

Housing and migration

A UK guide to issues and solutions



A publication based on the work of the
Housing and Migration Network

May 2012

The Housing and Migration Network

The Housing and Migration Network partners are:

HACT

HACT is a national charity that works with the housing sector, government, civil society and communities to develop and share innovative approaches to meeting changing housing need. We believe that the provision of housing must be about more than just bricks and mortar – that housing providers are at their most successful when they value and engage with their communities, harness the energy and enthusiasm of local people, and actively seek to identify and meet the needs of those at the margins.

HACT, 50 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8ST

Tel: 020 7247 7800 www.hact.org.uk

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Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP

Tel: 01904 629241 www.jrf.org.uk

Metropolitan Migration Foundation

Metropolitan Migration Foundation invests where it makes the greatest difference, drawing on our heritage as part of Metropolitan, which has been working with multicultural communities for over 50 years. Through this experience, Metropolitan Migration Foundation has an understanding of the impact of migration. By offering funding and practical support we encourage the integration and advancement of migrant and host communities.

Metropolitan Migration Foundation, Alexander Place, Lower Park Road, London N11 1QD

Tel: 020 3535 4629 www.migrationfoundation.org.uk

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Chartered Institute of Housing, Octavia House, Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JP

Tel: 024 7685 1700 www.cih.org

Housing and Migration: A UK guide to issues and solutions

Written by John Perry

Edited by Mary Carter and Heather Petch

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Cover photograph from ACANE. The photo shows Gaby Kitoko, Development Manager of ACANE (African Community Advice North East) in the ACANE Community Centre, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne with local residents.

While all reasonable care and attention has been taken in compiling this publication, the publishers regret that they cannot assume responsibility for any error or omissions that it contains.

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About this Guide

This guide aims to provide information and practical guidance about migration for the housing sector. It is based on the discussions, visits and research undertaken by the Housing and Migration Network over its two-year life. It has many practical examples which are intended to inspire people to act and include contact details wherever possible so that experience and learning can be shared.

The Network's other reports are [UK Migration: The leadership role of housing providers](#) (August 2011) and [UK Migrants and the Private Rented Sector](#) (February 2012). They cover in more detail two of the themes dealt with in the guide and should be read in conjunction with it.

About the Housing and Migration Network

The Housing and Migration Network was jointly established by [HACT](#) and its funders, the

[Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) and the [Metropolitan Migration Foundation](#). It aims to:

- improve the housing circumstances of recent migrants who are experiencing disadvantage and poor housing, whether as refugees, asylum seekers or migrant workers, or joining family members already resident in the UK
- focus on concrete changes that are suited to the localities in which recent migrants are living and that are developed in solidarity with existing residents.

The Housing and Migration Network is a mixed group of 20 policy influencers and practitioners from the public, private and voluntary sectors (see page 51 for a list of members). Over the last two years the group has been exploring practical solutions to the reality of continuing migration where it places pressures on housing and neighbourhoods.

Terms used in the guide

Migrants	all people coming to the UK to work, study or for family reasons, including asylum seekers and refugees. In official UK statistics, migrants are those who arrive with an intention to stay for at least a year
Asylum seekers	people who come to the UK to seek protection under UN conventions; they become refugees if their application is approved and they receive some form of leave to remain in the UK. Until then most are not eligible for normal help with housing or for welfare benefits, but can be assisted through UKBA asylum accommodation contracts - see below
Recent migrants	people who arrived in the UK in the last five years: most references to migrants in the report are to recent migrants; where necessary the text makes the distinction clear
EU accession state migrants	those from eight of the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia – the exceptions are Cyprus and Malta); also migrants from Bulgaria and Romania which joined in 2007
European Economic Area (EEA)	the EEA is used to define 'European nationals' for immigration purposes: it includes all EU countries, but also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway which are not members of the EU
Settled residents or the settled population	all other residents in any local area except recent migrants as defined above
Net migration	the difference in any one year between those migrating into and out of the UK on a long-term basis
Immigration	the actual inflow of people into the UK to live, study or work
Migrant and refugee community organisations	organisations led by migrants or refugees and acting on behalf of or providing services to migrants and/or refugees
Migrant support organisations	organisations, including MRCOs, that provide specific support services to migrants, often though not always voluntary organisations
UKBA asylum accommodation contracts	contracts to provide accommodation to asylum seekers on a 'no refusal' basis who are 'dispersed' to parts of the UK away from London and the south-eastern parts of England

Migration is a reality that we can't ignore or wish away. Our economy needs some skills that only migrants bring. We have humanitarian obligations to refugees, European commitments to economic migrants, and families continue to form across borders.

As migration is undoubtedly one of the pressures on the UK housing market, so housing is undoubtedly one of the pressures on migrants. By the time migration is featured in local housing discussions it is often in response to tensions or problems. This perhaps shouldn't come as a surprise. New migrants often enter the market via the least desirable housing, frequently in disadvantaged areas. The 'dispersal' of asylum seekers from 2000 onwards has coincided with such areas where housing was available and cheap. Working migrants from the new EU countries with jobs in farming, tourism and other industries often have housing tied to employment, on caravan sites, or in poor-quality lettings.

The Housing and Migration Network spent two years discussing all aspects of housing and migration with people who were involved in thinking about, acting on or experiencing, housing and migration issues. Housing is the frontline and deals with the realities of changing populations and neighbourhoods. It is also in a unique, and increasingly recognised, position to be a main partner in creating safe and contented neighbourhoods in the areas where they operate.

Within the settled population, those most affected by immigration are also people on low incomes who are competing for jobs and cheaper housing. There is anxiety about migration and people may also blame migrants – or government failure to 'control' migration – because of genuine concern about changes affecting their lives over which they have little control. Changes in neighbourhoods can affect relationships between communities, particularly in areas not used to migration. It seems right, therefore, that policies and solutions

to tackle such tensions should also include settled neighbours – what the Network describes as 'in solidarity with' others in similar situations.

With so many new people coming – and for different lengths of time – it's important they are supported to participate socially and economically, particularly if they are settling for longer in the UK. Successive governments have placed an emphasis on local activity, planning and responsibility both in an increasing emphasis on 'localism' and in the recently published approach to creating the conditions for successful migrant integration. The role of housing providers in neighbourhoods is clearly well-suited to support these efforts.

The decision to present our final report in the form of a practice guide reflects the extent of innovative and creative solutions that were presented to the Network over the course of its meetings. They have been developed in many local areas, often delivered in partnerships, and usually in the face of limited resources. They prove that there is no shortage of ideas for mitigating pressures related to migration. Many were led by or involved housing practitioners. Yet the Network also concluded that the housing sector could play a more proactive role.

While the housing sector has to work within central government policy, it also has to deal with the realities of changing populations and neighbourhoods. It cannot ignore the implications of migration and of growing diversity, both because of the needs of new arrivals themselves and because of the effects on local people and neighbourhoods.

Social housing needs to be more engaged with migration issues. Several housing organisations *have* engaged: some took part in asylum dispersal from 2000 onwards or responded to the effects of increased European migration from 2004. Indeed, their experience is reflected in this guide.

Foreword

But unfortunately most of the sector has still not got to grips with migration, and the dynamic of change in neighbourhoods. For example, local housing strategies often ignore its effects. Indeed, many social landlords who have started to look at the issue have been surprised by the way that migration has already changed the profile of their customers. The Network's discussions time and again reinforced how vital it is for housing and other practitioners to engage with these issues in neighbourhoods – with both migrant communities and the settled population – as this is where issues and tensions often occur.

The practical advice and examples in this guide are intended to stimulate housing practitioners, policy makers and influencers to raise their game in dealing with migration even at a time when resources are limited. For migrant support organisations the guide and its examples can be used to engage with housing providers.

Although the Network is now coming to an end, all its members remain committed to improving housing conditions for migrants and seeking better ways to tackle issues at neighbourhood level and in particular to:

- recognise the place of migrant housing within the mainstream of housing policy, planning and provision
- recognise the over-representation of migrants in the poorest quality private rented housing and the need to promote the rights and options of this group
- consider the impact on migrants of changes to housing benefit and increased use of the private rented sector to fulfil statutory housing duties
- recognise that leadership is needed at national and local levels to promote integration
- test new and practical ways for housing providers to improve migrants' housing conditions, including destitute migrants
- push for better information and advice so that migrants gain access to better housing and can make better choices
- stimulate new funding and housing models to provide low-cost housing for seasonal-working, single migrants (and others in temporary and/or low-wage jobs).



Julia Unwin CBE

*Chief Executive, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Chair of the Housing and Migration Network*

1 Who the guide is for

We want this guide to be read and used by all concerned with UK housing policy and practice. We particularly want to reach local housing authorities and social landlords. Much of the guide is also relevant to private landlords, voluntary bodies, residents' and tenants' organisations and migrant support organisations. Finally, we would like the guide to be read by the government bodies – Home Office, UK Border Agency (UKBA) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – who formulate and implement policies on migration, integration and housing.

Rapid changes in policy, limited consultation and low awareness by the housing sector have made it extremely difficult for social landlords to 'keep on top of' migration and its implications. It's a big challenge to stay up-to-date on numbers and trends, keep up with changes in eligibility for housing and other services, and consider how migrant integration fits with the localism/Big Society agenda, particularly at a time of significant cuts in public spending.

This guide aims to help you meet this challenge.

Part one covers the background issues important in all aspects of housing.

Part two aims to provide detailed guidance for those who...

- **...deal with housing applicants** – because you need to know if migrants are eligible for housing, and advice is included here (see page 24 and especially Figure 6.1)
- **...manage social housing** – because you need to know how to support migrants in sustaining tenancies (page 30)
- **...give advice on housing and homelessness** – because many migrants don't use formal advice services and more could be done to help them (page 32)
- **...work in neighbourhoods** – because you can play a key role in supporting the benefits and easing the tensions that migration may bring (page 35)
- **...work with the private rented sector** – because the vast majority of new migrants are living in this sector, often in poor or insecure conditions (page 42)
- **...want to help destitute migrants** – because having no roof and no money, when you are not in your own country, is devastating for the small but increasing numbers of migrants it affects (page 46).

2 The issues for housing

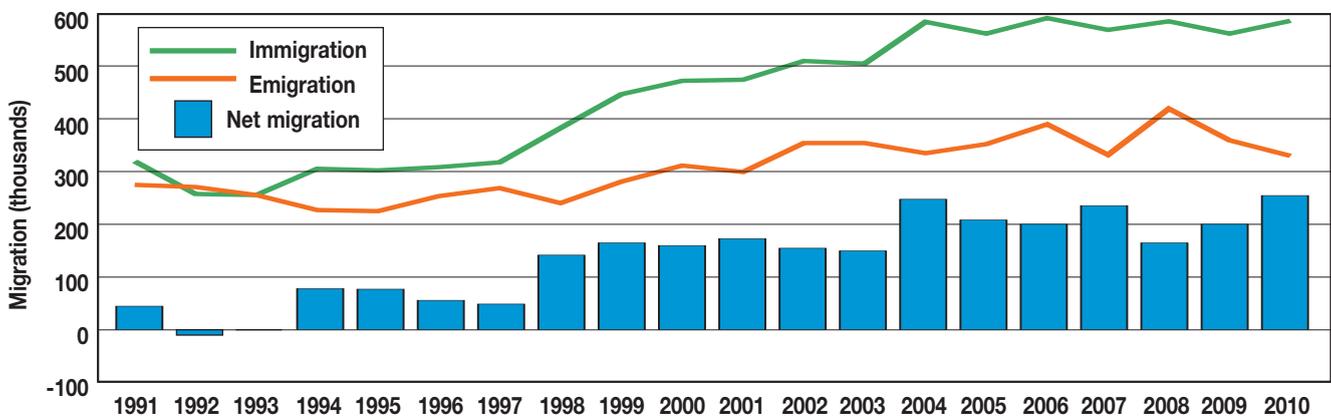
Migration to the UK and how it affects housing and neighbourhoods are complex issues. Practitioners need to know the main trends, the effects on housing demand and how migration relates to their work. They should be aware that debate in the media and among the general population is often ill-informed.

