

Summary Document

The Impact of International Migration on the East Midlands



Executive Summary & Recommendations

There remains a lack of awareness and informed discussion about the scale and impact of international migration within Parliament, the media and the public at large. This report represents an attempt by councils to 'shine a light' on such issues in an East Midlands context - but more needs to be done at a national level to frame the debate in a positive manner.

The available evidence suggests the impact of international migration on the East Midlands has generally been positive, particularly from an economic perspective. However the scale of population change and resulting impacts on public services and communities varies considerably and has resulted in particular challenges for some communities. These challenges are not insurmountable, but must be managed better by central and local government if local services are to be more effectively planned for and delivered, and if community cohesion is to be maintained.

The total population of the East Midlands grew at a faster rate than the average for England, at 8.2% compared to 7.7% between 2002 and 2012, due to a combination of natural change, UK inter-regional and international migration.

According to the 2011 Census, 9.9% of the East Midlands resident population was foreign-born, below the UK average of 13.8%. This equates to 448,200 individuals in a population of 4.5 million. This is an increase from the 2001 Census, where 6.1% of the resident population were estimated to have been born outside the UK.

There is strong evidence that international migrants make a positive net contribution to the UK budget. Migrants are 45% less likely to receive state benefits or tax credits compared to non-migrants and are estimated to make a contribution to regional output of around 10% (GVA). There is no firm evidence to suggest that international migrants have had an impact on wage levels or have displaced UK-born workers into unemployment.

Within this regional picture there are significant local variations in population structure and the pace of migration related population change. For example:

- Leicester City had by far the highest proportion of residents born outside the UK, at 33.6%. Non-UK born populations are also relatively concentrated in Nottingham (19.5%) and Derby (13.8%). Leicester also has the highest proportion of residents born in non-EU countries, at 28.2% of the total population.
- Boston has the highest proportion of residents born in EU Accession countries of any Local Authority in England and Wales, at 10.6%; and the biggest percentage increase where the non-UK born population grew by 8,063 residents (from 1,727 in 2001 to 9,790 in 2011), representing a growth of 467%.

This level of variation can give rise to a number of challenges for councils. In proposing practical solutions, the research and consultation has highlighted four key issues of particular concern to councils and communities in the East Midlands:

1 Local Data Quality

In order to better understand the dynamic nature of migrant populations at the local level there is a clear need for better quality and access to official local data. While the quality of national data has improved; the lack of a single, consistent and comparable official data source at the local level that is both timely and combines detail on migrant populations with information on economic activity prevents effective strategic planning and delivery of important public services. Since a sizeable element of council funding from central government is directly linked to population, any undercount of the migrant population leads to a significant shortfall in funding. Even when additional funding is forthcoming it lags behind the more immediate pressure on local services.

2 Cost Shift to Local Government

There is pressing need for Government to better understand the collective effect of legislative and policy changes that have led to additional unfunded burdens on councils at a time of rapid decline in council budgets. Cost shifts from central to local government include support for former 'looked after unaccompanied asylum seeking children' and those who have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF). Whilst NRPF is Government policy, councils have to obey the law – and the law is clear in requiring local councils to support destitute families with children or those with complex long term needs, whatever their status.

3 Asylum Seeker Dispersal Policy

At the end of March 2014, there were just short of 2,000 supported asylum seekers in the East Midlands. In a region of 4.5 million this is a tiny number of people – but a 76% increase on the number for the previous year. However, the dispersal of asylum seekers is concentrated in particular wards rather than being more widely distributed across the local authority areas. It is this that causes strain upon public services and can place pressure on community cohesion. The Home Office (and their private sector accommodation contractor) must work better with councils to improve the asylum dispersal policy and give more of a local say over where and how such people are housed.

4 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

The 2011 Census highlights that in the East Midlands there is lower English language proficiency in comparison to elsewhere. Councils are keen that new migrants should learn to speak English rather than making official information routinely available in other languages. However, the provision of language support has fallen. Across the region, ESOL waiting lists are getting longer; this is a real barrier to integration and finding work. This is a social and economic problem. A lack of language skills is a social problem in terms of community safety, health and wider integration and cohesion. Economically, it is a massive barrier to getting a job, a home and making a positive contribution to the local community. This is an issue not just for Government but also the EU - the free movement of labour is a cornerstone of the European Single Market.

Recommendations

- Government should secure a 'step change' improvement in the quality of local official data relating to the scale, location and characteristics of new migrant communities.
- The Home Office should commission Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships to undertake a focused review of migration impacts with support from local research institutions.
- Councils with significant migrant populations should take steps to understand the impact that new legislation may have on local service provision and work proactively with communities to address the concerns of local people.
- Government should ensure legislative and policy changes that have an impact on migration and migrants do not result, either individually or collectively, in additional unfunded new burdens on councils.
- All unitary and county councils in the East Midlands should use and maintain the NRPF Connect database to ensure that resources are targeted effectively, prevent fraud and meet the needs of vulnerable people in the community.
- Government should respond positively to the recommendations of the Public Accounts Select Committee on the management of the COMPASS Contracts.
- The Home Office and its contractors should work more closely with Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships and individual councils to achieve a more flexible and effective asylum seeker dispersal policy. This should include a greater local say over where and how accommodation is provided, take into account wider population change and the ability of local communities to accommodate increased numbers of supported asylum seekers.



- Joint action by councils and local partners to support people who wish to return to their country of origin has been shown to be effective. Government should make a longer term commitment to the funding of schemes such as that successfully operated by Framework Housing Association in Nottingham.
- The EU and UK Government must ensure that adequate provision is made for ESOL services as a core element of a coherent approach to the integration of migrant communities. Councils, colleges and Local Enterprise Partnerships should actively explore new ways of delivering ESOL services, including community based solutions, to make the most effective use of available resources.
- Ethnicity and country of origin data for all health interventions should be routinely recorded and used to produce comprehensive 'Migrant Health Profiles' for key migrant populations.
- A systematic multi-agency approach based around the police, central and local government is required to maintain community safety and cohesion in areas with high migrant populations. This must be underpinned by a step change improvement in the quality of local data relating to international migrants as both the perpetrators and victims of crime.
- The Government and NHS England should work with councils to improve the data and intelligence relating to the future demand for school places and councils should ensure flexible delivery to meet identified need in a timely and cost effective manner.

The full version of '**The Impact of International Migration on the East Midlands**' is available at <http://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/ImpactOfMigration-6-A4-AW.pdf>



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