercise caution when choosing the appropriate terminology and phrase to explain how the new system will work. The word “database” may allude to something of a more permanent nature for some, so it is important to emphasise that it is not a national database that will be held forever.

[17] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZWahK91WOg

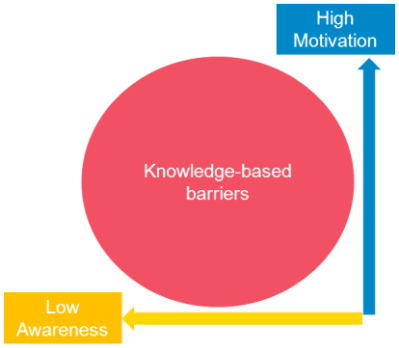
IER is an example of how the government aims to 'keep a track of people'; government as 'big brother': it is important to be able to refute any allegations of 'big brother' and in order to do this there needs to be an explanation of why it cannot be "big brother", for example clarity around who holds the data source, where the data comes from, what is being matched and most importantly, what happens to the data after it has been transferred/matched.

The use of data-matching or provision of personal identifiers risks details being lost or sold: another common concern was around the selling of data, or worst still, the possibility that details could be lost. So an explanation of what happens to the data after it has been transferred is critical to busting this myth. However, it is worth noting that the edited register is available for sale and this should be considered in future messaging strategies.

Turning now to the communication needs by each type, it is clear that whilst the need for a campaign is common to all, there are some specific channels and messages for each group. This will be explored in further detail in the remainder of this chapter.

9.3 Registration typology: Engaged unaware: communication needs

As we saw earlier, the engaged unaware lack awareness of the registration process but would be motivated to register if they had this information.



The key communications need for this group is information. Persuasion is also likely to play an important role in reinforcing engagement in registration (and subsequently, voting).

The table below outlines the key communications needs and potential channels for the *engaged unaware*.

Sample groups	Information	Persuasion	Channels
• Young people • Commonwealth citizens • EU Citizens	Why register? • Explain the need to register in order to vote • Clarify eligibility How to register? • Options for ways to register – it's easy	Why register? • Registration as a route to improved credit rating • Registration as a route to 'belonging'	• TV, posters • Online advertising • Facebook • Targeted press and TV channels for commonwealth and EU citizens • Events and stalls

The *engaged unaware* have specific needs around information and channels. In terms of information there needs to be an explanation of the need to register before they can vote. Across the research a large number of young people simply did not know about registration and the introduction of IER is an opportunity to address this.

For EU and Commonwealth citizens in particular there needs to be more clarity around eligibility.

Quote:
"I'd think the whole kind of the thing would be better if I saw something like when I arrived at Heathrow, saying – are you a Commonwealth citizen, did you know you can vote in the UK? I can pick that up and go – Oh my God, I can vote, that's really cool, and then I will obviously like go through this process 'cause it seems like a good thing."

Commonwealth, London

Along with information about registration and eligibility, it is important to show that there various ways to register and that it can be easy.

Quote:
"When I first came I tended to get, it was an overseas visitor's card and that kind of gave you some information about where you can apply for a bank account and all kind of stuff, so it probably could include information on that."

Commonwealth, London

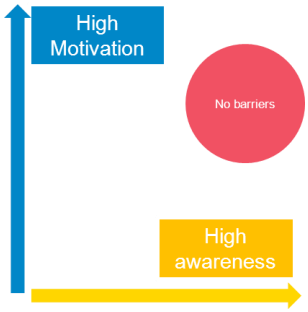
It is clear that some persuasion is also required and this can be achieved by describing registration as a route to improved credit rating and as a route to 'belonging' in the UK.

The channels most likely to achieve success with this group include a mix of traditional and social media such as; television, poster and online advertising (for example, via Facebook). More specific and targeted press and television channels for Commonwealth and EU citizens would raise the campaign profile further.

For young people events and stalls at college, universities and job fairs could help to place IER on their list of things "to do" at some point in the future.

9.4 Registration typology: Voters: communication needs

While *voters* have no barriers to registration and voting, they still require information about the new system of IER.



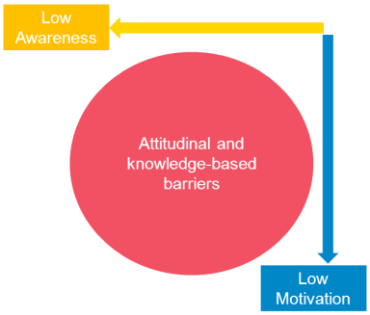
Sample groups	Information	Persuasion	Channels
• Especially over-25s	• Reassurance around data matching • Reassurance that the new system will be easy & straightforward	Why register? • Reasons for the change to the system	• All channels • Less emphasis on online channels than for young people • Leaflets & press

Information needs for this type include reassurances around data matching as well as a reassurance that the new system will be easy and straightforward. Even though they are well engaged and motivated, persuasion will also be an important element; any communication will need to explain the reasons for the change to the system, highlighting how they will benefit, wherever possible.

All channels such as TV, leaflets, posters are accessible to this group so there are no restrictions in how the messages can reach them; although there could probably be less emphasis on online channels such as Facebook.

9.5 Registration typology: Apathetic disengaged: communication needs

The *apathetic disengaged* have both attitudinal and knowledge based barriers so information and persuasion are equally important.



There are a range of channels that are likely to reach this audience. Given the large number of young people within this type (as with the *engaged unaware*) popular channels include online links and events and stalls at places of education including schools, colleges and universities.

