

The housing pathways of new immigrants

David Robinson, Kesia Reeve and Rionach Casey

This research explores the arrival experiences and settlement stories of new immigrants.

The study focuses on the housing experiences of new immigrants and considers the consequences of their arrival for local housing markets and neighbourhoods. Rich insights are gathered through in-depth, qualitative interviews with new immigrants living in Sheffield. The study explores their:

- housing options and choices, and their experiences of living in different situations
- perspectives on different places and the importance of residential location to their experience of living in the UK
- engagement and interaction with the housing system and resulting patterns of residential mobility and immobility.

It concludes by outlining the policy challenges raised by the research.



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Executive summary

Background and research approach

This report presents the findings from a study that sought to venture beyond speculation and explore the arrival experiences and early settlement stories of new immigrants. In particular, attention focused on the housing experiences of new immigrants who had arrived into the UK in the previous five years, their engagement with the housing system and the consequences for local housing markets and neighbourhoods.

All fieldwork was carried out in Sheffield, a city with a long history as a destination for new immigrants. Data collection focused on in-depth, face-to-face discussions with new immigrants and involved the collection of detailed housing pathways from the time that respondents had arrived in the UK. In total, 39 new immigrants who had arrived into the UK in the previous five years were interviewed (ten Liberian, ten Pakistani, ten Polish and nine Somali). Participants included people who had arrived into the UK seeking asylum, people granted refugee status prior to arriving in the UK, migrant workers and people entering the UK on a spouse visa.

The housing careers of new immigrants

The housing careers of new immigrants were characterised by some familiar situations, consistent with the early-phase housing careers of previous immigration streams into the UK. However, the contemporary political and legal context, and the particular bundles of rights and opportunities associated with different immigration pathways, were also revealed to be promoting clear distinctions in the settlement experiences of different new immigrant populations.

The careers of migrant workers arriving from Poland paralleled the well-trodden path taken by many new immigrants who arrive into the UK and are reliant upon their own resources to secure and maintain accommodation. In contrast, refugees have a right of access to social housing and this opportunity was found to have proved critical to the efforts of new immigrants from Somalia and Liberia to secure longer-term, permanent accommodation. These respondents tended to be living in relatively unpopular, low-demand accommodation on peripheral local authority estates, in a clear break with the settlement patterns of previous immigration streams into the

city. The settlement patterns of new immigrants arriving into the UK from Pakistan on a spouse visa were found to be reinforcing the established settlement patterns of this long-standing immigrant population – respondents moving in with a spouse and his/her family.

Housing situations and experiences

Most of the refugees and migrant workers interviewed had moved into temporary accommodation situations upon first arriving in the UK and into Sheffield. The situations endured and experiences reported were consistent with established understanding of the problems encountered living in temporary accommodation. However, while Liberian respondents typically lived in these situations for a matter of days and Polish respondents often reported choosing to ‘put up’ with such situations (to minimise costs and maximise capital accumulation), Somali respondents were forced to endure these circumstances for, on average, 13 months, while their asylum application was being processed.

Perhaps a more striking finding is that these problems often continued after new immigrants had moved into more secure, long-term accommodation (for example, a social housing tenancy). At the point when it might be presumed that new immigrants had finally secured a settled situation and targeted support and assistance were no longer required, participants were reporting problems of insecurity and poor living conditions. Basic material needs were often not satisfied and security of tenure often proved to be an illusion, with new immigrants struggling to maintain, and in some cases losing, their place in the housing system and becoming homeless.

The residential spaces of new immigration

Place was an issue of varying importance to the residential priorities of different new immigrants. Some new immigrants were focused on negotiating access to particular kinds of place. Established contact zones – locations with a history of accommodating diversity and difference – proved particularly attractive to many participants. These new immigrants were found to have rapidly developed nuanced mental maps of the city that included notions of safe places and hostile spaces. Other new immigrants were less concerned about their place of residence and appeared unaware or unconcerned about the contours of difference manifest in different neighbourhoods across the city, focusing their attention, instead, on the

particulars of their housing situation. Whatever their attitude towards different parts of the city, place proved to be a critical determinant of the experiences of new immigrants, more extreme problems arising for new immigrants settled in locations with little previous history of accommodating diversity and difference.

Engaging with the housing system

Upon arrival in the UK, new immigrants possess a relatively limited package of housing rights and opportunities. Through time, this package of rights and opportunities was found to shift and change, affected by events and incidents both within and beyond the household unit, ranging from resource accumulation by individual new immigrants through to government policy and law making. The result is something akin to a continuum of individual agency within the housing system, ranging from relatively *constrained/dependent* engagement upon arrival in the UK through to increasingly *unconstrained/independent* engagement, as resources and rights are gradually accumulated.

Policy challenges

The final chapter of the report reflects on the key points of note to emerge from the study and provides some broader reflections regarding the policy challenges raised by the housing experiences and housing market consequences of new immigration. To summarise, the latter include:

- reforming the policy framework and legal system governing new immigration to minimise the multiple disadvantages experienced by new immigrants
- limiting the likelihood of new immigrants experiencing ongoing disadvantage long after their arrival into the UK
- understanding and managing the social dynamics of new immigration in different localities
- recognising the benefits of settlement in established areas of diversity and the challenges raised by dispersal to locations with little previous history of accommodating difference

The housing pathways of new immigrants

- maximising the potential benefits of new immigration in low-demand housing markets – to reinvigorate demand and underpin sustainability – while managing community relations and minimising tensions
- managing the increasing mismatch between supply and demand in ‘tight’ housing markets, where increasing competition for the scarce resource that is housing can drive down housing conditions and fuel hostility towards new immigrants.

