



West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

Regional Migration Scoping Exercise

Summary of key findings

1. About the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP), is one of 11 such Partnerships across the UK that is core-funded by the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) of the Home Office. It was formerly the West Midlands Strategic Partnership for Asylum & Refugee Support, however since 1st April 2007, it was requested by BIA, that in addition to its regional, strategic coordinating role of overseeing the delivery of services to asylum seekers and refugees in the region, to incorporate the needs of economic migrants within its core activities. In order to meet this requirement, the WMSMP commissioned the *Regional Migration Scoping Exercise* to establish the potential for collaborative working at a regional level on migration issues, in the main across local authorities and other statutory organizations.

2. The key aims of the Regional Migration Scoping Exercise

The key aims of the Scoping Exercise were as follows:

- i. Establish the scale of issues, and resulting impact upon local authorities and other statutory partners as a result of the significant increase of migrant workers arriving in the West Midlands;
- ii. Ascertain the current level of activity, at either a strategic and/or operational level, taking place across the region in responding to these issues and consider how the WMSMP Secretariat can make a contribution to this through its Regional Strategic Coordinating role;
- iii. Make recommendations to BIA as to the scale and nature of the work to be undertaken at a regional level, with a view to successfully supporting local authorities and partners in responding to the issues identified.

Rather than to identify the specific issues presented by the increasing new migrant population in the West Midlands, the focus of the Scoping Exercise was to identify what can be achieved, by the Strategic Migration Partnership, to add value to locally established or emerging programmes and support organisations, by making strategic and operational linkages with them above and beyond those currently in place.

3. Key findings – estimating numbers of migrants

As part of the Exercise, National Insurance number (NINo) data in respect of overseas nationals for the West Midlands region was analysed. It was found that:

- At a regional level, the West Midlands ranks fifth highest out of the twelve Government Office regions in terms of National Insurance Number registrations to non-UK Nationals in 2006/07
- The top five local authorities with the highest number of NINo registrations in respect of overseas nationals during 2003-07 were: Birmingham (43500), Coventry (18150), Sandwell (8420), Wolverhampton (8260), and Stoke-on-Trent (6760)
- Again using NINo data, the number of overseas nationals as a percentage of the total population was analysed at a local authority level, the five authorities with the highest percentages were: Coventry (6%), Birmingham (4.8%), Rugby (3.8%), Herefordshire (3.6%) and Wolverhampton (3.5%).
- In terms of the pace of change, the authorities that had faced the most rapid change since 2003 to 2007, again using NI data in respect of overseas nationals were: South Shropshire (7-fold increase), Herefordshire (6-fold Increase), North Warwickshire and Tamworth District Councils both experienced a 5-fold increase; finally Wychavon, Redditch, Stratford-on-Avon and Wyre Forest Councils had all experienced around a 4-fold increase.
- It was found that a variety of different datasets can be used to analyse the numbers of overseas nationals/migrant workers entering the region, however, different data provide differing results, and it is impossible to reach an accurate figure of migrant workers at a national/regional or sub-regional level as numbers of in-coming economic migrants are recorded but not out-going migrants. This can hamper strategic planning for and services to those migrants who may be in need of support
- At a local level, the Police, Primary Care Trusts, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and further education providers could work collectively by gathering data themselves on migrants using their services and by sharing such data with each other at regular intervals. This was beginning to happen in some parts of the region.

4. Key findings at a Policy Level:

The Scoping Exercise looked at the issues presented by increased migration on a number of policy areas including housing, compulsory education, health, employment, adult education and training, community cohesion and media and information advice and guidance. A summary of the key issues and the potential for regional action for each policy area is provided below.

4.1 Housing: The key issues identified were as follows:

- Migrant workers have low expectations of their living conditions and some are being exploited through poor condition housing, overcrowding and paying high rents;
- Tied accommodation is leaving migrant workers feeling powerless over their living and working arrangements;
- The long-term impact of migrant workers settling in the UK on the housing sector needs to be addressed, including social housing, and the availability of accommodation to meet the net in-flow of migrants;
- Migrants living conditions are sometimes adversely affecting community tensions:
- There is a lack of translated material for housing advice and a degree of inaccessibility of information on legal rights to housing;
- There is potential for destitution amongst migrant workers to become a major region-wide issue that could impact negatively on community cohesion.

