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**CaSE**   
Campaign for Science and Engineering

# CaSE's Guide for Engaging the Public

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Advice for R&D  
advocates to engage  
the public in relevant  
and meaningful ways

This guidance has been informed by CaSE's nationally-representative polling of more than 20,000 UK adults and 14 focus groups.



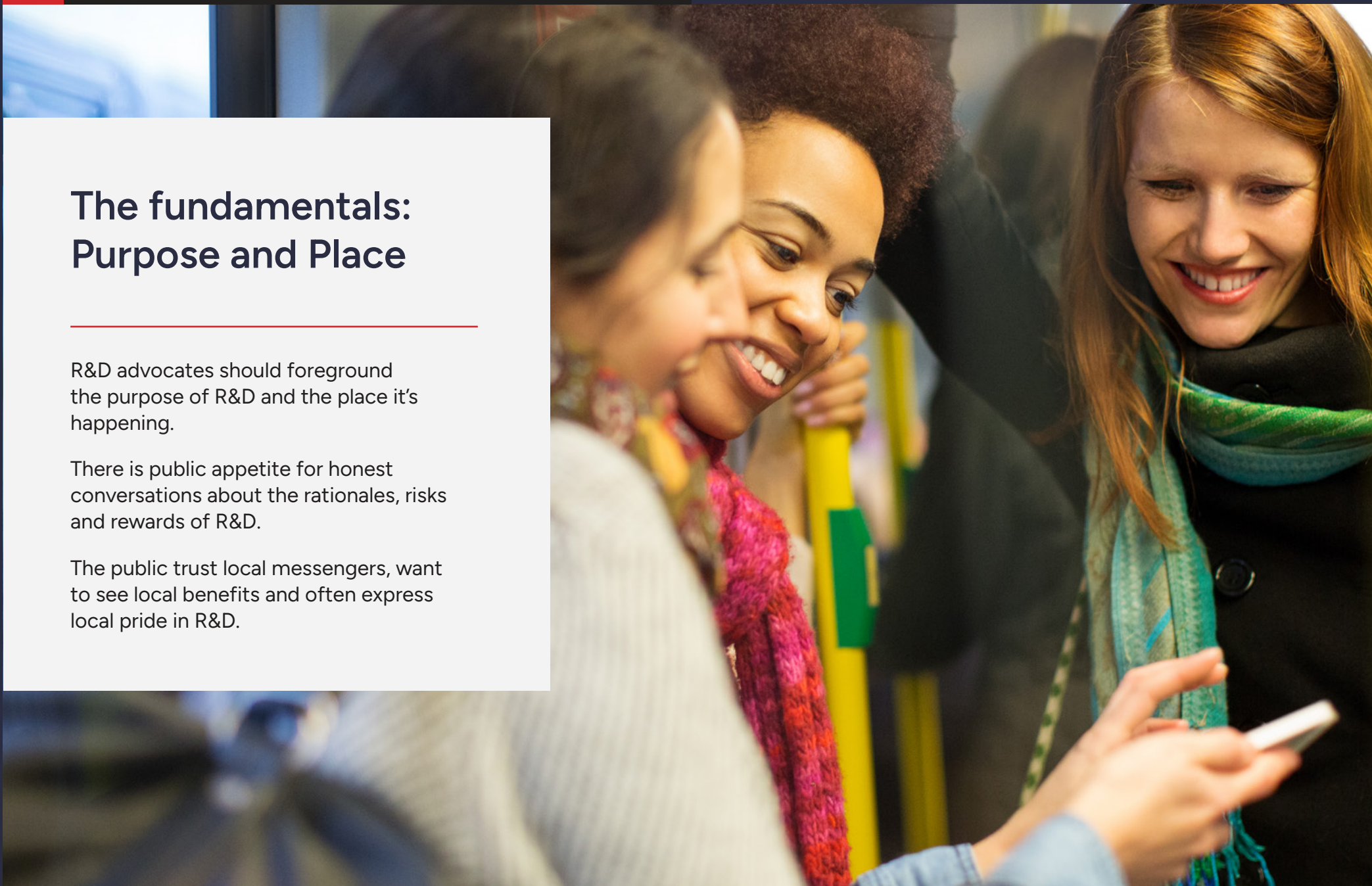
## The fundamentals: Purpose and Place

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R&D advocates should foreground the purpose of R&D and the place it's happening.

