

## Introduction to migrant worker and housing issues

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## Chapter 32. Introduction to migrant worker and housing issues

### 32.1 Introduction

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Research on migrant workers in the sub-region is currently ongoing and this paper provides a summary of the information currently available. Section 1 examines data from the National Insurance Registration Scheme, which provides some ideas of the number of migrants coming to the region. However, it does not show how many people are leaving or whether or not people are coming as individuals or with dependents. There may also be a number of migrant workers working in the sub region for cash in hand, particularly from non-A10 states.

The second section provides a summary of the key points about accommodation (e.g. main tenure types and key areas of concern) of the *Migrant Workers in the East of England* Project Report produced by EEDA and London Metropolitan University. It also provides a little more information on the types of migrant worker households who are more likely to stay for longer periods.

The final section looks at information from other sources of data, which include some data on migrant workers.

### 32.2 National Insurance Registration Scheme Data

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Table 1 shows the number of people registering for national insurance numbers from 2002/03 – 2006/07. It only provides inflow information and there is no information on people leaving, so it does not provide information on the total number of migrants currently in the sub-region.

**Table 1: National Insurance Registrations of Non-UK Nationals (Rounded)**

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Cambridge	2,550	2,430	2,900	3,830	3,770
East Cambridgeshire	260	280	400	1,210	1,010
Fenland	210	300	780	1,570	1,200
Huntingdonshire	510	500	720	1,040	1,350
South Cambridgeshire	650	610	900	1,160	940
Forest Heath	360	410	650	1,030	760
St Edmundsbury	480	440	450	770	620
<b>Sub-Region</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>4,970</b>	<b>6,800</b>	<b>10,610</b>	<b>9,650</b>

Source: National Insurance Registration Scheme

The number of people registering for National Insurance Numbers grew significantly between 2002 and 2006. Cambridge City has had the largest inflow of migrants, but the lowest percentage increase compared to the other districts. Some 200 workers registered in Fenland in 2002/03. By 2005/06 this had increased to 1,570. The second highest increase in registrations occurred in East Cambridgeshire. St Edmundsbury is the only district in the sub-region where fewer than 1,000 people registered in 2005/06. There was a slight decrease in 2006/07 in all areas except Huntingdonshire.

**Table 2: Countries with the highest number of people registering, 2002-06 by district**

**2002-2003**

	<b>Country with highest number of registrations</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of all registrations <sup>1</sup></b>
Cambridge	Spain/ China <sup>2</sup>	210	8%
E. Cambs	Portugal	60	23%
Fenland	Portugal	60	29%
Hunts	Philippines	90	18%
S. Cambs	Philippines/ Australia	70	11%
Forest Heath	USA	110	31%
St Edmundsbury	USA	100	21%

**2003-2004**

	<b>Country with highest number of registrations</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of all registrations</b>
Cambridge	China	220	9%
E. Cambs	Portugal	60	21%
Fenland	Portugal	100	33%
Hunts	Portugal	60	12%
S. Cambs	Philippines/ South Africa	60	10%
Forest Heath	USA	110	27%
St Edmundsbury	USA/ India/ Pakistan	70	16%

**2004-2005**

	<b>Country with highest number of registrations</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of all registrations</b>
Cambridge	Poland	460	16%
E. Cambs	Poland	120	30%
Fenland	Lithuania	170	22%
Hunts	Poland	210	29%
S. Cambs	Poland	130	14%
Forest Heath	Poland	130	20%
St Edmundsbury	Pakistan	100	22%

**2005-2006**

	<b>Country with highest number of registrations</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of all registrations</b>
Cambridge	Poland	850	22%
E. Cambs	Poland	680	56%
Fenland	Poland/ Lithuania	500	32%
Hunts	Poland	370	36%
S. Cambs	Poland	250	22%
Forest Heath	Poland	370	36%
St Edmundsbury	Poland	220	29%

<sup>1</sup> See Table 1 for total number of registrations by district

<sup>2</sup> 210 Spanish and 210 Chinese people registered in Cambridge City. Together migrants from Spain and China made up 16% of the register.