4.2 Potential for Regional Action on Migrant Housing Issues:

- Local authorities could collectively develop voluntary accreditation schemes at a regional level to improve accommodation standards within their own localities, for private landlords;
- Ensure that accurate estimates of migrant workers as well as the key issues they face in relation to housing are fed into forthcoming Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Work collectively with organisations such as LACORS, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and HACT to provide a regional mechanism in which the production of information for migrants – in a variety of languages - on accessing housing and their rights can be shared for use across the region, enabling resource and cost efficiencies;
- Use the above forum to enable the coordination of efforts from a variety of organisations involved in this area of work;
- Maintain close contact with agencies supporting failed asylum seekers or those with no recourse to public funds, to be aware of the impact that other migrants may have on them and their limited resources, as well as on community cohesion.

4.3 Compulsory Education: The key issues identified were as follows:

- Migrant children and their families are few and far between in some rural areas hence there are isolated children in villages attending schools where staff have very little or no experience of supporting foreign pupils;
- City-wide or county-wide networking in parts of the region is weak, there is a lack of joined-up working within and across cities, districts and counties in the West Midlands which if improved could enable staff to support each other, resources to be shared and common issues and solutions to be pooled;
- There are increasing reports of racism, especially white-on-white racism in schools, and of bullying;
- Parents lack of understanding about the British education system such as admissions and dealing with education appeals is leading to increased absenteeism from schools in some areas.

4.4 Potential for Regional Action on Compulsory Education Issues for Migrant Children:

- Consider the pooling of resources right across the West Midlands, such as parenting packs, teacher training programmes and country specific information about schooling circumstances abroad, which can help tackle the issues detailed in this section, thus avoiding the duplication of such initiatives by individual authorities;
- The above is particularly pertinent to rural authorities, where newly arrived pupils are often isolated, and where there are no economies of scale for developing such resources from scratch;
- Provide a forum where EMAS Advisors or EAL Advisory Teachers for example, can come together to discuss common issues of concern, and share processes, procedures and initiatives that are tried and tested, and have helped tackle issues such as bullying, racism, and the integration of newly arrived children within their own localities, that can be applied elsewhere;
- Use the above forum to bring together experienced personnel from around the region, such as those who have worked with asylum seeker and refugee pupils, to share their knowledge and insight with those who have little or no experience, but now find themselves supporting a diverse range of newly arrived children, with common issues. Cross-authority, informal buddying or mentoring arrangements could be set up as part of this to enable on-going support outside such a regional forum.

4.5 Health - The key issues identified were as follows:

- Most migrants to the UK are young, healthy and do not make major demands upon the NHS though this may change as some migrants decide to settle in the UK and as their families join them;
- Migrants have little understanding of the UK health system and are often making inappropriate use of A&E departments and not registering with local GPs;
- There is a need for better data gathering at both a national and local level to help develop a better understanding of migrants health needs as well as helping to obtain a clearer picture about their movements This includes for example knowing the percentage of migrants with dependants in the UK;
- The circumstances in which migrant workers in particular find themselves either due to the nature of industries in which they work, their lack of understanding of health and safety issues, communication problems or lack of training, mean that they are at greater risk of suffering from mental and physical ill-health than their British co-workers;
- Employers and employment agencies recruiting migrant workers could do much more to alleviate occupational health and safety issues amongst this group;
- The major burden of infectious diseases in the UK falls on non-UK nationals, although migrants do not have a have a very high occurrence of infectious disease;
- The UK population is not at risk of infectious diseases from migrants, this message should be communicated widely to the general public.