Sample groups	Information	Persuasion	Channels
Young people, all ethnicities Not UK-born	**Politics and voting** • Clarity on policies and candidates • Eligibility to vote **Registration** • The need to register in order to vote • Registration process • New system promotes independence	**Why register?** • Importance of voting • Importance of registering • Registration as a route to improved credit rating	• TV, posters • Online advertising • Facebook ads • Targeted press and TV channels for non UK-born • Events and stalls

To counter the knowledge based barriers for this type there is a need for information regarding politics, voting and registration.

Quote:

"Well if you want to vote then that is the benefit otherwise you can't vote I am guessing. Apart from that I can't see any other benefit of registering; I don't see anything else."

Young South Asian, Glasgow

In terms of politics and voting they need clarity on policies and candidates and a clearer idea of where and when they are eligible to vote e.g. students were unaware they could register at their term time address. There is clearly appetite for digestible information on this topic and the research suggests that increased understanding of politics is likely to encourage people within this type to feel confident in voting – and therefore engage in registering to vote[18].

Information on the registration process and the importance of registering in order to vote needs to be explained initially, followed by a clear explanation of how the new system will promote independence via personal ownership of registering to vote.

[18] Although an improved understanding of politics was identified as a key need for some groups, this is not necessarily something for the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission to be responsible for delivering.

In addition to the knowledge based barriers, this group also has significant attitudinal barriers which necessitate persuasion in the form of an explanation of the importance of voting and registering.

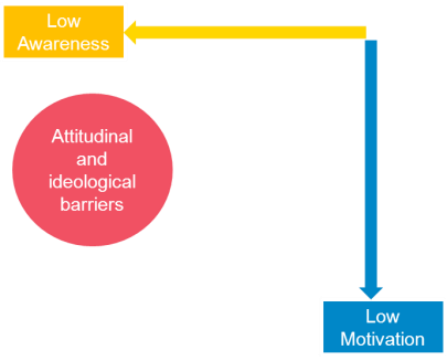
For young people in this group, there are various channels to access them using a mix of national campaigns (via television and posters) and social media (Facebook and online advertising).

It may also be worth targeting the communications for those born outside the UK via culture and language specific print and broadcast media.

Events and stalls would also work, but some targeting of events by group will be required. For example; stalls at concerts and student union events for young people; while stalls at Melas, carnivals and community based events for those born outside the UK.

9.6 Registration typology: Frustrated cynics: communication needs

Frustrated cynics have attitudinal and ideological barriers to registration so will require a great deal of persuasion.



Sample groups	Information	Persuasion	Channels

• Young people
• UK-born ethnic minorities
	Politics and voting
	• Relevance of politics to everyday life
	• Clarity on policies and candidates
	Registration
	• The need to register in order to vote
	• Registration process
		Why vote?
		• Importance of politics to everyday life
		  ○ Local issues
		  ○ Key services
		• Important to have a stake / have a say
		• Potential to influence
			• TV, posters
			• Online advertising
			• Facebook

As with the *apathetic disengaged,* to counter *frustrated cynics'* knowledge based barriers; they will need information on politics, voting and registration.

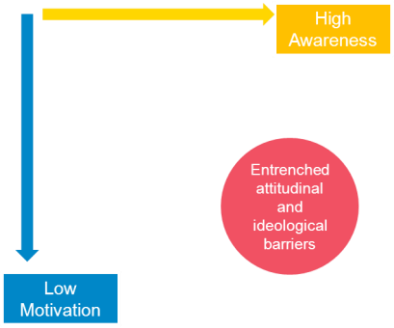
In terms of politics and voting they need to be convinced that politics and voting are relevant to their everyday life. They also need clarity on policies and candidates as they felt that they could not see any differences between the parties and candidates. They also need information on the registration process and the importance of registering in order to vote. .

In addition to the knowledge based barriers, this group also has substantial ideological barriers which require consistent and continuous messaging around the importance of politics to everyday life in terms of local issues and key services. The importance of everyone having a stake in society and having a say needs to be emphasised to this group. They may often feel disenfranchised so the potential to influence the local and national agenda needs to be stressed whenever possible.

As well as reaching them via a television and poster campaign, this group can also be accessed via online advertising and Facebook.

9.7 Registration typology: Deliberate non-voters: communication needs

Deliberate non-voters have entrenched attitudinal and ideological barriers which will need to be addressed via a combination of information and persuasion.



Sample groups	Information	Persuasion	Channels
• Over 25s • Commonwealth citizens • EU Citizens	• Reassurance around data matching • Reassurance that the new system will be easy and straightforward	**Why vote?** • Voting as an important right • Importance of participation in the country you live in • Local issues, jobs	• TV, posters • Leaflets and press

To counter barriers to voting and registration found amongst this type they will need to have some reassurances around data matching as well as reassurances that the new system will be easy and straightforward.

Case Study:
Matt came to the UK from New Zealand about five years ago and in that time he has moved about three times; usually renting with a group of friends. He doesn't know his neighbours or what goes on locally; as a result he finds it hard to connect with local issues. So when the letter about registration comes through the letterbox he ignores it; not only is it addressed to the landlord but he's not sure how long he's going to be living in the area. It just doesn't seem worth the hassle.

Commonwealth and EU citizens in particular need to be made to feel that they are part of the UK. Any messages targeted at these groups need to stress that voting is an important right and also the importance of participation in the country they live in with regards to the impact on local issues and employment.