## 2006-2007

	Country with highest number of registrations	No.	% of all registrations
Cambridge	Poland	870	23%
E. Cambs	Poland	610	60%
Fenland	Poland	510	43%
Hunts	Poland	730	54%
S. Cambs	Poland	240	26%
Forest Heath	Poland	320	42%
St Edmundsbury	Poland	310	50%

Source: National Insurance Registration Scheme

There has been increase in workers registering from most of the EU A8 Accession countries (Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary). The largest increase has been in workers coming from Poland, who are now the main migrant population in the sub-region. Prior to this, Portuguese workers were the main migrant group in most areas. The USAAF presence in Forest Heath explains the high number of Americans registering in these districts in 2002/03-2003/04 – although air force personnel don't require a national insurance number, dependents working off base would do so.

### 32.3 The Workers Registration Scheme

There is more specific information about migrant workers from the A8 countries through the worker's registration scheme. This began in 2004 and provides information supplied by citizens of the eight accession states (E8) when they obtain jobs in the UK. These workers are required to register once they obtain a job and to re-register for subsequent jobs until they have worked a total of 12 out of 13 months. Self-employed individuals do not have to register. There is also no deregistration information and it is not possible to use it to make assumptions about how long people stay in an area, or how many are working in an area at any one time.

**Table 3: Number of Workers Registered from Eastern Europe 2004-07, by district**

Cambridge	2,625
East Cambridgeshire	3,645
Fenland	3,970
Huntingdonshire	1,945
South Cambridgeshire	1,215
Forest Heath	1,150
St Edmundsbury	880
<b>Sub-Region</b>	<b>15,430</b>

Source: Workers registration scheme data published by the Home Office.

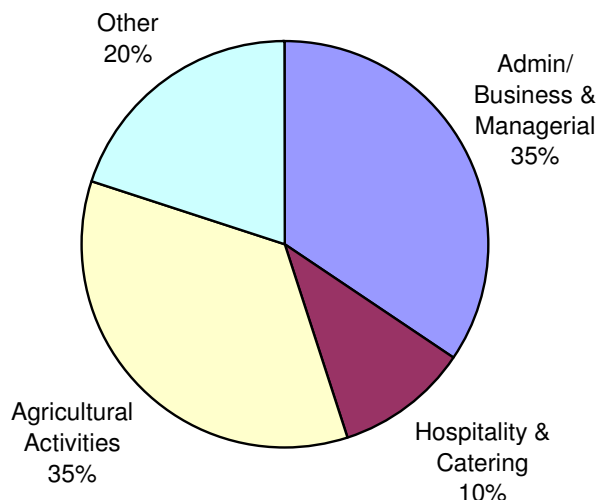
East Cambridgeshire and Fenland had the largest numbers of migrant workers registering from the A8 Countries. Fewer than 1,000 workers registered in St Edmundsbury in the period.

In the Cambridge sub-region, most of the migrant workers are aged 18-34. Almost 50% of migrant workers registered in the county are aged 18-24 and 34% are aged 25-34. Forest Heath had a lower percentage of people aged 18-24 (40%) and a higher percentage of workers aged 25-34 (43%). The age structure of migrant workers in all districts is quite similar. However, in East Cambridgeshire more than 60% of migrant workers are aged 18-24. The figure also shows that Fenland has a significant percentage of workers aged over 35

(23%). Some 53% of those who registered were male and 47% were female. There were more men than women registering in all districts.

On average migrant workers are less well-paid than the rest of the population. In Cambridgeshire, the median gross hourly pay is £10.77. For migrant workers it is between £4.50 and £5.34.

**Fig 1: Migrant workers by economic sector, Cambridge sub-region, 2004-07**



Source: Workers registration scheme data published by the Home Office.

Some 35% of workers in the sub-region are employed in agricultural activities, although there is a good deal of variation across the sub-region (74% of those who registered in East Cambridgeshire, but only 6% in Forest Heath). Agricultural work is more seasonal than the other sectors, and these workers are more likely to be here for short-term work. Most of them register during Spring and Summer.

Some 35% were also employed in admin business and managerial roles. In Forest Heath and Huntingdonshire around half of those registered were working in this sector. 10% were employed in hospitality and catering jobs. The remainder were employed in other sectors such as construction, education, financial services, health and medical sector etc.

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### 32.4 Migrant Workers in the East of England Project Report

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*Migrant Workers in the East of England* by McKay & Winkelman-Gleed (2005), produced by EEDA and London Metropolitan University<sup>3</sup>, looks at some demographic issues such as scale of migration and age and gender of migrants, aspirations and motivation for coming to the UK. The study looked at specific areas including housing issues.

