

Central and Eastern European migrant communities in Salford and Bury

Executive Summary

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The study

It is accurate to say that all areas of the UK have experienced migration of some kind, whether it is long-established migrant communities, dispersed asylum seekers and refugees, or, migrant workers. In recent years, the term migrant worker has been increasingly associated with individuals from the new EU countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The arrival of Central and Eastern European migrant communities into Salford and Bury has placed extra demand on public services as well as changing the demographic make-up of communities. While there is general awareness on the part of public services of significant in-migration, often into deprived urban locations, and statistical evidence of such migration from governmental recording schemes, there is limited data on the specific areas of residence and the breakdown by age, gender and household type of these new arrivals. There is also a lack of awareness of their particular needs with regard to core areas of public service delivery (health, education, community safety, etc.) and how services can adequately respond to meet these. Finally, there is a knowledge gap in relation to the people's future intentions.

In order to provide an initial baseline of knowledge in these areas a study brief was developed to enhance intelligence in relation to the Czech, Polish and Slovak communities in both local authority areas. This study was also intended to inform community cohesion and integration actions, as well as the priorities for local neighbourhood level work.

The research was commissioned by Salford City Council and Bury Metropolitan Borough Council in October 2009 and was conducted by 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. The project was managed by a steering group composed of officers representing Salford City Council and Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.

The study was undertaken by conducting:

- Consultation with **26** key stakeholders and service providers in Salford and Bury; and
- A total of **200** interviews with migrants from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

Main findings

The characteristics of the sample

- The majority of respondents were Polish (82%), followed by Slovak (11%) and Czech (7%).
- The majority of respondents were aged 25 – 39 years (73%).
- 56% of the respondents were male and 44% were female.
- 42% of the sample was single; 34% were cohabiting; and 24% were married.

- 23% of respondents were living with their children; the majority of children were under five years old.
- 42% of the Salford respondents had lived somewhere else in the UK before moving to Salford; 28% of the Bury respondents had lived somewhere else before Bury.
- The majority of people had chosen Salford or Bury because they 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: 11% had postgraduate degree level qualifications; 13% had degree level qualifications; and 26% had technical qualifications.
- 57% of people said that their ability to speak English was good or very good. People were more likely to have problems with written language skills.
- 35% of respondents indicated that they did not need an English language course as they had already completed one.
- 39% of respondents indicated that they did not have time to complete an English language course, primarily due to work commitments.
- 35% of respondents indicated that work colleagues translated for them at work.

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

Employment

- 45% of respondents had a particular trade or skill from their home country; the most frequently mentioned skills related the construction industry.
- 92% of respondents were currently in paid employment; the number of jobs people had had in the UK ranged from one to more than six.
- 87% of respondents were satisfied with their treatment by other workers; 79% were satisfied with their treatment by their employer.
- 38% of respondents were working in elementary occupations; Salford respondents were more likely to be working in elementary occupations than the respondents in Bury (43%, compared to 31% in Bury).
- 44% of those with a postgraduate degree and 52% of those with a degree were working in elementary occupations.

Chapter 8 of the report provides a full discussion of the findings in relation to employment.

Accommodation experiences

- 84% of respondents were living in the private rented sector and 11% in socially rented accommodation.
- 49% of respondents had found their current accommodation through friends and family.
- 81% of respondents indicated that they had enough space in their current home.
- 51% of respondents said that they would move to a different property in the future; 38% wanted to buy their own home, 27% wanted to live in private rented accommodation and 24% wanted to live in socially rented accommodation.

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

Community and neighbourhood

- Nearly all respondents had some contact with people from their home country as well as with British people.
- 65% of people were satisfied with their local area as a place to live; a third of respondents (33%) had a fairly strong sense of belonging and 5% a very strong sense of belonging to their local area.
- 69% agreed that their local area was a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds mixed well together; 12% disagreed.
- 22% of respondents indicated that they had been victims of crime, while 78% had not; 10% of respondents had experienced hate crime.
- 45% of respondents would recommend Salford as a place to live and work while 58% would recommend Bury.

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

Access to services and facilities

- Perhaps unsurprisingly, shops were most commonly used (99% of respondents). This was followed by public transport (77%).
- 90% of respondents were currently accessing a Doctor/GP, while 41% were accessing a dentist.
- 24% of respondents had been provided with an interpreter during their contact with service providers.

- Respondents indicated that the following information would have been most helpful to them on arrival in the UK: advice on how to find a job; language classes; advice on benefits; schools; housing and other services (for example, GPs); opening bank accounts; and getting a National Insurance number

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

Future intentions

- 18% of respondents wanted to stay in Salford indefinitely; 11% wanted to stay in Bury indefinitely.
- With regards to those who intended to leave, 66% would be returning to their home country; 21% intended to move to another part of the UK; and 13% intended to move to another country.
- 9% of respondents said they would be joined in the UK by other family members.

Chapter 12 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.

Language barriers

Perhaps unsurprisingly, language barriers remain an issue for migrant communities. Both migrant workers and key stakeholders in this study made reference to the issue of language.

