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Migrants Rights News ~ No: 2

Welcome to the October 2007 edition of Migrants Rights News

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[0] Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of Migrants Rights News.

We will be producing Migrants Rights News on a monthly basis. Migrants Rights News aims to review developments in policy and practice that affect migrants and works to support the rights of all migrants in the UK today.

Migrants Rights News reports will feature a mix of campaigns' news, reports of regional and national policy developments and reviews of the latest research.

At the heart of Migrants Rights News is the campaigns and strategies being developed by migrants to consolidate their position in British society. We focus on strategies that extend the scope of the human, economic and social rights which apply to migrants' circumstances.

Through connections with international networks such as the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants ([PICUM](#)), the European Platform for Migrant Workers Rights ([EPMWR](#)), and Migrants Rights International ([MRI](#)) we hope to bring developments in rights-based approaches to migration to the UK from across the world.

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[1] In the headlines

- [\[1.1\]](#) Immigration at the Party Conferences
- [\[1.2\]](#) Migrants in Rural Britain
- [\[1.3\]](#) Family Reunion for Migrants

[1.1] Immigration at the Party Conferences-Clues for the Election Campaign?

- **Liberal Democrats**
- **Labour**
- **Conservatives**

[Liberal Democrats]

Party conference season began with the Liberal Democrats in Brighton at the end of September, and concluded three weeks later with the Tories in Blackpool. There were clues from each side that immigration could be a 'gloves-off' issue in the forthcoming general election campaign, with various 'British first' and tough controls talk larded for the benefit of the parties' faithful.

The Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems) came up with a [proposal](#) for the regularisation of undocumented migrants (UDM), which considerably waters down the position advocated by the [Strangers into Citizens](#) (SiC). SiC calls for residence permits to be issued to UDMs who can demonstrate four years employment in the UK. For the Lib Dems, this had been extended to ten.

The Lib Dems claimed that this represented, in the words of their home affairs spokesperson, Nick Clegg, ". . . a humane, workable and principled approach to immigration that is a million miles removed from the shameless populism and blinkered prejudice that has dominated the debate for too long."

Other requirements for the grant of a regular immigration status to UDMs in the Lib Dem proposal include:

- **A 'public interest' test;**
- **Demonstration of a 'long-term commitment' to the UK;**
- **English language and civic awareness tests; and**
- **Payment of fees waived for those performing community service.**

Labour's immigration minister, Liam Byrne, indicated the response that this limited set of proposals would get if it was raised during the course of an election campaign. Speaking on BBC2's Newsnight programme, he declared that the measure would bring 'illegal' immigrants to the front of the queue for jobs and benefits. Others were more sympathetic to the Lib Dems. The Economist suggested that it was at least more credible than the government's proposal to deport all UDMs, which at the current rate would take at least 25 years.

But other reports in the business press draw attention to the parts of the Lib Dem resolution, which would lead to increases in fees for work permits. Personnel Today [described](#) that the intention to use fees charged to employers, set as a percentage of the starting salary of the migrant worker, would be used to fund a 'national border force.'

[Labour]

The closest the Labour Party came to discussing immigration at the main sessions of its conference in Bournemouth were the speeches of Labour Party leader and Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) and the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith. Brown's speech was heavily charged with references to "the British people" and "British values," and he made coded references to immigration themes when he said that, "a mark of citizenship" meant "that you should learn our language and traditions." He also spoke of the need to "create British jobs for British workers."

More direct comments dealt with the creation of a "unified border force", the introduction in 2008 of identity cards for foreign nationals, and the "Australian-style points-based approach to immigration," which would allow Britain to continue "to benefit from skilled workers from abroad."

Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith made sparse references to immigration, dealing with border security and identity-check policies in brief comments. She also stated that plans to double enforcement action against people breaking immigration rules would result in greater protection for workers from exploitation.

A broader debate on immigration policy took place at the fringes of the conference, with meetings run by a range of organisations, including the Refugee Council, the Immigration Advisory Service and the MRN. Jon Cruddas, the MP for Dagenham, emerged as a prominent critic of the Labour leadership. He welcomed the fact that the issue of the exploitation of migrant workers was moving towards the centre stage of policy discussions, and urged that a programme for the regularisation of UDMs be adopted.

The MRN contributed to this discussion with a fringe meeting organised jointly with [Compass-Directions for the Democratic Left](#) and the [Barrow Cadbury Trust](#). The meeting launched the new publication "[Towards a Progressive Immigration Policy](#)" (42 page .pdf) and heard contributions from Barrow Cadbury Trust director Sukhvinder Stubbs, Compass spokesperson Neal Lawson, Jon Cruddas MP, 'Justice for Cleaners' campaigner [Evrard Ouale](#), and MRN director Don Flynn. The arguments around progressive politics and immigration policy are discussed in a separate article in this newsletter.

[Conservatives]

The Conservative conference gave a big indication that the party would be returning to traditional anti-immigrant themes in the months period leading up to the next general election. Home affairs spokesperson David Davis () promised that it would be a '[key issue](#)' for a Conservative government.

Characterising the Labour government's approach as an "open-door policy," Davis claimed that housing, schools and communities could not cope with immigration rates, which he said were running at the rate of 700,000 incomers a year.

He insisted that immigration is "not the irresistible result of globalisation," but rather, a "failed policy" on the part of the government. He conceded that certain aspects of immigration did bring benefits to Britain. Conservative policy would aim at bringing in "the right people and the right number of people." This would mean a limit on the numbers of economic migrants coming into the country each year.

Davis claimed that Tory plans for a Border Police Force, as opposed to Labour's Border Service, would have real powers to control movement across frontiers. Acting on the report of an advisory committee led by former metropolitan police chief Sir John Stevens, a Conservative government would establish a unified border police authority charged with the power to stop, search, detain, prosecute, gather intelligence and seize illegal goods.

