

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXTRAORDINARY EXECUTIVE MEETING**

Date: 14 July 2010

Subject: **South East Strategic Partnership for Migration**

Report of: Roy Millard, Partnership Manager



1. Purpose of the Paper

1.1 This paper is written to update SEEC on migration issues through the work of the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) hosted by SEEC since February 2010.

2. Background

- 2.1 The UK Border Agency provides 100% funding for the role through an Enabling Grant (until 2012) in each Government region to provide the full range of advisory, development and consultancy roles on local migrant issues throughout the UK.
- 2.2 SESPM fulfils this function in the South East with member organisations from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors providing the co-ordination and provision of advice, support and services for migrants.
- 2.3 The partnership provides a full picture of migration throughout the region drawing on a range of sources and is able to directly link into national fora, such as the National Migration Group and the LGA Task Group, providing the region with a strong voice to help influence and shape migration policy.
- 2.4 The Enabling Grant covers all the costs of the function and contributes towards agreed initiatives such as the SEEC Housing Conference and the establishment of a local Migrant Health Network across both Strategic Health Authorities.
- 2.5 Staffing comprises one full time Partnership Manager only, with some administrative support provided by Dover District Council.

3. The Main Issues in the South East

3.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Children Leaving Care

- 3.1.1 The financial impact is felt particularly by local authorities containing ports; Kent is the primary example with sea ports and the channel tunnel.
- 3.1.2 Grant reclaim rules do not allow local authorities to claim for those over 18 years but for whom a statutory responsibility exists under the Children Leaving Care Act. As a result there is a deficit to these authorities in meeting their statutory obligations.
- 3.1.3 UKBA provides support for those with a negative asylum claim for three months after leaving care to allow for the removal to take place. However local authorities are concerned removals take longer in many instances.
- 3.1.4 Local authorities are concerned that the cost of supporting children leaving care is higher than the basic support granted to Section 4 applicants.
- 3.1.5 The number of UASCs has decreased following the closure of the 'Jungle' in Calais, however an increase in females (some of whom are pregnant) is reported. It is too early to say if the closure will have a long term negative effect on the numbers.

3.2 Impact of Economic Migration from the EU Accession States

- 3.2.1 The allocation of National Insurance numbers shows the South East as receiving the highest number of Migrant Workers outside London.
- 3.2.2 However the rate of growth has slowed following the peak in 2007 and nationally net migration reduced markedly over the last year largely due to reductions in inflows from Eastern Europe and Poland in particular.
- 3.2.3 It is reported that although the number of new migrants is decreasing in the South East there is, however, little evidence to show existing migrants are returning. Southampton, for example, reports a growing population with births and joining family members.
- 3.2.4 Positive economic and social impact reported in the region includes filling labour shortages, especially in lower skilled/elementary occupations within 'migrant dense' industries, i.e. manufacturing, catering, health, social care and agriculture; employers often cite enthusiasm, punctuality and hard work as positive attributes; willingness to work in low paid work in high cost regions; contribution to local economy; generation of tax revenue; and a typically young 'fit' workforce.

3.2.5 Challenges of economic migration reported in the region include lack of ESOL/English language skills as a barrier to integration, working above the elementary level and to accessing a range of services; e.g. housing issues such as overcrowding appearing below the radar, i.e. hot bedding/beds in sheds; homelessness particularly for those with no recourse to public funds manifests as sofa surfing or rough sleeping often with associated issues such as anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse; gravitating to areas of low cost, often poor quality housing in relatively deprived areas; vulnerability to exploitation; community tensions and cultural divisions; over reliance on migrant labour; and pressure on statutory services and attendant costs including interpretation and translation.

3.3 Gurkha Resettlement

3.3.1 The MOD currently estimates that 8,000 ex-Gurkhas plus relatives will migrate to the UK over the next two years (information provided by the CLG states 3,700 visa applications have been approved and 2,700 are pending).

3.3.2 There is an existing community of around 10,000 ex-Gurkhas and their families in the UK, with the majority in the South East.