- Between 50,000 and 80,000 migrant workers came to the East of England between 2000 and 2005 (when the report was written).
- The largest age band was 25-49 year olds.

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<sup>3</sup> Referred to in this chapter as "the EEDA report".

- There were approximately equal numbers of male and female workers although they were engaged in different sectors and roles.
- Of the migrants surveyed for this piece of work, very few intended to remain indefinitely, although those whose children lived with them were more likely to view the move as a permanent one. Skilled migrants were also more likely to stay for longer than unskilled workers.
- Accommodation tied to employment and renting privately were the most common forms of tenure amongst migrant workers. There were also people living with relatives. Only a very small number bought property in the UK (or aspired to do so) and there were very few people in social rented accommodation.

The following issues in the report relate specifically to housing:

- **Tied accommodation** - This was the least preferred type of accommodation. Some caravan-type accommodation was inadequately heated. Large dormitory accommodation with up to 200 people lacked privacy. Complaints about working conditions or taking too many days sick could lead to threats of eviction. This highly visible type of accommodation could be a source of tension with the local population. Although this is mostly associated with those employed in agricultural work, some people employed by hotels are also resident at their place of work.

Some workers on short-term seasonal contracts were able to tolerate these conditions as they knew the job was short term. As it is generally a cheaper option than renting elsewhere, there was more money to take or send home.

Employers surveyed who provided this type of accommodation were frustrated with planning processes and permission when they did try to improve standards.

- **Private rented accommodation** - Concerns were raised about high rents and large deposits. Some people reported living in overcrowded properties (one interviewee from Peterborough shared a 4 bedroom house with 13 other people each paying between £30-35/week). As with tied accommodation, lower cost private rented accommodation in particular was also of a low standard.

Some individuals were sharing accommodation with strangers and there were potential dangers, especially for single women on their own.

The requirement for letters of reference was an inconvenience in finding somewhere to live. Some interviewees reported being caught in a cycle of needing a bank account to get accommodation and needing accommodation to get a bank account.

### 32.5 Other housing issues

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- **The private rented sector** - In the survey of estate and letting agents we asked for an estimate of the percentage of people buying or renting homes who came from outside the UK. A very low number of estate agents reported people who had previously lived outside the UK buying homes (see Chapter 15 *The private rented market*). The EEDA report also said that there were few people who owned or aspired to own property in the UK.

The survey of letting agents failed to pick up significant numbers of migrants in the rural districts of Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. It may be that people in these areas are more likely to have access to tied accommodation.

The letting agents survey showed a large percentage of private renters from overseas in Cambridge City and Forest Heath. In Cambridge City, this is because of the student market. In Forest Heath there is also a private rental market for USAAF personnel and one respondent dealt exclusively with rents to this group.

- **ARLA Survey of Residential Landlords October to December 2006.** The ARLA national survey of residential landlords asked about whether people had noticed an increase in the number of people from the A8 countries wanting to rent residential property. Just under 45% said they had and just under 70% said they expected to do so in the next year.

Some 21% of respondents said that migration from these countries had had a significant impact on the private rented market and 6% said they had boosted it dramatically.

Some 71% of respondents in this national survey said that they weren't sure how difficult it was to get references for prospective tenants from these countries, possibly because they hadn't had to try. 23% said it was difficult to get references, which supports the EEDA report, which highlighted getting a reference for landlords as a problem.

- **The social rented sector.**

National regulations restrict access to social housing by migrant workers. They cannot access affordable housing registers (social rented and shared ownership) unless employed. Applicants from A8 countries need to be in current, continuous full time employment and need Worker's Registration Scheme documentation in order to access the register, although there is less restriction on workers from other EU states e.g. Portugal.

Using CORE data: The EEDA report said that very few migrant workers were housed in the social rented sector. This is supported by data from CORE collected from 2006/07 onwards. Of those housed in the sub-region in 2006/07, some 3% (99) were non-UK Citizens. 68% of these worked either full or part time, compared to 40% of UK citizens. The average age of head of households of those housed was 36, two years younger than the average for British social tenants. Some 34 households were from A8 countries (1.2%), 19 of these were from Poland. Some 35 were from the rest of Europe (1.2%) and 30 (1.1%) from the rest of the world.

