



# Progress through Partnerships Migrant Workers Roundtable

Tuesday 20th January 2009, Jury's Inn, Southampton

## Purpose of discussion

As stated in the invitation, the purpose of the discussion was to equip participants with:

- Increased awareness of migrant worker flows and profiles in the South East;
- A better understanding of the economic and social impacts of migration – including what this means for their local area;
- More ideas about how to address the challenges and maximise the positive impacts of migration – in particular by working in partnership; and
- Improved knowledge of good practice around addressing the issues of migration.<sup>1</sup>

For a full list of participants please see the list at the end of this document.

## Key messages from research

Anne Green from Warwick University presented the key messages to emerge from her report [\*Migrant Workers in the South East Regional Economy\*](#) published in July 2008 and commissioned by SEEDA:

- **Migration trends:** There has been a rapid upward trend in the numbers of migrants, with A8 migrants (and particularly Poles) a key element. A8 and A2 migrants tend to be young and have predominantly economic motivations for coming to the South East, almost 40% are unsure of how long they plan to stay.
- **The labour market:** Employment gains were associated with moving to the UK – 96% of A8 and A2 migrants were in employment at the time of interview, contrasting with 2 in 3 prior to moving to the UK. Migrants tended to be concentrated in elementary occupations and in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, and health and social work. They also tend to work long hours for low pay.
- **Skills and training:** Two-thirds of employers did *nothing* to help workers whose English language skills needed development and little training was offered by most employers beyond health & safety and inductions. Some employers were reluctant to provide training on the basis of the transitory nature of migration and fear of poaching. A key issue raised by employees was employers' lack of understanding of their

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<sup>1</sup> During discussions a number of attendees asked whether it was fair for Councils to focus on A8 migrants, or whether they should be considered equally alongside the needs of migrant communities more generally. This was considered a valid point, but it was felt that the stated focus of the discussion – on migrant workers from the A8 and A2 nations – should be retained

foreign qualifications, and some have taken similar qualifications to those already held, but in English in the UK.

- **Economic impact:** Two-thirds of employers reported a positive impact on business performance from migrants, and the report estimates migrant contributions to regional output increased from 11% (2002) to 15.6% (2007). Though there was evidence of displacement of UK-born workers in various 'migrant dense' industries and occupations, evidence suggests this was 'voluntary' as UK-born workers move up to a more senior/ skilled position. However, there is an upward trend in inactivity amongst UK-born men and some interviewees were concerned about the negative impacts on the least skilled, such as reduced work experience opportunities for young people.
- **Access to and impact on services:** An overall issue is that service providers have to deal with *flows* of migrants as well as populations of migrants– with those who are transient and settled often having different characteristics. Only 55% of migrants were registered with a GP making it difficult to estimate need and demand for health care. In some areas, there have been localised increases in the demand for school places as some migrants establish a family.
- **Cohesion and integration:** Contrasting with popular reports of British hostility, 70% of migrant workers surveyed said they found it easy or very easy to adapt to life in the UK, with only 7% finding it quite or very difficult. Particular tensions were noted and tended to be rooted in: the role of the press; rapid population growth in particular areas; and the concentrations of migrants in areas with little heritage of migration.

The report emphasised the importance of **increasing the adaptive capacity** of the region's economy, labour market and institutions, communities and service providers to adapt to changes in migration and maximise positive impacts whilst minimising the negative ones.

## Summary of responses to research

**Skills and training:** Many participants agreed with the finding that recognition of migrants' existing skills is as much of a problem as lack of skills. Several said some migrants report more difficulty passing exams for equivalent qualifications in English (due to language difficulties) than actually doing the work it qualifies them for. Another problem is that the skills or qualifications they do have are of no use in their current jobs – for instance, qualified health professionals harvesting crops. A number of attendees said many migrant workers find it difficult to maintain attendance at English language classes due to their hours – they often do shift work.

**Access to and impact on services:** Data on service users uses the 'White Other' category, and though we can deduce that this is probably made up of a significant number of migrants from the A8 and A2 countries, this is not easily substantiated. Participants from a PCT suggested that English residents are more likely to register with a GP. They also said that A&E departments receive a disproportionate number of migrant workers from the A8 and A2 countries. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this reflects common practice in the health

care systems of their countries, which don't use localised GP surgeries to the same extent.

**Cohesion and integration:** Some participants were surprised by findings stating that migrant workers have found integration easy, as they have anecdotal evidence suggesting they have difficulty making friends outside their immediate community and significant hostility from the existing residents in some areas. Others mentioned tensions in their areas between incoming A8 and A2 migrants and established migrant groups such as Portuguese.

## **Discussion of key issues**

### **Engaging with strategic migration bodies in the South East**

Participants were keen to explore how to make the best use of available research to map out the impact of migrant workers and plan a response, influencing regional structures where appropriate. There was general consensus that this needed to be better coordinated at the regional level.