The essence of Davis' position was reiterated in David Cameron's [speech](#) the following day. But he attempted to strike a tone consistent with his claim to represent a modern and humane brand of Conservatism by agreeing that the UK "has benefited immeasurably from immigration." He said, "People who want to come here, work hard and contribute to our country. I think our diverse and multi-racial society is a huge benefit for Britain but we do have to recognise the pressures that can be put on public services, schools, hospitals and housing if immigration is unlimited."

The Conservatives will be pressed to explain how they will be able to force a substantial cut in immigration without damaging the interests of British companies. With Labour's points-based immigration system likely to end the schemes aimed at admitting migrants for jobs in low-skill sectors, the options for further reductions is limited to skilled workers coming in on work permits or the highly-skilled migrant programme. Yet these are precisely the categories of immigrants which David Cameron and David Davis say they value the most.

Some idea of the way in which immigration is likely to run in the next general election can be gleaned from these excursions into the

subject at the party conferences. It is clear that the Conservatives are to make it a big part of their pitch, arguing that they will reduce the numbers of non-EU national migrants coming in under the economic categories. Labour will counter this position by arguing that they are already doing this: the points-based system they are putting in place helps pin-point the types of workers they are prepared to admit and keep out. The Liberal Democrats are adopting positions which promise a little more on the 'humane' side of policy, but differs little in other respects from what the two larger parties are arguing about.

Additional Resources

[Personnel Today Article](#)
[Strangers into Citizens' Position](#)
[Gordan Brown's Speech](#)
[Compass-Directions for the Democratic Left](#)
[Liberal Democrats Regularisation Proposal](#)
[David Cameron's Speech on BBC](#)
[David Davis' Speech on BBC](#)

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[1.2] Migrants in Rural Britain: What is the Real Story?

- **Migrant Stereotyping**
- **Changing Social Fabric**
- **How Migrants Live and Work**
- **National and Local Response**
- **From Regional Activism to National Lobbying**

The comments of Cambridgeshire police chief, Julie Spence, linking migrant workers to an increase in crime were widely reported in the media at the end of September. They came at a time when the government has promised action to reduce the numbers of migrants entering the country through the ending of schemes permitting access to low-skill jobs in agriculture, food processing, hotel and catering services, and through the operation of a tougher points-based regime for work permits.

[Migrant Stereotyping]

The grounds upon which Spence made her comments on 19 September, regarding migrants' impact on rural Britain, need to be seriously questioned. She stated that migrants boosted crime rates and cited drink-driving and "knife crime" as key problems. Others in the local police said they felt migrants were a strain on public services and that they did not integrate well with rural communities. Spence also called for more government funding to cope with the supposed "extra pressures" from new migrant communities.

Her calls were seized by unsympathetic commentators, who used them as an opportunity to denigrate the positive aspects of migration. But a number of migrant support organisations and trade unions networks criticised Spence's comments. David De Verny of the Lincolnshire Chaplaincy Services said that, "It's simply unacceptable that migrants get blamed for everything, from crime rates and strains on public services, to failures in the strawberry harvest."

More sympathetic media reports reinforced these positive voices. A Guardian [feature](#) (26 September) showed how migrants were more likely to be victims of crime rather than perpetrators. Even when there was an initial association of offending with the arrival of newcomers, often due to misunderstandings about the character of acceptable behaviour in British society, this has been susceptible to reduction through information campaigns directed at migrants. The South Division of the Lincolnshire police, for example, reported a significant decrease in crime levels following an active outreach programme from its Diversity Division. For similar reasons, drink-driving offences in Cambridgeshire had decreased by more than a third since last year

Drawing on experience in Lincolnshire, David De Verny points out that many petty incidents are reported as crimes and give rise to unnecessary stigmatisation of migrants. They become recorded as crimes, for example, when migrants are unable to provide evidence of

their residency status, or when they are unable to show their passports-a common problem as 30-40 per cent of workers report their passports being held by agents.

Nigel Costly, who works with migrant workers' networks on behalf of the South West TUC, linked offences to poor conditions of existence. He argues that, "A lot of neighbourhood crime stems back to migrants' exploitative conditions and the fact that many arrive with few social connections, and they are easily controlled by unscrupulous agents." He also says that where there have been efforts to unionise migrants, provide them with better working conditions and social support, involvement in crime decreases as vulnerability is reduced.

[Changing Social Fabric]

Though the population and social fabric of the east of England has changed significantly since 2004 with the accession of the new countries into the EU, it is thought that the changes can be accommodated with proper social planning, especially in the housing sector (see below). Cambridgeshire itself has one of the fastest growing populations in Britain, which is projected to rise by 12.5 per cent or 94,000 people in 2016. 69,000 or two-thirds of this figure are predicted to be from Eastern Europe.

These are regions of the country that have had little recent history of migration and migrant community, and they have grown to depend heavily on migrant labour. The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) has stated that migrant workers comprise between 50,000 and 80,000 of those economically active in the region.

Insecurity and a feeling of being unprotected by the police were frequently reported by migrants, and statistics show that racially aggravated violent assault and criminal damage in Cambridgeshire rose last year by 9 per cent. The case of two Polish men who were nearly killed by a gang of 10 teenagers in the Cambridgeshire town of Wiesbech is a rare but disturbing example of this. In her comment in [The Guardian](#) (23 September), Mary Riddell states "There is no immigration scandal, nor any doomsday scenario of over-population. Bogus fears are incubating greater crises." She goes on to mention that all but 3 per cent of Eastern European migrants are employed, 56 per cent of them plan to stay for under three months, and the overall rate of Eastern European migrants entering is actually slowing down. Migrant labour is an economic necessity in these rural areas. The EEDA has reported that migrants have contributed £360 million a year to the regional economy. According to the Commission for Rural Communities, of all the migrants registering with rural employers since May 2004, 33 per cent were registered in the manufacturing sector, including the food processing and packing industries, and 25 per cent were registered in agriculture and fishing. Clearly, these industries would not survive if it weren't for migrant labour.