1 Background and research approach

Introduction

For all the heated debate about the impacts and consequences of new immigration in the UK, surprisingly little is known about the realities of this dynamic and ongoing process. Evidence has slowly begun to emerge, but the lives of new immigrants, their arrival experiences, settlement patterns and material situations still remain largely hidden and the local implications of new immigration remain a point of conjecture rather than informed understanding. This has not stopped often fevered media speculation about the motives of new immigrants, the priorities of statutory agencies and service providers and the consequences for long-standing residents. Much of this increasingly divisive debate has focused on the issue of housing and questions about who gets what and why, and the knock-on effects for local neighbourhoods, in terms of population change, community relations and sustainability.

This report presents the findings from a study that sought to venture beyond such speculation and explore the arrival experiences and early settlement stories of new immigrants. In particular, attention focused on the engagement of new immigrants with the housing system during the first five years of settlement in the UK, related housing experiences and the consequences for local housing markets and neighbourhoods. Specifically, the research set out to explore four key questions:

- What are the housing pathways of new immigrants (from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds arriving from different locations) during their early years of settlement in the UK?
- In what ways do the resources, priorities, perceptions and identities of new immigrants shape these pathways?
- What challenges and barriers do new immigrants encounter in meeting their housing requirements and achieving their aspirations?
- What are the relationships between the housing pathways of new immigrants and the dynamics of local housing markets?

This chapter provides an overview of the approach taken to address these key research questions. Following clarification of the study's definition of 'new immigration' and a brief introduction to a key concept underpinning the research (the

housing pathway), discussion concentrates on the research approach in terms of who was interviewed and what they were asked. Subsequent chapters focus on the findings to emerge from the study, with discussion organised into five chapters:

- *Housing careers* – this chapter provides an overview of the housing careers of the new immigrants interviewed. The routes followed through different housing situations and locations are charted and differences between the different new immigrant groups are revealed and explored.
- *Housing situations and experiences* – this chapter explores the housing experiences of new immigrants, with a particular focus on efforts to negotiate access to more secure, longer-term housing situations and the issues of security and living conditions.
- *The residential spaces of new immigration* – this chapter focuses on new immigrant perspectives regarding place and perceptions of different localities within Sheffield. The critical importance of place as a determinant of the settlement experiences of new immigrants is also explored.
- *Engaging with the housing system* – this chapter explores the engagement and interaction of new immigrants with the housing system. Attention focuses on the how, why and when of residential mobility and immobility.
- *Conclusions and reflections* – this final chapter takes a step back from the detailed discussion of data to reflect upon the key points of significance that can be taken away from the study.

Some issues of definition: what is new immigration and who are the new immigrants?

Immigrant, in the context of international migration, is a catch-all term that refers to all people who have migrated across national boundaries and who have arrived into and are now resident in a new country. It is therefore a label that describes people from a wide range of different ethnic, national, social, cultural and economic backgrounds, ranging from business executives moving between key nodes of the world economy through to people fleeing violence, oppression and civil war and who have been granted leave to remain in the UK after passing through the asylum system.

This report focuses on immigrants legally entitled to be resident in the UK, who have recently settled in the country and who arrived into a situation of social and economic disadvantage. The project is not concerned, therefore, with the experiences of migrating business executives. Rather, it is interested in the experiences of refugees granted leave to remain in the UK after passing through the asylum system, migrant workers from the European Union and beyond travelling to the UK to work in relatively low-paid sectors of the employment market and chain migrants migrating to join family members already in the UK.

It also important to emphasise the report's focus on *new* immigration. Of course, all immigrants are at some point in time 'new' to the UK, raising difficult questions about when a new immigrant comes to be identified as merely 'an immigrant', or as a member of a minority ethnic group or even as just a British citizen. These complexities can be managed, however, by clarifying that this report is concerned only with the recent phase of immigration to the UK about which much has been said but little is known.

Immigration into Britain during the last ten years has been distinct and different from what has gone before. It has involved a far more diverse range of people than was the case, for example, during the early post-war period, when immigration was dominated by people from the New Commonwealth (the Caribbean, India and Bangladesh) and Pakistan. Smaller numbers of people are arriving from a wider range of national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and diverse locations that they have left for a variety of reasons. They are also arriving into a very different socio-economic, cultural and, perhaps most importantly, political context (Robinson and Reeve, 2006). This point is well illustrated by the fact that prior to 1993 there was no legislation directly relating to the issue of asylum in the UK. Since 1993 there have been six major Acts of Parliament relating to immigration and asylum. Related to these legislative developments has been the construction of a new infrastructure to support, monitor and police people seeking asylum. Central has been the establishment of NASS (National Asylum Support Service) in 2000, the government department responsible for supporting destitute asylum seekers (asylum seekers who do not have enough money to support themselves), a role previously fulfilled by local authorities. Meanwhile, the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement allowing for the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons within the European Union was signed in 1992. In 2004 ten new countries joined the EU and their residents acquired the right to live and work in the UK (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and in 2007 Romania and Bulgaria also joined the EU, although restrictions were placed on the right of nationals from these states to work in the UK, under transitional arrangements put in place by the UK Government.

