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A study of A8 and A2 migrants in Nottingham

Executive Summary

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Nottingham
City Council

ONE
NOTTINGHAM



The study

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the migration of people from A8 and A2 countries¹. It is now recognised that local authorities need to understand the composition and needs of their local population in order to be able to plan and deliver services effectively, as well as being able to respond to any issues relating to community cohesion². Consequently, local authorities are making efforts to find out about the experiences and needs of these new and emerging communities.

The research was commissioned by Nottingham City Council and One Nottingham in August 2008 and was conducted by a team of researchers from the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. The study was greatly aided by research support from Nottingham City Council Children's Services Asylum Seeker/Refugee Support Team, as well as a number of community interviewers. The project was managed by a steering group composed of officers representing Nottingham City Council, One Nottingham, Nottingham City Homes, NHS Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, Nottinghamshire Police and Basic Educational Guidance in Nottinghamshire (BEGIN).

The main objective of this research was to explore the needs and experiences of A8 and A2 migrants living and working in Nottingham. There were two strands to the study:

1. Research with A8 and A2 migrants

The key areas of investigation with A8 and A2 migrants included:

- the number and geographical distribution of migrant workers in Nottingham;
- demographic information (including age, gender, nationality, religion, family status);
- language skills of migrant workers (including ESOL requirements);
- length of time in the UK/Nottingham;
- employment issues (including type, income, sector, location, official registration levels and match to qualifications);
- housing issues (including tenure, density of occupation and experiences of homelessness);
- health care issues (including take-up of services and particular health needs);
- benefit take-up of migrant workers;
- access to other goods, services and facilities (including council services);
- education take-up of migrant workers and their children;
- evidence of hate crime or discrimination;
- level of involvement in the local community (including contact with people from their home country and the indigenous population); and
- future intentions (including length of stay, employment, housing, family reunification).

¹ Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (A8 countries); Bulgaria and Romania (A2 countries).

² Institute of Community Cohesion (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level*, London: Local Government Association (LGA).

2. Research with the children of A8 and A2 migrants

The research with children focused on the following key issues:

- overall satisfaction with their school;
- language skills;
- help they received when they started school (including language support);
- contact with people from their home country and the indigenous population;
- comparisons with schools and education in their home country;
- feelings of safety and experiences of discrimination; and
- suggestions for ways their life could be made better at school and in their local community.

The study was undertaken by conducting:

- a review of available literature, data and secondary sources;
- consultation with key stakeholders, including service providers and employers; and
- a total of **235** interviews with migrants from the following countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic.
- a total of **158** interviews with migrant children from the following countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and the Slovak Republic.

Main findings

The characteristics of the sample

- The sample included representatives from all A8 and A2 countries, with the exception of Bulgaria and Slovenia. The majority of respondents were Polish (75%), followed by Czech (8%) and Hungarian (7%). The sample also included a number of people (7%) who identified themselves as Roma (most of which were Czech).
- The majority of respondents were aged 17 – 39 years (86%).
- 61% of the respondents were female and 39% were male.
- 47% of the sample was single; 33% were married; and 20% had a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- 88% of those who were married or had a partner indicated that their spouse/partner was currently living with them in Nottingham.
- 41% of the sample had dependant children; 90% of those with dependant children stated that their children were living with them in Nottingham.
- The respondents lived in a number of areas across the city; however, there was a concentration of people in Dales and St Ann's. These are areas where new migrants to Nottingham have historically settled on first arrival in the city.

- 20% of the sample had lived somewhere else in the UK before moving to Nottingham.
- The majority of people had chosen Nottingham because of social connections; for example, 38% had moved to Nottingham because they had family living in the city, while 35% had friends living there.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide a full discussion of the characteristics of the sample.

Qualifications and language skills

- The sample was diverse in terms of their skills and qualifications; 34% had degree level qualifications (including architecture, business/finance, economics, engineering, environmental science, IT, law, marketing, mathematics, political science, religious studies, social care, teaching, textiles), while a quarter had technical/vocational qualifications (including carpentry, electrician, economics, food technology, gardening, hairdressing/beauty therapy, IT, marketing, mechanics, metal work).
- 20% of people said that their ability to speak English was poor or very poor while 32% said their ability to write English was poor or very poor.
- 33% of respondents were either currently studying on an English language course or had already completed one, while 11% were on the waiting list for a course.
- 30% of respondents would like to study on an English language course but were not currently enrolled. The main reasons were not having enough time or not being able to attend because of working hours.

