

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Yorkshire and Humber, 1999-2008

Summary

December 2008

In the last decade the numbers of migrants coming to the UK has peaked and there has been intense political and social interest in asylum and immigration issues. This literature review, undertaken by the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion and Social Justice at the University of Hull for Yorkshire Futures, synthesises the regional literature on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to highlight key themes and identify research gaps and recommendations.

The review found that:

- The Yorkshire and Humber region has received a significant proportion of international migrants in Britain. Under a government dispersal programme, around 20% of asylum applicants in the UK are supported in the region and between 2002 and 2008, 177,770 adult non-UK nationals registered for work. In 2007, the region's universities had over 27,000 international students. Many migrants are temporary; it is not known how many stay long term.
- Asylum seekers experience poverty and social exclusion and are vulnerable to poor physical and mental health. Children experience interrupted educations. Access to education for adults has been severely restricted due to cuts in funding. Refugees experience very high unemployment and multiple barriers to employment, despite having a great desire to work. Integration has been promoted through a regional integration strategy, informal networks, refugee community organisations and churches.
- Most research on 'new' migrants is about migrant workers from eight of the countries ('A8') that joined the EU in 2004. Many live in private rented housing and often experience poor, unsafe and overcrowded conditions. There is little available data on migrant health needs; registration with doctors is thought to be low. Schools face challenges in responding to mid-term arrivals and in some areas are unfamiliar with providing English language support. Cost and long working hours restrict access to English classes for adults.
- Migrant workers contribute to the regional economy filling labour gaps in low skill jobs despite many having a good level of education. Poor English language skills create risks for health and safety in the workplace and limit possibilities for improving work conditions. Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace.
- Research gaps exist on family joiners, dependants, children and young people, women, migrant workers from countries other than Poland and outside the EU and international students. There is little work on how the social experience of migrants affects interaction with formal institutions or services.
- The needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants must be recognised within existing policies, decision-making structures and strategies, in addition to targeted provision and initiatives being developed to respond to the particular needs of different migrant groups.

Background

Migrants have come to Yorkshire and Humber for hundreds of years. The last ten years have seen the introduction of a system to disperse asylum seekers around the UK, a rise in the number of immigrants and a change from large groups from a few countries to a 'superdiverse' migrant population, under a constantly shifting policy environment.

New migrants in the last ten years include: asylum seekers, refugees who gain status following a claim for asylum and 'Gateway' refugees resettled from refugee camps; international students; family joiners (spouses or dependants); work permit holders or point based migrants; migrant workers from the A8 countries that joined the EU in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovak Republic) and the A2 countries that joined in 2006 (Romania and Bulgaria); and irregular migrants who overstay, enter illegally or are trafficked.

Data on migrants in Yorkshire and Humber

Asylum seekers are dispersed to eleven local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber.

- Around **30,000 asylum seekers** from 117 countries have been dispersed since 2000
- Iraq, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Eritrea and Iran were the top five nationalities 2002-2007
- There are **15,000 or more refugees** in the region

In 2007 there were **27,270 international students** at Yorkshire Universities.

In Yorkshire and Humber, 2002-2008, **177,770 non-UK nationals** registered for a National Insurance Number from 99 countries.

- **39%** (70,050) were **A8 nationals**, of which **66%** (46,290) were from **Poland**.
- The top five nationalities were Poland, Slovak Republic, Latvia, South Africa and Pakistan.

Recent arrivals have increased international migration to North Yorkshire, East Riding and the Humber. Most migrant workers are in Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Asylum seekers are supported with housing and weekly payments by the UK Border Agency. Cash support is set at 70% of Income Support; poverty and

social exclusion are central features of their lives.

- Dispersal **housing** is often in deprived areas. Many asylum seekers get support from compatriots, creating a desire to live in close proximity. Ethnic divisions and fear of information exchange mean others avoid people from their country. On receipt of a positive asylum decision, refugees face challenges in moving onto benefits or finding work and securing housing. Refused asylum seekers are highly mobile as they are reliant on others for survival.
- Asylum seekers are vulnerable to poor **health** as a result of past experiences of trauma and their precarious status in the UK. Health services may struggle to respond to complex needs - some specialist services have developed. Translation and interpreting is vital, however, working with interpreters increases appointment time.
- Refugee and asylum seeker **children** are likely to have had a disrupted education due to conflict, flight and frequent moves in the UK. Pockets of expertise in teaching refugee children who speak English as an additional language have developed. Children are important brokers of integration. They tend to learn English more quickly than adults and can manage mixed identities well.
- **Adult Education** colleges providing English as a Secondary Language (ESOL) classes have been a key feature of life for asylum seekers. However, cuts in funding have reduced access to ESOL even though learning English is expected for integration and employment. Despite multiple barriers, refugees are recognised as motivated students.
- Asylum seekers do not have permission to work so without **employment**, volunteering can provide a vital chance for to build skills, learn about UK society and contribute. Refugees can work, yet face multiple barriers including employer attitudes, language, qualifications not being recognised, health problems and lack of references. Despite their desire to work, refugee unemployment is very high. Those working are likely to be employed below their skill level.

- Refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to risks to their safety ranging from lack of awareness of **safety** measures in the home to threat of detention and deportation to countries where they fear persecution. Several studies advocate that refused asylum seekers should be given status and allowed to work, especially those from countries to where it is dangerous or difficult to arrange return.
- Refugee **integration** promotes 'hosts' and 'newcomers' adapting to each other. Refugee community organisations organise cultural events and provide support despite lack of resources. Faith and worship can help refugees adjust to a new life. Churches have contributed considerably to providing welfare and lobbying for positive change. A new regional refugee integration strategy is published in December 2008. Refugee integration requires both dedicated services and inclusion in deprivation and community cohesion work.

New Migrants

There was a sharp rise in migration when new members joined the EU 2004 but numbers have recently fallen. Migrants come to work, learn English, join family and friends and broaden their horizons, and include Roma people fleeing persecution. Many migrants are short term and have returned. The availability of work will affect future migration trends.

- Many A8 migrants live in private rented sector **housing** characterised by poor, unsafe standards and overcrowding. They may be unaware of their rights and face unreasonable charges and

high rent. Take up of social housing is very low. Employees in accommodation tied to employment may avoid complaining as they fear losing their job.

- There has been no dedicated Yorkshire and Humber study on the **health** needs of new migrants. Uptake of health services is thought to be low because of low levels of GP registration, the population being largely young and fit for work, and migrants returning home for health care. Lack of knowledge of health systems can lead to inappropriate use of accident and emergency.
- The arrival of **children** in areas unfamiliar with international migration has created new challenges for schools, particularly Catholic schools. Mid-term arrivals can make it difficult for schools to obtain sufficient funding for English language support. While some schools have capacity problems, falling pupil numbers at others make it easier to absorb new arrivals. Migrant children are associated with improved standards of performance and attitudes to learning.
- The language barrier limits all aspects of life, yet many adults face difficulties in accessing **adult education**. These include cost: universal entitlement to free ESOL was withdrawn in 2007; working hours: long hours and night shifts limit time for attending classes; and not understanding educational systems. A lack of technical English provision limits progress to higher skilled employment.
- Migrant workers constitute 0.8% of the regional working age population and fill skill and labour gaps in many sectors. Most have **employment**

A regional perspective

The regional focus aims to facilitate sharing knowledge across Yorkshire and Humber and reflects the increasing role of regional governance. This report is one of the first comprehensively to bring together findings on asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Over 120 studies since 1999 were found. Most studies on refugees and asylum seekers were conducted in Leeds and Sheffield, due to their large dispersed asylum seeker populations and established agencies. Thirteen of 51 studies on migrant workers were conducted in Hull or the Humber. Detailed analyses of A8 migrants in other sub-regions are restricted to a few studies.

Only one or two studies were found in smaller towns and rural areas highlighting the lack of knowledge on migrants and service providers outside the main urban centres.

in jobs unpopular with the established population in agriculture, factory work, hospitality, social care and construction. Poor English, qualifications not being recognised, and lack of training limit chances for migrant workers to enter higher skilled work. On average A8 migrants earn 20-30% less than other EU migrants. Unscrupulous employers deduct spurious payments from wages and creating insecurity that traps some workers in poor conditions. Good employers offer flexible shifts, welfare support and training for migrant supervisors.

- Risks to **safety** include racism and discrimination. Unchecked feelings of resentment and misconceptions about the preferential treatment of migrants can lead to tensions, highlighting the importance of promoting mythbusting work. Crime among A8 migrants is low or results from a failure to understand UK laws, such as driving regulations and carrying weapons. Negative experiences of police in countries of origin can dissuade migrants from reporting crimes.
- Long hours spent at work limits **integration** as migrant workers have little chance to meet local people or to find support services. Multi agency groups have formed to address gaps in provision and to develop welcome packs. Churches and libraries (that offer free internet access) are central sites for socialising and disseminating information.

Key research gaps

- The numbers, needs and location of families, women, children and young people.
- The experiences of migrant workers from countries other than Poland, especially non-EU migrants.
- A skills audit of migrants and mechanisms for accessing appropriate employment.

For more information

The full report, **Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Yorkshire and Humber, 1999-2008**

by Hannah Lewis, Gary Craig, Sue Adamson and Mick Wilkinson, is published by Yorkshire Futures (ISBN 1-903-704-46-4). The report and summary

are available to download free from www.yorkshirefutures.com

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- The challenges for employers of migrants and possibilities for supporting them.
- Secondary migration and migrants' length of stay in the region.
- Migrant-centred perspectives.

Gaps in data can be improved by services monitoring country of origin (not just ethnicity); attention to smaller migrant populations; and provision of regional level migration statistics.

Recommendations

- The rights and needs of new migrants must be promoted within existing decision making structures and policies on deprivation, cohesion and diversity, especially in Local Strategic Partnerships.
- Local authorities should use public health and housing regulations to address poor housing conditions.
- Migrant health mapping to be undertaken to guide services sensitive to the needs of different groups of migrants.
- Increase funding and availability of English classes.
- A dedicated strategy for addressing exploitation in the labour market.
- Continue and extend myth-busting and awareness work.

About the report

The report reviews literature on asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Yorkshire and Humber since 1999 identified through a range of sources. A full bibliography is provided in the report.

The report is intended to provide an overview of regional literature and to identify research gaps to help inform policy, practice and future research agendas. We hope the report will be useful to decision makers, researchers and practitioners concerned with migration.



Yorkshire & Humber
Regional Migration Partnership
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