Traditional channels such as television and print media (posters, leaflets and press) would be the best way of accessing this group.

9.8 Registration typology: Vulnerable groups: communication needs

Vulnerable groups include recent arrivals to the UK, those with English as a second language as well as people with learning difficulties and low literacy.

Sample groups	Information	Support	Channels
• English as a second language • Learning difficulties • Recent arrivals to the UK	Emphasise ease and simplicity • New system will be straightforward	Promote face to face channels • Reassurance that face to face channels are available to access support	• Broad mix • Meet language needs • Via intermediaries

Vulnerable groups need support in order to register to vote. Language and literacy difficulties may mean that they are often ignored and do not know to ask about registration in the first place. So any information about registration and the new system should emphasise ease and simplicity. Any information should also clarify clear routes for support and where this can be easily accessed.

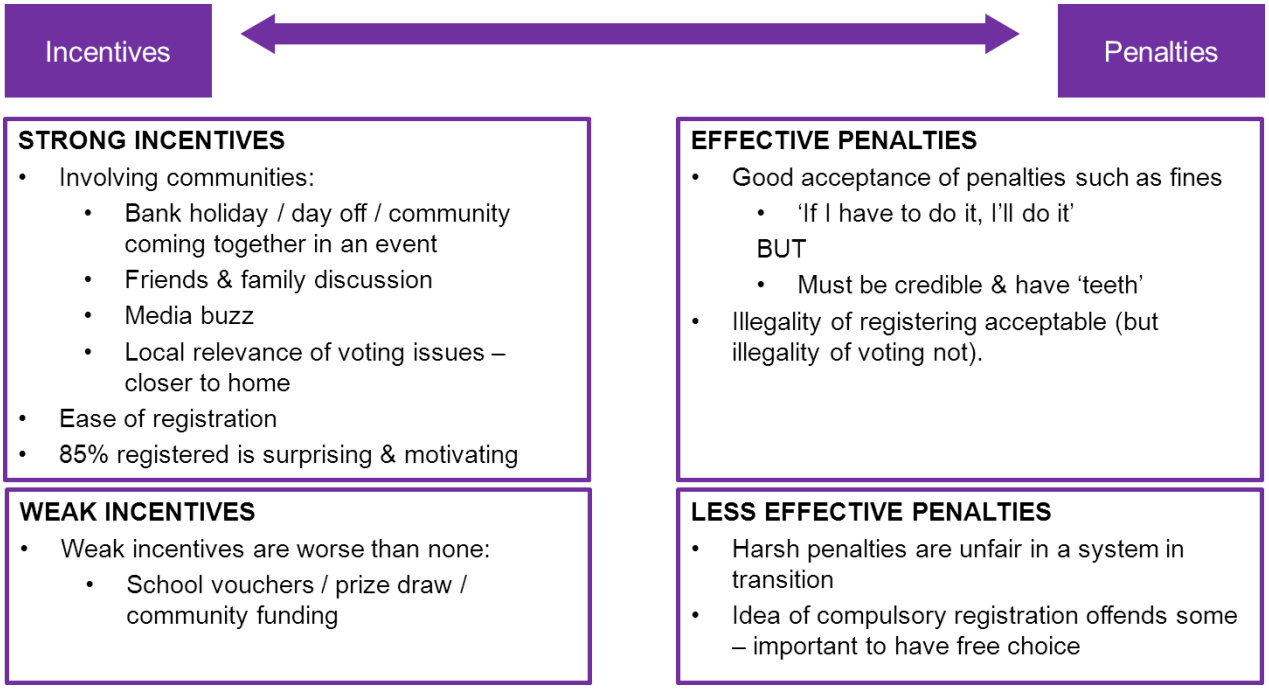
Delivery of this information should ideally be face to face as this will give people the opportunity to ask questions and have these answered immediately. Face-to-face is often preferred by these groups who are familiar and comfortable in seeking advice and information in this format.

A broad mix of channels can be used but it is important that language needs are met as this is often the main barrier. For some harder to reach groups, intermediaries (such as existing support networks at community centres, Citizens Advice Bureau, or informal community leaders) may be important to provide additional reassurance.

Case Study:
Irena did not know about registration or about her rights to voting in the UK. It was only when someone knocked on her door that she learned more about it and registered to vote there and then. She thinks it was someone from the council. They were very helpful and spent some time explaining it to her 12 year old daughter who speaks English fluently and she was then able to interpret for her. Irena feels that unless someone had come to speak to her, she probably wouldn't have bothered to find out about Registration and voting. She's really pleased that she can vote now though.

10 Compliance

In order to comply with the new system a balance needs to be struck between 'incentives' and 'penalties'. The diagram below provides an overview of views regarding these.



The ideal system for compliance would have a set of strong incentives and effective penalties.

10.1 Incentives

The research suggests that the strongest incentives include people coming together in their communities to discuss issues of local relevance. This could be facilitated by a bank holiday or a special day where the issue of voting and registration is highlighted. Creating a media buzz could also enable people to have discussions with friends and family.
The ease of registration was often a surprise to those who were unfamiliar with the registration process which suggests that this could comprise a motivating incentive. Participants were also surprised to know that around 85% of people are registered to vote and 'being part of it' was considered motivating for some.

It should be noted that weak incentives are considered worse than none. These included financial awards such as school vouchers, prize draw or community funding. Voting is seen as too important to be associated with this kind of incentive.