It is the housing situations and experiences of these people – migrant workers, refugees and chain migrants joining family in the UK – that represent the focus of this study.

A housing pathways approach

Before discussing the specifics of who was interviewed and the practicalities of how they were recruited and what questions were asked, it is necessary to spend a little time talking about the conceptual thinking that underpinned the research and framed analysis.

The research approach focused on collecting the housing careers of new immigrants: the sequence of dwellings that a household occupies during its history (Pickles and Davies, 1991). This involved the team charting the series of dwellings (size, design, tenure and location) that immigrant households occupied in their early years of settlement. Common patterns and linkages between this housing career and life course events (such as changes in immigration status, employment career and household structure) and associated shifts in choices and priorities were mapped. Analysis also sought to expose and understand both the ethnic and cultural priorities that inform decisions and the framework of constraints in the housing field and wider society within which strategies are devised and actions taken. Meeting the research objectives, however, required moving beyond the limits of housing careers analysis.

The analysis of housing careers is closely associated with the constrained choices perspective, which has dominated analysis of the housing situations and experiences of minority ethnic populations over the last 20 or more years. Involved is the recognition that minority ethnic people, largely as a consequence of racism, exercise housing choices within a greater series of constraints than the majority ethnic, White British population. The constrained choices perspective has been embraced by researchers seeking a resolution to concerns about the determinism of the constraints debate and the voluntarism and associated cultural stereotyping and victim blaming of choice perspectives. More recently, however, it has been criticised for inhibiting recognition of the fact that minority ethnic people are active agents capable of challenging and transforming the system of constraints within which they exercise their housing choices, or that these choices vary both within and between groups and can shift and change through time (Harrison and Phillips, 2003). To these criticisms can also be added concerns about the validity of making assumptions about group preferences and collective rationality implicit within housing careers analysis when researching a population as socially, ethnically and culturally diverse

as new immigrants, about whose identities so little is currently known and whose voices are so rarely heard (Robinson and Reeve, 2006).

The housing pathways approach was used to help overcome these concerns. It seeks to capture the changing set of relationships and interactions that a household experiences in its consumption of housing through time (Clapham, 2002). As with the life history method, the emphasis when exploring housing pathways is on uncovering the understandings and experiences of individuals through empirical research and linking their actions to wider social structures. An important focus is on relationships and interactions, which prompts consideration of both *structures* of the housing system and wider society – factors through which opportunities and choices are constrained or liberated, supported or undermined – and the *actions* of individuals and collectives that reinforce, resist and transform the mechanisms, practices, assumptions and attitudes that inform housing opportunities and outcomes.

Reflecting on structures that inform perceptions and choices, shape events and frame decisions demanded consideration of factors including (social, political and economic) resource issues, public and policy discourses that categorise the identities of individuals and households on the basis of ‘race’, ethnicity, culture, religion or immigration status, and the associated policies and practices of institutions within the housing system. Recognising new immigrants as active agents, meanwhile, prompted consideration of key manifestations of agency, including the actions of individuals in shaping strategies relating to the pursuit and use of home and the collective strategies devised in local neighbourhoods or among communities of interest in pursuit of housing goals (Harrison with Davis, 2001).

The research approach

The focus of the study, on the lives of new immigrants and the objective of situating these experiences within the particulars of the places in which new immigrants have lived, placed a number of specific demands on the research approach. In particular, data had to be collected that was sensitive to the detail of new immigrant’s lives *and* the localities in which they had lived since their arrival. To this end, three critical issues had to be resolved:

- the fieldwork location
- the sample to be interviewed
- the methods to be employed.

The location for the research

All fieldwork was carried out in the city of Sheffield. The reasons for selecting Sheffield were largely practical. For reasons discussed in detail below, the pathways approach demanded a qualitative research design, combined with a detailed understanding and awareness of the particulars of the places through which new immigrants' housing careers had passed. In addition, there was the practical challenge of securing access to new immigrants. The study team had established links and good working relations with a range of refugee- and housing-related service providers working in Sheffield, able and willing to facilitate access to potential respondents. Detailed knowledge of the context, the particulars and histories of different neighbourhoods and the dynamics of the local housing market also served to promote the required sensitivity to place. Sheffield also represented an interesting setting for the study, given its rich history of immigration and particular housing market situation.

Sheffield is a city with a long history as a place of settlement for new immigrants (see Appendix 2 for an overview). Rather than being dominated by any single group, immigration into Sheffield has involved the arrival into the city of relatively small numbers of immigrants from a wide range of national and ethnic backgrounds. The consequence is a relatively small, but ethnically and culturally diverse, minority ethnic (non-White British) population. The 2001 Census of Population categorised 10.8 per cent of Sheffield's population (55,500 people) as belonging to ethnic groups other than White British, compared to 12.5 per cent in Leeds, 25.5 per cent in Manchester, 23.9 per cent in Bradford and 13 per cent of people in England.

