



UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH

# **BREXIT**

## **Rebuilding Relationships and Resilience**

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## Executive Summary

This report draws on data from 40 interviews with key stakeholders (supplemented by two focus groups and two training seminars) to provide a picture of the unique pressures facing the South West as a result of the Brexit process. It also outlines an agenda to develop a response to the consequent challenges.

- Uncertainty, particularly in the context of a possible 'No Deal' means that businesses are reluctant to plan for growth and invest in the future. At the same time potential trading partners are difficult to find given confusion over the position of the UK government. There is a lack of preparedness among smaller businesses in particular with negative impacts already being felt in supply chains.
- There is a lack of clarity around the replacement of EU funding such as the Shared Prosperity Fund which was deterring the development of public-private sector partnerships. Uncertainty over future funding was particularly impeding planning and decision making in the third sector.
- Information and communication from central government is exacerbating uncertainty – small businesses, in particular, are overloaded and there is a lack of targeted guidance and support. There is a failure of central government to consult properly with local and regional stakeholders. At the same time, Brexit is crowding out discussion and action on other pressing policy issues.
- Some sectors, such as professional services have been insulated from negative impacts and certain groups (tourism and hospitality) are more positive about the potential opportunities that Brexit may bring. Innovation and development is still happening and Brexit has forced some organisations to increase their resilience, develop stronger relationships closer to home and look for more creative ways of operating.
- But, there is scepticism over the ability of the UK to benefit from any opportunities for new trading relationships that may emerge from Brexit. The UK has had an insular attitude to international trade and Brexit has arguably compounded this which has damaged 'Brand Britain'. There needs to be more emphasis on pro-active strategies to develop an understanding of potential trading partners and the need for long-term relationships.
- Marginalised and vulnerable communities stand to lose most from the Brexit process. Disentangling Brexit from welfare reforms and wider existing social issues is complex and third sector organisations are struggling to deal with an increased workload in relation to the EU Settlement Scheme, Habitual Residence Test appeals and Universal Credit rules.
- Brexit has led to EU nationals' feeling less welcome in the UK. From migrant workers to tourist visitors, many feel that relationships between UK and EU

populations have been fractured. Respondents reported a rise in poverty driven problems, with the fragile and vulnerable hit hardest by the current climate.

- Irrespective of the outcome of Brexit, there is a need for closer co-operation between business and local government to cooperate to fill the void left by national government and re-engage communities that felt they had been 'left behind'.
- The Brexit process has presented several challenges surrounding the labour market. The loss of key workers is a major concern with a drift of EU nationals back to their home or other EU countries. This is exacerbated by the weak pound, stronger economic performance in the EU and the perception (noted above) of being less welcome in the UK. The reduction in the supply of labour from the EU could enhance the bargaining power of labour and consequently lead to increased wage costs.

### Recommendations

- The UK needs to develop a more proactive approach to international trade by providing the negotiating skills, regional knowledge, a culture of openness and cultural know-how that will help UK business forge positive relationships with international customers and partners. Advice and guidance over Brexit needs to be much more targeted and precise.
- Dialogue between public, private, third sector and community organisations in the South West needs to be encouraged and closer understandings developed. Organisations need to place social impact and good work at the centre of their concerns while large employers can act as mentors and exemplars within their communities and through their supply chains.
- Organisations need to prioritise the development of negotiation skills and other people-related capabilities which will: help businesses build positive relationships with new customers and clients; underpin more collaborative relationships between key stakeholders; and deepen employee engagement and productivity.

## **Introduction**

Much of the focus of Brexit has been on the UK government's capacity to negotiate a settlement with the EU and new international trading arrangements. In contrast, the preparedness of key stakeholders within the UK to forge new relationships and rebuild those damaged as a result of the political uncertainty surrounding Brexit has received much less attention. This report is the culmination of an impact and innovation project funded by the University of Plymouth which has attempted to increase our understanding of the challenges facing businesses, communities and vulnerable groups within society as a consequence of the Brexit process.

As part of the project researchers mapped the positions, interests and needs of a range of different groups. This involved interviews and conversations with 40 individuals representing business communities, local government, unions and the third sector. This report draws on this data to provide a picture of the unique pressures facing the South West at this time and also outlines an agenda to develop a response which will support groups and organisations with divergent interests as they begin to develop solutions to the specific problems and conflicts posed by Brexit.

