

# Migrant Workers in Rochdale and Oldham

## Executive Summary

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## The Study

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the migration of people from Eastern Europe and the new EU countries<sup>1</sup>. 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 cohesion<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, some local authorities are making efforts to find out about the experiences and needs of these new and emerging communities.

This research was commissioned by Oldham Housing Investment Partnership, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council in January 2008 and was conducted by a team of researchers from the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford. The study was greatly aided by research support from a number of Community Interviewers and was managed by a Steering Group composed of officers representing the commissioning authorities.

The primary aims of the study were:

- To establish the extent and level of in-migration of the migrant worker communities from EU Accession states (A8/A2) into Rochdale and Oldham;
- To understand the settlement patterns of these communities in Rochdale and Oldham (including where families are joining workers);
- To identify the nature and extent of kinship and/or economic relationships with others across the UK and /or abroad;
- To assess the skills levels and expertise of new communities, including entrepreneurship and self employment, and identify what support is needed to foster these skills now and in the future;
- To investigate the future intentions of the migrant worker communities (i.e. staying in Oldham/Rochdale, moving to another part of the UK or returning to country of origin, etc.);
- To consider the impact of in-migration on the indigenous population, particularly in terms of access to employment and services;

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<sup>1</sup> Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (commonly referred to as the A8 countries); Bulgaria and Romania (commonly referred to as the A2 countries).

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

- To investigate the level of community integration and impact on community cohesion and develop support mechanisms to assist migrant communities to integrate within the local resident community; and,
- To evaluate the housing and support needs of this community now and in the future.

The study was undertaken by conducting:

- A review of available literature, data and secondary sources;
- Consultation with key stakeholders; and,
- A total of 125 interviews with migrant workers from a range of nationalities (57 in Rochdale, 68 in Oldham).

## **Main Findings**

### **The size and characteristics of the migrant worker population**

There are widely acknowledged difficulties with attempting to estimate the size of the migrant worker population. The data available does not always give the complete picture. Indeed, official data can underestimate the number of migrant workers living in an area, as well as the number of different national groups. Furthermore, it does not show who has returned home, nor does it allow for migration within the UK (see Chapter 3 of the report for further discussion of this).

With regards to the size and characteristics of the sample, there are a number of things to note:

- As might be expected, the majority of respondents were Polish (87%); however, there is a wide range of nationalities living in the two Boroughs. The interview sample included representatives from all national groups from the A8/A2 countries, with the exception of Bulgaria (see Chapter 4 of the report);
- Respondents had been in the UK for varying lengths of time, with the majority indicating that they had arrived in the period 2005 – 2007 (see Chapter 4 of the report);
- In line with official data, the majority of respondents were aged 25 – 39 years (62%), followed by those aged 17 – 24 (24%). Oldham had slightly more people from the younger age range (see Chapter 4 of the report);

- In terms of gender, just over three quarters of the sample were male (see Chapter 4 of the report);
- Just over half of respondents were single, while the remainder were married or co-habiting; of which, 71% had their partners in the UK with them. The respondents in Rochdale were more likely to have other family members living with them. Just over half of the sample had children (under the age of 16) living with them in Rochdale and Oldham, while nearly a quarter had dependents in their home country (see Chapter 4 of the report);
- Around 17% of people had family members living in other parts of the UK. The respondents in Oldham had more family connections in other parts of the UK than those in Rochdale (see Chapter 4 of the report);
- A small number of people (around 7%) had lived in another EU country prior to coming to the UK (for example, France, Germany, Spain) (see Chapter 5 of the report);
- Around 38% of the sample had lived elsewhere in the UK before moving to Rochdale or Oldham. These were primarily from areas within the North West; however, a small number had moved from the South of England. Respondents from Oldham had higher levels of internal migration than those from Rochdale. Lack of employment and cost of living were the main reasons for leaving (see Chapter 5 of the report);
- The majority of people had moved to Rochdale or Oldham because of social connections; for example, they had friends or, to a lesser extent, family already living in the area. This was more prominent in Oldham. Job opportunities was the second most common reason, which was more prominent in Rochdale (see Chapter 5 of the report);