4.6 Potential for Regional Action on Migrant Health Issues:

- Expand the existing Regional Health Practitioners Group convened by the WMSMP to include representatives from rural areas as well as urban, and place the above issues – and any others raised – in order of priority and urgency, consider what issues are best dealt at a local, sub-regional or regional level, based on the commonality of issues across local boundaries. Priority issues may include for example awareness raising of primary care entitlements and access for migrants amongst health commissioners;
- Issues to be taken forward at a sub-regional or regional level to be explored in terms of what other partners need to be involved, i.e. the Health & Safety Executive, and action plans to be drawn up. These may include for example commissioning research into the health needs of migrants from particular backgrounds (as opposed to all migrants), enabling information to be gathered and used regionally, but enabling local initiatives to be put in place;
- Through this group, consider the exchange of good practice, for example on challenging issues such as the use of migrants health records to develop a clearer picture of the number of new arrivals within a locality alongside other available data, and consider how such good practice models could be adapted elsewhere in the region to reduce health inequalities amongst migrants and the indigenous population;
- Through such a group, work with the Department of Health to clarify government policy on the health entitlements of migrants and differences in opinion amongst health practitioners. Guidance from the relevant central government departments on this and other similar issues, by presenting individual cases, sought by the region collectively could save time and effort, such information could then be widely disseminated amongst health professionals;
- Working with partners in the health sector, identify existing or commission further research. There is a need for further research to look into the reasons why migrants in some parts of the region are having little impact on healthcare providers and a greater impact in others, as well as research into: child health; research into immunisation rates; use of midwifery/health visitor functions; and the late booking into maternity services by migrants.

4.7 Employment - The key issues identified were as follows:

- Migrant workers make a positive contribution to the regional labour market and economy;
- Displacement of UK-nationals from industries and occupations where migrant workers are concentrated is voluntary, rather than involuntary. Involuntary displacement may have occurred at an individual and local level, some individuals – particularly those with poor skills - may find that they face greater competition for jobs;
- There is no evidence, in aggregate, to indicate that migrant workers have contributed to an increase in unemployment, to a lowering in the level of earnings growth or to a reduction in vacancies;
- Migrant workers have a positive, rather than a detrimental, impact on businesses. It is estimated that migrant workers make a positive contribution to regional output and are a crucial component in some local economies;
- There is evidence to suggest that migrant workers are exploited through a variety of means such as tied accommodation and being made to work harder and longer hours. In some local areas of the region however there is little or no evidence to suggest this.

4.8 Potential for Regional Action on Migrant Employment Issues:

- Communicate the overwhelmingly positive contribution made by migrant workers to the regions' employers and the regional economy widely across all industry sectors and to the general public to maintain this equilibrium;
- Work collectively to ensure that proposals to up-skill and better qualify migrant workers are comparable to existing and future initiatives targeted at the long-term unemployed in the region to avoid any hostility and opposition at a local level in particular from the indigenous population;
- Work collectively, through the Chambers of Commerce and the West Midlands CBI for example, to encourage employers to view both the short and longer-term benefits of a diverse workforce through the provision of facilities to migrant workers that they employ (on a level comparative with the rest of their workforce). For example offer better on-the-job training as well as opportunities to practice and improve English language skills, support in accessing training and qualifications outside of the work environment, allowing flexible working where possible, using case study examples available from the Home Office on the website www.employingmigrantworkers.org.uk;
- Following on from the above, work with employers to encourage the progression of migrant workers into better skilled, better paid jobs moving away from what is classed as 'migrant work';
- Work jointly with relevant organisations such as the TUC or Gangmasters Licensing Authority to improve the conditions of employment for migrant workers, possibly with the introduction of a voluntary 'minimum standards charter' or 'code of practice' to encourage the fair treatment of all employees in the workplace focusing on migrant dense industries;
- Encourage the exchange of good practice in delivering the above actions across the region.