Participants from the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration mentioned that this partnership intends to play this role. The Partnership is currently helping to form sub-regional groupings of authorities to assemble intelligence on migration. They are also looking to take forward work across the South East on workforce planning, housing and cohesion. They intend to take over the responsibility of SEERA for gathering intelligence on migration and guiding decision-making at the regional level in relation to migration. They already feed directly into the Home Office but more work needs to be done to give central government the 'South East picture' on migration – something that other regions have done more effectively. This is crucial to ensuring that new research and intelligence is picked up and influences decision-making. For more information see the 'Stakeholder Relationship Map' at the end of this document and these links to the [Migration Impacts Forum](#) and the [Migration Advisory Committee](#).

A number of attendees hadn't heard of these organisations and there was general consensus that there was a significant gap between the operational and strategic sides of the migration landscape in the South East. It was suggested that LSP's feed intelligence on the impacts of migration and practical solutions to these up through the sub-regional infrastructure to the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration Board. The Board could then work to develop strategic solutions and ensure access to funding where appropriate. One participant said that whilst practitioners struggle for resources on the ground, the Border Agency, CLG and the Regional Health Authority are offering funding for projects relating to the impacts of migration.

### **Migrant workers' access to services**

Several participants noted the impact of the recession was beginning to show. Some reported that there were small but significant numbers of migrant workers

who were now unemployed or homeless. For those in agricultural industries – where accommodation is provided with your job – unemployment and homelessness occurred together.

Anecdotal evidence from Job Centres in one area suggests rises in unemployment and that A8 and A2 migrants are planning to 'wait and see' whether they find work. It was noted that some migrant workers were out of touch with their home labour market. In one area, Job Centres are hosting talks by employment experts from Poland to explain the vacancies available there and the likelihood of them getting jobs. Other participants noted that the agricultural industries on the coast were highly dependent on this migrant labour for survival.

Some practitioners have noted a shift in the profile of A8 and A2 migrant workers from the young, single, predominantly male; and corresponding shifts in their plans. In some areas, an increasing number of migrant workers are having children, increasing demands for natal and child care. In some areas this has increased demand for school places. Overall though the pace of change is difficult to measure. Individual households will certainly be balancing the changes to the macroeconomic context and declining employment opportunities with other considerations such as dependent children and the relative social security of their home country and the UK.

### **The impact of the recession**

In parallel with these shifts in the profile of migrants and their plans, the recession has begun to impact upon the employment opportunities available for migrants in some sectors. This appears to be shifting patterns of migration, as more migrant workers return home and fewer arrive. However, the evidence is patchy and it's uncertain whether this will be a longer term trend – given that the recession is global, it is effecting their 'home countries' as well as the UK. All these changes and uncertainty make it difficult for public service deliverers to target them for services and plan for their needs.

It was agreed that part of the reason some authorities have found the recent population transience difficult is that a lot of the migration has occurred in largely rural authorities that have little experience of delivering to transient populations whereas it is becoming second nature in some parts of London and other metropolitan areas. Public service providers in urban areas, characterised by population churn, can perhaps provide useful experience or good practice in this area.

There were other concerns amongst participants that an increase in A8 workers unemployed would lead to an increase in competition with established communities for jobs, potentially creating or amplifying tensions. However others cited the lack of evidence that the indigenous population was willing to do the work. Monitors of the impact of the recession on employment are provided by SEEDA's rapid response team and the Commission for Rural Communities' monthly bulletins. (For further information on the impact of the recession and the implications for the public sector see the reading list below)

## **Skills, training and labour demand**

A number of participants agreed that many employers want large numbers of flexible, low-skilled workers to work in elementary occupations. This means that if current employees get new skills and 'move up' these employers will have to look elsewhere. If the constant demand for unskilled labour in certain sectors – such as manufacturing – isn't met there is a risk that without those employees these companies will move out of the area or even the country. Farmers on the other hand cannot do that, and farmers in certain areas still have a shortage of workers to fill vacancies. A good example of the importance of migrant labour for booms in agricultural industries is in the 'Sussex Strip', where disused glass houses were brought back into use to produce fruit and vegetables thanks to the influx of labour provided by migrant workers. The increase in this type of immigration to the Sussex coastal area and the impact this has been having has been well-documented in *Establishing a collaborative framework for dealing with the impact of new immigration* by Chris Gaine at the University of Chichester. A number of participants agreed that it is important to meet the needs of employers for low skilled labour if such industries are to be supported.

However, there were a number criticisms of employers' lack of work to invest in migrant skills. Some counter-examples were provided. In Lincolnshire, the big pack houses are working with a local university to provide English teachers for their employees. A number of these houses are also promoting migrant workers so that they are placed in more senior positions. Some large farmers in Chichester are requiring employees to speak English and providing English tuition. They are also recruiting migrant workers to key posts such as HR so that they are not simply concentrated in the low-skilled occupations.