Across the sample as a whole, 39% said that they did not have time to complete an English language course; the majority of whom said that this was due to their work commitments. In addition, written English was a particular problem for over one in five respondents. While some people will actively seek English classes, others want to learn a basic level of English that will enable them to 'get by'.

Migrant communities themselves need to be encouraged to access English language courses but also to continue with courses once they have enrolled, with more emphasis placed on the importance of acquisition of English language. In order to do so, however, there is a need to look at flexible learning opportunities. This includes the evening classes that are already available, but also includes working with employers to provide language training, and looking at less formal and structured methods of learning, which can sometimes deter people or can be difficult to sustain.

Dissemination of information

A common theme running throughout the study is the reliance on social networks. Having friends and family living in Salford and Bury has been vital for many people, not only influencing their decision to move to an area in the first place, but assisting with access to employment, accommodation and services. One concern is that migrant communities often get advice from friends, relatives and other migrants, which in some cases can be inaccurate or partial information. Dissemination of reliable, effective information is therefore vital for new communities.

A number of local authority areas (including Salford and – more recently - Bury) have developed *welcome packs* for migrant communities and these can be tailored to each specific local area in terms of the information they provide. Discussions with community interviewers who worked in this study indicated that the welcome pack developed by Salford, which was given out during interviews, had been very well received. 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. This includes taking advantage of CEE migrants' high levels of Internet use. There are already sites set up specifically to provide information to new communities; such as *myUKinfo.com*, which provides information on work, housing, health, money, etc. in a variety of languages.

In terms of information needs, perhaps unsurprisingly the key issues were finding employment; language classes; access to benefits; and access to housing and other services (such as GPs). Significantly both stakeholders and respondents indicated that knowledge of the range of benefits and the potential to utilise in-work and other benefits (e.g. using working tax credit to assist learning opportunities) to improve migrants' situation was an important area. The survey highlighted a diversity of skills and qualifications, with a number of highly qualified migrants living in Salford and Bury. Migrant communities, in common with the rest of population, therefore need to be able to access information with regards to how best to utilise and develop their individual skills and qualifications, as well as the employment opportunities that are available to them.

Perceived and actual issues

Another issue that has emerged from this study is the potential discrepancy between *actual* and *perceived* issues. Stakeholder consultation, for example, highlighted a perception that migrant communities often go to Accident and Emergency (A & E) rather than accessing a GP. Although this may be an issue with some migrant populations, 90% of respondents in this survey indicated that they currently accessed a GP, with nearly a quarter of respondents making use of local NHS Walk-in Centres. Nevertheless, this masked a far lower use of Walk-in Centres in Salford than Bury and the survey also indicated that use of NHS Direct was very low in both areas.

Furthermore, previous research has highlighted accommodation issues, particularly around the private rented sector and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). This study did suggest some cases of overcrowding; however, people were generally satisfied with their accommodation and the private rented sector remained high on their preference list. It is recognised that there are issues with some private landlords, but in this study this did not appear to be the majority experience.

Finally, there can sometimes be a perception of exploitation of migrant workers in employment. As above, people largely had positive views on their treatment by their current employer, again suggesting that poor treatment was not the majority experience for those interviewed in this study. Obviously, we are not attempting to say that people do not experience exploitation in employment and accommodation, but rather we are highlighting that the majority of people had positive experiences of living and working in the UK.

Future considerations

Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict future intentions, particularly with regards to a population whose migration is predominantly linked to economic opportunities and social networks. Indeed, 44% of the sample as a whole were unsure about their future intentions. Official data suggests a slowing in the number of arrivals, particularly from Poland. However, what this study suggests is that those who are here have stayed longer term; for example, 81% of respondents had been in the UK since 2007 and 37% since 2005. People did make reference to employment opportunities decreasing since arrival; however, they still remained in the UK and 70% of those who were in employment had a permanent contract. Furthermore, the fact that 38% aspired to own their own home suggests a possible longer-term commitment to remaining in the UK.

In addition, nearly a quarter of respondents were living with children. Previous studies have highlighted that families are more likely to settle for longer periods. This study did not focus on the needs and experiences of children, (or parents) or cover in depth the implications of an increase in CEE migrants' children on local services such as Early Years and nursery provision, plus health care and schools. This is therefore an area for further consideration.

The study focused on Czech, Polish and Slovak migrants. However, we recognise the difficulty of trying to categorise migrants as one homogenous group. There are differences, for example, in the experiences of people from different countries and ethnic groups that need to be taken into account, particularly in relation to skills and qualifications, aspirations and ability to progress in the UK. Although only one person in the study identified themselves as of Roma heritage, stakeholders highlighted some potential issues in relation to Roma communities which may require further information.

This study represents a 'snap shot' of a population, providing a starting point for key stakeholders to begin looking at how to take the findings of the report forward and where further information is required. Local authorities and service providers need to ensure that they are constantly monitoring population changes within their local area and sharing this information and good practice at a wider level.