In recent years, three particular engines have driven new immigration into Sheffield: the NASS dispersal programme, the Gateway Protection Programme for refugees, and the arrival of migrant workers from the new accession states of the European Union. The city has been designated by the Home Office as a cluster area for the dispersal of people seeking asylum. In 2005 Sheffield was one of the top three dispersal locations in England (along with Leeds and Birmingham), with 1,115 people seeking asylum being dispersed to the city (Heath *et al.*, 2006). The city has also served as a destination for Liberian, Burmese and Karen people entering the UK under the Gateway Programme – a scheme through which the UK accepts and resettles refugees as part of an international resettlement programme run by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The city has also emerged as a common destination for migrant workers from the European Union and beyond. In 2006/07, for example, there were 4,400 National Insurance Number registrations of non-UK nationals in the Sheffield City Council district (DWP, 2006).

These new immigrants are arriving in a housing market characterised by relatively small owner-occupied (60.3 per cent in 2001) and private rented (7.6 per cent in 2001) sectors and a relatively large social rented sector (30 per cent in 2001).¹ In the recent past the city has been characterised as having large tracts of housing at risk of low demand, a situation illustrated by the inclusion of part of the city within the boundaries of the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area. The situation varies across the city, however, and in the south west of the district house prices are relatively high and continue to outstrip the regional average (Hickman *et al.*, 2007). In recent years, rapid house price rises have been experienced across the city, including low-price sub-markets in the inner city core (Hickman *et al.*, 2007). Yet, the house price to income ratio (3.35) remains well below the regional (3.59) and national (4.20) averages and the city does not feature on the list of districts facing the most acute affordability difficulties (Wilcox, 2005). In 2006, according to statutory homeless returns, 6,127 households approached Sheffield City Council as homeless and 1,398 were recognised as homeless and in priority need, a homelessness rate of 6.3 per 1,000 households, compared to a homelessness rate for England of 3.6 (CLG, 2007).

Research methods

The only viable method for collecting the longitudinal data required in order to map the housing careers and chart the changing interactions and relations associated with the consumption of housing through time was a retrospective research design. Such designs involve the collection of longitudinal data at a single point in time through the application of biographical recall techniques during interview. Data collection was therefore required to focus on in-depth, face-to-face discussions with new immigrants. Memory fades with time, however, and recollection can become increasingly difficult. Various techniques, discussed below, were employed during the interviews to manage this problem. The decision was also taken to limit the focus of the research to new immigrants who had arrived in the UK within the last five years.

Two immediate questions arose from the adoption of this approach – how to access respondents and how to conduct in-depth discussions with people, many of whom might have only limited English language skills. Access was secured through a combination of methods. These included negotiating access to clients of refugee-specific agencies and community-led services, approaching people using community services (including shops), poster campaigns (for example, at churches) and through contacts made with community ‘leaders’, and snowballing out from secured respondents. The payment of a financial gift to all new immigrants giving up their time to talk to the research team also helped to promote willingness among potential respondents to engage with the research.

Access was also facilitated by the recruitment of community researchers. In total, six community researchers were recruited (a Somali man and woman, two Liberian men, a Pakistani woman and a Polish woman). The involvement of these six people proved to be critical to the success of the research. In terms of access they were knowledgeable about points of access and suitable venues for interviewing respondents and were able to build bridges with community groups/organisations and identify individuals willing to share their experiences. Prior to the interviews they were able to provide a link between the community and researchers, helping to increase trust and confidence. During the interview they promoted sensitivity and awareness to the community context and cultural considerations. They also provided important insight and understanding acting as cultural brokers, alerting the team to themes and issues that would have been missed or neglected. They provided interpretation of meanings and clarification of misunderstandings and helped to inform and direct the focus of research (research questions, methods and analysis). Their involvement also served to raise the voice of the researched, allowing respondents' voices to be heard in their own language and facilitating a more direct transfer of information.

Some obvious challenges were involved in working with community researchers. In particular, they had limited qualitative research experience and formal subject knowledge. The training provided could only go so far in guiding them in the subtle art of qualitative interviewing. In response, a paired interviewing approach was developed that sought to maximise the potential and minimise the problems of working with community researchers:

- Wherever feasible/appropriate, interviews were conducted in English and led by core members of the research team, supported by a community researcher who helped to ensure clarity over language, meanings and interpretations.
- When an interview was required to be conducted in a community language, the interview was led by a community interviewer working in partnership with a member of the core research team who was on hand to provide subject-specific knowledge and to provide advice regarding the direction of questioning.

The interview process was separated into two distinct elements. First, discussion sought to chart a respondent's housing career, generating a sequential record of the dwellings in which a respondent had lived since arriving in the UK and moving to Sheffield. This involved taking the respondent back in chronological order through the different housing situations that they had lived in since arriving into the UK. The focus was on the collection of simple descriptive information, including:

- *household situation* – size, composition, age, relationships between members
- *tenure and status of occupation* – owner occupation, private renting or renting from housing association or local authority, and tenant, licensee, associate of tenant, owner and such like
- *form and nature of property* – size, design, type, condition, sole or shared occupancy and such like
- *location and neighbours* – neighbourhood and neighbours
- *access and exit* – entry and exit process.