10.2 Penalties

With regards to penalties, there is an acceptance that fines will work but they will need to be credible and enforceable. Any threat of a fine will soon appear toothless if there is a failure to follow up. It is important to note that whilst illegality of non-registration is acceptable, the illegality of non-voting is not.

Harsh penalties could be seen as less effective as they would appear unfair, especially in a system in transition. Any proposed penalties should be communicated with a long lead-in time so that everyone is aware what failure to register could result in, mitigating the appearance of systemic unfairness. The idea of compulsory registration was met with mixed views whilst the idea of compulsory voting offends many and was seen as unfair as it is important to have free choice. This is particularly true of those who may use non-voting as a form of protest.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interpreting the findings.

11 Conclusions and Recommendations

When interpreting the findings of this research it is important to bear in mind the following:

- The qualitative approach: Qualitative research emphasises self-expression and insight over numerical outcomes and therefore relies on detailed discussion with a relatively small sample; although the research was carried out with a range of people this sample cannot be considered representative of the general public.
- Policy development: The research took place during the developmental stage of IER policy. Implementation plans were still in development and therefore ideas and processes tested during the research were ideas for discussion and not reflective of final policy.
- Public awareness: As the research was carried out during the developmental stage general awareness of IER was low as it preceded any public awareness campaign.

With these factors in mind, the conclusions and recommendations are grouped into five key areas for consideration:

1. Key existing challenges and opportunities
2. Potential risks of IER
3. Access to registration
4. Core universal information needs
5. Specialist information needs

11.1 Key existing challenges and opportunities

The research highlights a number of opportunities and barriers to registration amongst under-registered groups that are likely to carry forward to the new system of IER:

The intertwined nature of registration and voting: It is clear that when thinking about registration, participants think about voting. Registration is not seen as a discrete activity which means that those disengaged with the act of voting lack motivation to register. The strong perceptual linkage between voting and registration raises some questions for how best to encourage people to register. With many voicing that they would feel motivated to register if they planned to vote, or if they were more informed about politics and voting in general, the research suggests that one potential route for increasing registration is via increased engagement in voting and politics. However, the research also indicates that messages such as 'registering gives you the option to vote' could be motivating when coupled with awareness raising of the registration process and other related benefits including societal (for example, being part of it and having your say on local issues) and personal (for example, impact on credit rating).

Lack of awareness of the registration process: The lack of awareness of the existing registration process across the research was high. It is clear that an awareness raising campaign is needed. The research suggests that improved awareness of the need to register in general is likely to have a positive impact on registration particularly amongst those who are engaged but unaware. It should be noted that the Electoral Commission will run a national campaign in the run up to the introduction of IER and continue to campaign before elections take place.

Lack of resonance: The research has identified a plethora of reasons for why some people feel disengaged from voting and therefore lack motivation to register. In addition to increased awareness of the registration process, these participants require further triggers to encourage them to register. These could include societal benefits (having a say, voting as an duty/ obligation, voting as an important right, voting as a hard-won right); local benefits (opportunity to shape local issues and services); and personal benefits (impact on credit rating, a sense of 'belonging').

Lack of personally addressed correspondence. It is clear that currently letters addressed 'to the occupier' are unlikely to be opened by many people for a range of reasons. Whilst the system of IER will promote the use the individual letters and goes some way to mitigate this barrier, it does raise particular problems for those whose personal details are not captured in a data-matching exercise and will receive a Household Enquiry Form. Encouraging ownership of a letter not bearing an individuals' name is likely to be difficult, but could be tackled to some extent by an awareness raising campaign to ensure that people are pre-warned and expect to receive the letter as well as ensuring that the envelope itself refers to the importance and origins of the content. The research suggests that where a personally addressed letter cannot be provided, offering other routes and opportunities for registration will be essential.

Engaging those most cynical. The research identified a group of people whose cynicism is currently a key deterrent to registration. Awareness-raising alone is unlikely to change their views on registration, and there is also some resistance towards some of the motivational messages as detailed above. For a core number of this group it is clear that a perceptual shift over time is needed to change views and attitudes towards voting and registration.

11.2 Potential risks of IER

Looking specifically at the new IER system and the processes involved, there are a number of potential risks which should be mitigated to ensure comfort and engagement in the new system of registration. It should be noted that these risks are based on detailed discussion of the potential processes of how IER could work, and how participants felt about these.

Loss of gatekeeper. The key risk of IER is the loss of a proactive influencer or gatekeeper who takes responsibility or encourages registration under the current household system. This is of particular concern amongst young people who rely on

a parent, or in households where there are literacy and language barriers amongst some residents. The research suggests that this can be mitigated via a campaign to encourage personal ownership of registration under the new IER system. However, it is also clear that encouraging existing positive influences in households will be important, as well as ensuring there are clear routes for support for those with literacy and language barriers.

Providing your National Insurance number. The idea of providing a National Insurance number to register to vote was met with some apprehension and unease amongst some. The research suggests that this request has potential to disengage some people from the registration process. This can be addressed by providing clear reassurances regarding how the National Insurance number will be used, how it will be kept secure, and why it is required. This reflects previous research[19] amongst the general public exploring provision of personal identifiers during an annual canvass. This research also found that people required clarification for why personal identifiers were needed with similar comments regarding how this information would be used and stored being made. This previous research also queried the security of providing a National Insurance number which was similarly discussed as a key concern with this research. It should be noted that most participants in the research felt that they would be able to access their National Insurance number and therefore few felt that in practice this would be difficult. Many participants also noted that they would feel comfortable in providing their National Insurance number for this purpose although some were keen to question the need and use of this personal identifier.