A separate issue is high-skilled migrant workers being employed in low-skilled jobs. Indeed, one participant mentioned an extreme real life example of this - a Doctor of Astrophysics working as a picker. A number of participants agreed that the gains for the country as a whole could be massive if such skills could be recognised and the worker could find employment in their particular sector. The two key barriers to doing this identified were – non-recognition of non-British qualifications and lack of English.

## **Role of the employer**

A number of participants underlined the role of the employer as crucial to the picture as a whole – for instance, they decide the extent to which they provide training, which in turn influences the long-term opportunities of their employees to move to more well-paid and high-skilled work. English classes often provided by employers can be crucial to turning migrant workers into active citizens and service users.

## **Next Steps**

- Many participants felt that there was a huge amount of potential to continue the discussions, to share practice and to explore the potential for developing a relationship with regional and national strategic bodies working on the issue of migrant workers.
- The facilitators agreed to explore how these issues could be followed up with the Progress through Partnership Steering Committee alongside the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership.
- In the meantime colleagues are welcome to send around details of the documents mentioned to colleagues and peers.

## Participants

Sue	Charteris	Principal Consultant	Shared Intelligence
Benedict	Rickey	Consultant	Shared Intelligence
Anne	Green	Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Employment Research	University of Warwick
Pauline	Leonard	Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Sociology and Social Policy Division	University of Southampton
Derek	McGhee	Reader in Sociology (Migration and Citizenship research group), Centre for Citizenship and Democracy	University of Southampton
Chris	Gain	Professor of Applied Social Policy	Chichester University
Robert	Guile	South East Strategic Partnership for Migration - Manager	Portsmouth City Council
Paul	Watkins	Leader of the Council	Dover District Council
Caroline	Pinchbeck	Rural Life Advisor	Canterbury and Rochester Dioceses
Leone	Hill	Marketing Manager	Portsmouth Jobcentre Plus
Anna	Czepil	Policy and Performance Officer, Chief Executive's Department	East Sussex County Council
Caroline	Gosford	Senior LSP/Regeneration Manager	Arun District Council
Sue	Charmichael	Health Improvement Coordinator	West Sussex PCT
Anne	Easterbrook	Patient and Public Involvement Lead	West Sussex PCT
Joe	Mildred	Corporate Policy Manager (Lead Officer for Equalities)	Chichester District Council
Tony	O'Donnell	Stronger Communities Team	Government Office for the South East
Lucy	Bryson	Community Safety Manager - Refugees and Migrants	Brighton & Hove
Tony	Pascoe	Stronger Communities and Equalities	Southampton City Council
Liz	Page	Director of People & Learning	YOU (Southern Focus Trust)

## Apologies

Jane	Spurgin	Partnership Director	Learning and Skills council
Mary	Blanche	Senior Policy Manager, Communities Directorate	Kent county Council
Wendy	Keating	Patient and Public Involvement Lead	Central South Coast Cancer Network
Colin	MacLean	Head of Community Planning	Kent County Council
Uta	Schmidtblaicher	Community Development Worker	Portsmouth City Council
Ray	Morgan	Chief Executive	Woking Borough Council
Sally	Truman	Policy and Community Engagement Manager	South Oxfordshire
Andrew	Lloyd	Chief Executive	Rushmoor BC
Jane	Goodwin	Equality and 3rd Sector Manager, Chief Executive's Policy Unit	Hampshire County Council
Samina	Hussian	Enterprise Manager	Slough Borough Council
Suki	Sitaram	Head of Communities and Regeneration, Communities Health and Care Directorate	Southampton City Council
Maria	Middleton	District Change Manager	Jobcentre Plus

## Reading list

### Recession/ economy

- Reports on the impact of the recession: Oxford Economics, [Recession Guide](#) Shared Intelligence for the IDeA,, ONS etc *The Recession and Credit Crunch in England's rural economies*, October 2008, Commission for Rural Communities; *from recession to recovery: the local dimension*, November 2008, PACEC for the LGA.
- Reports on implications for public services – [Recession Checklist](#), Shared Intelligence for the IDeA, *Crunch time? The impact of the economic downturn on local government finances*, December 2008, Audit Commission, *Stand up to the Downturn*, November 2008, SOLACE.
- Monitoring reports: [Commission for Rural Communities](#)

### Migration

- *Establishing a collaborative framework for dealing with the impact of new immigration*, Chris Gaine, University of Chichester. See also: <http://www.expandingcommunities.org/>
- [Migrant Workers in the South East Regional Economy](#), July 2008, Prepared for SEEDA by Anne E. Green, David Owen and Paul Jones Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick with Chris Owen, Jayne Francis and Richard Proud, BMG Research
- [A resource guide on local migration statistics](#), November 2008, Prepared for the Local Government Association by Anne E. Green, David Owen and Duncan Adam
- [Migration Impacts Forum](#) web-site
- [Migration Advisory Committee](#) web-site.
- [Arun District Council](#) web-site.

# Stakeholder Relationship Map