## **The context**

Analysing the impact of Brexit is difficult, as it has not formally happened yet. Also, as has been widely noted, the range of potential scenarios for Brexit vary widely (Rutter and Owen 2018, Portes 2019). It could result in a radical break with European law or in essential continuity apart from leaving the political institutions of the EU, or there is still a possibility that the UK could remain. Nevertheless, Brexit as a political, economic and social process is a reality. The vote to leave on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, the triggering of article 50 on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017, the UK government's adoption of a relatively 'hard Brexit' posture have already had real effects. Clearly Brexit has inspired macro-political changes (including new political parties such as the Brexit Party) and placed great pressures on the leading parties, while intensifying divisions within the UK (Hobolt 2016, Surridge 2019, Montagu 2019).

Some describe it as a constitutional crisis as different sources of legitimacy and authority (the referendum vote, parliament and the government) are invoked and challenged in turn. Economically, it is beyond dispute that Brexit has led to a lower value of the pound (the pros and cons of this may be debated). Other economic impacts of the Brexit process are hard to prove but the often voiced concerns of many businesses about the risks of leaving the EU's single market and customs union do correlate with reduced investment in some sectors (De Lyon and Dhingra, 2019). Socially a rise in hate crime and in intra-communal tension has been noted (Burnett 2017, Virdee and McGeever 2018, Rzepnikowska 2019). Migration to the UK from the EU has reduced dramatically (Portes, 2019).

The Brexit negotiations have been tightly controlled by the government leading to tensions with devolved governments (Henderson et al. 2016, Rahmatian 2018, McEwen 2018). On the other hand Brexit and the anticipated repatriation of powers has been held up as an opportunity to further decentralise power throughout the UK. Areas often mentioned include farming, fisheries, environmental policy and public

sector procurement. Indeed, The UK's regional governance structures (urban and county councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have often been criticised as lacking in power (Deas et al. 2013, Almond et al. 2015, Billing et al. 2019). The key challenges facing regional and local institutions in the wake of Brexit are the end of EU funding, the impact on business, public services and community relations. The tools available to them to deal with these challenges are often very limited. In discussing all of these issues the prospect of a no deal Brexit merits discussion on its own (The UK in a Changing Europe, 2019). This is a much starker scenario than any negotiated agreement. It would amount to a radical rupture in the legal system that companies and organisations have been operating under.

The logistical challenges posed by this have been highlighted with logjams at key ports and consequent shortages of a range of products. The economic consequences are likely to be severe for agriculture, fisheries and those enterprises relying on trade with the EU. A range of legal disputes are also likely to emerge while a no-deal Brexit will inevitably intensify the political situation with the risk of intra-communal tensions. Local institutions have to try and plan for these scenarios (CloS Futures Group 2017, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board 2018, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2019).

Within the South West, Cornwall is in a unique position due to the extent of European funds it receives as an Objective One area (Di Cataldo, 2016). Cornwall also has a distinct LEP while the Heart of the South West LEP covers Devon, Somerset and Torbay. This institution set up a Brexit Resilience and Opportunities Group (BROG) in 2016 consisting of the chief executives of the LEP and local authorities in Devon and Somerset. The key challenges facing the South West as a result of Brexit are the above-mentioned EU funding (and its replacements), the vulnerability of specific agricultural and fishing sectors, the flows of migrant workers as well as the potential impact on vital service sectors such as education and tourism; as well as manufacturing.

Of course, if the national economic impact of a hard Brexit is as predicted this will also have a knock on effect with even less funding for local authorities and public services. On the other hand if there a radical change for the better the South West is a region with great potential in the aforementioned sectors. Under the status quo it is recognised as being relatively marginalised despite its great natural and human resources. As outlined in the following report a number of business associations and civil society institutions also have strong views on the challenges and opportunities of Brexit. There have been numerous surveys (of businesses in particular) conducted by, amongst others, the LEP (SQW 2018, Bloom et al 2018). This research has not tried to duplicate this but rather its focus has been on the relationships these different stakeholders have with each other, with the UK government and with overseas partners. It explores how these relationships are changing and how they should change to improve economic, political and social well-being within the region.