Concerns regarding data-matching for automatic registration and identification of people to invite to register. Whilst overall, participants were comfortable with the idea of data-matching for both automatic registration (for those already on the Electoral Register) and identification of people to invite to register; it was spontaneously met with some degree of push back. Participants queried how the process would work, and expressed anxiety around the use of personal information and the security of this. Once the idea was fully explained, participants felt more at ease with the process and it is clear that some reassurances will be needed, and will go some way to alleviating spontaneous concerns. Specifically reassurances regarding the use of personal data, security processes, involved parties and confirmation of data protection is required.

Lack of awareness of IER: As we might expect, awareness regarding IER was extremely low in England, Scotland and Wales. However, even across the six

[19] Ipsos MORI/Electoral Commission (2010): *Research into the collection of personal identifiers. Qualitative research study conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Electoral Commission*. Electoral Commission: London

depth interviews carried out in Northern Ireland (where IER is already in place), awareness was low. This suggests that the introduction of IER will need to be supported by a high profile campaign.

Access to registration

The research suggests that secure online registration is desired by participants, and seen as essential by young people who also seek the ability to register via mobile phone technology. As part of this, the provision of links via trusted websites is seen as appropriate. With the research sample in general voicing a preference for links to be provided via government sites, younger people are more open to links to also be provided via private company sites such as Facebook, Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, Youtube and Skype.

Whilst online is a popular channel for registration it is vital to offer more traditional routes. Postal registration is a clear preference for those who do not have internet access, or who have heightened security concerns in providing personal identifiers online.

More traditional channels are also required by more vulnerable groups who have differing support needs that require tailored engagement. The need for this type of support is often driven by accessibility requirements, low literacy or English as a second language. With these groups in mind, telephone and face-to-face channels for registration are required.

It is clear that there is some appetite for being able to register alongside other transactions. There is strong preference for this to be alongside other government transactions and for any sharing of data across transactions to be clearly explained and secure.

11.3 Core universal information needs

Overall there are some core information needs relating to registration that are pertinent to all of the groups included in the research. These universal information needs are driven by existing barriers to registration as well as concerns relating to IER but are all potential routes for increasing engagement in registration.

- Increase awareness of registration process.
- Encourage engagement in voting (and therefore registration) by providing general information about voting and politics.
- Pre-warn people about the change to IER so they know what to expect and are comfortable with registering.
- Communicate and emphasise that the new system will enable personal ownership and encourage this.
- Provide reassurances regarding:
    - The ease of registering with IER.
    - The range of ways to register.

- Security of registration and data protection.
- How any data-matching exercise will work and be secure.
- How any personal identifiers will be used and kept secure.

- Highlight the rationale for registration and associated benefits including:
  - Ease of registering
    - Ability to register online.
    - All you need is your name, date of birth and national insurance number.
  - Have your say
    - If you do not register you don't have the option to vote.
    - If you don't register and vote you can't complain about decisions made[20].
    - Shape the future and make a difference.
  - Have a say on local issues
    - Shape local issues in your area.
    - Have your say on issues that directly affect you.
  - Voting/ registration as a duty or right
    - Voting as a hard-won right.
    - Voting as a privilege.
    - Voting/ registration as an obligation.
  - Being part of it
    - Voting as a route to 'belonging'.
  - Improved credit rating.

11.4 Specialist information needs

There are some specific information needs for vulnerable groups who require a tailored approach to registration. In particular there needs to be clear routes for support including information on how to access support and what support is available. This should include how to access information in different languages.

Amongst vulnerable groups it is also important to consider the role of intermediaries such as community leaders, existing community networks and more formal sources such as community centres. Ensuring that these intermediaries are equipped and able to support vulnerable groups with registration will be key.

[20] Though some people may believe that in not voting their give up their moral right to complain, this is not true in a legal sense.

12 Appendices

12.1 Group and interview discussion guide

Cabinet Office: Under-registered groups

Discussion Guide FINAL

Objectives:

Explore potential barriers/ resistance and motivation to register to vote:

- Current level of engagement in politics, and awareness of electoral process.
- Awareness of process for registering to vote and any misapprehensions or misunderstandings.
- What encourages/ motivates the target audience to register to vote and who influences this?
- What prevents the target audience to register to vote, and who, if anyone influences this?
- Views on compliance and formal and informal compulsion.

Identify and explore views of IER and any potential barriers and resistance to registering that this may bring:

- Registering preferences and suggested improvements to make registering easier.
- Preferred channels including venues, combined with other government transactions, online.
- Views on providing personal identifiers including NINO and DOB.
- What concerns does IER raise?
- IER expectations.
- What would help/ encourage people to register under the new IER system?

Notes:

This guide is intended to guide the discussion however; the exact flow and question wording will be tailored by the moderator to best fit the group. Resultantly, not all questions may be asked in the order below, or in the wording below.

This discussion guide will be used for focus groups, mini-groups/ triads/ paired depth interviews and individual depth interviews. The timings are colour-coded for these as follows:

- *Focus group timings are in **blue**.*
- *Mini-group and triad/ paired depth interview timings are in **red**.*
- *Individual depth interview timings are in **green**.*

Moderator background:

"Great Britain currently uses a system of household registration – where the 'head of household' can decide who to register in a property – that dates back to the beginning of the last century. Changing the way we register to vote is important in our modern society because it gives individuals responsibility for their own right to vote (rather than leaving this to a 'head of household'). It should also make the electoral register more secure, by making it easier to check the identity of people who register. This can help to restore trust in electoral system.