There is public appetite for honest conversations about the rationales, risks and rewards of R&D.

The public trust local messengers, want to see local benefits and often express local pride in R&D.



## Use messaging that demonstrates R&D is...

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### Solving real problems:

**Put the issue that R&D is seeking to address front and centre.**

Support for R&D investment increases when it is clearly linked to an issue that audiences care about. Under-45s are particularly motivated by issues, with 18-24s far more likely to support Government investment in R&D if they knew it was going to support almost any issue.



### Helping the next generation:

**Emphasise that R&D can help create a better future for others.**

As a tagline, "R&D: Making a better future for all of us" was seen as the most convincing way to describe R&D's purpose and was strongest across all audience groups. The gender gap in our polling narrowed when R&D was framed as a way to be ready for tomorrow's problems.



### Relevant to real life:

**Help audiences connect with R&D's people, processes and products.**

Focus group participants actively looked for connections between R&D projects and their own lives or local areas. To avoid R&D feeling too abstract, use examples that show the people and processes involved, and allow audiences to imagine how R&D can benefit them, their loved ones or their communities.



### Benefitting local areas:

**Talk about benefits like local job creation and economic benefits.**

The spillover benefits of R&D are well-received, but rarely front of mind. Those who want their region to carry out lots of R&D or support a new research lab being built in their area are motivated by job creation, economic benefits, and education opportunities.



## What works when talking to the public about R&D

### 'Research and Development' is a familiar term that gains support in different contexts

Spell or speak out the phrase on first mention, and use 'R&D' afterwards.

### Refer to "investment" rather than "spending" to maximise support

Where possible, be specific and honest about how money is being used.

### Build on R&D being viewed as essential for tackling public concerns

Talk about a range of issues and consider how to use them to talk to different audiences.

### Use specific and jargon-free language

Audiences want to understand the risks, rationales and rewards of R&D and tangible examples will help build trust.

### Talk about cooperation on R&D at local, national and global levels

Avoid portraying R&D as a zero-sum competition between nations.

### Don't hide the time scale or risks involved in R&D

But recognise and respect people's desire for urgent action.

### Be honest and specific about the benefits of R&D

Explain whether and how the benefits of research are being made accessible to everyone.

### Balance optimism with realism

Avoid exaggerating the potential of R&D or using vague explanations.



## Choosing the right messengers

### Use voices from within the R&D sector as messengers

These groups command higher levels of trust on both R&D and investment, compared with political messengers.

### Choose messengers that represent the diversity of the roles and people involved in R&D

People from all levels of seniority, sectors and disciplines have a role to play in engaging the public.

### Use local links to reach new audiences

There is unmet demand for more information on local R&D, and appetite to connect via local news sources or open days at local institutions or businesses.

### Connect with audiences online or via friends and family

Take advantage of different ways to connect with key groups, and make use of non-R&D actors as conduits for messages.

### Collaborate and learn from best practice across the sector

Organisations can build on the public's view of research as being collaborative by working with others and learning from their experiences.

## Our audiences

To achieve broader public support for R&D, advocates must maintain the enthusiasm of existing supporters while also building support among those who are more skeptical.

Our data identified five audience segments on a scale of awareness and support for R&D. At the more supportive end our aim is to activate and empower people as champions, while at the more sceptical end we need to better connect with people's motivations.

### We have identified three priority audiences who view R&D less positively:

# 1

#### Under 45s

Age was one of the strongest differentiators of opinion in our data, with younger groups less likely to see R&D's benefits or support investment, and more likely to agree we currently invest too much in R&D rather than solving issues that matter now.

# 2

#### Those in skilled, semi/non-skilled manual work or retired

These groups, referred to as socioeconomic groups C2DE, were less aware of R&D, felt less supportive of R&D investment, and were less likely to say they feel R&D's benefits.

# 3

#### Women

Our research suggests women are generally less positive towards R&D than men, finding arguments to invest less strong and being more likely to say there are other more pressing priorities than R&D.