## **The Project**

The project was led by Richard Saundry (Plymouth Business School) in cooperation with Patrick Holden (from the School of Law, Criminology and Government/SLCG). The empirical research was conducted by Michele Fox. Zoe James (SLCG) led the interaction with civil society organisations. An initial mapping exercise delineated the major regional institutions likely to be affected by Brexit including local governments, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, businesses, business associations, trade unions and civil society organisations. 40 interviews were conducted with representatives and leaders of these institutions. These were qualitative, lightly structured, interviews, which explored questions related to:

the challenges posed by Brexit and the opportunities offered by Brexit,  
the key partners and interlocutors of the organisation in question and the impact of Brexit on these relations.

Two Roundtables were held in May 2019 to foster a free-flowing conversation building on the insights and opinions revealed in the research. The first event focused on economic development while the second one discussed social cohesion. To conclude the project, three training workshops were held (two in Plymouth and one in St Austell) in July 2019 on negotiation skills. These inculcated generic negotiation skills and also included specific lessons and scenarios from the Brexit process.

## **Findings**

### **Uncertainty and confusion**

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the timing of the research, the immediate challenge facing many of those we talked to was uncertainty and the potential threat of 'No Deal'. Businesses were reluctant to plan for growth and invest in the future, while new trading partners were hard to find given confusion over the position of the UK government. Training was also negatively affected as employers were unsure as to the skills and expertise that they would need to succeed in a post-Brexit environment.

The possibility of a 'No Deal' withdrawal was a recurring concern, with a consensus that it would make importing and exporting materials and goods both slow and 'painful'. Supply chains were described as 'unready' and with essential custom and excise documentation still not available, a lack of preparation in central government was adding to the sense of insecurity. Businesses using next-day delivery models were particularly concerned about the impact that disrupted supply chains would have on their ability to meet customer expectations and maintain successful relationships.

This lack of certainty was reflected at sectoral level. Respondents from tourism and hospitality reported a drop in advance bookings from EU summer visitors, citing confusion around passports and driving license requirements. Predictions of a 'staycation' upsurge to counteract this loss were met with some scepticism and the extension of Article 50 was thought likely to result in UK holidaymakers booking late European holidays, with the SW potentially losing out twice.

For transport operators and manufacturers, significant delays in the supply chain were problematic, with some finding that spare part delivery times had increased from 6 to 19 weeks due to industry-wide stock demand and a move away from 'just-in-time' systems. One company now had £1 million of extra capital tied up in stock. A fishing industry respondent reported concerns about the excessive paperwork that 'No Deal' would generate, citing the ten pages of documentation that would be needed for each box of fish. The strain that this would put on small businesses, already struggling with general administration, was felt to be a burden too far.

Local government interviewees also expressed concern about the disruption of 'No Deal' to their supply chains - for example food and heating system parts for schools and care homes. A particular challenge for Plymouth was the potential disruption to supplies through the port. The Port Health Authority lacked the capacity for the laboratory standard testing that would be needed to address food labelling issues or the facilities to deal with large numbers of live animals. Importantly, it was suggested that this illustrated a tension between government directives and institutional capabilities.

For local economic planning and development, the uncertainty surrounding the replacement of EU funding was a key concern, particularly Objective 1 funding. Details regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund which had been touted as a replacement for EU structural funding were still not clear and consultation or negotiations with regions had repeatedly been delayed or postponed. Questions regarding the scale of, and access to funding, had not been answered making it difficult to have meaningful conversations with stakeholders about their future position. Without these details, private sector partners were reluctant to invest. Similarly, despite the LEPs efforts to develop their Local Industrial Strategies, it was not clear if they would now be used as the basis for future planning.

Uncertainty over future funding was also impeding planning and decision making in the third sector. Agencies tied to EU grants anticipated being most heavily hit, however others would also be impacted by greater competition for fewer sources of income. Although EU money had largely funded skills and regeneration initiatives, this had freed up money for a wider range of projects and the knock-on effects were likely to be widespread.

### **Difficult conversations and poor communication**

Poor communication was generally felt to be exacerbating uncertainty and impacting on relationships. Although there were positive relationships between local government and the business community, the role played by central government was widely criticised. Although, businesses reported receiving plenty of information, there was lack of guidance, funding or support to back it up. SMEs, in particular, were struggling to keep on top of, what some respondents described as, an information 'overload'.

For local government, too much of the communication with central government was 'one-way' and although they were being asked to collect and provide extensive information on local situations, real consultation was lacking. As one interviewee stated, 'Government has done a lot of directing and very little listening'. Relationships between national and regional agencies were described as strained by a top down

approach to communication and a lack of practical support. Some agencies found that it was hard to keep on top of the guidance and sift out what was relevant for their communities.