Know how migration affects population change

In the last few years migration has been remarkably stable after a decade of rapid growth. Immigration (people coming in) is now running at just under 600,000 per year (Figure 2.1); emigration (people leaving) is over 300,000

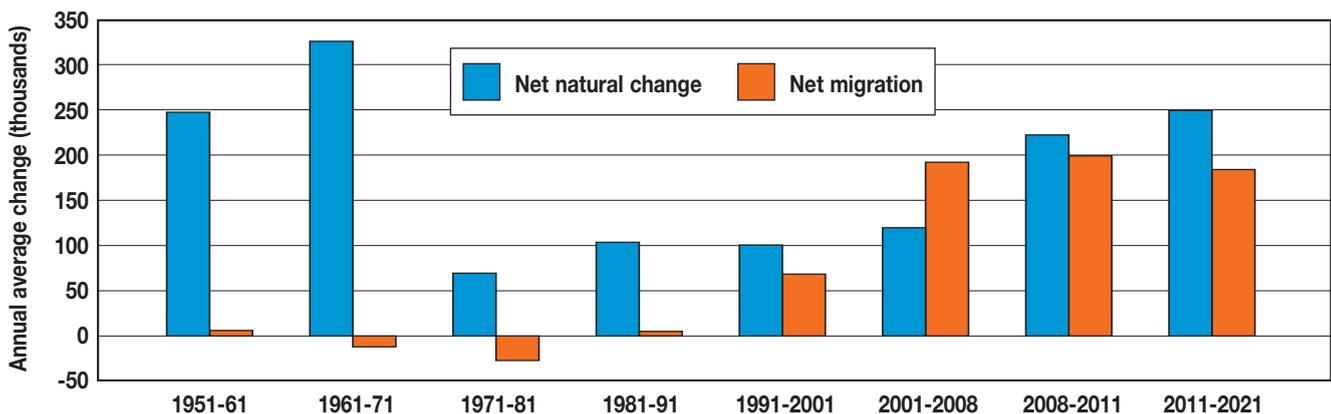
annually, and net migration (the balance between the two) is over 200,000. Population growth results from natural change (births and deaths) plus *net migration*. Figure 2.2 shows how they inter-relate. Projections such as these are revised regularly as migration trends are affected by the economy and other issues, only some of which can be influenced by government.

Figure 2.1: UK net migration, immigration and emigration, 2000-2010



Data based on charts by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk; derived from ONS migration data

Figure 2.2: UK population change 1951-2021



Source: *UK Housing Review 2011 Briefing Paper*; data from *Social Trends*, volume 40.

Know how migration affects demand for housing

Population growth due to migration feeds into projections of household growth and housing need. Household numbers in England are **projected** to grow by 27% to 27.5 million in 2033 (there are similar projections for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). This means 232,000 new households per year. Of this new demand, just over three-fifths is driven by natural population growth and changes such as divorce; net migration accounts for just under two-fifths.

This increase is far more than the number of houses currently being built (around 100,000 annually).

Know how migration affects the main housing tenures

Here is a summary of what we know based on work by the **Migration Observatory**:

- *Homeowners*. The foreign-born population has significantly fewer homeowners (46%) than the UK-born (71%).
- *Private rented sector (PRS)*. New migrants (those in the UK for five years or less) are more than twice as likely to be renters (75% are in the PRS), compared to all migrants (see Figure 2.3).
- *Social housing*. UK-born and foreign-born people are equally likely to be living in social

housing (about 17% of the population in each case). But recent arrivals are much less likely to be in social housing. The overall effect is small but growing: **in 2009/10** less than 10% of tenants were non-UK citizens.

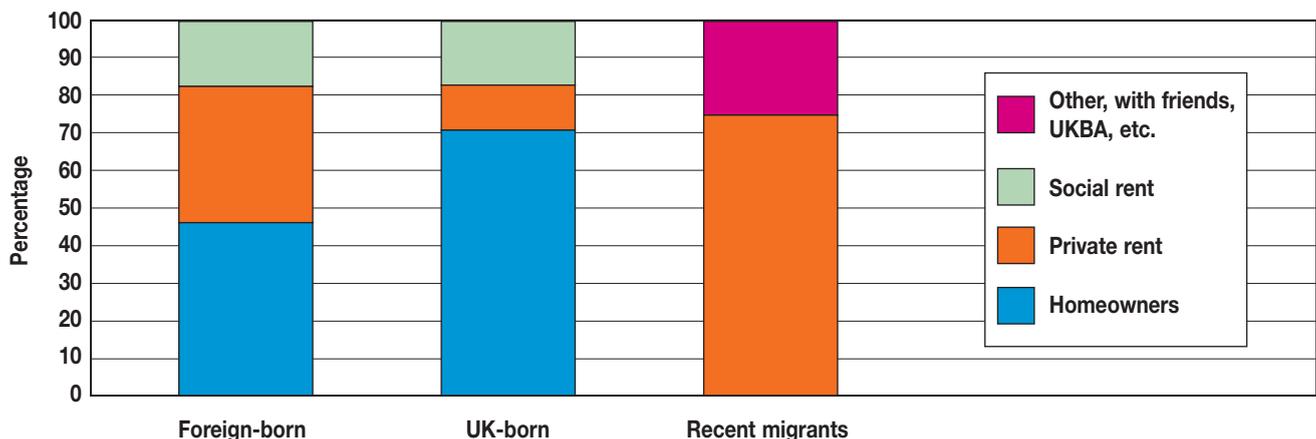
Migrants who stay in the UK long-term eventually have similar housing patterns to the settled population.

Housing's role is critical

Although most recent migrants live in private rented accommodation, strategic housing staff, social landlords and tenants need to get involved in local responses because:

- migration is now a fundamental influence on housing
- most housing organisations already have links with new migrants – as employees, as tenants, and as people requiring advice and assistance (including homeless individuals and families) who may be future tenants
- most landlords manage mixed-tenure accommodation in mixed-tenure neighbourhoods, so need to take account of private as well as social lettings
- social landlords have wider roles in neighbourhoods; migration is often a key local issue and their on-the-ground presence and community links mean they are well placed to lead.

Figure 2.3: Migrants' housing tenures



Source: Migration Observatory (2011) *Migrants and Housing in the UK*

Housing providers must of course remember that tenants and communities are at the heart of decision-making. Co-regulation and good practice both mean that tenants' organisations should be key players in decision-making, for example about housing allocations and meeting migrants' housing needs.

Because the impact of migration is felt at local level, it is important to judge the effects on local authorities and on neighbourhoods. How to do this is covered in Chapter 5 (page 20).



Key learning and action points on... **identifying your local migrant population**

- ✓ **be aware of the effects of migration on housing demand and be able to challenge misconceptions**
- ✓ **know what the tenure effects of migration are**
- ✓ **use this guide to understand how migration affects your housing operations and the communities where you are based**

3 Taking the lead and forming partnerships

Achieving change can be difficult and requires leadership and partnership working. Both need commitment if they are to work.

Housing organisations may be well-placed to do this and some provide clear examples of leadership and partnership-building. Some have a role in partnerships led by others who are better placed to lead.

The Network makes this case in detail in the paper [UK Migration: The leadership role of housing providers](#).

Why local leadership is needed

The Network's [full paper](#) argues that leadership means having the skills, knowledge and drive to recognise the changes that migration is bringing and to help both existing and new communities to deal with those changes. In some parts of the country, key politicians, regional and local organisations and community organisers have provided leadership, sometimes with housing providers in a prominent role.

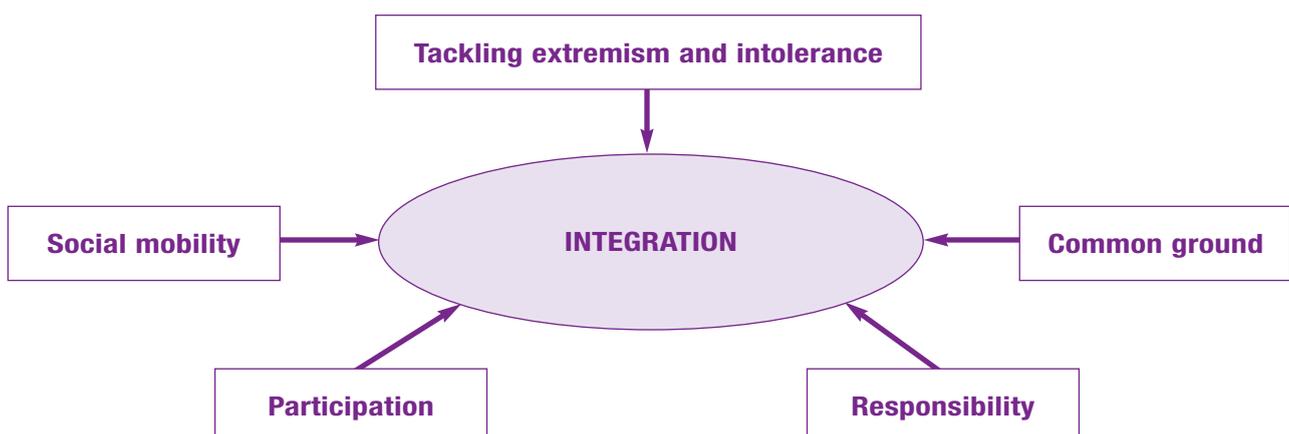
This chapter considers how leadership on these issues can be promoted in all places with significant migrant communities. The Network believes that, without progressive leadership, issues are more likely to be exploited by extremists putting the blame on

immigrants or become a received wisdom that is difficult to correct.

Policy at national level focuses largely on putting limits on immigration but the recent policy statement [Creating the conditions for integration](#) (February 2012) aims to 'encourage local areas to take the lead in building integration'. It identifies five key factors in doing this (Figure 3.1).

The policy contains no new funding but it does call for ideas and is intended to influence the wider work of government. This means that places have to deal with the impacts of migration largely with the resources already available to them and by developing leadership, relationships, partnerships and trust at local level.

Figure 3.1: Government's five key factors that contribute to integration



Part One – The approach

Taking the lead and forming partnerships

Set your own local objectives

In dealing with the local impacts of migration, it is essential to be clear what your objectives are and to ensure these are the right ones for your local areas and their issues. Many local authorities and social landlords do of course already have objectives about promoting more 'cohesive' or 'integrated' communities. However, it is important to consider how they apply in the context of work with newly arrived (as well as long-established) communities and whether they will need modifying or bringing up-to-date. A key issue is avoiding a policy stance or actions which put the onus mainly on new arrivals to 'integrate': it should be a two-way process, involving not only migrants but the people and the organisations in the areas where they come to live.

One definition of integration that might be appropriate (from [The Migration Debate](#) by Sarah Spencer – adapted slightly) is:

'...interaction between migrants and the individuals and institutions of the receiving society that facilitates economic, social, cultural and civic participation, and an inclusive sense of belonging at the national and local levels.'

Working towards integration in these terms might be adopted as the aim for your work with groups supporting migrants (Chapter 4) and in neighbourhoods (Chapter 9).

Learn from others

The Network's [full paper](#) takes as its main case study the work of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities on asylum and migration issues and their consequences for local integration. This is not covered here but is an exceptional example at regional level. Here are further examples which provide useful lessons.



Practice examples

Newcastle [ARCH](#) (Agencies Against Racist Crime and Harassment) is a partnership to identify tensions, report hate crime and support victims. Housing organisations including Shelter and Your Homes Newcastle as well as local refugee and migrant groups like ACANE (see page 16) are all involved alongside the police and several other partners. They share relevant information and get support for victims from the local agency which is best placed to provide it.

[MIGWAG](#), Cornwall – the migrant workers action group – began in 2005. Kerrier DC set up a multi-disciplinary group including police, fire, probation, HM Revenue and Customs and council staff from relevant departments.

The group now covers Kerrier and Penwith and has been joined by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority. Regular multi-agency operations address conditions on caravan sites, in barns and in houses in multiple occupation, and look at vehicle standards. Partner agencies share intelligence.

Part One – The approach

Taking the lead and forming partnerships

Find out about partnerships in your area

At the outset, it is important to find out who works locally on these issues and who offers relevant services, in order to begin to develop structures that can better meet local needs.

Partnership structures may already be in place:

- At *regional* level, strategic migration partnerships still exist and there are equivalents in Scotland and Wales. Where these grew out of asylum dispersal, they may or may not retain their effectiveness and will be affected by the contract changes mentioned below. It is not yet clear whether these regional structures will continue (although of course they could be sustained by the local partners themselves).
- At *local* level, old partnerships may have lost their impetus with the changes in asylum contracts, decline in EU migration and recent spending cuts. Many cities have refugee or migrant forums – likely to have good links with migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs) and other voluntary groups – but also probably struggling with smaller budgets.

Partnerships have advantages

They can provide:

- better information about local changes and earlier identification of potential hotspots or problems that need addressing
- information about language needs, knowledge of who is eligible for services, and many other issues
- shared services like interpretation and training or shared resources to support MRCOs and other migrant support organisations
- at neighbourhood level, collaboration to deal with any local pressures and tensions (see Chapter 9)
- joint work with hard-to-reach groups
- co-ordination of voluntary bodies to identify gaps and avoid overlaps.