4.9 Training & Skills - The key issues identified were as follows:

- Competence in English is as important to access the labour market as it is to integrate into UK society, however a substantial number of migrants are not accessing English language training;
- Few employers are investing in the English language skills of their migrant employees;

- The skills of migrant workers are under utilised, this is a loss to the region's economy, and unless addressed, migrants may be lost to other countries through frustration and in search of better prospects;
- The majority of migrants do not know where to go to seek relevant advice to improve their skills, convert their qualifications and improve their English language.

4.10 Potential for Regional Action on Migrant Training & Skills Issues:

- Ensure that the provision of ESOL is flexible and accessible enough to help meet the needs of migrant workers, including vocational and fast-track ESOL, through colleges, local authority adult learning provision or via employers;
- Work collectively to enable migrant workers to transfer onto other relevant courses from ESOL onto further or higher education courses where appropriate;
- Work collectively to improve the skills and qualifications recognition system and in the UK, improve access to UK NARIC and develop better Accredited Prior Learning systems to recognise and maximise the potential of the skills that migrants bring with them to the UK;
- Make the availability of information to help migrants access information on training and skills a simple process. This could involve the establishment of: a hotline similar to that provided in the East of England through establishing drop-in services at key points across the region and / or a web-portal with information in the most commonly used languages;
- Recognise that there are different types of migrants that have come to the UK, and that a varied approach may be necessary to target particular types of migrants and different nationality groupings;
- Acknowledge that the migrant workforce in the UK is mobile, that there is a risk that migrants may leave the region to go elsewhere in the UK or Europe to better their career prospects, and that this risk is increased if the interventions suggested in the regional Economic Impact of Migrant Workers study and those suggested above are not made, at a cost to the regions' economy.

4.11 Community Cohesion & Media - The key issues identified were as follows:

- There is a lack of a 'sense of belonging', particularly at a neighborhood and community level for some migrant workers, far greater than that felt by the existing population;
- It is important to inform new migrants of the impact of certain behaviours, protocols and etiquette early on, so these do not raise tensions between communities;
- Public perception in some parts of the region that migrant workers are taking jobs away and are given priority to social housing and other public services over the existing population can further create tensions;
- Some community tensions appear to exist amongst established and new communities, as well as amongst new and established communities in the region;
- It is important that any cohesion work undertaken at a regional or local level is inclusive of all communities and that migrants are not viewed in isolation;
- The Police forces across the region are essential partners at a local and regional level, their knowledge of issues on the ground as well as initiatives in which they play a lead role are already proving beneficial in local areas;
- Working with the media at all levels can help challenge misconceptions and enable balanced and accurate coverage of migration issues.

4.12 Potential for Regional Action on Cohesion and Media Issues affecting Migrants:

- Undertake joint working with key local authorities that have experienced the greatest increases of migrants over the last five years to establish what approaches they are taking in tackling cohesion issues, and to determine what initiatives exist to help understand local community dynamics in areas densely populated by new migrants;

- Consider undertaking, or encouraging relevant organisations to look in-depth at issues that may be raising tensions locally and to suggest what responses may help alleviate such tensions. This could also be done at a sub-regional level;
- Bring together statutory, voluntary and community sector projects from around the region as required, to share local concerns as well as solutions that have successfully dealt with the issues detailed above, such as common misconceptions, cultural and behavioural issues and negative media reporting of migrants. The existing Cohesion Regional Implementation Group of WMSMP could take on this role;
- Work proactively with the media in parts of the region where there is the greatest need to encourage positive reporting of migrant issues in the region as well as responding swiftly to unconstructive and inaccurate coverage on migration;
- Maintain on-going contact with the regions' Police forces, and the regional Government Office and BIA in relation to cohesion related issues, as well as share available data on hate crime and community tensions.

4.13 Information, Advice & Guidance - The key issues identified were as follows:

- The availability of up to date and accurate information, advice and guidance is essential to enable migrants to live and work in the UK;
- A template for 'local area information packs' nationally is to be developed by Communities and Local Government by January 2008, the use of this should be encouraged in the West Midlands region;
- There is a need to improve the awareness of legislation which can impact upon the lives of migrant workers immediately or soon after their arrival to the UK, such as vehicle insurance and employment legislation;
- Translated resources could be shared at a regional level at least avoiding duplication and enabling cost efficiencies;
- Close working with the voluntary, community and faiths sector is important to maintain an updated understanding of migrants issues from those working on the frontline, and who are often amongst the first to be contacted.