Furthermore, there was significant frustration that the domination of Brexit within the political discourse was (in the words of one respondent) ‘sucking the oxygen out of public policy’ delaying much needed legislation. What another business representative referred to as ‘paralysis’ meant that issues such as infrastructure investment, EU funding replacement, skills shortages and training needs were being overlooked. Local service delivery had also been impacted by the huge amount of contingency work surrounding the immediate problems that ‘No Deal’ would pose. General investment and expansion of local authority projects was reportedly felt to be ‘on hold’. Similarly, the consensus within the third sector was that Brexit had diverted focus, attention and funds away from their work. One CEO reported that if the money, effort and media coverage had been directed towards addressing homelessness, then a considerable positive impact would have been made in addressing complex social issues within our communities.

## **Opportunities and challenges**

Despite uncertainty surrounding the leaving process, concrete impacts from the potential departure from the EU were harder to find. Providers of professional and technical services such as solicitors, accountants and IT specialists felt insulated from the effects of Brexit. One Cornwall-based business explained that it had used Brexit as an opportunity to review and improve their operating processes and procedures. Respondents from hospitality and tourism were particularly bullish and there was a clear view that Devon, Cornwall and the South West were well placed to weather the storms of Brexit and potentially benefit from UK consumers opting to vacation at home. Small businesses in this sector were thought to be resilient and not particularly focussed on Brexit. Innovation and development were still happening and large-scale investments, such as the Box in Plymouth and the Rock Fish planned expansion, were largely unaffected.

Business groups also saw the potential for new international markets with Mayflower 2020 identified as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on Plymouth and encourage global engagement. Some respondents felt that there was now an opportunity to look at the world in a different way and may herald a longer-term reduction in grant dependency. In Cornwall, developments around space, renewable energy, mining and tourism were mentioned, with an opportunity to take the lead in making the most of local natural resources and work on climate change.

Developing sub-regional links in the fishing industry between Plymouth, Brixham and Newlyn was suggested as an area in which relationships may develop in a positive manner. Although each has historically competed for a slice of the available quota, it would be in their interest to cooperate and provide a unified voice for the industry through this period of turmoil. In addition, it was suggested that Plymouth could potentially benefit as traffic may be diverted from larger ports such as Dover.

Respondents from the third sector explained that over-reliance on EU funding had some negative side effects - onerous and outcome driven reporting requirements



brought organisational risk and had caused some small organisations to wither away under the weight. Brexit may trigger a return to a focus on more innovative and creative small-scale solution with a greater emphasis on localisation and municipalisation.

Unfortunately there was some scepticism over the ability of the UK to benefit from any opportunities for new trading relationships that may emerge from Brexit. Respondents with experience of international trade felt that the UK was unprepared for EU withdrawal and unlikely to be able to overcome historic insular attitudes in the short-term. The response of central government and particularly those responsible for developing trading links and opportunities was felt to have been essentially reactive rather than proactive, exposing long-standing problems in the Department for International Trade. Government activity had too often been run by staff with little business experience and the perception was that there was insufficient motivation to build external relationships or establish the networks required to trade globally. It was felt that whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, the 'British brand' had been damaged and trust with potential partners had been eroded.

Union respondents shared employers' concerns about the poor UK track record of negotiating trade deals and the lack of investment in the business infrastructure. They reported fears about the long-term future of the local arm of international companies such as Leonardo, Princess Yachts, Sunseekers, Rolls Royce and Honda, alongside the knock-on threats to provider chains. As many of the larger SW manufacturing businesses are overseas subsidiaries, one local economic development interviewee expressed concern that the UK arm of international businesses may become a parochial concern when making decisions about future global positioning strategies.

### **Marginalisation and vulnerability**

The more optimistic accounts outlined above were generally outweighed by respondents who feared that Brexit would (at least in the short term) exacerbate existing economic and social problems. For example, disentangling Brexit from welfare reforms and wider existing social issues was complex; one respondent described the double discrimination faced by homeless migrants who were waiting for benefit decisions, facing racist abuse when asking for money. Participants at one roundtable meeting highlighted the increasing complexity of the cases that they were dealing with citing interlinking issues surrounding mental and physical health, debt, housing, social care, benefits, domestic abuse and offending, often crossing generations. Vulnerable groups found it hard to navigate processes, particularly if English was not their first language, and now faced the expense and frustration of automated systems.