New UKBA asylum accommodation contracts

In 2012 a new challenge is to forge partnerships between the private companies that will provide asylum accommodation, local services (such as housing) and migrant support organisations. Currently there is a public/private mix, with councils and social landlords contracted to provide just under half of the accommodation (see page 25 for who is eligible for UKBA accommodation).

A range of issues arise from the change:

- transitional arrangements for accommodation
- impact of the use of different properties, e.g. in areas where there has been little new migration or where there is already pressure on the private rented sector
- effect on established partnerships and on relationships with neighbourhood-level bodies
- loss of resources/expertise for this work within authorities
- possible mismatch between where asylum seekers are accommodated and where support networks and MRCOs exist
- settlement/move-on issues as asylum seekers get decisions on their immigration status.

Commissioned to provide accommodation, it is going to be vital to encourage the companies to take a strategic view, recognise the ‘civic’ role they need to fulfil and contribute to successful integration.

Help to develop leadership within neighbourhoods and communities

Supporting leadership at neighbourhood level and within communities which is positive about migration and integration is vital. In some areas such leadership may already exist and it is important to identify and nurture this.

Part One – The approach

Taking the lead and forming partnerships

Working with local tenants', residents' and community groups to enable them to understand the local patterns and impacts of movement and migration, and to challenge myths and racism related to it, is the most effective way of supporting positive relationships. Supporting engagement and local leadership and activities which bring people together has

been found to be far more effective than PR campaigns delivered in isolation. And it is even better if recognised local leaders are prepared to make a stand.

Broxbourne HA (see box) took the lead in recognising and addressing resident concerns about population change.



Practice examples

Broxbourne HA (BHA) in South East Herts is on the edge of London and has experienced the sort of rapid population change which is typical of many outer London areas where previously the ethnic profile was predominantly white British. In the past there has been significant support for the BNP. Such change is likely to continue apace, as people seek to improve their access to housing or follow their predecessors in migrating out of London.

BHA organises regular discussion forums for tenants and residents on various themes relating to equality. Many residents have been asking about the changes in population: some hold misconceptions about who is getting access to social housing; some fear the unknown and some simply wish to expand their knowledge. A recent event involved an information sharing session, organised with speakers from the Housing and Migration Network who also facilitated discussion about people's own perceptions and experiences of migration. Feedback was good and although those who attended were mostly positive about migration they were acutely aware of much negativity amongst neighbours and wanted to develop ways of challenging this. Broxbourne is planning similar sessions for staff and board members and thinking about how it takes forward the session held with tenants and residents to a wider audience.

Contact: [Catherine Bailey](#), Performance and Equalities Manager

Nurturing new leaders – including within new communities – is also vital if they are to be able to participate in local civic life. Community development work (see Chapter 9) can help identify and build the capacity of new leaders, especially in neighbourhoods where new migrants live. This is a challenging task:

- it can be difficult to avoid relying on longstanding community 'leaders' who may only represent settled residents not new arrivals
- modern movements of people and information

challenge traditional community development models: people may move on a short-term basis, maintain social networks through mobile phones and cheap flights rather than place-based contacts, or may not feel they need to integrate locally

- in future there may be *more* movement in and out of areas, posing a real challenge to communities and leaders in dealing with change (and migration may simply be adding to change/churn already taking place).

Part One – The approach

Taking the lead and forming partnerships

Despite the challenges, there are examples of success: the Network spoke to many community-based groups which started from scratch but developed effective leadership at both neighbourhood and local authority levels (see box).

In addition, the 5 Estates Project in Dudley and the Engage for Change project in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (page 39) both provide examples of local leadership which positively works towards integrated communities.



Practice examples

Bolton – Polacy Duzi i Mali (the group's name means *Poles Big and Small*) had support from Bolton housing providers and the council. It pointed out to the Network that Polish communities can be very divided – between generations, by wave of settlement, by experiences of work, etc. – and there is a need to bring together groups that do not readily mix. This means finding people then uniting, motivating and empowering them, and raising their awareness of issues about life in the UK. The migrant population is in flux and the many people with multiple jobs have little time for community activities or even learning English. The plethora of third sector bodies is confusing as they do not exist in Poland.

Contact: [Krys Stankiewicz](#)

African Community Advice North East – ACANE was set up in 2001 with support from the North East Refugee Forum to fill gaps in local services. It provides information and support for African refugee communities, who often do not initially speak English. It acts as a bridge to other agencies. It grew from its founder's front room to the current (council-owned) office in the Byker housing estate.

At first only new African arrivals were referred, but now all new asylum seekers in the area can receive support. The centre has always been open to all in the neighbourhood, making it a good place to meet neighbours, use the phone or computers or attend the cooking or after-school clubs.

Contact: Gaby Kitoko 0191 265 8110 or [ACANE](#)



Key learning and action points on... leadership and partnerships

- ✓ **consider what leadership is needed and whether you can help provide it**
- ✓ **set some local objectives you intend to aim for in working with migrant communities**
- ✓ **think about how you support others who are taking the lead already**
- ✓ **take stock of the examples here and in the more detailed paper**
- ✓ **review local partnership arrangements on migration issues and consider whether they need strengthening**
- ✓ **check what is happening about UKBA asylum accommodation contracts in your region**
- ✓ **look for ways to stimulate local leadership at neighbourhood level and within communities**

4 Work with groups supporting migrants

Migrant support organisations carry out a vital support role in many areas.

They are often ‘under the radar’ of housing organisations but if identified and supported can be an important partner for housing providers and broader-based community groups wishing to include new communities in their services and activities.

Build partnerships with migrant support organisations

Most housing bodies work closely with residents’ associations and other community-based groups but may be unaware of groups working with migrants or formed by refugees or new migrants themselves.

Migrant support comes from different sources. Depending on the area, there may be migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs), whether well-developed or newly emerging, or wider voluntary bodies or community groups who work with migrants specifically or target them as part of services to a broader range of people. In some areas, it is an umbrella body such as a migrant or refugee forum which provides the main support. To complete the picture, there are regional and national bodies who provide support too.

Engaging with the migrant support sector is very important to:

- get local knowledge about people’s needs and experiences in coming to live in local neighbourhoods
- help housing bodies provide better services to migrant communities by consulting or designing/adapting services in partnership with migrant support organisations
- assisting migrant support groups to build on services they already provide, formally or informally, to new arrivals – because many people prefer to get help from people in their community as a first port of call

- contact hard-to-reach groups
- tackle neighbourhood issues by bringing them together with other local community and resident groups
- help link them to the wider voluntary sector if this is not already the case.

Bear in mind that many semi-formal groups are finding it difficult to survive after spending cuts and of course even well-established groups are likely to have had to reduce their services. Advice and youth services have been hit particularly hard and existing organisations may find it even more difficult to reach out to new groups. Use of volunteers is increasing across the sector as a means of holding many services together and migrant-led groups – who largely depend on volunteers from within the community – are likely to find there is an even greater call on their time but with less expert back-up to refer people on to.

Offer practical support

An excellent way to support new migrants to integrate is to help the organisations who provide them with services. For example:

- give practical support – such as making office space available
- sponsor community facilities that provide a base for neighbourhood groups, including migrant support organisations
- base housing staff in migrant support sector offices to provide advice sessions

Part One – The approach

Work with groups supporting migrants

- where migrant organisations provide office space or services such as surveys or translation or help create links for you with new communities (so as to support your business objectives) – pay for these as this can help sustain the group
- provide direct financial support or help to migrant support organisations so they can access outside funding
- support MRCOs to build links with the wider voluntary sector, including local umbrella groups, where they can access business or organisational support as well as develop other partnerships.



Practice examples

East North East Homes, Leeds – this ALMO lets the city's refugee forum use an ex-housing office rent-free. The forum pays running costs and insurance. The centre is well used: in 2010/11 there were about 6,500 visits by 1,300 different people, most living locally.

Forum workers give advice and support and run courses and English conversation classes. Advice includes housing support e.g. about the city's choice-based lettings scheme. A range of MRCOs use the building. Recent bookings included:

- mother-tongue language classes for children
- a wake for a community member
- meetings about the situation in one country and options for return.

Local tenants' and residents' associations, the community forum and ward councillors also use the building – helping avoid complaints of exclusivity.

Contact: [Rachel Pilling](#), Leeds Refugee Forum

Piers Road Centre opened in 2007 after a study by HACT and Family Housing Association into the feasibility of advice provision for refugees in North West Birmingham. Family HA covered any deficit for the first three years, but the centre is now self-funding through grants or delivering commissioned services. It houses 21 groups with a waiting list of other groups wanting to move in.

It includes the PARS Immigration Advice Service, licensed to give immigration advice and able to conduct appeals. PARS has over 600 clients and also runs an advice service for prisoners whose first language is not English.

Find your local MRCOs

Within the range of migrant support groups, housing providers should pay special attention to MRCOs. They are often the smallest and least formal organisations but can provide close links with new migrants. They may not be in the same networks as long-established ethnic minority groups, may not be as well linked with the local voluntary sector and may be ignored by statutory bodies.

MRCOs are found in many places in Britain. They may be less numerous among newer migrant worker communities but it shouldn't be assumed that they do not exist (although they are more likely to be virtual/social media based). To make contact with them:

- use the information sources in Chapter 5
- look at the useful tips in the CES guide to [Working with Refugee Community Organisations](#)

Part One – The approach

Work with groups supporting migrants

- check out HACT's [summary](#) of lessons about links with MRCOs – it has do's and don'ts and the obstacles that can be met.

MRCOs are hugely diverse bodies – they range from small groups that perhaps come together to organise one event to long-established organisations with staff and offices. They often operate under considerable pressure, have limited funds and rely heavily on volunteers. Many have massive demands made on them by undocumented migrants, asylum seekers or people with limited or no resources, who look to them as their main sources of support. They may serve particular nationality or ethnic groups (Somalis, Poles, etc.) and there can be divisions of different kinds, with multiple groups serving one nationality – but the actual pattern of arrangements varies considerably from place to place and between nationalities.

Ensuring that MRCOs are linked into wider networks – including long-established ethnic minority groups – is vital so they are able to provide accurate and up-to-date advice within their communities and refer people to appropriate services for expert advice; support their communities to understand lifestyles and expectations in the UK, and build relationships beyond their own communities.

Work with isolated migrants

Some migrants may be very isolated even though they have been here for some time. This can occur with whole communities such as Roma

(often persecuted in their countries of origin) or with particular groups (such as women) in certain communities. Migrant workers may live on remote farms or have long working days.

In Dudley, estates where migrants live are far from the town centre: isolation has been tackled by a tenant-led initiative which has widened to achieve broader integration between people and communities in the five estates (see page 39).

Wider work with migrant organisations

Migrant support organisations, particularly those staffed and run by migrants themselves, can provide other opportunities for engagement with social housing providers:

- *Work placements* – enabling refugees in particular to get work experience to help in getting employment. HACT's [Reach In](#) project is an example and there have been others. Reach In has so far placed 83 trainees with 25 housing providers. Longer term this also aids relations with migrant communities.
- *Training/enterprise start-up* – housing and other bodies have helped build the capacity of MRCOs to help them bid for service contracts. A HACT and JRF [guide](#) gives advice and many practical examples.
- *ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)* – ESOL is in heavy demand; some housing organisations have provided courses as part of their engagement with migrant communities (see pages 31 and 32).



Key learning and action points on... migrant support organisations

- ✓ **identify and contact local migrant support organisations**
- ✓ **consider whether you could support them and/or develop partnership working arrangements**
- ✓ **discuss the kinds of support they need and you could offer**
- ✓ **look for opportunities for wider work and establishing longer-term relationships**
- ✓ **don't overlook small MRCOs or isolated groups of migrants who aren't yet organised**

5 Identify your local migrant population

Information on migrants and where they live is essential – but difficult to obtain from official sources.

It is important to build a *local* picture of migrant communities, their needs, characteristics and local impacts – preferably in partnership with other local agencies who have or need the same information – recognising that it's not possible to get exact data in a dynamically changing situation.

What do we want to know?

Service providers, advice agencies and perhaps neighbourhood organisations have a range of questions about new migrants, such as:

- how many migrants are there in the area?
- where are they living and in what types of accommodation?
- how long will they stay?
- what changes will they bring?

Behind these questions may be others – will they put extra demands on services? Can we use the numbers to get some help from somewhere, to deal with extra needs that may arise? How will local people react to this change?