Chapter 7 of the report provides a full discussion of qualifications and language skills.

Employment

- 58% of respondents had a particular trade or skill from their home country. Looking at the last job in their home country, people were drawn from a range of occupational levels; 35% were previously working in the three highest classifications (managers and senior officials; professional occupations; and associated professional and technical occupations); 21% were working in skilled trades occupations; and 12% elementary occupations.
- 81% of respondents were currently in paid employment. There were slightly higher rates of employment amongst male respondents.
- 87% were currently working within the Nottingham urban area. The remaining respondents were working in other parts of Nottinghamshire.
- The majority of respondents were currently working in elementary occupations (41%, compared to 12% previously working in elementary occupations). The percentage of people occupying the highest three levels decreased from 35% to 13%.

- 59% of people had experienced a decrease in occupational level, 33% had stayed within the same occupational level and 8% had increased their occupational level.
- Eleven respondents were earning below the national minimum wage. The lowest paid worker in the sample was earning in the region of £1.68 and £2.94 per hour.

Chapters 8 of the report provide a full discussion of the findings in relation to employment.

Accommodation experiences

- 73% of respondents were living in the private rented sector and 9% in socially rented accommodation.
- 42% of respondents had found their current accommodation through friends and family.
- 11% of respondents indicated that three people were currently sharing a bedroom, while 1% indicated that four people were sharing a bedroom.
- 9% of respondents indicated that they, or people within their household, were sharing bedrooms with non-family members.
- 75% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their current accommodation.
- Five people had experienced homelessness since living in Nottingham.
- Just 2% of respondents did not know the different housing options available in Nottingham.
- 42% of respondents wanted to own their own home in the future, while 25% wanted to live in socially rented accommodation. Just 7% wanted to live in private rented accommodation in the future.

Chapter 9 of the report provides a full discussion of housing experiences.

Community and neighbourhood

- 77% of respondents were currently living in areas which had a mix of different national and ethnic groups; 66% of respondents felt that people from different backgrounds mixed well together.
- Nearly all respondents had some contact with people from their home country as well as with British people.
- 75% of people were fairly satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood, while 38% had a fairly or very strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

- 35% of respondents wanted to move to a different area of the city. This was primarily because they wanted to live in 'safer' or 'better' areas of the city.
- 33% of respondents indicated that they had been victims of crime while living in Nottingham; 9% of respondents had experienced hate crime.
- 54% of respondents would recommend Nottingham as a place to live and work to friends and family in their home country.

Chapter 10 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to community involvement and engagement.

Access to services and facilities

- 83% of respondents were currently accessing a Doctor/GP, while 50% were accessing a dentist. The majority of respondents who did not currently access a GP/Doctor or dentist indicated that they would access health/dental care in their home country.
- 34% of respondents had children attending local schools or nurseries in Nottingham. Stakeholder consultation suggested that there may be a preference for children to attend local faith schools rather than non-faith schools.
- 99% of respondents had a mobile phone, compared to having a landline phone (29%); 81% had internet access.
- 49% of respondents were currently receiving benefits or tax credits. These were almost entirely child-related or in-work benefits.
- 24% of respondents had been provided with an interpreter during their contact with service providers.
- Respondents revealed a general lack of understanding with regards to what services were available and their entitlement to these.

Chapter 11 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to use of goods, services and facilities.

Children and families

- The majority of children who took part in the consultation were Polish (80%), followed by Czech (14%).
- 59% of the children were girls and 41% were boys.
- 63% were attending primary school while 37% were attending secondary school.
- 41% of the children had lived in Nottingham between two and four years.

- The children revealed relatively low levels of English language skills prior to coming to the UK. Half of the children couldn't speak English, while 40% could speak English, but only a little.
- 63% of children said that they had found it easy or very easy to learn English.
- The children themselves or their fathers were perceived to speak the most English within the household.
- 78% of children indicated that it was easy to make friends in Nottingham. The majority of children were friends with children from their home country and English children.
- 42% of children said that someone had been nasty or unfriendly to them because of their nationality.
- 87% of children said they had someone at school they could talk to if they had any problems.
- 69% of children indicated that they sometimes used their own language in the classroom. This was more likely to happen in primary than secondary schools.
- 71% of children indicated that the subjects they studied were different to those in their home country.