Having generated a sequential picture of the dwellings lived in by a respondent, the challenge was then to look beyond these situations and to uncover factors impinging on actions and shaping outcomes. This involved exploring perceptions and the meanings informing decisions and actions. The challenge was to go beyond the rational narratives that might be constructed out of present identities, inclinations and preferences to explain past actions. To this end, attention focused on exploring four key, overlapping and interrelated factors:

- *Interactions* – focusing on interactions (between household members, neighbours, friends and family, among communities of interest and between respondents and key institutions within the housing system) served to concentrate analysis on both the wider social structures that frame housing interactions and the meanings held by different actors that inform social action.
- *Specific examples of agency* – attention regarding the strategies and actions of individuals and households focused on those aspects of agency relevant to the pursuit of housing goals. In some instances, this led into analysis of collective agency, for example of a particular population group and the ways in which these activities impacted on the choices and opportunities open to individuals.
- *Identity* – the importance of housing and neighbourhood location to household identity and the relationship between housing actions and the search for a particular identity were considered. This involved recognition of the categorical labels that an individual might ascribe to or might be assigned by society (such as ‘new immigrant’, ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’).
- *Place* – any attempt to understand the factors shaping actions and determining housing outcomes needed to situate analysis within an appreciation of the distinct places that housing pathways pass through and bypass.

All interviews were tape-recorded, translated and transcribed into full verbatim text, allowing detailed analysis within and between cases.

The interview sample

The research approach, with its emphasis on in-depth, qualitative interviewing, was a resource-intensive process. The resource implications of this focus on depth of understanding, rather than breadth of appreciation, and the associated practical challenges of identifying and securing the participation of new immigrants resident in the UK for up to five years led the team to adopt a working target of up to 40 interviews. Working with this sample size, it was of course impossible to represent all new immigrant populations known to have settled in Sheffield during the last ten years within the sample. Attention therefore turned to generating a sampling framework that ensured the representation of certain key identities and experiences, including:

- *Mode of immigration* – the sample was to include people who arrived into the UK and settled in Sheffield through different routes, with three key distinctions being recognised: refugees and asylum seekers, chain migrants (those who came to join spouses or family) and migrants from within the EU.
- *History of settlement* – the sample was to include new immigrants belonging to an ethnic or national grouping with a long history of settlement in Sheffield as well as new immigrants who might be characterised as spatial pioneers, representing the early phase of settlement of a population group in the city.
- *Diverse identities* – the sample could not include the full range of identities represented within the new immigrant population, but there are certain forms or types of identity that might more readily impact upon the experiences of new immigrants and were therefore included in the sample. For example, the experiences of white and black groups might be distinctive, given different experiences of racism. Similarly, the experiences of new immigrants from different faith groups might vary, the most obvious example being the distinctive experiences of Muslim immigrants in the context of rising Islamophobia within British society.

Reflecting on these priorities, a long list of possible target groups, identified on the basis of national and ethnic identity, was generated. This was eventually reduced to the four national groupings that became the focus of the study: Polish, Somali, Pakistani and Liberian. The situation of these four population groups in Sheffield is summarised in Table 1.

In total, 39 new immigrants resident in Sheffield were interviewed:

- *Ten Liberian* respondents, aged between 20 and 38 years old – six women and four men – were interviewed. Five were single and five had dependent children. Nine out of ten were living in social rented accommodation at the time of the interview. All reported that they had indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- *Ten Pakistani* respondents, aged between 24 and 43 years old – six women and four men – were interviewed. All were married, nine out of ten were living with their spouse and six had dependent children. At the time of the interview, four out of ten were living with family members who owned the property, four were living in private rented accommodation, one person was living in a refuge and one person was living with his wife in a house that she owned. Seven reported that they arrived into the UK on a spouse visa and three people reported entering on a work permit.
- *Ten Polish* respondents, aged between 20 and 55 years old – five women and five men – were interviewed. Seven were married and three were single (including widowed or divorced). Two had dependent children living with them and one had a dependent child in Poland. At the time of the interview, eight were private tenants and two were staying as a guest with a friend or family member. All were working, nine out of ten in full-time employment and one in part-time employment, but six reported that they were not registered with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). (All A8 migrants who wish to work for more than one month for an employer in the UK are supposed to register under the WRS. Once they have been working legally in the UK for 12 months without a break they can apply for a residence permit confirming the right to live and work in the UK.)
- *Nine Somali* respondents, aged between 20 and 42 years old – three women and six men – were interviewed. At the time of the interview, seven people were living alone (one had a wife and children in Africa, one had a husband in Africa and one had a wife and children living elsewhere in Sheffield). Eight out of nine were living in social rented accommodation (one in a temporary property after being made homeless) and one was staying in temporary private rented accommodation arranged by a refugee support agency. Four reported that they had received indefinite leave to remain in the UK, one reported having exceptional leave to remain, one reported having limited leave to remain, one reported having leave to remain, one respondent was challenging the outcome of her asylum application and one reported having British citizenship.