[Underpaid Yet Overcharged-How Rural Migrants Live and Work]

Housing poses a considerable problem for migrants especially on their initial arrival. For example, they will often arrive with enough money to cover both the first month's rent and deposit required by landlords and accommodation agencies. The requirement to have references and bank details also contributes to difficulties they face in securing accommodation that is independent of their employer. Studies have shown that the mix of housing and employment provision by employers creates dependencies in which migrants become vulnerable to abusive employment relations and practices ([Anderson and Rogaly 2005](#)). (.pdf)

Migrants often live in over-crowded and privately rented accommodation-a larger potential hazard to their health than they themselves present to the communities they live in. The police have reported complaints against migrants regarding noise, parking, waste disposal, petty robbery and household disputes. But migrants generally have little choice in finding places to live, and they are pushed to live in housing conditions that strain their ability to cope with stress.

In areas of work, migrants face infringements on employment rights, including payment below minimum wage levels, the absence of overtime or holiday pay entitlements, lack of wage slips, and in some

instances, the withholding of passports. Poor employment practices faced by migrants include excessive non-statutory deductions for housing, transport, and in some cases, agency fees for the provision of work.

A significant skills mismatch exists for many migrants who are frequently overly skilled relative to the job and wage they are occupying. Finally, underpinning the challenge faced by migrants seeking fair work and housing conditions is the lack of widespread, enforceable penalties for offences and breaches against workers and tenants. Obscuring potential remedies are factors relating to the situation of migrants themselves, for example, temporary or unstable immigration statuses as well as seasonal work and experiencing work mobility within the UK.

Employers easily shirk their responsibilities by offering migrants poor conditions of work. In her comment in [The Guardian](#) (24 September), Madeleine Bunting highlights that an employer's chance of being inspected by the Health and Safety Executive is estimated to be once every 12-20 years, and once every 200 years for breaches in the minimum wage. Though systems are generally in place, the responsibility rests on the migrant worker knowing how to report a complaint.

[National, Local and Community Responses]

Media coverage particularly in the past few weeks have partly shown how the challenges arising from the situation of migrants living and/or working in rural areas have reached the agenda and attention of numerous organisations and efforts, including media coverage, academic research and investigation by local authorities and regional bodies.

The government-appointed rural advocate, Dr Stuart Burgess, announced in January 2007 that migrant workers in rural areas are one of the three priorities on the agenda of the Commission for Rural Areas. NGOs have also raised awareness of the situation faced by migrant workers. Trade unions have highlighted the work experiences of migrants and the absence of accessible rights. Churches increasingly play a role in the welfare of migrant workers and initiate debates on the nature of the work relations experienced by migrants. Regional and local bodies have also offered various responses, including seeking to disseminate information to both migrant workers and employers.

In the East of England, community responses to the issue headed by regional developmental agencies, district councils, trade unions, community-based organisations and churches have been particularly diverse.

[EEDA and Partners' Initiative]

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) launched the Mobile Europeans Taking Action (META) as the first part of the Migrant Gateway pilot project. The META Hotline is run by the Keystone Development Trust and Advice for Life. Hotline users are connected to an advisor who speaks Czech, English, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, or Russian, and who can provide information on topics such as rights to live and work in the UK, accommodation and housing, public services, driving in the UK, welfare benefits, language training and adult education providers.

The Trust's Chief Executive, Neil Stott, stated that they receive around 300 to 400 calls per month. The Trust is encouraging other UK Development agencies to 'buy a day' into the project and support its ongoing development. The hotline currently operates 16 hours per week, from 8am-12pm and 2pm-6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The META Hotline number is 0871 423 1334. The Trust is also exploring the possibility of developing housing solutions for mobile workers.

Since 2004, the EEDA and Keystone Development Trust have also operated a face-to-face service run for and by migrant workers. Staffed by a team of six individuals who are proficient in the Portuguese language and several East Europe languages, the service runs for 20 hours a week. Over the past three years, the team has seen over 4000 clients, and it has assisted on issues relating to

benefits, housing, national insurance and employers. Monthly information clinics are also run, which give the opportunity to the Department for Work and Pensions and the police to discuss various issues with migrants.

[District Council Project]

In Lincolnshire, the South Holland District Council initiated the Migrant Workers Project, which investigated the experiences of migrants arriving in the locality of Southern Lincolnshire. A report was published that detailed the research findings, entitled *The Dynamics of Migrant Labour in South Lincolnshire*. The website includes podcasts, which can be accessed by workers, employers and supervisors in a range of languages.

More recently, health and safety induction packs were made available by the Project, which included information regarding payslips and employment contracts. Another recently launched project offers migrants in the local area free life-skills training through the provision of mentoring, translation, interpretation services and English language lessons. Since its inception, however, the project has been considerably reduced.

[City Council Service]

An [initiative](#) currently taking place at the city level is the Peterborough City Council's Asylum and Migration Service-New Link-an institution that aims to create a new model for managing new arrivals by bringing together different partners working to build better lives in the city for all communities. New Link provides new arrivals to the city, including asylum seekers and migrant workers, with access to information on living in Peterborough and volunteering and employment opportunities. It conducts trainings, translation and interpreting services, and it also provides support on how to build a community-based association. Migrants can access office space, IT facilities and rooms to hold meetings and trainings at New Link. The initiative also works with host communities to promote positive thinking towards refugee, asylum and migration issues.

[Citizen's Advice Bureau]

Branches of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) are the frontline agencies responding to the needs and concerns of migrants in the East of England. Many branches have at least one Polish speaker working as an advisor. 25% of work at the local branches of CAB is related to the issues brought by migrant workers. This figure increases to 40% during sowing and harvest periods.

[TUC Advocacy & Outreach]

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) is the key national, trade union centre actively working on migrant workers' issues across Britain, including the rural areas. Through its affiliate members, TUC reaches out to migrant communities to recruit them as members. Through the union, migrants can get the support and help they need. Earlier this month, the TUC with Citizen's Advice issued [guidance for migrants](#) (.pdf) on living and working in the UK (.). The guide contains sections on housing, council tax, TV licenses, energy suppliers, as well as advice on how to access healthcare, open a bank account and find a suitable school. Its work advice covers national insurance and tax, the minimum wage, holidays, agency workers, and health and safety.