Housing authorities and social landlords may need information to:

- inform housing need assessments and housing market appraisals
- prepare for/update choice-based lettings schemes
- understand the landlord's own tenants and changes in the tenant mix
- decide how to respond to issues such as increased multi-occupation, poor-quality caravan sites or rough sleeping by migrants
- identify and respond to tensions with existing residents
- ensure that advice services, including voluntary sector ones, are giving appropriate housing and benefits advice to migrants

- influence the landlord's own policies and practices, e.g. staff recruitment, training, language resources, interview procedures, etc.

Problems about information sources

Obtaining good information from official data sources is not straightforward:

- official sources often show who is coming into the country (inflows), not who leaves (outflows) or who is here (the population stock)
- different sources may be partial or incompatible with each other (e.g. data on people arriving in the UK are collected on a different basis from data about visa applications)
- sources used to provide migration data may not have this as their main purpose (e.g. 'Flag 4' health data – based on voluntary registration with GPs and can miss out mobile young workers)
- long-term migration figures do not include short-time workers, e.g. in crop-picking jobs, although there are plans to change this
- some national sources break down to regional or local authority levels – others do not
- people here who change their status or overstay don't show in statistics (e.g. someone on a student visa who gets married to a UK citizen)
- migrant workers may not work where they live but travel long distances
- most sources record *individuals*; social landlords need to know about *households*.

Part One – The approach

Identify your local migrant population

Where to go for information

- [Migration Observatory](#) provides independent and balanced analysis of national data
- LGA's [Resource Guide on Local Migration Statistics](#) summarises official sources and possible local sources of information to supplement these
- [Working with Refugee Community Organisations](#) has a section 'how do we find refugees in our area?'

Supplement with local data

The above data sources are not likely to provide all the desired information. Some possible solutions are:

- local authorities – especially if they work sub-regionally – may have resources to combine different data sets (see examples)
- other partners – may have good data albeit for different geographical areas (e.g. police data on changes to the demand for different languages – available for a force area, but not always for a smaller area)
- in-house surveys – cheaper and can be built into current practices
- independent surveys – may be more objective and bring in outside expertise
- self-completion surveys or adding questions to those used by housing staff - may keep costs down

- smaller, qualitative sources – such as focus groups – can provide in-depth information at low cost and help in reaching out to migrant communities (see page 22)
- local migrant support organisations – can provide information (both quantitative and qualitative) as well as being important partners in carrying out surveys.

Try to look for solutions where you work in partnership with other agencies that need similar data, otherwise there is a danger of duplication and misuse of resources.

If you have to choose between one-off or ongoing surveys, remember that:

- the smaller cost of a one-off survey has to be balanced against the limited value of a 'snapshot' view
- snapshots can be useful in identifying issues that need to be tracked or problems thought to be 'below the radar'
- if previously unknown migrant communities are identified, instead of repeat surveys other approaches might be used – such as contact with migrant support organisations or finding out which shops or facilities like phone card outlets the community uses, to make contact through them.

Despite the costs, housing bodies have done specific surveys and a review of many examples was undertaken for the HACT-CIH [Opening Doors](#) project. Look at these and other examples (see below) to get ideas for local surveys.



Practice examples

Bristol City Council [analysed](#) different data sources to produce an estimate of its Somali population, showing that its size is often exaggerated by the media. Its 'Somali Community Calculator' puts the range of estimates for the Somali population as 6,600-10,000, as against the 20-30k often cited.

NESMP – **North East Strategic Migration Partnership** produce regular statistical bulletins covering LAs in the region which bring together official data sources for local service providers in a form enabling them to see trends over time.



Part One – The approach

Identify your local migrant population

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) used a popular local delicatessen to help develop links with the Polish community and gain information about issues that may affect them in accessing a new choice-based lettings scheme, Homesearch. With eastern European communities making roots in the Wakefield district, WDH has supported the setting up of a Polish Community Association, in particular supporting them to have their accounts audited and by printing leaflets and newsletters to publicise their activities. The association now has office space in a local church centre.

Contact: Gerard Maguire 01977 784669

East Cambridgeshire DC appointed a health and safety officer for migrant workers, one of whose tasks was to establish a knowledge base on migrants and housing. This was done from:

- information held by council departments and outside bodies such as the police
- visiting migrant worker accommodation and carrying out interviews
- visits to employers.

A database of accommodation was compiled together with a priority list for inspections.

Collect data from housing applicants

When a new letting takes place, details such as whether the tenant is a UK or foreign national are collected for **CORE returns**. Additional data such as ethnicity, language, when the applicant arrived in the UK, etc. might be added. But it is important:

- not to collect unnecessary data
- to be sensitive in asking questions about immigration status
- not to treat people differently by (for example) their appearance – you should have rules that apply to everyone (see page 27).

Another source of information is housing applications (see page 27).

Other methods

More limited and/or less formal methods of obtaining information include:

- ‘micro-surveys’: for example, in-depth ‘pathway’ studies of relatively small numbers of households can show how they use the housing market (e.g. **Sheffield**)
- focus groups – see the practice example

- surveys by MRCOs, carried out by volunteers, which may also help to develop their capacity and empower the groups.



Practice example

St. Vincent’s HA, participants in the **Opening Doors** project, organised two focus groups with migrant workers in Bolton. This enabled them to get a more detailed understanding of migrant housing needs and issues.

Pitfalls

Be very wary of data reports in the media, even if apparently based on official press releases.

Migration is an emotive issue: many bodies have political agendas that are backed by selective reporting and carefully worded press releases.

To avoid the snags in data collection and presentation, aim to:

- *focus on trends*: not sudden anomalies

Part One – The approach

Identify your local migrant population

- *be clear how figures will be used* before collecting them
- *be clear in advance about questions you are trying to answer*: for example, counting incomers but not leavers won't tell you about absolute numbers, only that the population is changing
- *beware of misuse*: do not be lured by the press into giving figures unless you are sure about them
- *beware of inconsistencies*: e.g. avoid confusing individuals with households, or 'foreign-born' people with new migrants.



Key learning and action points on... **identifying your local migrant population**

- ✓ **be clear what you want to know**
- ✓ **check what data other agencies have or may also need**
- ✓ **form partnerships to share/obtain data where appropriate**
- ✓ **be aware of weaknesses in official data sources**
- ✓ **consider local surveys or other less formal methods**
- ✓ **be aware of the pitfalls**

6 ...allocate housing

Most recent migrants are not eligible for social housing tenancies but may become so and apply later. Those responsible for allocations or for interviewing applicants need to be well briefed on the eligibility of different types of migrant.

Migrants face additional barriers in accessing social housing which landlords can help remove. Tackling such barriers can help a range of people, not just migrants.

Know who is eligible

Only some recent migrants are eligible for social housing but with time and changing circumstances others become eligible too. The rules are complicated and differ in the four parts of the UK. Figure 6.1 on page 25 is a summary; the [Housing Rights website](#) provides a detailed guide.

Help remove the barriers migrants face

Migrants are often unaware of their rights or may not use advice services. Landlords often assume they are not eligible for housing or create other barriers like their staff being unaware of migrants' eligibility for housing. Because the issues are complicated, it can seem easier to 'say no'. The barriers are summarised in Figure 6.2 on page 28.

Train your staff and improve awareness

To remove these barriers all frontline staff need basic awareness of migrant needs and eligibility; staff actually giving housing options advice, taking housing applications or dealing with homelessness cases need access to [full guidance](#). The HACT-CIH Opening Doors project produced model [training modules](#) for staff: the overall approach in these is valid and they have been adapted by several landlords to provide their training material (but would now need updating in several details).

It is also vital that staff are aware about the people and communities they are likely to meet in their work. Staff are often local people: if they understand the issues they can then help counter myths outside work. But equally if they are not well-trained they can contribute to rumours and inaccuracies.

Some landlords recruit migrants to help provide language skills and cultural awareness within their frontline staff. Or they may give work experience placements, e.g. through HACT's [Reach In programme](#). By building partnerships with MRCOs and other voluntary groups, housing providers can find out more about barriers which migrants face (see Chapter 3).

Provide guidance on dealing with applicants

Staff who interview applicants and make allocations or homelessness decisions may need to check immigration status. They must do this without being discriminatory (e.g. only asking 'obvious foreigners' about their status). They need to check sensitively about ability to pay the rent and about benefit entitlements. Glasgow Housing Association has developed staff guidance on this: have a look at their approach (see box on page 27), but bear in mind the differences in Scottish law. All social landlords should consider having such guidance and training.

Figure 6.1: Eligibility for housing and housing impacts of different types of migrant (May 2012)

Type of migrant	Eligibility for social housing and for welfare benefits	Likely housing impact
Migrant workers		
Migrant worker from outside the EEA (the EU plus some other countries to which free movement rules apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry controlled by points-based system; given limited leave • Obligated to find own accommodation • Eligible for social housing if eventually granted ILR (indefinite leave to remain) 	Private rented sector (PRS) or employer-provided accommodation; owner-occupation for better paid/longer-term workers
Migrant worker from the EEA (inc. workers from Bulgaria/Romania who meet special conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many are eligible for housing/welfare benefits; includes family members • Not eligible for housing if here to seek work and not yet in employment 	As above, but most are eligible for social housing and some may qualify for homelessness services if in priority need
Seasonal farm worker (from Bulgaria or Romania under 'SAWS' scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation provided by employer (workers can provide their own but rarely do); rent can be deducted from wages • Workers recruited by licensed agencies who check on accommodation quality, etc. 	Often shared or dormitory accommodation; often in large groups in separate buildings with self-catering arrangements
Asylum seekers		
Asylum seeker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation through a contract with UKBA • No rent charged, asylum seeker gets basic furnishings/white goods and subsistence funds (e.g. £35 per week for a single person) • Some disabled asylum seekers may be accommodated/supported by social services • Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are accommodated/supported by social services 	UKBA contractors now usually use PRS accommodation; even if social housing is used, no secure or assured tenancy is created
Asylum seeker receiving subsistence funds only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for UKBA accommodation; makes own arrangements for accommodation 	Usually stay with family or friends. Subsistence excludes rent
Asylum seeker whose application is finally refused (all appeal rights exhausted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If still in the UK and child-free (e.g. waiting for voluntary return, applying for judicial review, unable to travel) may be eligible for 'hard case' support: accommodation + vouchers worth £35 per week, subject to strict conditions • Families with children are supported and housed by UKBA until they leave the UK • Otherwise, only eligible for help if LA social services support because of disability or other care needs 	'Hard case' accommodation likely to be in the PRS. Many become destitute: may be helped by various voluntary sector and faith projects



Part Two – What you can do if you...

...allocate housing

Type of migrant	Eligibility for social housing and for welfare benefits	Likely housing impact
Refugees		
Refugees given leave to remain in the UK, usually after seeking asylum; but some arrive under the Gateway protection programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible if given refugee status or other leave to remain such as humanitarian protection or discretionary leave • If in asylum accommodation, have maximum of 28 days to arrange new housing 	Mixed: many are single people/not in priority need. Many will initially use the PRS and later apply for social housing, especially if they bring family members
Family migrants (e.g. spouses of people settled in or citizens of the UK)		
Person joining a family member in the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally have no recourse to public funds (meaning no access to welfare benefits, tax credits, or housing help). • special arrangements for people fleeing domestic violence (due to change in 2012) • Eligible for social housing when granted ILR (normally after two years for a spouse) 	Live with the family member in most cases; some may access hostels/refuges if fleeing domestic violence
Other people with limited leave, etc.		
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally no recourse to public funds 	Most likely in the PRS, lodgings or university accommodation
Other visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible 	None (or very limited)
Undocumented migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for housing and benefits • May get support and accommodation from social services if have children or social care needs and are applying to get leave 	Unknown
People with indefinite leave to remain		
Some working migrants, refugees and family members get indefinite leave to remain after a specified period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally eligible for housing and benefits 	Usually stay in existing accommodation but may apply for housing and/or benefits once eligible

Note: This table is a summary of eligibility at May 2012 but is *not* a guide to the law. This can be found at www.housing-rights.info
Please note different rules may apply to categories of migrant not covered in detail in the table, such as family members.
Table prepared with help from Sue Lukes.



Practice example

Glasgow Housing Association's guide to [Housing Migrants and Refugees](#) gives step-by-step advice to frontline staff. It covers issues such as the (Scottish) legal and regulatory framework, assessing ability to pay rent, interpreting and translation, asking for documentation and access to choice-based lettings. It is supported by a range of Scottish social landlord organisations.