3.3.3 Welfare costs are estimated at £300-400m per year.

3.3.4 It is expected that the ex-Gurkhas will arrive at towns with military/Nepalese connections, the majority of which are in the South East, i.e. Kent, Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Rushmoor has what is thought to be considered the largest Nepalese community in the UK.

3.3.5 Ex-Gurkhas will be eligible to seek help under homelessness legislation but the level of support the local authorities can provide will depend on if they are considered intentionally destitute by leaving a home in Nepal. Pressure on housing is already great in these areas and social housing very limited.

3.3.6 There is a risk that a sizable number of older ex-Gurkhas with health and support needs may come to a small number of locations in a relatively short timescale pressurising services.

3.3.7 It is thought that older ex-Gurkhas may want to come to the UK in the belief that younger dependants might enjoy better prospects for the future.

3.4 Asylum and Refugee Issues

- 3.4.1 Overall numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in the South East is comparatively low on a national basis, with only three dispersal areas.
- 3.4.2 Dispersal to Brighton & Hove remains suspended following the city's participation in the Gateway Protection Programme for refugees.
- 3.4.3 Dispersals to Portsmouth, Southampton and Hastings continue with improved parity with figures dispersed to each area remaining consistent. There were a total of 339 individuals dispersed in the region: Portsmouth 151, Southampton 112 and Hastings 76.
- 3.4.4 There were 299 receiving support only with the largest single populations in Slough (35) and Brighton & Hove (30) and 64 Section 4 applicants across the region. These numbers were correct at the end of December 2009, taken from the UKBA Management Information Pack.

4. **Examples of Successes and Positive Outcomes**

- 4.1 Cross sector partnership working has proved successful, including but not limited to, the following examples:
 - i) Community Safety - Operation Cleansweep targeted a run-down area of Margate suffering from anti-social behaviour, arson and housing issues. Collaboration took place between Kent Fire and Rescue, the local authority's Housing and Building Control staff, police and UKBA officers, to put together a three-day plan of action. This targeted premises where non-compliance or illegal activities were suspected. During this time Fire Safety staff visited over 50 premises, with follow-up audits for compliance. Housing Act enforcement notices were also issued and arrests made by police and immigration officers. The operation improved compliance and raised public confidence that the agencies are working together to make the area safer.
 - ii) Multi-agency cross sector initiatives through the Migration Impact Funds and other funds, such as Safer Stronger Communities, has enabled a range of issues to be jointly addressed - innovative approaches such as employing migrant community support workers with language skills to work with communities where there are specific issues of integration; examples include the Expanding Communities Project in Arun, the Czech Roma Project in Thanet and Dover District Council Migrant Gateway/Outreach Adviser.

- 4.2 Expansion of e-learning and technological tools, such as the cross sector web-based information for new communities on how to effectively access services in Southampton. The Myukinfo.com website development has enabled the expansion and development of an existing resource for migrants, employers, local authorities and advisers.
- 4.3 The Total Place initiative in Slough, drawing together a whole area approach around ICT and ESOL. This is adding considerable value to ICT literacy and widening access to online resources for migrants.

5. 2010/11 Priorities

- 5.1 Working with employers to contribute to the discussion on setting limits/caps on non-EU migration.
- 5.2 Contributing to the review on ending the detention of children for immigration purposes.
- 5.3 Contributing to the social impact agenda through a range of activities, including:
- Establishing a local 'No Recourse to Public Funds' resource network for local authorities in the South East.
 - Sponsoring the SEEC Housing Conference to include senior level discussion on the impact of migration and housing.
 - Working with the two Strategic Health Authorities to support the development of the Migrant Health Network as a resource to share intelligence, inform strategy and provide intelligence resources to commissioners.
 - Feeding into the skills priority research.
 - Producing analysis on migration data to understand local issues such as health, education, crime, housing, community cohesion and benefits.
- 5.4 Working with UKBA local immigration teams to support the wider agenda.

Roy Millard
Partnership Manager
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Tel: 01304 872186
Mobile: 07881 521092
Email: roymillard@secouncils.gov.uk