TUC also lobbies the government regionally and nationally, and in conjunction with the EEDA, is co-sponsoring a series of conferences promoting joint government action to meet the needs of migrants.

[Churches]

Churches are also responding to the needs of migrants, offering a wide range of support and playing a key role in directing new arrivals to local and national authorities and organizations from whom they can seek services and assistance. The Baptist church in Boston provides ESOL classes, as do Fydell House in Boston and Market House in Long Sutton. A similar project is being set up in Spalding. Last year, the Baptist church invited a Brazilian minister to work in the East of England with the aim of reaching out to Portuguese-speaking migrants. Churches and their members welcome individuals and offer them a safe space and a break from work and home. Migrants may

express their own faith in many of the churches.

David De Verny, himself an Anglican minister based in Lincolnshire, works to provide a welcome to new arrivals to the area. His activities amongst the wider circles of Lincolnshire society aim to increase awareness about the situation migrants face by explaining their presence and experiences to churches, employers, schools and colleges.

[From Regional Activism to National Lobbying]

Despite the hostility to migrants in rural areas that is often expressed in the national media, it is clear that influential currents exist in provincial cities and towns that do value migrants' contributions to economic vitality. Many institutions and individuals are working for changes to local infrastructure to ensure that workers, who might otherwise be placed in a vulnerable position, are provided with better support.

The experience of ongoing work in Lincolnshire has led David De Verny to call for a national coalition against the abuse of migrant workers. He believes that such a coalition should establish a national coordination to lobby government on issues such as enforcement of safe and fair working conditions, better housing, support for family welfare, and full access to health services.

The foundation for such a coalition against exploitation and abuse could be laid by churches, trade unions, and anti-poverty and social inclusion networks, as well as community activists currently providing advice and other support services to newly-arriving migrants.

Potential objectives for a national coalition are suggested by the existing work of local and regional groups. Objectives could include:

- **Provision of better information about migration flows, the forces driving migrants and the people involved.**
- **A positive focus on meeting the challenges of migration that is not tainted by a presumption that problems are overwhelming.**
- **Definition of strategies for getting constructive discussion on migration into the media and other public discussion forums.**
- **Action to encourage engagement with the situation of migrants on the part of local and regional government, the public services, and civil society organisations.**
- **Development of programmes of work that tackle specific issues in the work place, housing, education and language training needs, and threats to migrants' sense of public and private safety.**

Related Resources

Joint Academic Research: '[Fair enough? Central and East European migrants in low-wage employment in the UK.](#)'

(pdf)

COMPAS and TUC Study: '[Forced Labour and Migration to the UK](#)'

(pdf)

[Commission for Rural Communities](#)

[East England Development Agency](#)

South Holland District Council Report: "[The Dynamics of Migrant Labour in South Lincolnshire.](#)"

[The New Links Centre](#)

TUC and COMPAS Research: '[New EU Members? Migrant Workers' Challenges and Opportunities to Trade Unions: A Polish and Lithuanian Case Study](#)'

(pdf)

['Living and Working in the UK: Your Rights'](#)

(pdf)

[TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment](#)

The Guardian article: '[On the margins](#),' 26 September 2007.

The Guardian article: '[What about a welcome amid the warnings, chief constable?](#)' 23 September 2007.

The Guardian article: '[A curious irrationality grips the British when it comes to migrants](#)' 24 September 2007.

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[End of Section 1.2]

[1.3] UK Family Migration Policy

- **Increasing Restrictions**
- **Costs of Control**

British government policy generally stresses the importance of stable, supportive families, and of the need to provide support for children's development, emphasising that "every child matters." But migration policy presents a sharp contrast. Its focus is on managed economic migration, with new schemes for workers, a new points system planned to start in 2008 and further restriction on family migration. The traditional focus on spouses and children coming to join an initial breadwinner has completely disappeared, and the later focus on asylum seekers and the 'genuineness' of their claims has diminished.

This economic focus has directly and indirectly affected family migration. For decades, the largest numbers of family migrants have been spouses or fiancé(e)s coming to join a settled or British partner. The rules on this have been made more restrictive in recent years-with the claim being that this prevents abuse of family reunion procedures. The doubling of the one-year probationary period of permission granted to foreign spouses in April 2003 meant that it became harder for a foreign partner to keep up a deception about intention to live together. But it has also had the effect of keeping vulnerable people in abusive relationships for longer periods as the settled spouse threatens to initiate deportation. The raising of the minimum age for sponsors of spouses and for spouses from abroad to 18-a policy designed to protect young people from being pressured into marriage in communities where it is normal for family members to arrange marriages-has also restricted numbers and choices.

[Increasing Restrictions]

The increasingly onerous requirements on a partner applying for permission to remain, or applying for settlement after a two-year probationary period, continue to grow. When the spouse from abroad applies to settle, he or she is now required to produce at least 20 official documents over the two-year period, showing the names of either or both members of the couple. Few couples know of this requirement in advance, and at the time of application, it becomes almost impossible to meet. It also militates against a traditional joint family way of life, when two or three generations of a family live together and many of the utility bills, council tax demands and other bills are addressed to the patriarch of the family.

A further rule change in April 2007, made with only a month's notice, requires anyone between the ages of 18 and 65 applying for settlement to pass the Home Office computer test of knowledge of language and life in the UK. The intention of this test, first introduced for those applying for British citizenship, is to help migrants understand the society in which they live and to be able to participate fully in it. But with no preparatory period, family members were unable to prepare for it and qualify for settlement. At the same time, the fee for settlement was more than doubled to £750, causing real financial difficulties for some families. In addition, settlement visa fees abroad have increased to £500.

