The impacts of new A8 migration in Leeds

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Aims

To gather information on the experiences and needs of A8 migrants, the implications for service provision and the impact upon Leeds communities; and to provide recommendations to service providers.

Methodology

A qualitative study in Leeds January-February 2008 that undertook semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 89 participants including Polish, Slovak, Roma and white, Pakistani and West Indian residents; key informants from employers, employment agencies, trade unions and community workers; and service providers.

Key issues

The article summarises findings from the research on migration patterns, work, neighbourhood and community relations and welfare service provision. The key motivation for migration to the UK was the desire to work, and for Roma migrants, a chance to escape persecution and discrimination. The population of migrants is diverse in length of stay and type of migrant which include single males, couples and families. Employers reported that new migrant workers were taking up previously unfilled vacancies and believed it would be problematic if A8 migration ceased. Some evidence of employment hierarchies among migrants was found. Some participants were positive about new migrant workers; others had concerns related to jobs and welfare resources that should be addressed by opening opportunities for interaction. All groups had experienced prejudice and harassment. Impact on welfare services of new migrant workers varied across sectors.

Conclusions

The unexpected arrival of significant numbers of A8 migrants presented local authorities with new challenges, increased the numbers of migrant workers and increased diversity of the migrant population. Impacts are likely to be felt most keenly in particular, local communities that are often relatively disadvantaged.

Recommendations

Recommendations are aimed at the local authority, education and health services, and national policy, and cover issues including gaps in data collection, gaps in resources for education and maternity services; translation and interpreting services, developing good community relations by addressing tensions and creating spaces for interaction, and taking action on reports from A8 migrants of harassment and prejudice.

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EU migrants
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Migrant workers
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