**Table 4: Household Structure of general needs social tenants by nationality 2006/07**

	UK Citizens	A8	Other European Country	Outside Europe	Total
Single	848	2	5	9	864
2 Adults No Children	341	6	7	1	355
2 or more adults and 1 or more child	563	19	15	13	610
Lone Parent	577	4	7	6	594
Single Older Person	221	0	1	1	223
Older Couple	116	0	0	0	116
Other	32	3	0	0	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,698</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2,797</b>
Percentage	96.5%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	100%

(Source: CORE)

Table 4 shows the household structure by nationality of general needs social tenants. There were very few non-UK citizens aged over 60. Single people were the largest category among the UK citizens. Most of the non-UK households consisted of two or more adults and one or more children.

There may also be a preponderance of migrant workers living in Houses in Multiple Occupation, which have their own specific issues around fire risk, health and safety, living standards and overcrowding.

### 32.6 Further research

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® The Luminus Housing Group and Diversity Forum in Huntingdonshire are jointly undertaking research into migrant worker housing issues in that district. The Diversity Forum is starting to map the services, agencies, organizations, community groups, authorities and businesses that work with, deal with, and provide services for migrant workers in the Huntingdon and surrounding district. The purpose of the work is to target need and assist social cohesion and integration of migrant workers within host communities and to further understand the issues surrounding the need for migrant workers within our communities. It covers such issues as identifying organizations which work with, deal with, provide services for migrant workers, whether for Employment, Community, Learning or Leisure. It seeks to identify the three main issues arising during this work and the three main barriers experienced whilst working with migrant workers. It seeks numbers and origins of migrant workers and what their language issues might be. The research will report back in 2008. We hope the results of this research can feed into future updates of the SHMA.

® In May 2008 “Workers on the Move - Migrant workers, housing and growth in the eastern region” was produced for EEDA as part of a Building Communities Fund Bursary awarded to Keystone Development Trust, and sponsored by Wherry Housing Association. Keystone commissioned King Street Housing Society and Anglia Ruskin University/ Public Policy Consultancy Group to assist with the project – including primary research in conjunction with META (Keystone’s Mobile European’s Tacking Action project). This may provide useful information for the SHMA and will be considered, and the findings incorporated as appropriate, in future updates.

### 32.7 Summary

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- Just over 27,000 people from outside the UK registered for a National Insurance Number in the Cambridge sub-region between 2004/07. 15,000 people from the Eastern European accession countries registered under the workers registration scheme in the same period.
- Information on how many people are leaving is difficult to obtain, although what is available shows that most people are here for shorter time periods (less than two years).
- Tied and private rented accommodation are the dominant tenure types. There are very few people in social housing and not much evidence of owner occupation.
- Tied accommodation is the least preferred option for housing as it is of low quality e.g. large dormitories, badly heated mobile homes etc., but people usually view this as a temporary option that they are willing to tolerate for a short period. Some employers who own this sort of accommodation would like to update this information but encounter problems with planning processes.
- Issues surrounding the private rented sector include problems such as overcrowding and low quality. High rents and costly deposits are prohibitive for some people. Nationally, some letting agents have reported problems getting references from prospective tenants from overseas.
- There are very few non-UK citizens in social rented housing. Most of those housed are families and include at least one person in work. The main reason for leaving previous accommodation is overcrowding and around a third had previously been private sector tenants.



## **Appendix 1: Local documents on migrant workers**

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This appendix summarises the available district level policy and strategy documents relating to migrant workers.

### **East Cambridgeshire**

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Migrant workers are included in the BME Housing Strategy in East Cambridgeshire. The particular issues raised were largely drawn from Audit Commission research into the UK as a whole and included many of the issues raised in the main content of this chapter, such as

- The cost, standard and safety of tied accommodation.
- Problems accessing bank accounts.
- Access to information and advice which migrant workers feel they can trust, and problems enforcing standards where they are known.
- Deductions for housing, transport, food etc taken out of already lower than usual pay.
- The lack of hard data on the number of workers for planning.
- The country and rural areas need low-paid workers but they are often not provided for in land-use or housing plans.
- The main areas of housing concern tend to relate to the private rented sector. This is because so much housing is 'tied' to work. Many single people live in HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) which are often smaller than traditional HMOs (i.e. ordinary 2 storey houses). People may need housing advice but it can be difficult to give it to them as they have to deal with a landlord who is also an employer and many are afraid that if they complain they could lose their job.
- The Seasonal Agreement Work Schemes (SAWS) is due to disappear and the Government is changing the immigration laws and introducing a 'points' system, which would give more points to people bringing skills to the economy, and not accommodating the lower end of the market.