[Costs of Control]

The Home Office openly admits that fees for settlement of family members, and for citizenship applications, are set artificially high in order to pay the expenses of enforcing immigration control. Once again, this shows the low priority put on migrant family life. There is no reason why the costs of enforcing control should be borne by family migrants, rather than the whole of society.

The Home Office plans a further consultation in the autumn on increasing the minimum age for a spouse and sponsor to 21, and requiring spouses from abroad to pass some form of English test before arrival. This barrier would militate against poorer people from poorer countries, where the opportunities for learning English are fewer.

Rules for children joining parents, or elderly parents joining adult children, have not been significantly changed for decades. There has been little discussion on the rigid cut-off point of 18 for children joining parents and the restrictive rules for elderly relatives. But in some way, the immigration authorities have recognised the value of families. The concession that children born here or who came at a very young age and who live here for more than seven years should not be deported, and that their parent(s) may be allowed to also stay, recognises the importance of families in community cohesion.

The 2003 'family settlement exercise,' whereby families who applied for asylum before October 2000 and have a child under 18 were given settlement even if the asylum application was refused, recognised the roots they had put down and cleared some of the huge backlog of undecided cases. The Home Office estimates there may still be 450,000 to 500,000 individuals and families in the UK without any kind of immigration status, and it will take up to five years to decide on all the cases. This delay does not provide any kind of security, and the harsher policies to deter illegal working mean that for years, families may exist in severe penury or fear.

The migration of families is important to migrants themselves and to a significant proportion of society. Those coming to join families may stay significantly longer than economic migrants. The government, therefore, needs to consider the social and personal aspects of migration instead of simply aiming for the maximisation of its economic benefits.

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[2] Migrant Voices, Migrant Campaigns

- [\[2.1\] Medact Campaign on Immigration & Health Services](#)
- [\[2.2\] Migrants' Continue Pizza Chain Dispute](#)
- [\[2.3\] Women for Refugee Women](#)

[2.1] Medact Launches Petition Campaign Against Immigration Controls on Health Services

The global health charity, Medact, has criticised government plans to introduce identity checks for primary health care services and impose fees on refugees, refused asylum seekers and other undocumented migrants.

The proposals for immigration checks in GP practices were discussed in September's Migrants' Rights News ([link](#)), and they are contained in the Home Office strategy paper, [Enforcing the Rules](#) (.pdf), published in March 2007.

Medact states that the proposals would:

- **Deny vulnerable and often destitute individuals the chance to identify serious and often life-threatening conditions, which need immediate treatment.**
- **Contribute to maternal and infant mortality by delaying or preventing access to maternity care.**
- **Condemn many children to a life without primary healthcare, inevitably resulting in serious illness and death among some.**
- **Increase the likelihood that serious communicable diseases, including TB and HIV, remain undiagnosed and thereby increase the transmission risks and endangering public health.**
- **Remove an important source of support for women experiencing domestic abuse.**
- **Increase avoidable costs to the NHS resulting from late diagnosis and additional administration, and increase avoidable admissions to hospital.**
- **Overburden Accident and Emergency Departments both with those who should be treated at significantly lower costs in primary care, and those who become seriously ill as primary care was unavailable to them.**

- Deny GPs their current discretion to judge how best to meet the healthcare needs of their local population.
- Breach the UK's obligations to basic international human rights standards and entrench discrimination in the NHS.

Medact is challenging the introduction of these measures with a petition campaign. The Medact [petition](#) intends to "convince the Home Office and Department of Health that a policy of excluding vulnerable migrants from NHS care is neither acceptable nor workable." It says that any change in the regulations on primary care access "must be preceded by a full Health Impact Assessment."

The Newham Primary Care Trust (PCT) published a [health-impact assessment](#) (.pdf) on an earlier and similar set of proposals in June 2006. The publication set out a number of concerns along the lines indicated in the Medact petition. In February 2007, the Newham PCT and MRN, sponsored a London [seminar](#) (.pdf) addressing issues related to primary care services and immigrants

Community-based campaigning against the measures is also underway in some areas of the country. As was also reported in last month's Migrants Rights News, a migrants' group in Manchester has written to their PCT to ask their views on regulations that would restrict access on the part of migrants to health care services. A reply from the PCT indicates that this would not be welcomed and that a health impact assessment would be needed to consider the practical implications.

Related Resources

[Medact Petition](#)

[Home Office Report: Enforcing the Rules](#)

(pdf)

[Newham PCT Health Impact Assessment](#)

(pdf)

[Report of Newham PCT & MRN Seminar on Primary Care Services and Migrants](#)

(.doc)

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[End of Section 2.1]

[2.2.] Migrant Workers Continue Pizza Chain Dispute

A dispute, which began in August in the Derby branch of the pizza chain Dominos, has continued over the summer, with the latest claims of migrants' exploitation surfacing in Wolverhampton.

The newly-merged trade union, Unite, produced evidence of deductions amounting to £50 per week from Eastern European migrants in the summer. This sparked a storm of counter-claims by the company alleging that the union was acting unfairly. The company stated that its dismissal of its eight Hungarian national workers was not connected to their speaking out against "appalling conditions," claiming that dismissal was warranted as the staff had refused to register on the Home Office's Workers Registration Scheme.

But the company's claims were challenged weeks later with the emergence of evidence that workers in Wolverhampton had been earning negative wages due to salary deductions. One former delivery worker, Tibor Sorosi, had received deductions amounting to £1,700. The company said these costs related to the purchasing and insuring of the car he had used to deliver pizzas.

Other workers in Wolverhampton said they had no employment contracts, and they had not received wages for the first week of their work on the grounds that they had been given unpaid training for their jobs.

The dispute was reported on BBC2's 'Newsnight' programme back in July, and publicity encouraged other bodies, including the Derby City Council, local MP Margaret Beckett and the police to speak out against migrants' exploitation.

At the end of September, the Transport and General Workers' Union

(TGWU) section of Unite claimed a victory on behalf of the workers for its campaign, with management agreeing to review employment practices and end unreasonable deductions from wages. But the union said it was receiving more evidence of migrants' subjection to abusive conditions, and they called on the government to take necessary preventative action.