Third sector organisations which were struggling to deal with a significant rise in queries caused by the ambiguity surrounding immigration policies. Client groups needed support with the EU Settlement Scheme, Habitual Residence Test appeals and Universal Credit rules, adding to existing refugee and asylum seeker caseloads. Finding definitive answers about the Habitual Residence Test was difficult and as appeals were often turned down for reasons which varied wildly, there seemed to be no set decision criteria evident from DWP. Clients were then faced with a 6 to 9-month tribunal process, in a complex legal system, before often winning their cases and receiving their entitlements.

EU nationals' sense of 'feeling unwelcome' was a repeated refrain from private, public and third sector participants with racism and intolerance as underlying components. From migrant workers to tourist visitors, relationships between UK and EU populations were felt to have been fractured. A transport CEO described 'foreign' public facing staff now experiencing frequent racial abuse. He considered the UK to lack respect for differences, with intolerance a by-product of a Brexit process that had lifted the lid on deep rooted prejudices and ideas about identity. Unions recorded a spike in racial abuse immediately after referendum, even among staff who had worked happily together for many years.

It was also suggested by some respondents that the South West was particularly ill equipped to meet the challenges of Brexit. Poor infrastructure and inadequate transport links already created a sense of peripherality, which was likely to increase, particularly in the event of 'No Deal'. Unitary authority boundaries exacerbated problems for those living on the edges and it was generally felt that under current policies, local government was unable to deliver beyond their statutory duties.

Respondents reported a rise in poverty driven problems, with the fragile and vulnerable hit hardest by the current climate. Furthermore, coastal communities were particularly fragile. For example, it was increasingly difficult for young people to make a sustainable living in fishing, tourism or hospitality and in some areas second-home ownership had priced them out of the local housing market. The need to develop and diversify skills development was being hampered by restricted budgets for schools and further education colleges.

One equality organisation reported that they were working at full capacity and therefore unable to 'get out there' and see the full extent of what was happening; they felt that they were only dealing with tip of the iceberg at present. Others noted that hate crime had increased yet was often only uncovered when people sought help for other issues. Organisational capacity was also a problem for charities delivering support to clients attempting to secure settled status. In addition to challenging Habitual Residency Test decisions for refugees, they were now struggling to deal with the EU Settlement Scheme process without the capacity to deliver this effectively or the biometric equipment needed. The absence of free advice on immigration status at level 2 in the far SW was noted, as was the fact the nearest document checking service was in Bath.

Overall, respondents argued that, irrespective of the outcome of Brexit, there was a need for closer co-operation between business and local government to cooperate to fill the void left by national government and re-engage communities that felt they had been 'left behind'.

### **Work, employment and positive relationships**

Among those that we interviewed withdrawal presented several challenges surrounding the labour market. Future restrictions on the free movement of workers and how consequent needs in the workforce could be met were frequently identified as ongoing concerns, as was the harmful impact on relationships. The CEO of a transport company noted a general decline in tolerance and respect, describing the

previous one driver assault per year as having jumped to one per week in the last six months.

For business and economic development respondents, the primary concern was the potential loss of key workers through an extensive return to countries of origin and a downturn in future recruitment. Some respondents noted that although they hadn't seen a mass exodus of their EU workforce, current applications were much reduced. A spell working in the UK was no longer seen by EU workers as a useful part of their career development and they were now more likely to gain this experience elsewhere. The labour market had already lost many young, short-term migrant workers, partly due to a weaker pound and stronger economies in their home countries, but also due to the perception that their status was insecure and that they were not welcome.

The manufacturing industry was reported to have already lost a number of valued employees and as migrant workers constituted 35% of the workforce in some companies, this was anticipated to cause significant problems. One respondent reported that over 300 Polish carpenters in a large firm were considering returning home. It was felt that replacing these losses with domestic employees with a similar work ethic was likely to be very difficult. Unions representing academic workers argued that a lack of clear information and also a general sense of 'feeling unwelcome' had already resulted in their members looking to return to their home countries or to relocate elsewhere in the EU. This was exacerbated by the fact that they could be denied EU research funding by staying in the UK.

While some businesses in tourism and hospitality had been pleasantly surprised that they had been able to retain EU workers, this seemed to be where workers were more firmly established in the UK and had been able to develop sustainable and rewarding careers. However, this created its own problems, EU workers in the sector were often highly skilled and employed in supervisory or management roles and it was anticipated that Mayflower 2020 would create a huge need for hospitality workers in Plymouth. The need for proficient modern foreign language speakers was echoed in a range of sectors, as was a critical view of decisions made by governments over many years which have led to a decline in these skills.