The transition to a new system also provides an opportunity to look at how the system of electoral registration can be modernised to make it easier, more convenient and more efficient for people to use and administrators to run. Proportionate and appropriate use of people's data is at the heart of the proposals. Data will be handled securely. People will only be asked to provide the minimum additional information necessary for the purposes of checking their eligibility and ensuring the accuracy of the register, and that data will only be used for this purpose. No additional information will be placed in the electoral register and the register will continue to be created and held locally – there will be no new national database."

1. Introduction

10 mins | 5 mins | 3 mins

(Aim: to introduce participants to the research and each other)

- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.
- Introduce self and GfK NOP.
- Explain purpose of the research: We are carrying out the research on behalf of the Cabinet Office who are interested in knowing what people think about registering to vote. I'll explain more about this throughout the course of our discussion, and I will be showing you some ideas and asking for your comments on these. The ideas that we are going to look at are still being developed and what we show you might not be exactly how it looks when it is finalised.
- Explain audio recording.
- Reassure participants that the discussion is confidential, and that it complies with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.
- Explain the discussion will last for **2 hours** | **1.5 hours** | **1 hour**.
- Explain the importance of being able to say what you think, there are no right or wrong answers and please be honest.
- Any questions?

Participant introductions

- Please tell me a little bit about yourself…
    - First name, age, who you live with
    - Where do you spend most of your time?
    - Who do you spend the most time with?
- When we invited you to the groups we asked you about how involved you are in your local community. What did you say about the following:
    - Feel that you are a part of the community in the local area where you live.
    - Tend to meet new people in the local area where you live.
    - Know a lot of people in the local area where you live.
    - Attend local events.
    - Can have your say in local issues.

2. General engagement in politics and voting 10 mins | 5 mins | 5 mins

(Aim: to understand levels of interest in politics and knowledge and awareness of the process for registering to vote)

Moderator please note: the focus of this section is on the methods of engagement rather than the content of policies between political parties etc.

Today we are going to be talking about registering to vote, but first of all – what comes to mind when you think about voting?

EXERCISE: word association

- Flip chart responses to 'what comes to mind when you think about voting?'

Just to clarify, when we talk about voting we mean voting in general or local elections and referendums. So for example, a general election would be voting to choose a candidate to represent your local constituency in the House of Commons. A local election would be voting to choose who will be a councillor in your local area.

- What do you think about voting?
- Who here has voted before?
- When would you consider voting?
- When might you decide not to vote?

What comes to mind when I say 'politics'?

- What does 'politics' mean?
- How interested are you in politics?
    - How interested are your friends and family?
    - Who talks about politics? When? What do they say?
    - Would you say you are more or less interested in politics than your friends and family?
- How does politics affect you?

- How do you/ people vote?
    - What happens?
    - Can anyone vote?
    - Who can/ can't vote?

Before you can vote, you have to register to vote…

- Has anyone heard about this?
    - What have you heard?
    - Where did you hear this?
- How do you register to vote?
    - What does registering to vote involve?
- Who do you register with?

    Prompt:

- Do you register on a national or local level?
- Who is in charge of the register?

- Do you know if you are registered to vote?

3. Motivations and barriers 10 mins 5 mins | 5 mins

(Aim: explore motivations and barriers to registering to vote)

We know that some people register to vote and some people don't…

EXERCISE: **benefits vs. drawbacks**

- Flip chart positives and negatives to registering:
  - What are the benefits of registering to vote?
  - Why do some people register?
  - What would encourage you to register to vote?
  - What are the drawbacks of registering to vote?
  - Why are some people not registered?
  - What puts you off registering to vote?
  - What can make it difficult to register?

- What type of person registers to vote?
- Who do you know who has registered to vote?
  - Which family members/ friends do you think have probably registered?
    - Why are they likely to have registered?

For those who are registered:

- What encouraged you to register to vote?
- Why did you decide to register?
- What was the experience like?
  - What was easy/ difficult?

For those who are not registered:

- Why haven't you registered?
- Do you think it would be easy or difficult? Why?

4. The Registration System 60 mins | 50 mins | 30 mins

(Aim: Clarify how the current system works and explain how the new system will work and explore reactions to this)

I'd like us to think a little more now about how people go about registering to vote…

STIMLULUS: How people register to vote at the moment

- Does anyone recognise the form/ has anyone heard about this before?
- Who in your household would be responsible for filling out the form?
    - *Moderator: please note that this is of particular importance for groups who might rely on others to complete the form for them e.g. people in care homes/ with literacy issues.*
    - Why/ why not you?
    - How would you feel about being responsible for filling out the form? Why?
- How easy or difficult does this seem?
    - What could make it easier?

STIMULUS: **Changes to how people register to vote**

- What do you think about the fact that the way in which people register to vote is going to change?
- What does the new name (Individual Electoral Registration) suggest to you?
    - How do you think it might be changing?

STIMULUS: Individual Electoral Registration

- What do you think about the change to individual registration?
    - What are the benefits of this?
    - What are the drawbacks?
    - How do you feel about registering individually?
    - How easy or difficult do you think it might be?

Moderator please explain: one way to help simplify the move from the current system to individual registration is to check the details of individuals who are already on the electoral register against other public data sets. If the details match, the person can be automatically added to the register without having to provide their details.