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[End of Section 2.2]

[2.3] Women for Refugee Women

A leading campaign group, Women for Refugee Women ([WfRW](#)), has emerged in recent months, bringing together women who stand in solidarity with women refugees. Its objectives are to raise awareness of the situation of women fleeing gender-based persecution, including rape, 'honour' crimes, and female genital mutilation, and promote the human rights of women seeking asylum in the UK.

The group also seeks to raise awareness of the humanitarian impact on women of enforced destitution, indefinite immigration detention and violent deportation arising from UK immigration policy.

In July 2006, WfRW organised an event at the Institute for Contemporary Arts in London, bringing together women working in the media, politics, law and the arts to discuss possible contributions to these areas towards the improved understanding of women's experience of persecution and how this generates refugee movements. The event was followed up with a second meeting in March 2007 in which refugee women predominated and directed discussion on engagements with women journalists and lawyers.

Part of WfRW's work involves lobbying and briefing MPs on women refugee issues. The campaign group's website reports on meetings with Barbara Follet and other women MPs. A meeting with minister Vera Baird, who oversees the government's plans to reduce legal aid spending on refugee cases, led to questions being raised on how the UK would meet its obligations under human rights law should there be reductions in money required to pay for legal assistance.

The group's website provides a good archive of media reports on issues concerning refugee women and UK policy. It also provides accounts of individual asylum cases and reports on upcoming events and issues requiring action from supporters.

Related Resources

Women for Refugee Women Website
<http://www.refugeewomen.com/about.php>

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[End of section 2.3]

[3] Research and Advocacy-Who is Saying What About Immigration

- [\[3.1\]](#) **'Progressive Approach' to Migration Called for by Compass, Barrow Cadbury Trust and MRN**
- [\[3.2\]](#) **Migration and Housing Market Report Says Migrants Do Not Threaten Local Residents**
- [\[3.3\]](#) **Polish and Lithuanian Migrants Present Challenges and Opportunities for Unions Says New TUC Study**
- [\[3.4\]](#) **Employers Advice Groups Says 25,000 Care Workers Face Removal**

Publication on Immigration and Progressive Politics;
Report on Immigration and Housing Markets; TUC Report on Polish and Lithuanian Migrants; Immigration Newsletter Highlights Care Workers' Plight

[3.1] 'Progressive Approach' to Migration Called for by Compass, Barrow Cadbury Trust and MRN

A new pamphlet, Towards a Progressive Immigration Policy, emerging from collaboration between Compass-Directions for the Democratic Left, the Barrow Cadbury Trust and the MRN was launched at a fringe meeting at the Labour party conference on 26 September.

The pamphlet consists of twelve essays on aspects of progressive politics and the ways it can be made to relate to immigration policy. MRN director Don Flynn and one of the editors of the publication, says in the opening chapter that what is currently called progressivism has been ambiguous in its attitude to immigration in recent years. Progressivism as it currently stands holds that it is sufficient to declare that immigration can be made to work for the good of the British economy as measured by profitability and gross domestic product growth rates.

This emphasis of economic performance has meant that progressivism has failed to provide a broader base of argument in support of migration across a wider range of social policy issues. The challenges which immigration undoubtedly presents to society are discussed as intractable problems and dangers which produce victims and losers at every point. After a few years of experimenting with policies that open the system up to higher levels of migration, progressive politicians sink back into a mood of despondency when the simplistic 'good for Britain' message fails to catch on.

The essays in this collection investigate the political responses to migration in recent years. Compass Chair Neal Lawson criticises the centre left for collapsing into an anti-immigration stance in the manner exemplified by the editor of Prospect magazine, David Goodhart. Other articles examine immigration as an aspect of globalisation, what migrants are doing in economic and social terms, and issues related to workplace, housing, schools, the health service, and what it calls 'habits of solidarity'-meaning the capacity of civil society to respond to migration challenges.

Other contributing authors to the pamphlet are Stephen Castles, Laurence Cooley, Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, Bernard Ryan, Sue Lukes, Rob Berkeley, Wayne Farah, Sukhvinder Stubbs, Sarah Kyambi, Jon Cruddas and Leonie McCarthy.

A copy of Towards a Progressive Immigration Policy can also be obtained at £5.00 (including postage) from 'Progressive Immigration', MRN, Club Union House, 253-254 Upper Street, London N1 1RY. Cheques are payable to 'MRN'.

Reductions available for bulk orders - email info@migrantsrights.org.uk for more details.

You can download a copy directly from the link below.

Related Resources

Compass, Barrow Cadbury Trust and MRN publication: [Towards a Progressive Immigration Policy](#). (42 page .pdf)

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[End of section 3.1]

[3.2] Migration and Housing Market Report Says Migrants Do Not Threaten Local Residents

A recently released report, titled 'Economic Migration to Housing Market Renewal Areas in North West England-Opportunity or Threat?' concluded that migrants posed no threat to local communities. Commissioned by the Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory (MSIO), it was written by Simon Pemberton and Claire Stevens and released in September 2007.

As increasing numbers of migrants from A8 countries are thought to be moving into housing market renewal areas, the report considered the impact of economic migrants from the newly acceded countries of Eastern Europe (referred to as 'A8' countries) on local housing,

employment markets, access to services and community cohesion. It focused on areas marked as 'Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder areas' of North West England-NewHeartlands (Merseyside-covering parts of Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral), and Oldham and Rochdale.

The research revealed that recent migration to these areas did not generally pose a problem to the community, as migrants did not appear to displace existing residents from available housing. Migrants tended to accept housing that is in low demand among local tenants, and they were actually helping to regenerate properties which were previously 'hard to let'.

The majority of migrants interviewed decided to live in these areas as they had previous contacts with friends and family, and they felt they were able to attain a higher standard of living for relatively lower costs. Though approximately half of all migrants interviewed stated they planned to stay less than three months, 57% had lived in the areas for over a year, and 27% had been in residence for up to three years.

