UK migrants and the private rented sector: a policy and practice report from the Housing and Migration Network

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Aims

To explore the range of different uses of privately rented accommodation by migrants in the UK, placing it within the wider context of housing policy, to better inform such policy and practice.

Methodology

The report collates current knowledge regarding the needs and experiences of migrants and the policies that affect their

housing. No new data collection was conducted in informing the report. This includes data from a variety of surveys and case studies across the country, including the role of social landlords in South Yorkshire and Doncaster, and investigation of accommodation arrangements of migrant workers at a single workplace in North Yorkshire.

Key issues

Migrants overwhelmingly reside in the private rented sector [PRS]. However this takes many forms; for example, asylum seekers housed by private agencies on behalf of government, migrant workers from EU states, non EU migrants on work visas or illegal migrant labourers.

Migrants often have a preference for PRS because of the flexibility it offers, and accommodation is often found through friends, agents or employers. This situation exists within a wider context of high demand for rental properties so that migrants may be in competition with UK born accommodation seekers, and other migrants. It is noted that low skilled, deprived migrants are often housed in poor quality housing without tenancy agreements and subject to exploitation. Therefore, the PRS market can benefit some migrant groups, but penalise others.

It is noted that little research has been done on this subject, and national datasets do not collect data on housing tenure among migrants. Recent reports have highlighted the high turnover of migrants within the PRS.

Changes in welfare rules [especially housing benefit], asylum policy and cuts to local authority housing budget have created, or magnified existing challenges, but the report offers a number of potential solutions.

Recommendations

These are grouped into four main sections:

- Promotion of specific initiatives: while central funding is declining, industry led solutions could be supported with government ‘seed’ funding and assistance. Likewise, such funds could be used to enable local authorities to promote sustainable schemes building on local good practice working with landlords. The author suggests possible examples, including simple standardised tenancy agreements and recommends that local schemes which promote access to better quality PRS properties should be encouraged.

- Role of regional and local bodies: more action on a local and regional basis should occur. This should include better consultation with migrants about housing need, but also that local housing strategies should adequately reflect the use of PRS by different groups of migrants, particularly those with significant populations. Key players include local councils, regional strategic migration partnerships [RSMPs] and Local Enterprise Partnerships [LEPS].
- Co-ordination of local bodies: better joined up work by government services working with migrants, including the UK Borders Authority [UKBA], the Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG], and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority [GLA] to collectively respond to factors affecting migrants in the PRS.
- The establishment of a PRS 'summit' to look at key issues in the sector, including its importance for migrants.

The report also outlines in detail a range of other options such as using decommissioned public property, schemes to convert empty properties, and encouraging employers to take more responsibility for accommodation. Overall, it suggests while current statutory powers are sufficient, they should be enforced more rigorously.

Web Link
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Migrant Group
Asylum seekers

EU migrants
Non-EU migrants
Topic
Housing and welfare
Housing needs
Housing patterns
Strategic planning
Place
Doncaster
York
North Yorkshire
South Yorkshire
UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element
Year
2012
Resource Type
Report

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