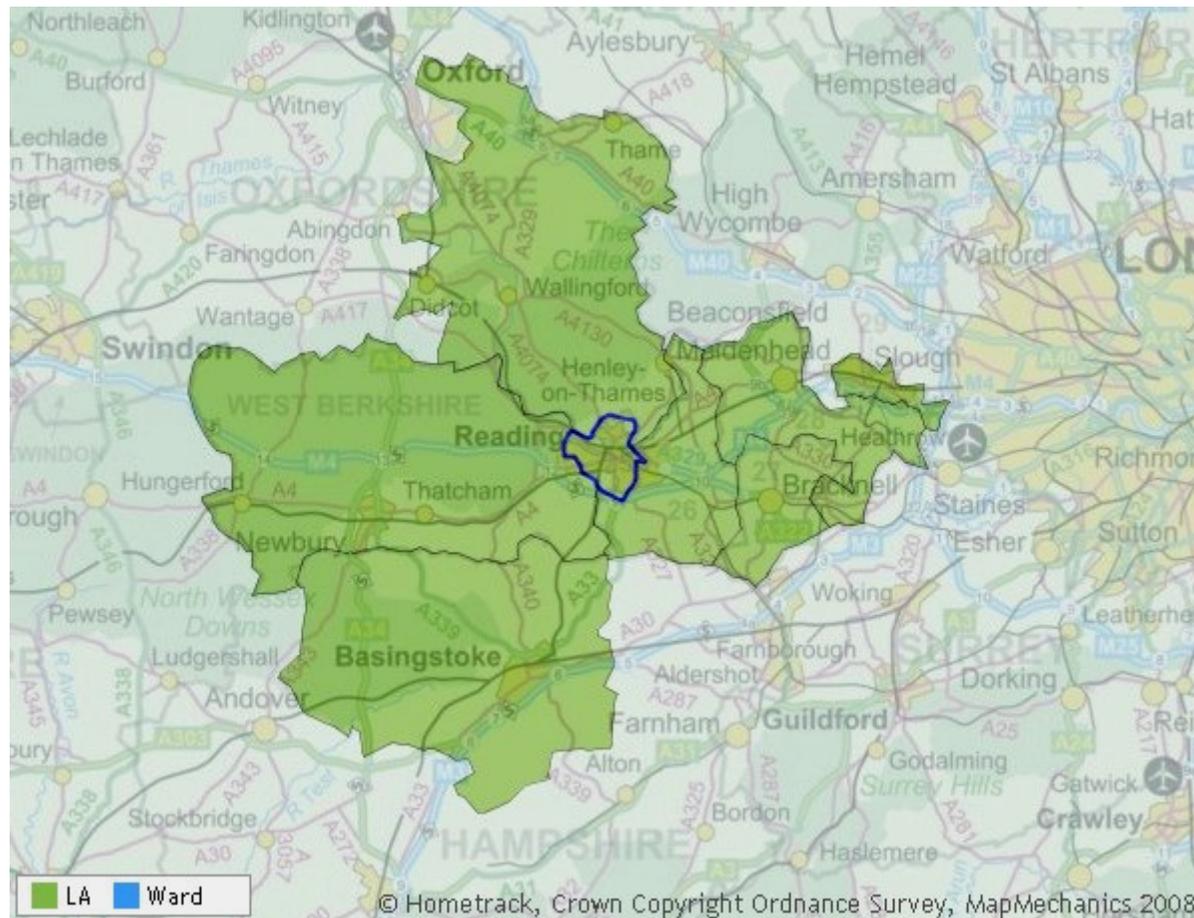


# **Housing the Migrant Population**

**Cllr Daisy Benson**

**Reading Borough Council**

# Introduction to Reading



# Introduction to Reading

- 40skm but a densely populated urban centre of a much wider functioning economic area
- Service and financial centre of the Thames Valley - in 2009 average wage is second only to London
- However 11 super out put areas in the 20% most deprived in England
- Comparatively young population with local in-ward migration of young professionals

# Housing in Reading

- In 2008 - 64,388 households
  - 55.4% Owner Occupiers
  - 27.7% Private Rented Sector
  - 1.9% Intermediate Housing
  - 15% Social Housing
- Significant issue for Reading is the size of private rented sector which is twice the national average

# The super diversity of Reading

- Annual population survey suggests that 25% of the residents in the town were not born in the UK
- In 2009 Ethnic minority pupils made up 45% of the school population, up from 27% in 2004
- In addition to Eastern European, Nepalese is a growing community in Reading
- More than 150 languages spoken in our schools
- In 2008 migrant workers accounted for 13 out of every 1000 people in Reading

# International migration to Reading

- In 2009 the net international migration was 2500 which is 1.6% of the total population
- Compares to 0.29% nationally and 0.26% for the SE
- Since 2004 there has been a substantial flow of economic migrants in to the borough
- NI No applications in 2005/6 stood at 3900, which rose to 4290 in 06/07 but had dropped to 3250 for 2009.
- Most migrants were male between the ages of 18-34 and were predominantly from Eastern Europe (60% from Poland alone)

# An adapting town

- Migrant workers support Reading's economic and social infrastructure with many finding employment in growing service sector as well as construction
- Growing polish community with an emergence of Polish food shops
- In 2008 Reading Chronicle was produced in Polish selling 12,000 copies a week
- In 2008 WH Smiths were selling Polish language books (business case is 10% of sales)

# Impact on housing and the community

- Little impact on social housing as migrants not able to apply until employed for 12m
- Increase in overcrowding of HMOs, and tenants accepting poor quality accommodation
- Increased rough sleeping - 38% Eastern Europeans with no recourse to public funds
- Higher levels of ASB and street drinking
- Increased need for translation services
- Higher demands on health and education services

# How did we respond and what are the costs?

- Many costs absorbed by existing budgets but estimate additional corporate unit costs of **£1 per migrant**
- Polish speaking officer 2 days a week at main customer service desk to provide advice and information
- Welcome pack produced aimed at new arrivals (includes information on tenant rights/ expected standards of accommodation) - One off cost of £6,000
- Grant for the CAB for immigration advice - 25K
- Grant fund a Polish Saturday School (currently full) - £3,562

# Housing interventions

- Challenging rough sleeping
  - Security patrols in some car parks
  - Outreach team working with rough sleepers, including a polish speaking worker
  - Specific cases were resolved by supporting clients to obtain ID and therefore work (£892), support to access health services (£850)
  - Repatriated two people back to Poland
- Increased enforcement in the Private Rented Sector
  - Increased inspections - 7 immigration related over-crowding inspections PA - £579 per inspection

# Migration Impact Fund

- The Reading 2020 Partnership successfully bid for £221,750 from the DCLG
- Objective was to invest in front end services to secure sustainable migrant integration
- Enable migrants to access their entitled services appropriately
- Activity still on-going

# Current initiatives

- Community Development and Outreach for Polish Communities (45k)
- New Entrant Screening (75.5k)
- Advice Service to the Nepalese Community (25k)
- Rapid English and community Activists (£48.75k)
- ‘Welcome Pack’ learning tool (£15.5k)

# Looking to the future

- Although the acute pressure in relation to economic migrants has decreased, longer term pressures on education and housing will continue
- Introduced a flexible approach to grant funding which will enable us to support communities to support themselves
- Reading is an ever evolving town used to supporting and celebrating a diverse and complex community - will continue to do so!