Chapter 12 of the report provides a full discussion of the findings from the consultation with children.

Future intentions

- 28% of respondents wanted to stay in Nottingham indefinitely; 27% intended to leave within five years; and 37% did not know how long they would stay.
- With regards to those who intended to leave, 57% would be returning to their home country; 22% intended to go to another country; and 16% intended to move to another part of the UK.
- 15% of respondents said they would be joined in the UK by other family members.

Chapter 13 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to future intentions of the respondents.

Conclusions

The following provides a summary of the main conclusions based on the findings of the survey.

Employment

The A8 and A2 migrants interviewed in Nottingham were diverse in terms of their skills and experiences. While there are many migrants who may prioritise finding a job and being able to earn money, regardless of what the job entails, there are also those who will actively seek occupational mobility. Migrant communities, in common with the rest of population, therefore need to be able to access information with regards to how best to utilise their individual skills and qualifications, as well as the employment opportunities that are available to them.

Previous research has often highlighted exploitation of migrant workers and issues in relation to recruitment agencies and gangmasters. Stakeholder consultation suggested that there were gangmasters operating in the study area. The scale and nature of exploitation remains unclear and is an issue that would require further investigation.

Language barriers

Perhaps unsurprisingly, acquisition of English language remains a key issue for migrant communities. Both migrant workers and key stakeholders in this study made reference to issues of language, particularly in relation to English improving employment prospects; language affecting engagement with the local community; and language creating a barrier to accessing services and facilities.

What has been highlighted is that people's work and other commitments can mean that they are often unable or unwilling to access language courses. Issues such as long or irregular hours act as a barrier to accessing ESOL provision. However, costs and waiting lists can also discourage people from enrolling on courses. So, while some migrants will actively seek English classes others simply want to learn a basic level of English that will enable them to 'get by', and this may be done with the help of friends and family. There is clearly a need to consider how to provide flexible learning opportunities, particularly for those working long or anti-social hours. Stakeholder consultation revealed good practice in Nottingham with providers striving to tailor ESOL provision to the workplace (for example, offering the new ESOL for Work qualification). There is also a need to look at how employers can be encouraged to build the language capacity of overseas employees, in the same way that they would provide other types of staff development courses.

Accommodation

There are three main issues to highlight in relation to accommodation. Firstly, there is an issue around accommodation standards and landlords operating in the private rented sector. There was evidence of people living in HMOs and some made reference to overcrowding issues. What was interesting to note was that poor conditions were not necessarily highlighted by the A8 and A2 migrants who took part

in this research. This is perhaps due to their acceptance of lower standards because of the more temporary nature of their stay or comparisons with their living arrangements in their home country. Nottingham City Council has been working to address some of these issues through the work of the Nottingham HMO Action Zones. This involved identifying three areas of the city with high levels of HMOs and concerns about non compliance with HMO licensing regulations. These projects could be developed to target other areas of the city where there are known to be large migrant communities.

The second issues relates to homelessness/rough sleeping. Only a small proportion of the sample indicated that they had experienced homelessness/rough sleeping. With regards to the scale of homelessness amongst migrant workers we need to consider migrant workers understanding of the concept of homelessness, with perhaps a lack of understanding that homelessness goes beyond street homelessness and rough sleeping. There were six people in our sample who did not have their own accommodation but rather were currently 'staying' with friends and family. People are more likely to rely on informal support (i.e. friends, family or other acquaintances) than the more formal support available to those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The issue is not the need for greater provision in relation to homelessness, but rather a greater awareness of what support is available; an issue that applies not just to migrant communities but the whole population of Nottingham.

Finally, there is a need to consider the implications of people's future accommodation aspirations. The majority of people expressed a preference for owner occupation while a quarter of the sample indicated that they would like to live in socially rented accommodation in the future.

Children and families

There are three main issues in relation to children and families. Firstly, there are issues of disruption, upheaval and attendance. Previous research has referred to disruption caused by mid-term arrivals. This study, however, has revealed additional issues; for example, stakeholder consultation suggested that parents often have a preference to send children to faith schools in Nottingham. This preference can be so strong that children will be removed from non-faith schools when places are available in a faith school. With regards to the issue of attendance, there is often a lack of understanding with regards to parent's responsibility to ensure that children attend school and parents will sometimes take children out of schools to visit their home country. An Attendance Project has been created which looks at developing good practice around the induction and integration of new migrant communities, with the idea that appropriate and sensitive integration means that migrant children are more likely to attend.