Table 1 Profile of the interview sample

Group	Mode of immigration	History of settlement	Identity issues	Other issues
Polish	Migrants from within the EU	Long-standing population, which has grown rapidly since 2004 following the accession of Poland into the EU Relations between established population and new immigrants unclear	White, European, Christian culture	Reported to be the largest migrant worker population in Sheffield Long-term intentions regarding settlement unclear Suspected predominance of single men Anecdotal evidence of settlement along the 'Abbeydale corridor' in private rented sector housing
Somali	Refugees and asylum seekers Migrants from within the EU	Long-standing population that has seen rapid growth through new immigration over the last 15 years Established areas of settlement and associated resources	Predominantly Muslim population Often considered 'new' population, despite long history of settlement Predominantly originating from Somaliland	New immigrants include refugees and migrants from within the EU New immigrants include families with children Established areas of settlement and associated population clusters (e.g. Broomhall, Burngreave and Pitsmoor, Darnall, etc.)
Pakistani	Chain migrants	Long-standing population that is recorded as being the largest minority ethnic group in Sheffield	Predominantly Muslim population Not necessarily recognised and labelled as new immigrants	Opportunity to explore the distinctive experiences of people moving to join family and friends Established areas of settlement and associated population clusters (e.g. Fir Vale, Darnall, Tinsley, 'Abbeydale corridor')
Liberian	Refugees and asylum seekers	New population, arriving in Sheffield in 2004	Resident in refugee camps in Africa before being dispersed to the UK and settled in Sheffield Christian, Muslim and indigenous faiths	English language skills Have received resettlement support and assistance through the Gateway Protection Programme Anecdotal evidence of settlement in social rented accommodation in traditionally White British, working-class locations (Gleadless Valley) with little history of minority ethnic settlement

2 The housing careers of new immigrants

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the housing careers of 39 new immigrants who had arrived into the UK and settled in Sheffield during the previous five years. Attention focuses on the sequence of dwellings in which the 39 respondents had lived since arriving in the UK. Patterns of change in housing situations through time are analysed and associated geographies of residential settlement revealed. In certain instances, numbers are used to illustrate patterns and trends within the experiences of the new immigrants interviewed, but no claims are made about statistical significance. The patterns of convergence and divergence between the careers of the different new immigrant groups are considered, prompting questions about why similarities or differences exist. Consequently, common patterns (and linkages) between housing careers and life course events (such as changes in immigration status and household structure) and the importance (or otherwise) of choice and constraint on the housing careers of different new immigrant populations are considered.

Discussion begins with an overview of the early-phase housing careers of new immigrants. The first steps taken by respondents within the UK housing system are explored and important staging posts along the pathway from early, temporary settings through to more long-term residential situations¹ are pinpointed. The specifics of these longer-term housing situations and subsequent mobility patterns are then revealed, before discussion concludes with a review of the geography of settlement associated with each of the four groups.

Early-phase housing careers: from arrival to long-term accommodation

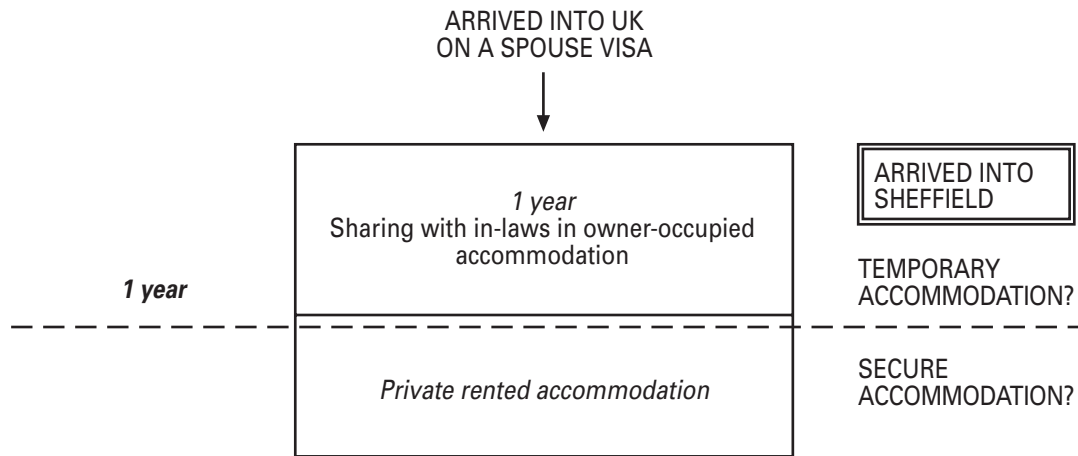
The majority of respondents arrived into insecure accommodation situations that provided only temporary residence. The length of stay in the first accommodation setting in the UK varied between the four groups, however, reflecting the very different residential situations into which new immigrants arrived. For Liberian and Somali respondents, their initial accommodation served merely as a staging post along the path towards a more long-term resting place.

Liberians arrived into the UK with the support of the UK Government, which provided shared accommodation in London for two or three days before relocating people to Sheffield. Somali new arrivals typically stayed for one or two nights, with either a friend or relative, in accommodation arranged by their agent (the individual paid to negotiate safe passage out of Somalia and who had facilitated entry to the UK) or with a Somali associate they had met since arriving in the UK (people recalled getting help and advice from Somali people who were complete strangers). The next day, these respondents approached NASS² seeking asylum, at which time they were temporarily housed in NASS hostel provision. All Somali respondents spent the early stages of their housing career in London, other than two respondents who were taken by the agent who provided them with transit to the UK to the Liverpool Immigration Public Enquiry Office.