4.14 Potential for Regional Action on Information, Advice & Guidance Issues for Migrants:

- Given the 'regional strategic coordinating role' that the WMSMP has covering asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, it is in a strong position to encourage collaborative working on issues such as welcome packs, information guides and any other materials that may be produced in English or in other languages, across the themes covered in this report, such as health, housing or education;
- Through its developing database of contacts of organisations supporting migrants in the region, the WMSMP can promote the use of existing leaflets and websites which have already been developed to better inform migrants of their rights and responsibilities in the UK, avoiding the development of duplicate resources. Where there are gaps in such resources, new material could be commissioned at a regional level;
- There is a push from all regions in the UK to encourage Communities and Local Government to fund the roll-out of the META (Mobile Europeans Taking Action) hotline. This is a telephone service providing information to migrant workers, currently operating in the Eastern region only. This would require some degree of involvement from partners in the West Midlands, potentially coordinated through the WMSMP;
- There is the potential to collaborate with the Regional Language Network in the West Midlands to help raise awareness amongst public and private sector organisations alike of the cultures from which their new migrant workforce originates, and how this can be used to their advantage, as well as to the advantage of migrants themselves;
- Work in partnership with frontline organisations, particularly in the voluntary, community and faiths sector, (including the Citizens Advice regional office) to maintain an up-to-date overview

of the types of issues that migrants raise, and where necessary, feed such issues into the relevant national forums on migration to affect national policy.

5. What are the conclusions we have drawn from this work

From conducting this Scoping Exercise it has become clear that there is much to be gained from working collectively at a regional level on migration issues, with statutory and voluntary organisations. A significant amount of engagement at a local and national level needs to take place to ensure that the region meets the needs of migrants who are choosing to settle here, and to help them maximise their potential for the benefit of the region. For the WMSMP to undertake this work, and to ensure engagement from the urban and rural parts of the region, additional funding will be necessary. With its previous focus on asylum seekers and refugees, the WMSMP is best placed to undertake this work in part because of the experience it has, and secondly as many of the necessary structures in terms of regional working groups on key policy areas are in place and already beginning to consider migration.

6. The Recommendations

The Scoping Exercise made a number of recommendations, in summary these are:

1. To establish a new Board to oversee the new remit of the WMSMP
2. To work with partners to establish the regions' priorities on migration
3. The WMSMP should consider new joint working/commissioning arrangements to enable priority needs to be met
4. The WMSMP should seek to secure funding to recruit two full-time Policy Officers to begin taking forward some of the key findings of the Scoping Exercise.
5. Should additional funding not be forthcoming, have an alternative plan of action in place to ensure the WMSMP is not in breach of its Agreement with the Home Office
6. Ensure the continuation of the WMSMP role on asylum seeker dispersal and refugee integration issues
7. Consider commissioning work to identify any major differences between migrants from different countries and who arrive through different routes, much research at present seems to be generic
8. Undertake further in-depth data analysis to identify migrants that are in greatest need of support to ensure the efforts of the WMSMP are better targeted and effective.
9. The WMSMP should work with other Regional Migration Partnerships to ensure exchange of information, research and practise
10. The WMSMP should work closely with other research/data-gathering organisations to minimise information requests to partners and seek to use what is already available
11. Work with the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights to promote the Race Relations Act as a tool to securing the better integration of migrants
12. The WMSMP should promote its regional strategic co-ordinating role to government departments to seek their buy-in to this joined-up regional approach
13. The WMSMP request a response from BIA as to how it considers the key issues raised in the Scoping Exercise can be met and what other funding sources it suggests to enable the findings to be delivered upon.

Further information is available from:

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A copy of the full Scoping Exercise will be available from February 2008 at www.wmlga.gov.uk

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