# stimulating effective public debate on the ethics of artificial intelligence

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## Developing A Shared Understanding on Public Debate for AI & Public Service Delivery: Briefing paper to prompt discussion at DeepMind & Involve roundtable 3

## Introduction

The focus of the third roundtable in this series is to pull together the discussions we have had so far. The aim is to support participating stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the best ways to create a public debate which is more effective at shaping the use of AI in public service delivery.

This briefing paper will outline three key areas in preparation for these discussions:

1. Reflections on roundtable 2 conversations around the context of artificial intelligence (AI) implementation in public service delivery.
2. Features of robust engagement processes identified at roundtable 2.
3. Discussion points & key questions for roundtable 3.

As before, this paper is not a verbatim account of the previous roundtable but a synthesis of the themes raised in discussions that have informed the designing of the third roundtable.

## AI & Public Service Delivery

To move the conversations forward from the wide-ranging topics covered at the first roundtable, the second roundtable engaged participants with questions focused on the use of AI in public service delivery. Participants discussed areas where AI could have the most impact in public service delivery, and the ethical questions raised in these contexts. A broad selection of public service areas and ethical queries were identified. The public service areas discussed were:

* Justice
* Policing
* Military
* Health
* Social Care
* Immigration System
* Education
* Types of government activity/function

From these discussions, we have drawn out three possible framings for public engagement around the use of AI in public service delivery:

* Option 1: Engage people at public sector area level e.g. health, justice.
  + Priority areas identified here by participants were **policing, health** & **social care** and **education.**
* Option 2: Engage people around categories of government/public sector systems/processes/functions.
  + An example of this was case-working.
* Option 3: Start from the perspective of the public and engage with the challenges and issues they identify.

These framings inform one of the key threads of discussion that will be in focus at roundtable 3, to develop a shared understanding of the key next steps needed to develop meaningful public engagement in the implementation of AI in public service delivery.

## Identifying Features of Robust Engagement Processes

Following the above contextualisation, brief presentations were delivered from the Royal Society, RSA, British Science Association and Nesta on the public engagement processes each have run around AI and/or machine learning. Participants interrogated each example around method, design, resourcing and output. From the resultant discussions, participants recommended the following key takeaways/questions that must be considered in future engagement processes:

* **Purpose:**
  + What is the purpose?
  + What is actionable from the outputs?
  + How to make it meaningful?
  + Who’s listening?
  + How can you work with participants to answer these questions?
  + Answer might be “No” but can provide more informed response e.g. “No but invest resource in X, Y, Z instead”.
  + Ultimately, needs to help better service delivery.
* **Learning & Design:**
  + What can be learnt from previous processes?
  + How can learning be shared – fund beyond research stage to outreach.
  + Practical questions needed to deliver a process.
  + Iterative process needed.
  + Use focussed discussion with “representative” groups to agree the questions.
  + What can we learn from designers in how to get to people’s preferences/values?
* **Recruitment:**
  + How to get those people in the room?
  + Other methods than paid recruitment?
  + Conversations happening in elite spaces – how can conversations happen in existing public spaces/policy-makers have more sustainable direct contact with the public?
  + What actions can those in empowered spaces take?
* **Scale:** 
  + What outcome for what shift?
  + How many people would it take to shift debate?
  + How much can we learn from small focus groups?
  + Not data collecting exercise but more about what shifts in mindset can occur from process.
* **Who’s involved?** 
  + Stakeholder vs. public engagement – get institutions to address power imbalance created.
  + Feedback loop – people being engaged & those with power to respond, historically focused too much on process not on implementing findings.
  + Accountability.
  + With wide variety of people – different trade-offs arise.
  + Is commissioning organisation trusted & able to take results forward?
  + Who else is needed?
* **Quality:**
  + Set of minimum standards for meaningful engagement needed to give to policy-makers.
  + List of questions required to interrogate methods to see if robust enough.
  + Designing an impact from the start.

We will build on and interrogate further these recommendations during the discussions at the third roundtable in this series.

## The Third & Final Roundtable

Although this is the “final” roundtable in this current series, our aspiration is that it is not the end of this work. As many of the participants may also feel, we have only just scratched the surface.

We started this work with four objectives. The first roundtable focused on the first two objectives to provide a forum and space for collaborative conversations amongst diverse stakeholders on public engagement with AI and ethics. The second roundtable focused on the third objective to build a common understanding of how to engage with public perspectives on this area, as reflected in this paper. And the final roundtable will focus on the fourth objective looking to identify further areas of research, collaboration and advocacy around public engagement with the ethics of AI.

The final roundtable will be designed with this objective in mind whilst also drawing together conclusions from our various discussions to date. As outlined above, we will analyse how engagement might vary across different public service areas and functions to review whether recommendations can be made as to which level future, sustained public engagement on the use of AI in public service delivery should be implemented. And we will unpack further the features and key questions to be considered when creating robust engagement processes.

The two main areas we will focus on at this final roundtable to do this are:

1. What key questions need to be answered to embed public engagement around the use of AI in public service delivery? Some of these might include areas participants have raised previously including:

* How do we get policy-makers into the mindset/space of the public?
* What’s engagement for? How might this vary across sectors – government, industry, academia & civil society?
* What challenges are the public facing where AI might form part of the solution? How can we engage on these?
* How do we embed public engagement in institutions? – Where/who else do we need to be connecting this to?
* How do we ensure effective feedback to the public?

1. Are there any specific next steps we can identify together to move the agenda forwards?

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