Secondly, there was sometimes a lack of recognition from parents with regards to the additional support their children received in schools, particularly with regards to language support.

Finally, although this study focused primarily on the needs and experiences of migrant workers, the research has revealed that a high proportion of people have come to the UK with families. Schools may have a key role to play in relation to

integration of migrants in the community and community cohesion. Indeed, having children in a local school provides common ground between migrant communities and the wider population.

Dissemination of information

One of the key issues emerging from the study is the lack of understanding or knowledge of UK systems, particularly in relation to rights as well as responsibilities. One concern is that migrant communities often get advice from friends, relatives and other migrants, which in some cases can be inaccurate information.

What has also emerged from the research is that many different stakeholders and service providers are often undertaking an 'advisory' role that goes beyond the remit of their current job. There are examples from stakeholder consultation; for example, Children's Services staff needed to understand immigration policy in order to answer queries from families, while GPs were providing information on the health care system as a whole during appointments. This is obviously not accounted for in the resources available to these services. Furthermore, some employers were playing a role in providing information, helping people with issues around tax, benefits, and filling in forms.

A number of local authority areas have developed 'welcome packs' for migrant communities and these can be tailored to each specific local area in terms of the information they provide. What is apparent is that there needs to be a more coordinated approach in Nottingham in terms of provision of information. It is clear that a number of agencies are undertaking this role, but this differs in terms of what information is provided and the languages it is available in. A group of 'grass roots' workers, drawn from a range of service provision areas in the city are currently working to share information and encourage more joined up working. They are also looking at how to develop a welcome pack. However, this will only be able to resolve some of the awareness issues and agencies need to consider different strategies to engage with migrant communities. The study has shown that the more 'traditional' places for disseminating information (such as churches), may not be appropriate for some of the migrant communities in Nottingham, highlighting a need to look at more innovative approaches. Given the large proportion of people who have access to computers and the internet there is a need to explore new ways of disseminating information taking advantages of people's use of technology.

Community cohesion and involvement

A common theme running throughout the study is the reliance on social networks. Having friends and family living in Nottingham has been vital for many people, not only influencing their decision to move to the city in the first place, but assisting with access to employment, accommodation and services. The study has suggested relatively high levels of involvement with the local community; however, we need to recognise that language, once again, emerges as a barrier to engagement with the local community, while lack of time due to work and family commitments can also be an issue.

Given that people tend to move to areas where they have existing social networks the current patterns of settlement are likely to continue with concentrations of migrants in particular areas of Nottingham. The study has revealed, however, that A8 and A2 migrants are also found in a number of other areas of the city (not just traditional migration areas). Consideration needs to be given to the impact on community cohesion in different areas of the city.

While this research has focused on the needs and experiences of migrant communities, there is a need to consider the 'settled' population in the receiving neighbourhoods and their perception of how the arrival of migrant communities has affected their neighbourhood. Understanding what some of the issues are for local people is perhaps one of the steps to being able to break down the barriers that can sometimes occur.

Future intentions

Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict future intentions, particularly with regards to a population whose migration is intrinsically linked to economic opportunities. A number of the people interviewed in this survey were unsure about their future intentions. It is also difficult to assess the impact of the current economic climate. A8 and A2 migrants are continuing to arrive in the UK and it does not appear that there will be a sudden exodus of migrants. Indeed, some of the data in this survey suggests that people may have longer-term intentions, particularly looking at accommodation preferences for owner occupation, overall satisfaction with living in Nottingham, as well as the number of people who have brought children to the UK.

What we need to recognise is that people are adaptive, making use of social networks and responding to the opportunities available to them. Decisions on whether or not to remain in Nottingham may be not just be based on employment considerations, but a combination of factors including their overall experience and how 'embedded' they are in Nottingham. Local authorities, service providers, etc. need to ensure that they are constantly monitoring population changes within the city, and sharing this information at a wider level. The group of 'grass roots' workers, referred to above, as well as the steering group for this project provide excellent forums for sharing information and good practice and coordinating Nottingham's response to new and emerging communities.