Improve access to housing registers and choice-based lettings

As well as the barriers in Figure 6.2, migrants wanting to go onto the housing register or bid for choice-based lettings (CBL) can face problems such as:

- not understanding the system
- language difficulties
- not being computer literate or not having access to a computer
- timing – bids are time-critical
- poor knowledge of areas and choices

- unrealistic expectations – thinking success will come quickly and being disappointed when this doesn't happen
- complexity of needs, e.g. requiring support or having other difficulties apart from lacking a house.

These handicaps can also apply to parts of the settled population. They can be overcome or reduced by good preparation:

- providing local guidance or training to applicants
- explaining the scheme in plain English and in minority languages
- allowing telephone bidding in the most commonly-spoken languages
- providing free computer facilities, e.g. through libraries
- training staff to assist vulnerable people or providing such a service through a community-based organisation.

Working with migrant support organisations can make information more widely available and also help manage expectations that lettings will be available quickly.



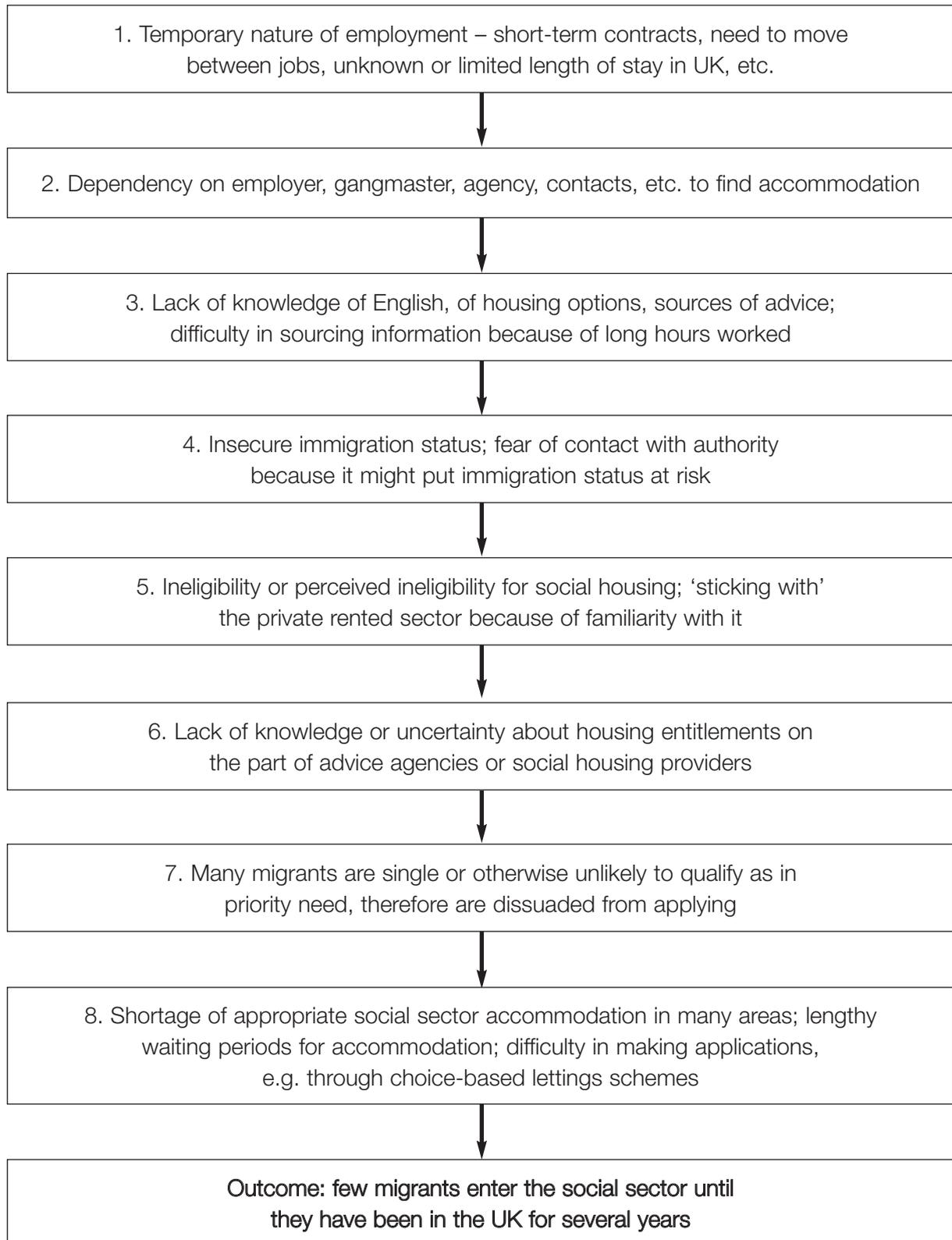
Practice examples

Leicester Homechoice. In preparing their CBL scheme the council noted that many migrants use free computer facilities in libraries. The council therefore gave library staff basic training in CBL, so they could assist applicants. The council has since monitored referrals; considerable use is being made of the libraries as access points and a wide range of different groups are using CBL. Several alternative languages are available and the second highest usage is in Polish.

Bolton Solidarity Community Association (BSCA). Bolton MBC, Bolton at Home and Bolton Community Housing collectively invest in BSCA to work with a fast-growing Somali population as well as other new migrants (including Roma people) who do not feel comfortable using other services. Staff from the lettings team provide regular updates to the community about the CBL scheme and attend fortnightly advice sessions at BSCA where they help individuals and households to make decisions about bidding for properties, for example advising on chances of success and on moves to less popular areas. They also advise on access to the council's homelessness services. The funding also supports BSCA to work jointly with other council services.

Contact: [Dominic Conway](#)

Figure 6.2: Barriers faced by migrants in moving from the private to the social rented sector



Some CBL schemes include lettings by accredited private landlords, adding to the range of properties available and easing access.

Make policies and their effects transparent

Housing providers are well aware of the accusations of queue-jumping that can arise from

allocations policies and how they operate. The best defence is to be open about policies and their outcomes.

Many authorities publicise results on websites (e.g. Blackburn with Darwen's b-with-us.com) or through local free newspapers (e.g. Sheffield's 'Homefinder'). There is more guidance on this [here](#).



Key learning and action points on... **dealing with social housing applicants**

- ✓ **make sure staff have up-to-date guidance on eligibility**
- ✓ **ensure training takes account of migrants' housing needs**
- ✓ **adapt services to deal with the barriers that migrants face**
- ✓ **make it easy for migrants to access your housing register or choice-based lettings**
- ✓ **make links with migrant support organisations to ensure information gets out into communities**
- ✓ **be transparent about your policies and their results**

Part Two – What you can do if you...

7 ...manage housing

Landlords need to know the profile of residents living in their stock so as to be able to adapt their services and respond to needs.

Migrants may have particular support needs. Landlords should recognise migrants as one of the potentially vulnerable groups that they house.

Know who lives in your stock

As well as knowing about the general population in the areas where they work (see Chapter 5), good landlords are aware of the changing profile of their tenants, find out about their needs and adapt services accordingly. A range of **customer insight and profiling methods** are available which show how to combine existing data sources with new ones, to get the data you

require. It is important that these are established in ways which identify migrant groups and their needs. They should take account of possible problems in doing this: for example, nationality questions may not identify Somali residents (who may be EU citizens) or Roma (who may be, say, Czech Republic citizens).

Some housing organisations have sponsored research into migrant housing needs.



Practice example

Karin HA's research into the Somali Community

Karin is a Somali-focused HA which undertook a **survey** into the housing needs of the Somali community.

It revealed that only 12% found their housing to be satisfactory and less than one third had a home big enough for them (one family of eight shared a two-bedroom house). Karin described the results as representing an 'emergency' for Somalis in north and east London.

Assess needs and develop support

Information you collect on tenants should enable you to identify support needs, including those among migrant households. Bear in mind that many refugees entering social housing will have had no experience of managing a tenancy in the UK and will have had issues like utility bills dealt

with for them in UKBA asylum accommodation. As asylum processing is speeded up, new refugees may only have been in the UK a very short time. A lot of Supporting People funding for refugees has disappeared, so landlords have to be imaginative about ways to fill this gap.

On the next page there are three examples.



Practice examples

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) has many Somali tenants who are more likely to be in rent arrears. Tenants did not trust housing officers, and low literacy levels and poor English mean they cannot read leaflets, so do not benefit from financial inclusion work. They often fall into debt but don't ask for help.

THH works with two Somali organisations, the Ocean Somali Community Organisation (**OSCA**) and the Somali Integration Team (SIT) who focus on women's issues. An OSCA volunteer was resourced by THH to help with rent arrears discussions. This has prevented evictions and reduced arrears. THH has also developed 'talking leaflets' in Somali.

In April 2011, a Somali Engagement Officer was seconded from SIT and helps THH to address barriers to services. Work has included focus groups and recruiting a Somali resident to the Diversity Working Group and Residents Panel. One issue has been helping tenants to bid for larger homes; this has helped some households move. THH has also supported free ESOL courses for female Somali tenants.

Gofal, Cardiff is a leading mental health and wellbeing charity. 'Our Business' is a collaboration between Gofal and four HAs – Taff, Cadwyn, United Welsh and Cardiff Community. It addresses social and financial exclusion for unemployed tenants who need more help than can be offered by housing management/tenancy support staff. Working to a mental health and wellbeing model, the project provides support in access to education, training, volunteering and paid employment.

To date it has benefited 184 clients from the partner HAs, of which 26 are refugees. It adapted to support refugees as their needs emerged, especially people needing language support to access other opportunities. Language training is given by a volunteer and clients can also access the 'Switched On' project which trains in English for computers. These are open to refugees and asylum seekers generally: so far 19 have taken part.

Contact: Alessa Hill 02920 440197

Home Learning Project, run by Metropolitan over the last four years, provides trained ESOL tutors for hard-to-reach refugees in Greater London. Volunteer tutors teach in the learner's home, once a week for at least six months. The project also trains refugees as volunteer learning mentors, to help learners continue to practice their English and access community activities such as volunteering or other classes. In the last two years, 48 volunteer ESOL tutors and refugee learning mentors have given tuition and support to 53 refugees.

Contact: [Rosie Ward](#) at Metropolitan.



Key learning and action points on... managing social housing

- ✓ **collect information about the profile of everyone living in your stock**
- ✓ **use this to identify recent migrants and their needs**
- ✓ **adapt management methods or services to address those needs alongside those of others**
- ✓ **look at examples of how different landlords respond to migrants' housing needs**

8 ...give advice on housing and homelessness

Encouraging migrants to use advice services can help to widen their housing options and to apply for social housing if eligible.

Homelessness prevention work can help migrants in the private rented sector to sustain their tenancies.

Why advice and information are important

Many studies (such as [this one](#) of Central and East European migrants) have shown that new arrivals often had poor information about conditions in the UK before they came, and get inadequate advice after they arrive. Lack of information applies to a range of issues such as rights at work and access to services as well as accommodation.

Since the EU expansion in 2004, new advice sources such as [myUKinfo](#) have been established, often in a range of migrant languages, but lack of awareness of rights and services remains a significant problem.

Make sure that services are welcoming to migrants

Services that help people understand their housing options need to reach all parts of the community, especially those (not only migrants) with lower awareness or unrealistic expectations.

Because many new migrants do not use formal services, some landlords offer alternatives that are more attractive – e.g. are near where migrants live, have staff with cultural and language skills, or are linked with MRCOs.



Practice example

Horton HA's Bevan House in Bradford provides homelessness and related assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. It became the one-stop service for newly recognised refugees as part of the HACT Accommodate project. It is user-friendly, staffed by people from different nationalities and housed in the same building as an open-access health centre for homeless people. It offers move-on support and links to other services such as ESOL.

Include migrants in homelessness prevention work

Migrants are particularly vulnerable to homelessness: the DCLG [family homelessness survey](#) found that one in ten adults in families accepted as homeless by local authorities had at some stage been asylum seekers. Migrants also form a significant proportion of non-priority homeless cases. Reasons include:

- most migrants start off in the private rented sector, often in insecure lettings
- asylum seekers who gain refugee status leave UKBA accommodation with a maximum 28 days notice (often much less in practice)
- migrant workers may lose their jobs and hence their accommodation.

Part Two – What you can do if you...

...give advice on housing and homelessness

Problems may be further complicated by migrants having unclear documentation (see guidance [here](#)), unawareness on the part of housing agencies or changing benefit arrangements.

Migrant workers

DCLG homelessness prevention initiatives include deposit schemes for private lettings and other ways of helping migrants as well as settled people. But prevention often focuses on issues such as chaotic lifestyles, substance abuse, etc. whereas for migrants the issue may be much simpler, i.e. loss of job = loss of accommodation.