### **Skills, qualifications and employment**

The migrant workers currently living in Rochdale and Oldham were diverse in terms of their skills and experiences. There are a number of things to note from the survey:

- The male respondents were more likely to have high school level or vocational qualifications, while the female respondents had higher numbers of undergraduate/postgraduate qualifications (see Chapter 6 of the report);

- 60% of respondents had a particular trade or skill, many of whom had been using this for a number of years. People came from a range of industries<sup>3</sup>, with construction being one of the main categories (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- In terms of occupational level in their home country, people were mainly drawn from Skilled Trades Occupations<sup>4</sup>; however, people came from a range of occupations from Elementary through to Managers and Senior Officials. The data suggests that a greater percentage of women were drawn from the highest occupational classifications (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- In terms of employment in the UK, 92% of respondents were currently in paid employment, with a further 3% who had a job but had not started yet (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- 79% of respondents were currently working in the study area, while the remainder travelled elsewhere for work. This was mainly to other areas of Greater Manchester. The respondents from Oldham were more likely to travel for work (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- Weekly wages ranged from £95 – £480 per week, with 29% of respondents indicating that they were currently paid 'cash in hand'. The hours people worked ranged from 16 – 75 per week, with the majority working in the range of 30 – 40 hours per week (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- The survey suggests a shift in occupational level between previous job in home country and current employment. The majority of respondents were currently working in Elementary Occupations. They were also concentrated in fewer industries. This was particularly pertinent for female respondents (for example, 63% were now concentrated in manufacturing compared to just 5% previously) (see Chapter 7 of the report);
- Around 43% of respondents with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree were currently working in Elementary Occupations (see Chapter 7 of the report).

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<sup>3</sup> Using the Standard Industrial Classification of economic activities 2007 (SIC) (See ONS, *Internet reference: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods\\_quality/sic/operation2007.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/sic/operation2007.asp)*).

<sup>4</sup> Using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) (See ONS, *Internet reference: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods\\_quality/ns\\_sec/downloads/SOC2000\\_Vol1\\_V5.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/downloads/SOC2000_Vol1_V5.pdf)*).

## Housing experiences

With regards to housing experiences there are a number of interesting findings:

- In line with previous studies, there is a dominance of the private rented sector for migrant workers living in Rochdale and Oldham (57%). This dominance is more prominent in Oldham. Just over a quarter of respondents were living in the socially rented sector, with higher numbers in Rochdale than in Oldham;
- There were a number of people (14%) who indicated that they were currently lodging with friends/family rather than being tenants themselves;
- The number of people sharing properties ranged from 2 – 8 people, with 61% sharing with non family members. Of these respondents, half were currently sharing bedrooms, as well as other facilities. There were higher levels of sharing with non family members in Oldham than in Rochdale;
- Rent levels varied from £21 to £81 or over per person per week. The private rented sector had the greatest variation in rent levels. Taking these figures and multiplying by how many people were sharing a property shows that the highest rental income in private rented accommodation in the sample was £1,231 – £1,387 per month (£14,768 – £16,640 per annum). However, there are potentially higher rental incomes than this;
- Only 5 respondents indicated that their accommodation was currently 'tied' to their employment;
- With regards to awareness of housing options, the majority of people were aware of private and Council renting. Renting from a Housing Association was the least well known option. As would be expected, awareness of options increases over time;
- In terms of accommodation aspirations, the majority of respondents want to rent a Council property (58%) or buy their own home (25%). Only 4% indicated that they wanted to remain in the private rented sector.

Chapter 8 of the report provides a full discussion of housing experiences.

## **Community integration and engagement**

A number of issues relating to community integration and engagement emerged from the research:

- Although respondents were engaging with people from their own country (85% had some form of contact), there was very little involvement with the wider community. Over half of the sample were not very involved or not involved at all in their local community;
- 70% of those living in Rochdale would recommend the area as a place to live and work to friends and family, compared to 54% of those currently living in Oldham;
- Reference was made to anti-social behaviour where people were currently living. In particular, people referred to local youths causing trouble, vandalism and the culture of alcohol in the UK. There were, however, relatively low levels of experience of crime and racist harassment amongst the sample;
- 36% of respondents suggested that they wanted to move to another area of Rochdale and Oldham. This percentage was much higher in Rochdale, where over half of respondents wanted to move to another area. Again, this related to anti-social behaviour.