Then show stimulus:

STIMULUS: **Registering to vote (1) AND Confirming existing records examples (1)**

- If you are/were *[registered/unregistered respondents]* already on the electoral register what do/would you think about your details being matched against other public data sets?
    - What are the benefits of this?
    - What are the drawbacks of this?

- What concerns do you have about this?
- How comfortable are you with this idea? Why/ why not?

- How do you envisage this would work?
  - What types of organisations do you think could be used for this matching with the electoral register?
    - Which organisations would you be happy to transfer your data? Why?
    - Would it make any difference if the organisation was in the private sector as opposed to the public sector (e.g. a credit reference agency?)
    - Which would you not want to be transferring your data? Why?
  - What more information would you like to know? Why?
  - What reassurances would you expect?
- How easy or difficult do you think this would be for you?
  - Why?
- How would you feel about being automatically put on the new electoral register?

Moderator please explain: Matching the names on the electoral register might also highlight that some people who could be registered are not. The electoral registration officer could then use this information to write to them and invite them to register.

Then show stimulus:

STIMULUS: **Confirming existing records examples (2)**

- If you are not/were not *[unregistered/registered respondents]* already on the electoral register what do/would you think about your details being highlighted as someone who could be registered?
  - What are the benefits of this?
  - What are the drawbacks of this?
  - What concerns do you have about this?
  - How comfortable are you with this idea? Why/ why not?

STIMULUS: **Registering to vote (2)**

- What do you think about having a letter sent to your home?
- What would you do if you received a letter like this?
  - What would you do with the letter?
  - Who would you show it to?
  - Who would you talk to about it?
- What would encourage you to provide your details and register to vote?
- What would put you off?
- What, if any, concerns do you have about registering to vote in this way?
  - What would concern you the most? Why?
  - What could be done to alleviate this concern?
- How would you feel about providing your date of birth? Why?
  - How does this make you feel about registering to vote?

- How would you feel about providing your national insurance number? Why?
    - How does this make you feel about registering to vote?
- How would you provide the information to your local electoral registration office?
- What would be the easiest way for you to provide this information?

  Spontaneous then prompt:
    - Post
    - Online
        - Do you currently have access to the internet?
        - How would you feel about providing your details online? Why?
        - What role do you think Facebook could play?
        - What about an App?
    - Face-to-face
        - Where would you be happy to go to?
        - Where would not be appropriate?
        - What do you think about going to the local Post Office? Why?
        - What do you think about going to your Council offices? Why?
        - Where else could you go to provide these details?
    - Telephone
    - Other?
- Out of all of the ways we've just discussed, which way would you prefer to provide your details?
- What help would you like in providing your details?
    - What would be useful?
    - Who could provide this help?

For those who are online:

- It could be that you could be prompted/ reminded to register to vote at different places…what do you think about the following giving you a web-link to directing you an online registration page?:
    - NHS website
    - Student Loans Company website
    - NUS website
    - Tenancy Deposit Schemes' website
    - Facebook website

STIMULUS: **If you do not have a national insurance number**

- What do you think about this?
- How do you feel about providing these documents?
    - How easy/ difficult would this be?
- How would you prefer to provide these documents?
    - Photocopy?
    - Face-to-face? Where would be convenient?
- What would make this process easier?

- What help could be provided?
    - What would be useful?
    - Who could provide this?
- How do you feel about writing a letter?
    - What about getting someone to sign this?
        - How easy/ difficult would this be?
        - Who would you ask?
    - What support/ help could be provided?
        - Who could provide this?

The electoral registration office wants to make it as easy as possible for people to register to vote…

- How do you think they could make it easier?
- What are the key things you think they should look at to make sure that it is an easy process?
- What are the things that you would like made easier?

STIMULUS: Registering to vote at other times

- What types of places do you tend to regularly visit in your local area?
    - Flipchart a list
- Which of these places could you register to vote at?
    - Which would be convenient? Why?
    - To what extent would this make registering easier?

IF SHORT OF TIME SKIP THIS STIMULUS: What happens if…(1)

- What do you think about this?
- How would you feel if this happened in your household?
- How would you feel if everyone else in your household had their entry on the register confirmed through cross checking against trusted public data sources but you did not?
    - How would it make you feel about registering to vote? Why?
    - What would encourage you to register to vote?
    - What would put you off registering to vote?

STIMULUS: What happens if…(2)

- What do you think about this?
- What do you think Grace will do with the letter?
- Let's imagine that Grace decides that she does want to register to vote…
    - Why do you think she has decided to register?
    - How could she provide her details to the electoral registration office?
- Let's imagine that Grace decides not to register to vote…
    - Why do you think she might not register?
    - What might make it difficult for her to register?
    - What might be putting her off?

- What could encourage her to register?
- What would make it easier for her to register?

STIMULUS: What happens if…(3)

- What do you think about this?
- Which option to do you prefer?
  - Why?
- What are the benefits of the first option?
- What are the drawbacks of the first option?
- What are the benefits of the second option?
- What are the drawbacks of the second option?

STUDENTS ONLY STIMULUS: What happens if…(4)

- What do you think about this?
- Did you know that you can be registered at home and at your term-time address?
  - Where have you heard about this?
  - How could you find out about this?
- What would your preference be? Why?
- How does the fact that you can register at home and at your term-time address make you feel about registering to vote?
  - What would you prefer to do?