This suggests a shift in focus for prevention work. Co-ordinated action between agencies could be planned so that local mechanisms are in place to respond to events like factory closures (see box) or to enforcement action against multi-occupied properties which results in loss of accommodation.



Practice example

Hyndburn BC led a **co-ordinated response** between several agencies to the threatened redundancy of 200 migrant workers in a local factory, housed in private lettings, to minimise the resultant homelessness.

Codes of guidance on homelessness in England, Wales and Scotland all identify refugees as a vulnerable group needing special attention, especially when they gain refugee status and leave UKBA asylum accommodation (see previous page). Until recently, the Refugee Integration and Employment Service provided basic advice about employment and wider issues (including housing) to newly accepted refugees, but it has now ended. Refugees can get limited help in several cities through the UKBA **One Stop Shop** system (currently provided by refugee and voluntary organisations, but due to be retendered) or from voluntary agencies and migrant support organisations. There is also a need for housing

benefit staff to understand the documentation that shows refugee status.

Some housing providers have focused on the needs of refugees leaving UKBA asylum accommodation.



Practice examples

Metropolitan's Staying Put project ran in the East Midlands where Metropolitan had asylum accommodation contracts (since ended). The project operated until late 2008 and aimed to meet the housing needs of 240 families who received positive decisions and would have faced leaving asylum accommodation at short notice. Metropolitan provided a delayed eviction scheme, housing the families on short leases for around six months until local authorities were able to rehouse them.

In Nottingham, where it leased 62 council properties, it handed them back with the former asylum seekers as tenants. As a result, all the families either 'stayed put' or made only one move to get into permanent housing.

Contact: commercial manager [Les Cloughley](#)

Glasgow housing associations' agreement with Scottish Refugee Council

Four community-based Glasgow HAs have signed partnership agreements with the Scottish Refugee Council which allow SRC to directly nominate clients to them. In exchange, SRC shares information on vulnerability and support needs which should lead to a suitable allocation, and helps to set up appropriate support with specific agencies. The agreements also cover wider awareness-raising sessions on housing/support needs of refugees, work shadowing opportunities, other training needs and helping review policies that affect refugees.

Here is [a case study of a rehoused refugee](#).

Part Two – What you can do if you...

...give advice on housing and homelessness

Support wider advice services

Housing organisations can support wider advice services for migrants. Here are three examples.



Practice examples

GOSIP (Govanhill Social Inclusion Project) is critical in the support which Govanhill HA in Glasgow offers to ethnic minority tenants, housing applicants, resident owners and private sector tenants. It handles around 2,000 enquiries each year, nearly one-third from private tenants, and assists clients with anything required to sustain their settlement in the area. The team are bilingual and utilise professional telephone and face-to-face interpreting services to communicate with diverse communities which speak over 50 languages, including a large Roma community. Govanhill's membership of the scheme 'Happy to Translate' allows them to overcome communication difficulties which may occur.

Contact: [Alan McDonald](#), Housing Services Manager.

META, Norfolk is an advice service for migrant workers in Thetford provided by Keystone Development Trust. Thetford has a big EU migrant community, working in farming and food processing. META (Mobile Europeans Taking Action) is a partnership with Breckland Council, which has staff based there part of the time. It is a general advice service and about 5% of inquiries are housing-related. Several staff are from the migrant community.

West End Refugee Service is a voluntary body aiming to fill some of the gaps in statutory and other services in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Examples are a clothing bank, a library service, and a befriending scheme. The centre is a good place for statutory housing services to reach out: an equalities advisor from Your Homes Newcastle runs a weekly surgery on housing issues.



Key learning and action points on... advice and homelessness

- ✓ **make sure services you offer are migrant-friendly**
- ✓ **consider specific advice services to meet migrant needs**
- ✓ **look at ways of preventing homelessness among newly approved refugees and/or migrant workers who lose their jobs**
- ✓ **check out ways to support wider advice services**

9 ...work in neighbourhoods

The impact of migration is most keenly felt at neighbourhood level. New migrants often bring changes – a greater mix of nationalities, faiths and languages, and people meeting unfamiliar cultures. Change can bring benefits but has led to tensions in some places.

It is vital to know how migration affects neighbourhoods, encourage positive interaction between people and know what to look out for in (and the importance of) early intervention to reduce tensions. This needs to be set in the context of recent government policy changes.

Recognise the importance of neighbourhood-level work

Social housing providers are often the strongest organisations in the places where they have housing stock. Their tenants want to live in a decent neighbourhood free of tensions and of course they want to maintain the value of their stock – both are good reasons for playing a leading, partnering and facilitative role in supporting new migration at neighbourhood level.

Social landlords have advantages: a solid business base and a secure and rising income from rents. Of course, there is enormous pressure to deliver more housing and to improve services. But landlords can still do things that the rest of the statutory sector cannot now easily do. There are other reasons why a neighbourhood focus is important:

- Migration often affects places which are unused to it – often poor areas where housing is cheaper and jobs may be scarce. Some places may easily accept new migrants but others – for many reasons – may not.
- An area's reputation affects the desirability of its housing, including social housing. Migration has benefits but at the same time may add to (or be seen as adding to) the issues affecting this reputation.
- Myths and misunderstandings can and must be tackled at local level. For example, houses

sold through the right to buy might be bought by private landlords and let to migrants: local people may still see them as 'council houses' and accuse migrants of 'queue-jumping'.

- Neighbourhood approaches with migrant communities often give good results (look at the [Accommodate](#) and [JRF Bradford](#) programmes).
- Government policy [Creating the conditions for integration](#) calls for 'local areas to take the lead'.

Housing providers can support the kinds of projects described in this chapter, take initiatives and fill gaps.

Develop a wider neighbourhood approach

Several examples throughout the guide show the importance of community development work in addressing many different issues in an area, only some of which may relate to new migrants. Marilyn Taylor, in [Signposts to Community Development](#), says that community development is:

'...concerned with change and growth – with giving people more power over the changes that are taking place around them, the policies that affect them and the services they use.'

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Community development may not necessarily be led by housing providers, but they need to be linked into an organisation which can play this role and ensure that the strengths within a community are identified and mobilised to address needs and create a better environment for all.

Community development can identify when help is needed to bring people together – for example, if new arrivals in an area need some basic support. Part of this will involve working with migrant support organisations as well as with tenants' and residents' groups (see Chapter 4).

Many housing providers already have a strong neighbourhood focus, for example acting as or supporting 'community anchors' or taking the lead in neighbourhood management, as in the [HACT Together for Communities](#) project. Here are some important principles which the Network has noted:

- *Get stuck in.* There are plenty of examples of ways that housing providers can work with new migrants and their organisations to strengthen whole communities (see examples here and in Chapter 4).
- *Understand the local context.* Methods tried elsewhere may or may not work in a different neighbourhood. Build up your ground knowledge before you start – including identifying and finding out about migrant communities, what needs they have and what contributions they can make (see Chapter 5).
- *Benefit all communities.* Neighbourhood approaches should produce programmes or facilities aimed at everyone and ideally co-designed and possibly co-owned or produced by everyone. Shared spaces of different kinds can play an important role (see above). HACT's [Communities R Us](#) project provided a framework for bringing people together to

determine priorities and jointly develop initiatives and found in some places that this worked best at 'street' level.

- *Partnerships are vital.* Any deprived neighbourhood has a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and probably community-based groups working in it. Find out what is already happening and try to build on it (see Chapter 3).
- *Identify and support new arrivals.* Recognise that they may well be very isolated, particularly non-English speakers and women. Devise ways to help new arrivals overcome isolation and help open up access to or possibly even invest in learning English because access to good quality, low-cost courses is increasingly difficult (see examples on pages 31 and 32).
- *Basic neighbourhood management is key.* Little will be achieved if neighbourhoods have 'crime and grime' problems – make an early impact by tackling them.
- *Time is needed.* It takes time to achieve results, especially with migrant communities who are often preoccupied with issues like jobs and immigration status. Tackling tensions and building trust and interaction cannot be done quickly.

Take account of government changes that affect poor neighbourhoods

Bear in mind the wider pressures on poor neighbourhoods at the current time, regardless of any effects of migration, such as:

- cuts in funding leading to withdrawal of 'softer' services or community facilities that assist in achieving integration
- more competition for available resources
- housing benefit changes affecting many areas where migrants live

Part Two – What you can do if you...

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- changes in UKBA asylum accommodation contracts towards using private suppliers affecting the integration work that was linked to earlier asylum contracts.

At the same time the coalition government's policy on integration aims to **create the conditions** for integration through localism and the 'Big Society'. This brings some opportunities, although often without statutory finance being available:

- *localism and the Big Society approach* – the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum have set out the **potential** for MRCOs to be part of this
- *some government initiatives* provide opportunities – for example, community budgets, community organisers, the community right to own assets, the **Near Neighbours** programme
- *encouraging volunteers* – part of the Big Society but also, given that many people struggle to get full-time work, projects could encourage volunteering or try to continue previous volunteer programmes.

Look at the impact of new migration on neighbourhoods

Most new migrants arrive with limited resources. They may move to a neighbourhood because of advantages such as being close to work or offering cheaper housing, or because they have no choice (e.g. asylum seekers provided with accommodation by government on a no-choice basis). They may bring benefits – such as helping to regenerate a declining area by increased demand for facilities like shops and schools. After a relatively short time, some migrants will set up shops and businesses in areas previously nearing dereliction. But often both new arrivals and settled people may feel extra pressure on facilities and services. In some rural areas numbers of new arrivals have been extremely high compared to the local settled population.

A wide range of local studies have recorded the kinds of change which might be expected from recent migration and some of the more negative changes are suggested in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1 – Potential neighbourhood stresses linked to new migration	
Rapid change in who lives in a neighbourhood	Extra numbers can put pressure on neighbourhood facilities, especially if they're already under pressure or affected by service cuts. In some neighbourhoods population 'churn', increased by migration, affects public services such as schools.
Change in nationalities living in a neighbourhood	Effects range from new arrivals simply being 'unfamiliar' neighbours, to changes in local facilities because of new demands or language barriers. These can present problems for new arrivals, long-established residents and service providers.
Effects on local housing stock/property market	New arrivals typically access the poorest and cheapest housing, usually in the PRS (including through asylum accommodation contracts). This can intensify competition for available lettings and affect rent levels. New arrivals may tolerate overcrowding or sharing in order to pay lower rents, leading to over-use of properties, with spill-over effects into the neighbourhood. Caravan parks previously used by holiday-makers might be used to accommodate migrants.



Figure 9.1 – Potential neighbourhood stresses linked to new migration – continued	
Changes in household types	New arrivals are typically younger, single people needing different types of accommodation. This may lead to more conversions of 'family houses' to HMOs.
Effects on jobs	Especially if employers welcome migrant workers, there can be worries about the effects on jobs for local residents who may be poorly-equipped to compete for work. Competition may be more intense in the current economic situation.
Destitution	Some kinds of new arrival may not qualify for official help and become destitute (see Chapter 11). This can be a neighbourhood problem if there are concentrations of people with no jobs/no money in one area.
Environmental problems	Many new migrants are unaware of local custom and practice, ranging from not putting bins out at the right time to driving without a licence, and thereby add to the general 'crime and grime' problems which often afflict poor neighbourhoods. This may be exacerbated by intensified use of previously single-family properties.
Crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)	There is little evidence that new migrants are more likely to be involved in crime, but individuals may be victims of hate crime. Levels of perceived or actual ASB may grow, however: for example, migrants leaving/arriving home at night time because of shift working, alcohol issues, etc.
Community tensions	Community tensions may result but are not inevitable: there are plenty of examples either of there being no/little conflict or of the conflict being successfully managed and reduced or removed.

Sources: [Neighbourhood experiences of new immigration](#) (2006); [Crossing Borders](#) (2007); local studies reviewed for the HACT-CIH [Opening Doors](#) Project.

The rest of this chapter (as well as other sections of the guide) is about how housing providers can tackle stresses and bring about positive change in their neighbourhoods.

Tackle tensions and promote interaction

Many neighbourhoods absorb new arrivals with few problems but sometimes there are tensions. Engagement at neighbourhood level is vital in

tackling prejudice, challenging myths, etc.; any campaign to do this which doesn't include a neighbourhood focus can backfire or be counter-productive.

Among the examples below (see box on the next page), community-based work in Newcastle intended to give 'early warning' of potential conflict led to publication of national [guidance](#). The Dudley project, which began by tackling isolation and racism, has broadened to get more migrants involved in tenants' and residents' associations.