The transport industry had experienced a noticeable drop in European job applicants and there was concern that the construction sector would find it difficult to meet demand having become reliant on EU labour. Agricultural worker shortages, particularly flower pickers in Cornwall, were also noted and many in the industry were struggling to attract migrant workers in the numbers needed. At the same time local authorities were working closely with care sector providers to retain staff but feared that recruitment problems would eventually have an impact.

Some respondents argued that a reduction in the supply of labour from the EU as a result of the end of freedom of movement could enhance the bargaining power of labour and consequently lead to increased wage costs. Business groups reported that problems with recruitment had increased workers' leverage in high demand sectors with dismissal having become a less effective threat. French and German speakers were now so highly in demand in some roles that they were able to set their own employment terms.

In contrast, union representatives anticipated that despite government assurances, there would be an erosion of established employment rights, particularly in the event of a 'No Deal' exit. The pressure to compete in international markets, it was argued, would inevitably create a pressure to relax employment protections and labour standards. The fact that the current government was argued to have a negative attitude to trade unions, illustrated by the introduction of the 2016 Trade Union Act, reinforced these concerns.

Poor information flows were affecting relationships with employees, who expected their employers to know what will happen and what they will do. The more employers shared information which subsequently changed, the more they appeared untrustworthy or unreliable. A general lack of trust in government was filtering down to a lack of trust in employers. Nonetheless, there was a view among some trade union respondents that they would have to work with employers to deal with the challenges posed by Brexit and that employers would also have to engage with union representatives in a constructive and pro-active way. This would also require both sides to develop and enhance their negotiating skills and capabilities.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The timing of this project inevitably meant that participants were anticipating and speculating on the impact of a process that has not yet been decided. Nonetheless, it was clear that the uncertainty surrounding Brexit was making it very difficult for organisations to develop robust and sustainable plans for the future. Moreover, this uncertainty was already leading to concrete impacts with investment plans put on hold, EU organisations looking elsewhere for collaboration and partnership and EU nationals questioning whether the UK provided a secure context within which to build their lives and careers. At the same time, some argued that Brexit would force organisations to look for new markets, become more agile and creative and also to forge stronger partnerships at a local level.

Irrespective of the outcome, Brexit has exposed our collective failure to build resilient and collaborative relationships whether at home or abroad. If the South West is to deal with the immediate challenge of Brexit and go on to prosper in the longer term, this project has highlighted a number of steps that can be taken both at a National, Regional and Organisational level.

- If the UK is to develop new markets a more proactive approach is needed from central government providing the negotiating skills, regional knowledge and cultural know-how that will help UK business forge positive relationships with international customers and partners.
- There needs to be much greater clarity from central government regarding the potential implications of Brexit, both for businesses and their employees. However, advice and guidance needs to be targeted and relevant avoiding information overload and confusion that appears to have characterised communications to date

- Create opportunities for dialogue between the third sector and industry in the South West - encourage businesses to develop a closer understanding of the communities in which they are sited. This could involve a greater focus on social impact and Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Counties and cities within the South West would benefit from more accessible mechanisms which facilitate regular cooperative approaches towards shared issues. Frameworks such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships are well-conceived but need reinvigoration in the new context.
- Respondents suggested a clear need for more investment in building and rebuilding relationships with communities of EU citizens. Local government representatives highlighted the close links that have been established with the Polish community in the South West. This should be extended to other groups.
- Small and medium sized enterprises and particularly micro-businesses need greater support and assistance. Central government needs to adopt a more strategic approach to this but larger private and public sector organisations need to play a more pro-active leadership role both within their communities but also through their supply chains.
- There needs to be a renewed focus on 'good work' to address potential labour shortages and boost productivity. This could involve the development of charter-mark schemes within cities, regions or sectors. This could target low pay, job quality, employment insecurity and a lack of employee voice.
- Organisations need to prioritise the development of negotiation skills and other people-related capabilities which will: help businesses build positive relationships with new customers and clients; underpin more collaborative relationships between key stakeholders; and deepen employee engagement and productivity.
- Universities in Devon and Cornwall should play a key role in establishing a civil society forum to share networks and knowledge between regional organisations that support the vulnerable, providing a SW lens for influencing and responding to national policies.

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