### **Fenland – Migrant Population Strategy, September 2007**

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The strategy recognises that initial accommodation for migrant workers is arranged by employers and gangmasters and this "cushions" the local housing market. But it also recognises a preference among landlords to rent HMOs specifically to migrant workers because letting on a per head basis increases profitability.

There is anecdotal evidence of migrant families accessing the private rented sector, which may be impacting on the ability of the indigenous population to find accommodation in this tenure – in many cases renting privately is not a tenure of choice but of necessity whilst waiting for affordable housing. However the pressure for affordable housing becomes greater if more households are living in overcrowded accommodation as a result of reduced access to the private rented sector.

The strategy also raises the following points about the following different types of tenure:

#### **Tied housing**

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Because of a large amount of seasonal agricultural work in the Fens, individual caravans, caravan sites and converted farm buildings are frequently used to house these migrant workers. There have been a number of unauthorised caravan sites developed for

accommodating migrant workers in recent years and relevant enforcement action has been and is being undertaken to address such unauthorised use.

Available evidence identifies a number of permutations in the tied housing arrangements experienced by migrant workers, ranging from the conventional model where the employer is also the landlord through to circumstances where the landlord is an independent third party and the employer acts as a facilitator between worker and landlord. Where migrant workers operate through agencies, the agency either provides the accommodation directly, or acts as the manager/rent collector for a property that is owned by an independent third party.

Problems associated with tied housing include:

- Loss of job leading to a loss of accommodation, or homelessness.
- A lack of continuous employment often leads to rent arrears and debt with associated harassment, threat of eviction.
- The absence of a tenancy agreement undermines security of tenure with agency managed housing, and rent levels above those in the private rented sector – especially where rent is deducted from wages on a fixed, pro rata basis. In this situation rent becomes a variable which increases when the worker earns more money, e.g. because of overtime.
- Accommodation provided is often poor quality, sub-standard and over-crowded.
- Available accommodation is most commonly suitable only for single adults and, as such, inappropriate to the needs of families.

### **Private rented**

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For other private rented accommodation, migrant workers share some of the problems experienced in that housing market by indigenous unskilled and semi-skilled workers including:

- The affordability of private sector rents, especially in relation to eligibility for or limits imposed on Housing Benefits.
- The need for a deposit and the payment of rent in advance (usually one month).
- Insecurity associated with tenancy agreements that usually specify one month's notice.
- The quality and standard of housing being made available to migrant workers in the private rented sector.

### **HMOs**

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Households in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) have been one of the most visible features of the presence of the migrant population in Fenland and as such have been one of the main flashpoints with the local population.

This type of accommodation is one of the most obvious symbols of the marginalisation and exploitation of the migrant population. People occupying these properties are usually unable to engage in the local housing market on an equal footing, so they are, at best, subject to significant over-charging. At worst, their accommodation is tied to their employment, leaving them open to illegal deductions from their wage packets, immediate eviction if laid off, arbitrary demands for money and threats or actual violence.

Of the 8 Houses of Multiple Occupation that the Council are in the process of licensing in response to the new mandatory licensing powers which came into force in 2006, 6 (75%) are occupied exclusively by migrant workers.

The council is estimating that there are 500 plus houses in non-mandatory licensable HMO use with the vast majority occupied exclusively by migrant workers.

The district council continues to receive reports of properties converting to HMO use for the purpose of housing migrant workers.

There have been several serious fire incidents in these HMOs over the last few years, and there are on-going concerns about fire safety in this form of tenure.

### **Owner occupation**

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Higher income, often professional, migrant workers wishing to enter owner occupation can face problems from banks and building societies which are reluctant to provide loans to clients on a time-limited work permit with no guarantee of extension or renewal

### **Huntingdonshire**

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In December 2005 Huntingdonshire published a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy 2006 - 2011. It includes the following comment on migrant worker issues:

“We recognise that there is an emerging population of ‘White-Other’ households / population in the district. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an increasing number of Eastern-European economic immigrants in Huntingdonshire. Increasingly, speakers of Polish, Portuguese and Lithuanian, are using our services. Reports of over crowding in the private rented sector have alerted our Environmental Health department to an emerging trend. This will be monitored over the coming months.”

This point is further developed above, in paragraph 32.6 - *Further Research*.