Practice examples

Engage for Change project in Walker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

In 2009 there was a racist attack on a migrant in the Walker area, which has a lot of social housing and houses a number of asylum seekers. Many residents were shocked at the attack and wanted to respond positively. In January 2010, community groups launched 'Engage for Change', an initiative exploring the positive things residents do to resolve conflicts and relieve stress on family and community relationships. In a related 'Images of Change' project residents used photography to show and talk about the changes in the area. Over 100 people attended an Engage for Change workshop, and 27 residents attended workshops on handling conflict. These give people the confidence and tools to manage future local tensions.

Contact: [Newcastle Conflict Resolution Network](#)

Bradford Community Forums is a JRF-funded [project](#) which tested the value of such forums in bringing together different migrant and settled communities. It found that participants valued the forums and improved their understanding of other communities, although there is a limit to what can be achieved from time-limited interactions.

Dudley's 5 Estates Project

The idea for a project working with migrant communities and local residents came in response to an incident after the London bombings in 2005 when a Muslim tenant was attacked.

One resident, active in the local tenants' association, intervened in the incident and helped start the project along with Dudley's Centre for Equality & Diversity in 2009. It began on two estates and when funding was obtained from Barrow Cadbury Trust it expanded to become the 5 Estates Project. In 2010 the project employed a development worker to work alongside volunteers from the tenants' and residents' associations and from the various migrant communities. The project is supported by Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations and by Dudley Council.

One aim was to reduce social isolation among refugees and asylum seekers (Dudley was a dispersal area). This grew into work with migrants generally. Working methods are simple but effective. A range of events are held – social occasions and training courses or conferences, or a combination. The worker and volunteers make contact with people to get them along, often simply by approaching people in the street.

Events work by bringing people together and breaking down barriers, whether through seminars or skittle evenings. They are planned by mixed groups of residents and often tackle difficult issues such as what support asylum seekers receive and why. The project has fostered better relationships between communities and more positive attitudes to migrants.

The project is now developing more specific objectives such as raising the proportion of people from a migrant background who are on TRA committees and engaging at a strategic level with all 26 Dudley TRAs.

Contact: [Kenneth Rodney](#) at [CfED](#)

Part Two – What you can do if you...

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Create shared spaces

Any neighbourhood has lots of shared spaces – shops, school playgrounds, post offices, parks. They can be places for different people to meet – or be sites of tension or conflict. There is **guidance** (with case studies, including of new

migrants living in Hull) of ways of using shared spaces to promote integration.

New neighbourhood facilities could be built around mixed activities that break down divisions between communities. Here are three housing-led examples.



Practice examples

Bolton has six **Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centres** aimed at sustaining communities, promoting learning and employment, and combating crime. The centres bring together people from different communities within a neighbourhood or estate and provide specific services such as ESOL, driving courses and healthy eating guidance. One centre has a specific migrant worker integration project.

Old Ford HA in Tower Hamlets has worked to bring together different communities in an ethnically mixed area which still has a large, traditional white community. Work with young people is based in community centres (several managed by residents) and a youth centre. Services include women-only sports sessions, which are sensitive to the needs of Muslim young women without being specific to one faith or community. They also have a confidence-building programme which is based on young people's use of mobile phones – part of the training is to collect and discuss the opinions of other young people.

Contact: [Christine Hevey](#)

Barton Hill Settlement is a community resource centre for part of the diverse inner city area of Bristol. The trustees, staff and volunteers are mainly local people, including migrants. Its **Barton Hill Together project** aimed to address issues of community tension occurring in and around a tower block where there had been rapid growth in numbers of Somali tenants. A range of initiatives brought the communities together and improved understanding, leading to a reduction in problems and to a significant increase in people from different backgrounds saying they 'get on well' together.

Tackle 'crime and grime'

New arrivals are often blamed for problems in poor neighbourhoods. Of course if there is a sudden increase in multi-occupation this is bound to affect an area, especially if houses are poorly managed. Yet the JRF **Bradford programme** found these concerns are often shared between communities and affect everyone.

Two key priorities are to:

- ensure that everyday services like street cleaning or graffiti removal work properly and, if necessary, at the more intense level needed in a densely populated neighbourhood with frequent changes
- tackle specific problems in simple or imaginative ways (for example, chewing of 'khat' by groups of Somali men in a neighbourhood in Harrow was dealt with through local mediation.)

Part Two – What you can do if you...

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Below is an example of service priorities being changed.



Practice examples

Northwards community wardens, Manchester

Northwards (the ALMO) has ten wardens: two speak other community languages – one Urdu and the other both Czech and Polish. Neither was employed for their language skills, but they are helpful to explain basic issues that can cause difficulties, for example, about bin collections and other services for new residents.

Originally, Northwards wardens covered some terraced housing areas where the warden with Czech and Polish was also able to mediate in problems such as late night parties and under-age drinking (a Polish man buying alcohol for local teenagers).

Contact: [Robin Lawler](#), Chief Executive



Key learning and action points on... **neighbourhood working**

- ✓ **find out which neighbourhoods have been influenced by migration and in what ways**
- ✓ **work out what you can do, based on the characteristics of each neighbourhood and what others – including people in the community – can contribute**
- ✓ **review the options and examples in this guide**
- ✓ **ensure that any approaches involve and benefit everyone in an area, including settled communities**
- ✓ **consider how you can make current government policy work in your neighbourhoods**

10 ...work with private rented housing

Most recent migrants find accommodation in the private rented sector along with other vulnerable groups.

Housing agencies need to understand the issues about migrant use of the sector and how to address them.

Examples of successful interventions to benefit migrants and other vulnerable tenants could be adopted more widely.

More detail is given in the Network's paper [UK Migrants and the Private Rented Sector](#).

Understand how migrants use the private rented sector

At least 75% of new arrivals in the UK in the last five years live in the private rented sector (PRS). Migrant workers often live in the worst quality houses and, in common with their neighbours, often suffer poor and exploitative conditions in the PRS, sometimes with health and fire risks in overcrowded or unsuitable private lettings, rooms being used in shifts, lack of privacy, etc. Migrant workers may tolerate poor conditions and be reluctant to complain, may have low expectations, have accommodation linked to their job, be intimidated or simply want to avoid spending more money than necessary on accommodation. Few use formal advice services.

Refugees and other longer-term migrants usually look for reasonable quality, secure accommodation from the start, as a base from which to integrate and re-establish their lives, find work, etc. Even if they are eligible for and would prefer social housing, the PRS is often a more realistic option. They are also likely to use local contacts, including migrant support organisations, to help them find housing.

The PRS is growing rapidly and is also changing, sometimes because of migration. For example in

Thetford, Norfolk, numbers of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) grew from 40 to over 400 in only four years as migrants moved to the area to work on local farms. Growth of the sector stretches the resources and control mechanisms available to local authorities at a time when budgets are under intense pressure.

Understand the effects on neighbourhoods

Concentrations of migrant workers, especially in HMOs, can lead to tensions. Noise nuisance can be linked to higher densities or early and late shift working. Badly managed HMOs might be a fire or safety risk to neighbouring properties. While these may be similar to issues in (for example) student areas, they may happen in what were 'quiet' neighbourhoods and lead to resentment or conflicts.

Use of the PRS by longer-term or permanent migrants may be different, concentrated in different areas and generating fewer problems. But it can still have an impact on the local housing market, affecting rents and possibly the opportunities for first-time buyers to find a property to buy.

Part Two – What you can do if you...

...work with private rented housing

Because of the importance of private renting, the Network published a policy and practice report [UK Migrants and the Private Rented Sector](#), endorsed by a range of national bodies. It describes migrants' use of the PRS, the problems that arise and the obstacles to tackling them. It suggests a range of actions and examples to show what can be done. It makes recommendations to government about how these could be more widely promoted.

Here is a summary of actions and some of the examples. Read the full report for more information.

Act to promote better conditions within the PRS

The Network believes that most private landlords want to provide good accommodation at a fair price. The challenge is to get all landlords to do this and exclude those who won't. The Network wants councils, social landlords and the private sector to act together. A range of initiatives have been shown to work and they include:

- *Strengthening the role of environmental health officers* – they play a key role in the PRS and often have greatest knowledge of issues and

landlords, sometimes taking the lead in tackling poor housing for migrants (see East Sussex example). However, action to tackle poor conditions may be under-resourced or not adequately linked to wider housing strategies.

- *Making creative use of HMO licensing schemes* – such as the Goole example (below).
- *Consider setting up bond, rent guarantee or deposit schemes* – they can help migrants and refugees with no initial income or savings to obtain lettings, as well as helping other vulnerable groups.
- *Establish local accreditation or lettings schemes* – or other ways to promote access to better quality PRS lettings. There are many examples (see Doncaster), but those which can eventually become self-financing are more likely to be viable. Schemes should be accessible to migrants as well as to settled residents.
- *Consider private sector leasing or access schemes* – with funding from the Oak Foundation and European Refugee Fund, [HACT](#) is supporting the setting up and development of four projects that benefit refugees, building on its extensive experience in this area.



Practice examples

East Sussex Strategic Partnership (in Hastings and Eastbourne) produced a [good practice guide and toolkit](#) with associated training about migrant housing conditions in the PRS, designed for staff responsible for monitoring and enforcement. There is also a teaching kit for use with migrants, designed to help them learn English and at the same time encourage them to discuss housing issues and how they might go about obtaining better conditions.

Goole HMO licensing scheme responds to an increase in two-storey houses being converted to HMOs, mainly due to the estimated 3-5,000 migrant workers now living in Goole. These were outside the standard licensing scheme that applies to three storeys and above. Not all were well run, the tenants were more at risk and there was some neighbourhood nuisance: so the council applied for an additional licensing scheme. Evidence from council departments, police, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and others confirmed the need. The scheme began in January 2011.

Contact: [Peter Jackson](#)



Part Two – What you can do if you...

...work with private rented housing

St Leger Homes, Doncaster is the ALMO that manages Doncaster's council housing. It has a [Private Landlords Register](#) and provides a management service to landlords who have renovation grants, agree to sign up to a 'silver' or 'gold' maintenance scheme and keep their rents within local LHA levels. The aim is to provide better, more affordable PRS accommodation.

HACT's Accommodate PRS project is being set up in four areas:

- A private sector leasing (PSL) scheme led by Bolton at Home aims to become self-financing and includes a refugee-specific element (with a target of 150 refugee households over three years).
- Causeway Housing's PRS access scheme to assist 70 households in Haringey and Enfield. The refugee element includes links with MRCOs.
- Brushstrokes – working with Sandwell Homes/Sandwell MBC to deliver 60 units. It is mainly a PRS access scheme but is looking at the feasibility of a PSL scheme.
- The Single Homeless Project and Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL) work with East Thames HA to deliver 40 units – a private sector access scheme for refugees.

Consider wider approaches

Some schemes provide housing specifically focussed on migrants who might otherwise look to the PRS. For example (and see boxes below)

- *Foyers* can be particularly welcoming to migrants, for example young refugees whose cases are recently approved.

- *Self-help housing* – derelict and empty properties can provide migrants with self-help opportunities.

The government's [Empty Homes Programme](#) is a potential source of finance: it is intended to deliver 3,300 affordable homes by 2015, through re-use of empty property, and is open to community-based groups.



Practice examples

Metropolitan's foyer in Sheffield provides temporary housing for 20 refugees aged 18-35 and offers housing/welfare/financial advice and training opportunities to young refugees and accession-state migrants, currently funded from the Big Lottery. Around 200 young people (the majority refugees) benefitted in the first year from the advice/training services and many of these were successfully referred on from the foyer to mainstream services.

Contact: foyer manager [Marion Boyd](#)

Leeds Canopy project renovates void properties using volunteer labour including people from migrant communities. Some of the 'self-helpers' then have the opportunity to become tenants.

More details: self-help-housing.org and a HCA [case study of Canopy](#).



Key learning and action points on... **the private rented sector**

- ✓ **be aware of recent migrants' use of the sector in your areas and of the issues that arise for migrants and for neighbourhoods**
- ✓ **ensure that their needs and those of other potentially vulnerable tenants in the sector are built into your strategies**
- ✓ **consider providing or adapting services which take account of those needs, as in the examples here**
- ✓ **look at wider approaches to providing accommodation for those who might otherwise go into the PRS**

11 ...intend to help destitute migrants

Migrants can become destitute for various reasons and housing bodies often believe they are legally constrained from providing housing or support to help.

Housing providers should understand why destitution occurs, what issues it presents and how housing agencies can legitimately help and could help further.

Why destitution is everyone's problem

Being destitute means having nowhere to live and no proper income. This is devastating for those concerned and creates a burden on family or friends who try to help. It can become a neighbourhood issue: rough sleeping or encampments can become a serious local problem.