Problems identified by the research included the increased risk that unsuitable properties are being let to migrants to maximise rental income.

Another significant finding was that a minority of migrants are starting to buy property, and this could bring marked positive changes by promoting economic development of the areas. It could also have a potential negative impact of leading to the displacement of existing residents from housing, services and employment, and hence, it might "work against community cohesion in the longer term." The report suggested that if and when more migrants' property purchasing power increases, additional funding arrangements by HMR programmes could help respond to such changes.

The research also examined the impact of migrants from A8 countries on the economy and public services in the specified areas. Most migrants, those in the public and community sectors and existing residents interviewed felt that there had not been any significant job displacement for local workers caused by migrants.

There was also no substantive evidence found of additional migrant-related pressures on public services, although a higher demand for ESOL classes was reported among education providers. Most migrants said they made relatively little use of NHS services, often preferring to travel back to their home countries for treatment. But the Kensington area within NewHeartlands stood out from the other areas as it reported an increase in family settlement and the enrolment of migrant children at local infant and primary schools. The report suggested the allocation of additional funding for schools so that they could provide more classroom assistants and mentors to respond to these changes.

Police in all the areas reported that efforts had been made to contact and liaise with A8 migrant communities. An important finding was that despite isolated incidents, "there was no suggestion that A8 migration had led to any significant impact on crime and community safety in any of the HMR areas under consideration."

Related Resources

MSIO Policy Report: '[Economic Migration to Housing Market Renewal Areas in North West England-Opportunity or Threat?](#)' September 2007 (pdf)

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[End of section 3.2]

[3.3] Polish and Lithuanian Migrants Present Challenges and Opportunities for Unions Says New TUC Study

New EU Members: Migrant Workers' Challenges and Opportunities to UK Trades Unions-A Polish and Lithuanian Case Study was

published by the TUC in September. Written by Bridget Anderson, Nick Clark and Violetta Parutis, it sets out the findings of a survey of 508 Polish and Lithuanian migrants who requested information leaflets from the TUC after the accession of their countries to membership of the EU in May 2004.

The survey provides evidence of the exploitation of migrants from Eastern Europe by British businesses, and sets out the following main findings:

- **over half the respondents said that they had encountered problems at work in the UK either currently or in the past;**
- **nearly a quarter reported having no written contract, a figure which rose to nearly a third amongst agency workers;**
- **over a quarter highlighted problems with payment, including not being paid for hours worked, discrepancies between pay and payslips, unauthorised deductions, and errors in pay calculation; and**
- **ten times as many migrants as indigenous workers were paid less than the national minimum wage.**

The report findings challenges the assertion among some that jobs done by migrants are marginal and could be dispensed without damage to the overall health of the economy are challenged by the findings of the report. In contrast to claims that firms employing migrants contribute little to economic growth, the report found that the companies the migrants complained about were profitable with one making over £45 million a year. Company CEOs were receiving salaries of between £100,000 and over £600,000 a year.

Tied accommodation had returned to business practices in a big way, with this being an important mechanism to increase employer power over workers. 31 per cent of migrants surveyed were living in accommodation that was found for them or provided by their employers, and over 40 per cent of those working for more than 48 hours a week were in tied accommodation.

The unlawful payment of wages below the minimal level was found to be much more extensive amongst migrant workers than it was for residents. Across all categories, 1.3 per cent of jobs in Britain pay less than minimum wage rates: for migrants the figure ranged from 11 to 14 per cent.

The report concludes that migrant workers need assistance to secure their rights, and that trade unions and advice agencies should work together to provide such support.

Related Resources

New EU Members: Migrant Workers' [Challenges and Opportunities to UK Trades Unions-A Polish and Lithuanian Case Study](#) (pdf)

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[3.4] Employers Advice Groups Says 25,000 Care Workers Face Removal

Immigration Matters Newsletter, which advises employers on matters relating to the employment of migrant workers, has calculated that up to 25,000 workers currently in the UK will be required to leave the UK or face removal as a result of government changes to the work permit rules in the employment of senior carers working in residential care homes.

The plight of the care workers was covered in the September issue of Migrants Rights News. Changes to the rules on the skill content of senior carers had produced a situation in which those needing to renew their existing residence permits to complete their final 12 months of 'leave to remain as workers' would find their applications

being refused by Work Permits UK (WPUK), the Border and Immigration Agency's work permit agency. In what the BIA described as a concession to employers concerned about the disruption of continuity of care, the WPUK said that they would grant extensions providing that the employer provided evidence that the worker was earning a minimum of £14,600 per annum.

Immigration Matters believes that very few owners of care homes would be prepared to pay wages at this level. It says that it is receiving "hundreds" of enquiries everyday from carers worried about the prospect of losing their jobs and removal from the UK. It recommends that people in this position should not quit their jobs, but seek legal advice on their position. They should also join a trade union and set about lobbying MPs about the predicament they have been placed in.

Related Resources

Immigration Matters Newsletter
<http://www.immigrationmatters.co.uk/> for more information.

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[End of section 3.4]

[4] International news

- [\[4.1\] European Commission Seeks Role in Policing Migration](#)
- [\[4.2\] Council of Europe View of Regularisation Programme](#)
- [\[4.3\] Radio1812 organises global broadcast for migrant rights](#)

[4.1] European Commission Seeks Role in Policing Migration

The European Commission (EC) continued with its push to define a role for itself in the field of immigration policy during a 'high-level conference on legal migration, which took place under the aegis of the Portuguese presidency of the EU in Lisbon in September.

The conference considered a newly published OECD report entitled *Gaining from Migration: Towards a New Mobility System*. The report claims to offer a "road-map" to a new system of labour mobility which proceeds from the basis that migrants can be made to work for everyone's benefit—sending and receiving countries and the migrants themselves. A presentation by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría clarified the scope of international organisations' ambitions to achieve the total management of migration. He said that institutions need to:

"look at migration from different angles, ranging from the education and integration of immigrants to matching of skills and labour market needs and fostering economic development in the origin countries. This will entail looking at the best ways to achieve an orderly migration flow management and how to deal more effectively with illegal migration and the unlawful employment of foreigners."