Chapter 9 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to community involvement and engagement.

## **Engagement with services and facilities**

The research also focused on access to local services and facilities, as well as access to financial services and household goods.

- With regards to health care, 58% of respondents were currently accessing a Doctor/GP, while just 21% had access to a dentist. With regards to other local facilities, 48% of respondents accessed a local church or place of worship and 34% accessed a community centre/social club or sports facilities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who had been in the UK indicated higher levels of access. There was a generally lower level of access to these selected services in Oldham;
- With regards to specific goods and financial services, the most common goods and services that people had were a mobile phone (97%) and a bank account (76%).
- Very few people had credit/store cards, a landline phone or home contents insurance. This remained consistently low regardless of length of time in the UK. Respondents in Oldham appeared to have less access to selected goods and financial services;



- 40% of respondents in Oldham were currently using a pre-pay meter for gas/electricity compared to 18% in Rochdale. There may be some demand (particularly in Oldham) for support around financial inclusion issues; for example, accessing alternatives to pre-pay utilities, but also obtaining bank accounts and credit services;
- With regards to the use of English language services, just 15% of people were currently enrolled on a course, while nearly half wanted to study English but were not currently enrolled. The three main reasons given were: not knowing where to go; being unable to afford it; and, not having enough time;

Chapter 9 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to engagement with selected services and facilities.

### **Future intentions**

We focused on future intentions in terms of the length of time people anticipated staying in Rochdale and Oldham and whether or not they would be joined by other family members:

- Nearly half of the sample did not know how long they intended to stay in Rochdale and Oldham. Just over a quarter wanted to stay indefinitely, 13% indicated they would stay for 5 years or more, while 11% suggested they would stay for less than five years;
- With regards to those who intended to leave, 85% would be returning to their home country. The main reasons given were to return to their families and to find employment in their home country;
- A small number of people had the intention of moving to another area of the UK, while one person said they would be going to another country;
- Respondents in Rochdale appeared to have more longer-term intentions to stay, while a higher percentage of respondents in Oldham did not know their future intentions. Newer arrivals were more likely to be unsure of their future intentions;
- 17% of respondents said they would be joined in the UK by other family members, the majority of whom would be joining them over the next 12 months. All respondents indicated being joined by immediate family members (siblings, children, partners);

Chapter 10 of the report provides a full discussion in relation to future intentions of the respondents.

## **Conclusions and Ways Forward**

### **The size and characteristics of the migrant worker population**

No one knows the true size of the migrant worker population. The Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) data suggests that there were 1,121 registrations for Rochdale and 736 registrations for Oldham from the A8 countries (i.e. excluding Bulgaria and Romania) between May 2004 and December 2007. Looking at the survey of people interviewed in Rochdale and Oldham, however, suggests that around 37% of the sample overall were not registered on the Worker Registration Scheme, breaking down to 2% in Rochdale and 66% in Oldham. If these percentages are applied to the WRS data for the two Boroughs it offers a range of 1,143 – 1,536 for Rochdale (based on applying both a 2% and 37% multiplier) and 1,008 – 1,222 for Oldham (based on applying a 37% and 66% multiplier). We are not suggesting that these are the true figures for movement to Rochdale and Oldham since May 2004; however, it illustrates that there is a potentially larger population living in the two Boroughs than the official data suggests. There is also a potentially greater diversity than official data suggests.

This research provides a 'snap-shot' of the current population, but regular surveys are needed given the diverse and fluid nature of these communities. Some agencies are making efforts to find out about the local community; for example, Greater Manchester Police indicated that some of their officers are carrying out 'community mapping' exercises. Such initiatives should be encouraged for all service providers in order to ensure that up-to-date information is available.

### **Skills, qualifications and employment**

Comparing previous and current employment shows a significant shift in occupation level, with the majority of respondents' current employment being categorised as Elementary Occupations. The range of industries has also reduced, with concentrations of people in the manufacturing industry. This appeared to be particularly pertinent for the female respondents. As has been highlighted in previous research, there is a need to look at how best to match people's skills and qualifications to the appropriate jobs, as well as looking at how to get overseas qualifications recognised by employment agencies and employers. Those with vocational qualifications were more likely to find employment appropriate to their education; for example, working in Skilled Trades Occupations, while the respondents with university degrees were often found in lower skilled occupations.