The initial accommodation situation of the majority of Polish respondents also proved to be a staging post on the way to a more secure situation. In two cases people had arranged longer-term accommodation situations before arriving in the UK, either with the help of a friend or through an employer. In both instances, these residential situations proved relatively secure and provided accommodation for more than one year. All other Polish respondents arrived into the UK with a verbal agreement with a friend or relative that they could stay a few nights or weeks while they found alternative accommodation. In these cases, the length of stay in initial accommodation settings rarely lasted more than one month. Nine out of ten Polish respondents reported moving straight to Sheffield upon arriving in the UK.

With accommodation arranged prior to their arrival, all Pakistani respondents knew where they would be staying when they arrived in the UK (Figure 1). Nine out of ten respondents came straight to Sheffield and stayed either with their in-laws or in a property owned by their spouse or by a family member (and, in some cases, provided rent free). In contrast to the other groups, these initial accommodation situations often provided Pakistani respondents with a long-term place of residence, although respondents rarely had a legal right of residence, in most instances staying as a guest with their spouse's family. Eight out of ten Pakistani new immigrants remained in their first accommodation setting for at least six months and the average length in the initial accommodation setting was 13 months. The nature of this accommodation (flat or terrace, semi-detached or detached house) varied, reflecting the housing market position negotiated by their spouse or their spouse's family.

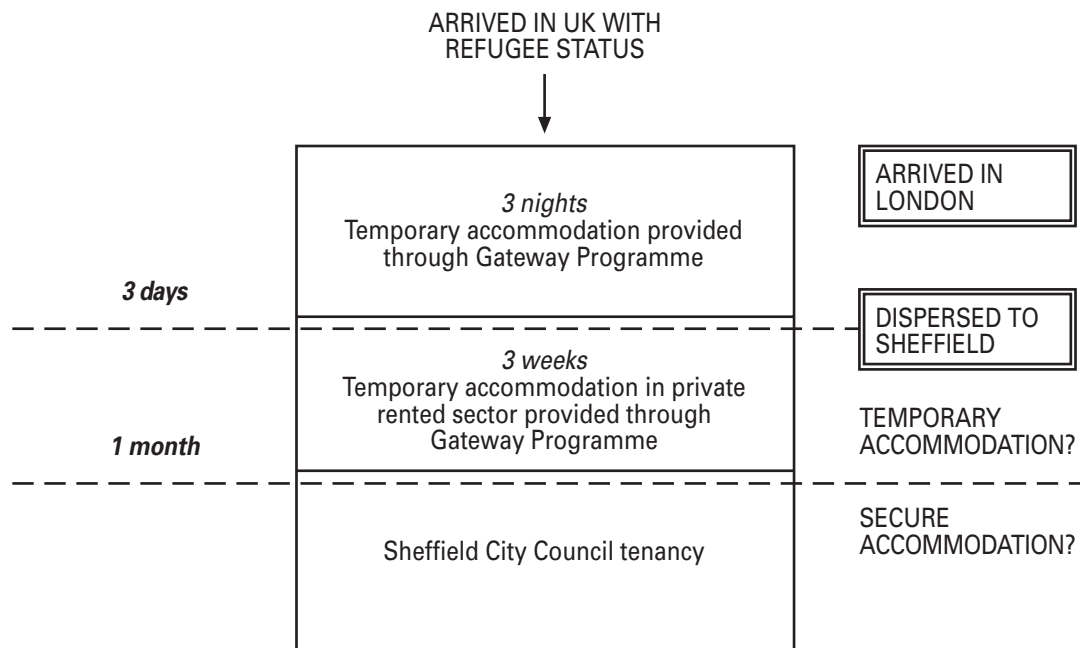
Figure 1 A typical Pakistani housing career: from arrival to secure accommodation



For Liberian and Polish new immigrants, the pathway to long-term accommodation proved to be relatively short, respondents typically securing longer-term accommodation in a matter of weeks, and certainly within the first two months. However, the specifics of the route taken by Liberian and Polish respondents into longer-term accommodation, the extent to which respondents themselves were responsible for navigating this course and the specifics of their final destination all varied.

The early housing careers of Liberian respondents (Figure 2) were largely directed by the actions of particular key institutions. Entering the UK under the Gateway Programme, they were initially housed in temporary accommodation in London which was organised by the Home Office. This was followed by a move to Sheffield that had been planned in advance of their arrival into the UK and reflected an agreement reached between the Home Office, Sheffield City Council and other partners, including the Refugee Council. Temporary accommodation was made available immediately upon their arrival in Sheffield. The legal status of respondents as refugees, which had been determined prior to their arrival in the UK, conveyed the right of access to opportunities provided by the welfare state, including social housing and associated benefits. Respondents were therefore accommodated in temporary accommodation until, for nine out of ten respondents, an offer of council housing was forthcoming. These nine respondents accepted this offer and moved into a council flat, in most cases within one month of arriving into the UK. The one other Liberian respondent moved into a house in multiple occupation (HMO)³ in the private rented sector.