The challenge to work on this basis was taken up in a speech by Franco Frattini, EC Vice President and Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. Amongst his concerns was the high component of 'unskilled' labour in EU migration flows, which he claimed made up the majority of all new arrivals. The added value of a European approach would, he said, be a reversal of these proportions, with skilled workers becoming the majority of migrants in EU managed policies.

Europe would tackle these issues, according to Mr. Frattini, through improved coordination of its efforts to combat irregular migration and "illegal working," enhanced identification of the areas of demand for migrants across Europe, and setting up channels to permit entry. He cited the recent opening of a Centre for Migration Management in Bamako, Mali as an example of good practice, as it "foster(s) efficient management of the human, financial and technical value of Malians abroad and monitor(s) the flow of remittances." Centres like this could influence migration patterns and also serve as a reception mechanism

for new arrivals.

Mr. Frattini advised the conference to look towards two new legislative proposals that would be issued by the EU in October: a general Framework Directive on the basic socio-economic rights of all third-country workers, and a Directive on the admission of highly-skilled migrants. In 2008, the Commission will propose an additional Directive on the admission of seasonal workers.

He stressed, from the Commission's point of view, the need to tackle "illegal migration" as the "other side of the coin." A key aspect of the work of the EU would be around proposals, published in May, for a Directive that harmonised sanctions against employers providing work to undocumented migrants.

A further component of the EU approach to migration policy is integration, the possibility of which will be available to "people who are highly motivated and strongly desire to be a part of the societies they live in." The implication of this is that all candidates for entry into new managed migration schemes will need to demonstrate a level of commitment to life in Europe which might encroach on the continuation of attachments to countries and cultures of origin.

On the basis of descriptions of international institutions provided by senior officials, there are grounds for concern about the insistence of highly-detailed controls and strong powers being invested in authorities to act against individuals breaching regulations. The debate in Europe is still in a comparatively early phase. But should Mr. Frattini's programme of work later form the basis for practical measures of migration management, a greater demand would need to be placed to ensure the adequate protection of rights of migrants.

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[4.2] Council of Europe Meeting Takes a Positive View of Regularisation Programmes

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe met in Strasbourg on 1 October to consider a report entitled Regularisation Programmes for Irregular Migrants, prepared by Mr John Greenway, a UK Conservative party member of the European Democrat Group.

The report identifies 23 regularisation programmes run by nine Council of Europe states during the period 1981 to 2006. The states concerned are France (two programmes), Belgium (one), Greece (five), Italy (five), Luxembourg (one), Portugal (three), Spain (six), and the UK (one). The report estimates that more than 3.5 million people have benefited from regularisation under these schemes during this time.

The report states that despite the frequent resort to regularisation by states in Europe, the measure remains controversial and little has been done to work out a programme methodology to achieve maximum benefits.

It concludes that regularisation should be acknowledged as a policy which can have a constructive effect combined with measures such as the protection of migrants' rights, increased internal and external immigration controls, and return programmes. The report argues that the prevention of exploitation should be an objective of immigration regulation, and to increase the level of protection available to migrant workers, properly coordinated measures are needed.

The report does not commit itself to any particular proposals. Instead, it sets out a number of principles identified as features of good regularisation programmes. These include:

- a. Strengthening the capacity of the administration to deal with the anticipated volume of applications;**
- b. Reduction of administrative requirements to a minimum;**
- c. Checks against fraud in procedures;**
- d. Consultation with employers' and employee organisations, and groups representing irregular**

migrants;
**e. Proper explanation of the purpose of the scheme
 and the benefits to be obtained for the general public.**

The report recommended a programme of work aimed at examining and analysing the situation of irregular migration into Europe and its related state policies. It called for this work to involve a major hearing on the issue of regularisation programmes involving not only state departments but also representatives of irregular migrants, trades unions and other civil society organisations.

The same day the report came to the Parliamentary Assembly (1 October), the Council of Europe organised a consultation with civil society organisations working with undocumented migrants in Strasbourg. This half-day session was hosted by the French migrants' rights organisation Cimade, and PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants. MRN director and PICUM Chair Don Flynn addressed this event, welcoming the Parliamentary Assembly initiative and call for more serious consideration for regularisation programmes.

Related Resources

[Speech of OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría](#)
[Speech of European Commissioner Franco Frattini](#)
[Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report: Regularisation Programmes for Irregular Migrants](#)

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[4.3] Radio1812 organises global broadcast for migrant rights

Radio [1812/2007](#) invites you to Tune in on [International Migrants Day!](#)

Radio 1812 is a global event dedicated to International Migrants Day, producing and broadcasting programmes from radios worldwide.

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[5] Up and Coming Events and Activities

29/10/07 to 26/11/07 [Autumn European Interdisciplinary Seminar Series: Perspectives on European Migration](#)

30/10/07 [Health of Black and Ethnic Minority Communities](#)

03/11/07 [Conference: Migrant Workers in the East of England: Sharing good practice and celebrating achievements organised by MENTER](#)

15/11/07 [Conference: Making Rights Real -A national conference for voluntary and community organisations working to tackle inequality and promote human rights](#)

19/11/07 [Conference: Extending choice and participation in housing for black and minority ethnic communities](#)

Full events listings:
<http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/events.htm>

Send us events information
<http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/form/events.htm>:

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[End of section 5]

[6] Jobs

[Volunteer wanted: Asylum Rights Campaign, co-ordinator](#) Closing date: 23/10/07

MENTER: [Regional Marketing Officer, Cambridge](#) - Closing date:
29/10/07

Jobs listings:

<http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/opportunities.htm>

Send us job information via:

<http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/form/jobs.htm>

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[7] Your feedback and comments

· [\[7.1\]](#) **How do you rate this newsletter?**

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Relevance:* . 1 2 3 4 5

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Please enter your email address here

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