There is also a link between language and employment. In order for occupational mobility to occur, people need the necessary language skills; however, with work commitments and the price of ESOL classes, people are often unable or unwilling to access language courses. There is a need to ensure that there is adequate and affordable provision, as well as looking at

ways to make provision flexible to meet the needs of those working long or anti-social hours. This could include exploring the possibility of employers building language capacity of overseas employees, particularly in relation to vocational language skills.

### **Housing experiences**

There is a need to look at the role of the private rented sector in greater detail, particularly in relation to the use of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), many of which are not known to the local authorities. Our study has shown evidence of overcrowding, as well as non family members having to share a number of facilities, including bedrooms.

Looking at the rental figures indicated in the survey and the number of people sharing some of the properties, it reveals opportunities for high rental incomes for some landlords. Authorities therefore need to explore different ways to ensure that properties are registered and landlords adhere to appropriate standards in terms of the conditions of the properties. A concentration in lower-end properties could explain the overall dissatisfaction with the private rented sector that many respondents had. What is interesting to note, however, is that poor conditions are not necessarily always recognised by migrant workers themselves, perhaps due to the living arrangements in their home country or their acceptance of lower standards because of the perceived temporary nature of their stay.

Consideration also needs to be given to the small, but significant number of people who can be described as 'hidden homeless'. This refers to those individuals who indicated that they did not have their own house, but rather, were staying with friends, family and other acquaintances. There was evidence of suppressed households in equal measures across both Boroughs. The number represented in the sample may be just a fraction of those who are currently in this situation.

There is also a need to consider people's future accommodation aspirations. There was an overwhelming preference for renting Council properties, which are perceived to be better quality, cheaper and more permanent, as well as offering people their 'own' accommodation rather than having to share. Authorities need to consider the implications of a potential increase in demand socially rented accommodation in future years, not only in terms of availability, but also any potential community cohesion issues that may arise from this.

### **Community integration and engagement with services and facilities**

There was very little involvement with the wider community in Rochdale and Oldham. Indeed, community involvement appeared to be consistently quite low regardless of how long people had been in the UK. With work and family commitments there can sometimes be little time to 'get involved' in the community; however, there are other issues to consider in relation to avoid possible confrontation with the indigenous population. The study revealed evidence of anti-social behaviour amongst local residents which may prevent people from making efforts to engage with the wider community

In line with previous studies, this survey reveals a need for support from service providers, particularly for new arrivals, to assist them to settle into the community and provide information with regards to the local facilities and services, as well as information on their rights (for example, with regards to employment, housing, etc.) and responsibilities (for example, the legal requirement to send children to school, as well as simple things like refuse collection, etc.). It must also be remembered that migrant communities often work longer or anti-social hours, which means that 9 to 5 support is not always appropriate or accessible.

Given that people tend to move to areas where they have social networks, the current patterns of settlement are likely to continue with concentrations of migrants in particular areas. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the impact on community cohesion and the local infrastructure. Service providers should also consider the needs of migrants' children and other family members.

### **Future intentions and stability of the communities in Rochdale and Oldham**

The data suggests that people were attracted to Rochdale and Oldham by job opportunities, as well as the already established communities of migrant workers, particularly in relation to Polish workers. The proximity to Manchester was also a pull factor for some people. There are, however, some differences between the two Boroughs, particularly in terms of the stability of the communities. In Rochdale, evidence suggests a greater level of stability, with more people living *and* working in the area, as well as wider social networks. In Oldham, there appears to be a more transient population, with people working in a wider range of other towns and cities.

It is difficult to predict future intentions, particularly with regards to a population whose migration is temporary in nature; indeed, a large number of people interviewed in this survey were unsure about their future intentions. What we need to recognise is that migrant workers are creative and adaptive, making use of social networks and responding to potential employment and housing opportunities. Decisions on whether or not to remain in Rochdale and Oldham will therefore be based on a combination of factors, relating to the current economic climate, but also based on their experiences of living in Rochdale and Oldham and the opportunities available to them.