5. Compliance 15 mins | 15 mins | 10 mins

(Aim: understand views regarding the notion of formal and informal compulsion)

- How important do you think it is to register to vote? Why?
- How many people do you think are registered to vote in your local area?
    - How does that make you feel about registering to vote?
- How many of your friends and family do you think are registered to vote?
    - How does that make you feel about registering to vote?
- How would you feel if you found out that 85% of people in the UK are registered to vote?
    - How would it make you feel about registering to vote?
- How would you feel if you found out that most of your friends and family were registered to vote?
    - How would it make you feel about registering to vote?

EXERCISE: thought bubble

- I'd like to you complete this thought bubble. Please think about what would definitely make you register to vote.
- Once completed share responses…
    - What does everything think about these ideas?
    - Which ones would make you think twice about registering to vote? Why?

I'd now like to show you some questions that some people have had about registering to vote, or have suggested that might encourage people to register to vote…

- Tell me what you think about these.
- Would they make you think twice about registering to vote? Why/ why not?

QUESTIONS/ IDEAS TO SHOW:
Do you think voting is a good thing to do?
What would happen if nobody in your local area registered to vote?
How would you feel if you were given frequent reminders to register to vote?
In Australia it is illegal not to vote. What do you think about this?
At the moment in the UK anyone who provides false information to their Electoral Registration Officer or who does not respond when required to provide information to their Electoral Registration Officer e.g. an annual canvass form is liable to a maximum fine of £1000 fine. What do you think about this?
How would you feel if there was a deadline for registering? For example, if you did not register within 3 months you would lose the opportunity to register and vote in any elections or referendums for 1 year?
How would you feel if the Council areas with the highest number of registrations received free school equipment for local schools?
How would you feel if everyone who registered to vote was entered into a prize draw?

6. Summary and Close 10 mins | 5 mins | 5 mins

(Aim: to finish up the discussion and thank participants)

- What do you think would be the best way to let people know about this change to the way in which people register to vote?
    - What are the important things to tell people?
    - Who should tell them?

To finish, I'd like to ask each person for an answer to the following two questions:

- What would encourage you to register to vote under the new individual electoral registration system?
- What would put you off registering to vote under the new individual electoral registration system?

- Any final questions?

Thank and Close

7. Vox pops 5 mins | 5 mins | 2 mins

(Aim: gather vox pop comments at approximately half of the research sessions to be used in the final outputs)

Moderator: please ask two participants to take part in a quick vox pop where you will ask to reiterate a couple of the key views to emerge from the discussion.

12.2 Research sample and locations

The table below shows the breakdown of the focus groups, mini groups, paired depth interviews or triads and individual depth interviews achieved by location.

Location	Type of group / depth
Aberystwyth	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25+, male) / registered
Birmingham	Mini group: South Asian (Bangladeshi, aged 25 and over, females) / non-registered
	Mini group: Black Caribbean (aged 25 and over, mixed gender) / non-registered
	Mini group: Black African (aged 25 and over, males) / registered
	Mini group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, males) / non registered
	Paired depth: Black African (aged 25+, males) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, female) / registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, female) / registered
Brighton	Focus group: Students not living in halls (aged 17-24, males) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
Cardiff	Paired depth: EU nationals (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
Exeter	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, females) / non-registered
	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, females) / registered
Glasgow	Focus group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, females) / non-registered
	Mini group: South Asian (Pakistani, aged 25 and over, males) / Non-registered
Leeds	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, males) / non-registered
	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, males) / registered
	Mini group: Black African (aged 25 and over, females) / non-registered

	Mini group: South Asian (Indian, aged 25 and over, mixed gender) / non-registered
	Paired depth: Black African (aged 25 and over, males) / registered
	In depth interview: Learning difficulty/low levels of literacy (aged 17-24, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Learning difficulty/low levels of literacy (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, male) / registered
Liverpool	Paired depth: EU nationals (aged 25 and over, female) / registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered
London	Focus group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, females) / non-registered
	Focus group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, females) / registered
	Mini group: Black African (males) / non-registered
	Mini group: Black Caribbean (females) / registered
	Mini group: Students living in halls (aged 17-24, mixed gender) / non-registered
	Mini group: Students not living in halls (aged 17-24, mixed gender) / non-registered
	Mini group: South Asian (mixed gender), at least 2 ESL / registered
	Mini group: Commonwealth nationals aged 25-44 (mixed gender) / non-registered
	Paired depth: Young people (aged 17-24, males, non–students) / non-registered
	Paired depth: Black African with translator (females) / non-registered
	Paired depth: Black African (females) / registered
	Paired depth: Black Caribbean (males) / registered
	Paired depth: Black Caribbean (females) / registered
	Paired depth: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, non-students, males) / non-registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered

	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, male) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Physical disability (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students) / registered
	In depth interview: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students) / registered
Manchester	Mini group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, mix of students/non-students, males) / non-registered
	Focus group: Young BMEs (aged 17-24, males) / non-registered
Northern Ireland	In depth interview: Resident in area of high levels of deprivation, female / non-registered
	In depth interview: Resident in area of high levels of deprivation, female / registered
	In depth interview: Young person, female / non-registered
	In depth interview: Living in communal establishment, male / non-registered
	In depth interview: Young person, male / registered
	In depth interview: Living in communal establishment, male / registered
Nottingham	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, females) / non-registered
	Focus group: Young people (aged 17-24, non-students, males) / non-registered
	Paired depth: Black African (females) / non-registered
	In depth interview: EU national (aged 25 and over, female) / non-registered
	In depth interview: Learning difficulty/low levels of literacy (17-24, male) / non-registered
Surrey	Mini group: Gypsy Traveller / non-registered