

Impact of migration on key services

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to address the impact on key service areas due to in-migration from the enlarging European Union.

Recommendations

2. Members are invited to consider the recommendations that:
 - All partners call for a more reliable data collection systems which will produce accurate migration statistics.
 - All partners request government to acknowledge the additional pressures on local authorities.
 - All partners call on the government to acknowledge these additional pressures on service provision and ensure delivery is fully funded for the sake not only of our longer-term economic interests but also of wider community cohesion.
 - All partners will promote the positive impact of migrant workers in terms of helping to meet the demographic challenges in Scotland.

Background

Accurate Statistics

3. The LGA and iCoCo report *Estimating the Scale and Impacts of Migration at the Local Level* has flagged up local authority concerns of inaccurate statistics and data collection systems which cannot keep pace with rapidly changing demographics. COSLA, informed by individual Scottish local authorities and partner organisations, has long been aware of the undercounting of migrants inherent in the UK Government's current data collection system.
4. The House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee report *Europe Moves East: The Impact of the new EU Member States on UK Business* identifies serious concerns with the Workers' Registration Scheme (WRS) – the key statistical source in which the Department of Work and Pensions use to gauge the impact of A8 migration to the UK. The WRS figure is a gross measure of the number of first applications made; individuals are not required to de-register if they leave the country and the figures exclude the self-employed, students, the economically inactive and others who chose not to register (for whatever reason).
5. Having accurate figures is obviously vital to enabling public services to meet needs, plan, manage and integrate the migrant population. Local allocation depends ultimately on 2001 Census data rather than more recent local data. A range of evidence from administrative data (such as NINO and NHS 'Flag 4' data) and local studies (such as Glasgow City Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Council's report on *A8 Nationals in Glasgow*) suggests that gaps in statistics are extensive, particularly local estimates.
6. COSLA calls on the government to recognise the impact caused by the use of inadequate population estimates and the implications for the distribution of funding to local authorities. COSLA agree with the growing consensus that there needs to be better use and enhancement of administrative data, such as the WRS, NINOs, the annual school census, Higher Education Statistics Agency and GP registers, to correctly estimate migrant populations.

Key issues for public services

7. COSLA recognise that councils and partner agencies in both urban and rural areas are undoubtedly facing demand pressures, in particular across interpreting services, ESOL classes, Education Departments' bilingual services, housing and homelessness services, childcare and social work services. These concerns are reflected in the LGA's report, which highlights seven key issues for public services: the impact of 'churn', child protection, language barriers, housing, community cohesion, community safety, and health
8. LGA has called for a £250m contingency fund to help areas cope with sudden rises in their population. COSLA support the need for government to acknowledge these additional pressures on service provision and ensure delivery is fully funded. COSLA suggests that funding service provision is vital for the sake of our longer-term economic interests and also for wider community cohesion. However, COSLA argue that ring fenced contingency funding may not be the most appropriate strategy. COSLA will request a strategy that reflects proportionality of resource allocation. This funding strategy would aim to ensure that the benefits of migration are spread across the country and areas of pressure.

Positive impact of migration

9. COSLA aim to promote the positive impact of migrant workers in Scotland through a positive media strategy.
10. In terms of helping to meet the demographic challenges in Scotland, young and economically motivated migrant workers are clearly welcome in Scotland. The *A8 Nationals in Glasgow* research demonstrates a number of positive impacts, such as the majority of A8 nationals in Glasgow are aged between 16 and 34 years and there appear to be a higher rate of entrepreneurial aspirations amongst A8 nationals than across the population of Glasgow as a whole.
11. According to the House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee report migration from the A8/A2 countries has been positive for the economy and UK business. It has had a major benefit in terms of access to more workers who can fill the skills gap.

Conclusion

It is clear that service impacts and costs associated with migration are only beginning to be understood. COSLA will carry out a survey to monitor and assess the impact of the arrival of A8 and A2 migrants on local authority services. The survey aims to provide a national picture of the impact of A8 and A2 migration, which will better prepare SSCG and local authorities to respond strategically to migration. COSLA recognise the importance of local data and knowledge; COSLA will support partners to continue to develop local knowledge of the composition, changing nature and needs of their communities. COSLA will work with partners to ensure that new populations are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are able to access appropriate services and integrate.

Lorraine Cook
Policy Officer
0141 314 3548
lorraine@cosla.gov.uk