The Network believes that destitution cannot be brushed under the carpet: destitute migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and concentrated destitution can affect community relations.

Ideally, there should be changes in government policy, but housing providers – within legal constraints – can still do a lot to help.

Understand why migrants can become destitute

Migrants can be a significant proportion of destitute people in any one place. Homeless Link's [survey](#) found that over half of homelessness agencies nationally see migrants who are sleeping rough. [Broadway's CHAIN](#) system shows that half of rough sleepers in London are non-UK nationals (around a quarter from Eastern Europe).

Lack of a 'safety net' can be the main reason why migrants end up on the streets. Homelessness prevention work may not be aimed at migrants (see Chapter 8) so they slip through this 'net' too. Migrants who sleep rough can develop other problems such as social drinking (perhaps in groups formed for their own safety), begging, health issues, resorting to 'survival' shoplifting, etc. (although recent [research](#) suggests such multiple problems are less common than among non-migrant homeless people).

Destitution mainly affects three groups:

- *Asylum seekers* who lose support from UKBA cannot access social housing or welfare benefits and most cannot legally work. Applicants pursuing appeals, or who cannot be safely returned to their first country, may be offered limited 'hard case' support. The only other option is voluntary return (see below) but some countries are unsafe to return to and many people do not feel able to take this option, for example because they have been away for a long time. Some have very complex immigration cases and cannot be returned but cannot get support either.
- *Migrant workers* from the EU often do not know much about the UK or how to obtain work, may be exploited or have language difficulties. Destitution among EU migrants became a serious problem because many were ineligible for welfare benefits if they lost

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their job. In May 2011 nationals from the first eight accession states gained the same entitlements as other EU nationals, although eligibility still depends on being 'habitually resident' (see www.housing-rights.info).

- *Undocumented migrants* or people who have overstayed their visas do not have welfare entitlements. Most may be working illegally, earning less than the minimum wage, or be exploited in other ways (such as sex work); only a small proportion are likely to be destitute. People who are trafficked into the UK may be promised work and/or papers and then face the reality of being undocumented and being forced into work or prostitution without knowing how to get help.

Know about support services

Here are some ways to help (for accommodation, see below):

- *Reconnection.* [Refugee Action](#) helps asylum seekers whose applications have not been approved, and undocumented migrants, to return to their first countries. Central and Eastern Europeans can be helped through [Routes Home](#) or [Barka](#).
- *Challenging non-eligibility.* Refusal of welfare benefits can be challenged if the migrant appears eligible. Guidance is available [here](#) and help for European nationals is available through the [Aire Centre](#).
- *Employment.* For EU nationals and some asylum seekers who have the right to work, the best solution might be help to find a job. [Barka](#) supports Central and Eastern Europeans to find jobs. [Thames Reach](#) has training and employment services and more services can be found through [Homeless Link](#).
- *Special cases.* Where children are involved, there is domestic violence or a migrant has care needs, help may be available even if

there is no eligibility for welfare benefits. Guidance is available [here](#).

- *Hosting.* These schemes place destitute migrants in households who provide free lodging and food (e.g. the Birch hosting network in Birmingham – birchnetwork@gmail.com).
- *Food and subsistence-only help.* Many charities provide soup runs or small subsistence payments (see below).

Help provide accommodation for destitute migrants

Destitute migrants are ineligible for housing benefit or for accommodation from the local authority or (through a nomination) from a housing association. So many projects use a building or house(s) supplied by charities or churches, including HAs, at a notional rent. They then rely on volunteers and charitable grants to run them and – usually – provide food or subsistence. A list of schemes for people with no accommodation is provided by [NACCOM](#). In Scotland, the [Refugee Survival Trust](#) gives cash grants to destitute asylum seekers.

Housing bodies can help set up such schemes (see box on the next page). [Praxis](#) is launching a scheme for destitute migrants in London, partly as an outcome from the Network, supported by the Oak Foundation and Metropolitan Migration Foundation. It plans to use accommodation supplied by housing associations.

Homelessness prevention funding from DCLG finances initiatives such as [No Second Night Out](#): it could be explored as a route to assisting destitute migrants alongside other client groups.

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...intend to help destitute migrants



Practice examples

The Ferry Project, Wisbech was formed by church members to help homeless single adults in the Fenland area. It became part of Luminus Group in 2006; Luminus provides back-office services.

The project opened a Night Shelter in January 2011 for destitute migrant workers ineligible for housing benefit. This meant they could not use the project's other hostels and associated support.

Accommodation is free. The shelter only accepts local referrals – including from the police, the council and the local shopping centre. There is a 28-night maximum stay. Staff help residents find alternative housing or reconnection where appropriate. Some are helped into jobs or treatment for alcohol problems.

Contact: Keith Smith, Director 01945 429301

The Hope Projects in Birmingham work with destitute asylum seekers and some other migrants.

They began in 2003. In addition to Hope Housing (see below), there are projects which make small cash grants, which help mothers and children, and which provide counselling for asylum seekers and refugees.

Hope Housing provides emergency accommodation through six properties made available at peppercorn rents by social landlords. Two further properties are funded by the Primary Care Trust for pregnant women and new mothers. All residents are supported by fortnightly grants and pay no rent. Funding from grant-making trusts covers running costs.

In 2010/11 Hope accommodated 97 adults and 21 children, from a wide range of nationalities, staying only a few days or for several months.

Learn from the Hope Housing example

The Network was impressed with Hope's experience:

- It developed from a partnership of independent local organisations working with asylum seekers, who bring a range of expertise and supporter networks including (importantly) immigration advice, and who learnt to work together over a four-year period. This gave a confident basis from which to launch an accommodation project with an initial £20,000 of seed-corn funding, although the partners had little experience of housing work.
- They benefited from established contacts with local housing associations to obtain properties,

e.g. with association board members, the chair of a local PCT, contacts in the local archdiocese, etc.

- The project relied at first on the commitment of volunteers and of workers from the partner organisations – particularly when it had no paid staff.
- They were willing to 'take a leap in the dark': embark on a pioneering project with little experience and no guarantee of success.

Co-ordinate local approaches

Destitution can become a serious local problem. Peterborough provides a possibly unique example of a co-ordinated local response.

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...intend to help destitute migrants



Practice examples

Peterborough council staff work closely with the voluntary sector and other statutory agencies to identify rough sleepers and find accommodation, support or reconnection. Many rough sleepers are eastern Europeans. The approach is now co-ordinated:

- a fortnightly meeting of partners discusses individuals and approaches
- new rough sleepers are identified at 22 city locations – many voluntary or faith centre points
- all locations promote reconnection services
- a laminated map shows, in diagrams and photos, all shelter/support services
- a ‘buddying’ system pairs faith group volunteers with council rough sleeper workers trying to find and connect with rough sleepers
- voluntary sector support is linked in: e.g. the Salvation Army provide haircuts, clothes and a suitcase for those who want to return home and volunteer opportunities for those seeking work.

Communication is key: the homeless service has recruited bilingual workers and given existing staff basic language courses.

A PRS officer (from eastern Europe) works with up to 20 rough sleepers with additional support needs who are eligible for benefits. She finds rooms in a shared house and fast tracks benefit claims. She sees individuals and landlords weekly; individuals learn what is expected of tenants in a shared house and the behaviour expected in the wider community.

Contact: [Sarah Hebblethwaite](#)



Key learning and action points on... destitution

- ✓ **be aware of destitution in your area and whether it affects migrants**
- ✓ **learn about the main causes of destitution and types of help needed**
- ✓ **check what services already exist**
- ✓ **consider how you could link into and support these services or work with partners to begin new ones**

Part Two – What you can do if you...

...want to find out more

Apart from specific references in the guide, here are some of the main general sources of information and guidance on housing and migration.

Housing and Migration Network

The Network's other reports are [UK Migration: The leadership role of housing providers](#) (August 2011) and [UK Migrants and the Private Rented Sector](#) (February 2012).

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

JRF's [page](#) on the Network has links to its other research relevant to migrants and housing.

Metropolitan Migration Foundation

The [Metropolitan Migration Foundation](#) has been relaunched and its website has a small but growing collection of resources.

HACT

[HACT](#) has many resources on refugee and migrant housing issues. The [Accommodate](#) project fosters initiatives across England and Wales to improve housing conditions for refugees. [Success Factors: Making partnerships work](#) is based on the Accommodate experience. [Communities R Us](#) included three grassroots initiatives aimed at tackling tensions in places with new arrivals.

HACT and the Chartered Institute of Housing

HACT and [CIH](#) have had a number of joint initiatives leading to practical guidance, including the [Opening Doors](#) project and the [Housing Rights](#) website to guide new arrivals, advisers and housing providers through the complex rules.

CIH also publishes [Community Cohesion and Housing: A good practice guide](#) and [A Guide to Engaging Muslim Communities](#).

Audit Commission

The Commission's page on [Crossing Borders](#) contains the original report and case study material.

Building and Social Housing Foundation

Their [policy and practice](#) pages have resources on refugee and migrant worker housing.

Charities Evaluation Service

The CES guide to [Working with Refugee Community Organisations](#) is also relevant to working with migrant groups.

COSLA

COSLA's [Strategic Migration Partnership](#) in Scotland has a policy toolkit and also produces regular bulletins on migration issues.

Homeless Link

Homeless Link has [information](#) on housing entitlements and sources of help, especially for those who lose benefits and become destitute.

Integrating Cities

[Integrating Cities](#) is a European project offering toolkits on language courses, anti-discrimination policies and cultural diversity.

Local Government Association

The LGA published [A Resource Guide on Local Migration Statistics](#) and the earlier [Estimating the Scale and Impacts of Migration at Local Level](#).

Migration Observatory

The [Migration Observatory](#) has a range of briefing papers on the issues and data discussed in this chapter, all published no earlier than 2011, including one on Migrants and Housing.

Migrants' Rights Network

The [Migrants' Rights Network](#) publishes a weekly bulletin, carries news on migration and has a blog, Migration Pulse, which often covers housing and neighbourhood issues.

Picum

The [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants](#) has a range of information at European level.

Praxis

[Praxis](#) has various resources including a manual for people advising undocumented migrants.

Refugee Action and Refugee Council

[Refugee Action](#) and the [Refugee Council](#) both have resources about the asylum process, MRCOs, refugee integration and tackling myths about asylum.

Scottish Refugee Council

SRC publish [A Practitioner's Guide to Housing Refugees](#) which has detailed guidance on assessing support needs, tenancy sustainment and other issues.

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Housing and Migration Network membership

Chair: Julia Unwin CBE, Chief Executive, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

Paul Birtill, Director, Metropolitan Migration Foundation

Ann Branson, Divisional Director, Housing Strategy and Options, Leicester City Council

Richard Capie, former Director of Policy and Practice, Chartered Institute of Housing

Mary Carter (Secretariat), HACT Associate and Independent Consultant

Neil Coles, Housing Services Manager, Maidstone Borough Council

Jenny Edwards CBE, former Chief Executive, Homeless Link

Dr Azim El-Hassan, Independent Consultant and Community Leader, Sudan Research Group

Tim Finch, Director of Communications and former Head of Migration, Equalities and Citizenship Team, Institute for Public Policy Research

Michael Gelling OBE, Chair, Tenants and Residents Organisations of England

Gill Green, Independent Researcher, formerly at the Audit Commission

Nancy Kelley, Deputy Director, Policy and Research, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Nigel Lee, Private Landlord, former Councillor for Coventry City Council

Arten Llazari, Chief Executive, Refugee & Migrant Centre of the Black Country

Jon Lord OBE, Chief Executive, Bolton at Home

Sue Lukes, Independent Consultant; Director, MigrationWork CIC

Leonie McCarthy MBE, Social Inclusion Manager, Peterborough City Council

Tom Murtha, former Chief Executive, Midland Heart

Elahe Panahi, Director, Royal Docks Learning and Activity Centre

Bill Payne, former Chief Executive, Metropolitan

John Perry, Policy Adviser, Chartered Institute of Housing; HACT Associate

Heather Petch OBE, former Director, HACT and co-ordinator of the Housing and Migration Network

Vicky Stark CBE, Chief Executive, Look Ahead Housing and Care

Neil Stott, Chief Executive, Keystone Development Trust

Alona Tirzite, attended in an individual capacity

Rob Warm, former Regional Manager, Migration Yorkshire

Housing and migration

A UK guide to issues and solutions



HACT

Housing, people and communities

JRF JOSEPH
ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION



Metropolitan



Chartered Institute of Housing
Octavia House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JP