Figure 2 A typical Liberian housing career: from arrival to secure accommodation



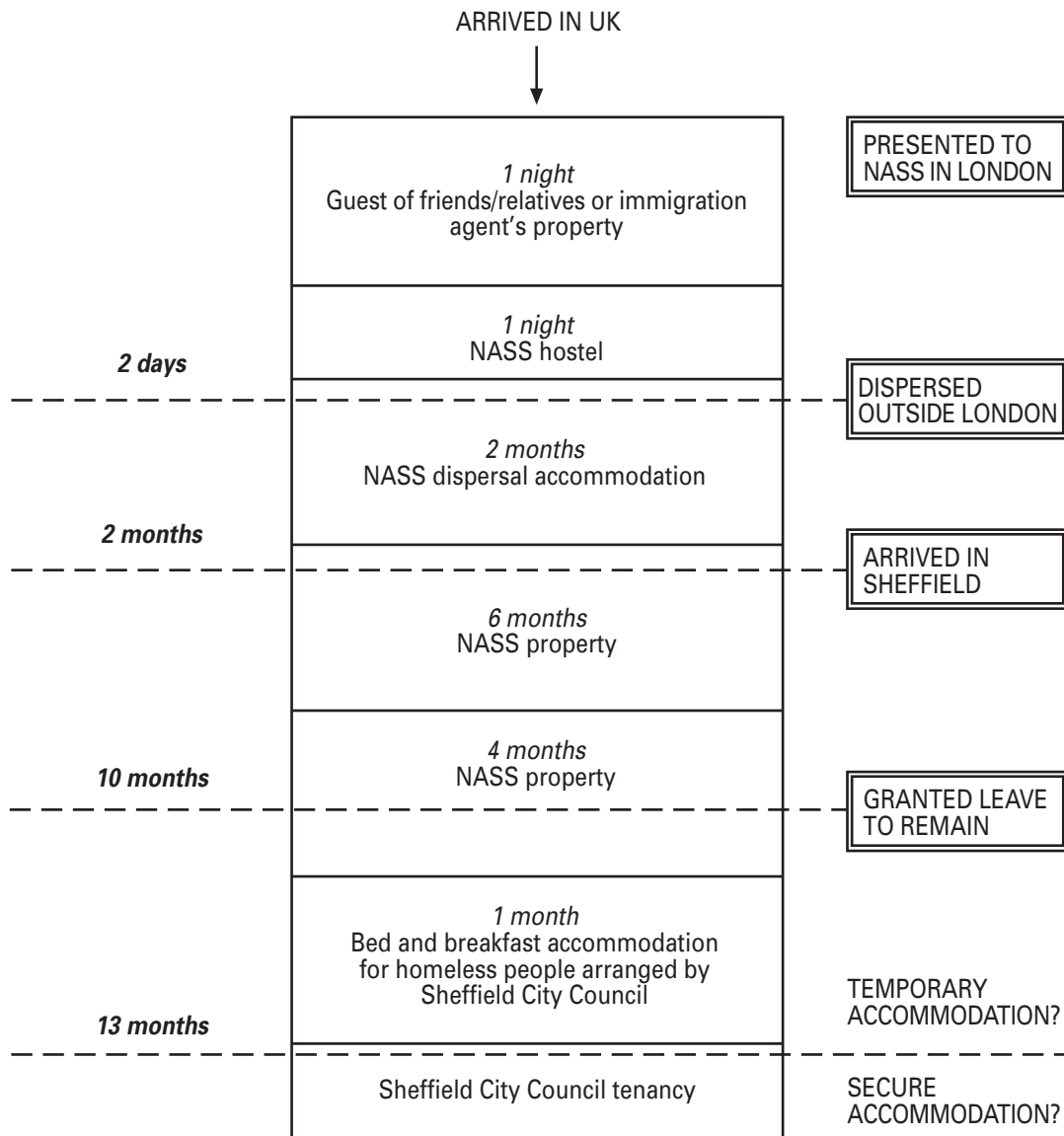
The Polish new immigrants arrived into the UK with a very different package of rights and opportunities (Figure 3). With the right to work upon entering the UK, but with restricted access to the benefits provided by the welfare state,⁴ Polish respondents relied on their own financial and social resources to negotiate access to more secure and longer-term accommodation situations. Focusing their attention exclusively on the private rented sector, respondents typically stayed with a friend or relative as a guest for a week or two until they secured their own tenancy, typically in a house in multiple occupation. Awareness of opportunities was often reliant on word of mouth, with respondents moving into tenancies vacated by other Polish people. Only two respondents had moved into accommodation tied to employment upon arriving in the UK, in contrast to other studies that have pointed to the frequent reliance of Polish and other European migrant workers on tied accommodation, particularly in ‘tight’ housing markets, for example in London and rural areas of the UK (Coote, 2006; Scottish Economic Research, 2006; Zaronaitė and Tirzite, 2006).

Figure 3 A typical Polish housing career: from arrival to secure accommodation



Somali new immigrants (Figure 4) followed a far more circuitous route towards longer-term accommodation. Somali respondents moved house far more frequently, lived in many more locations (within and beyond Sheffield) and had to wait many more months before they were able to secure long-term accommodation. Central to this distinctive early housing career was the status of Somali respondents as asylum seekers. With limited rights of access to the opportunities afforded by the welfare state, barred from formal employment and with few personal resources (most respondents arriving in the UK with nothing more than hand luggage and the clothes they were wearing), respondents had little option other than to approach NASS for accommodation and assistance while they waited for a decision on their application for asylum. In the event, some respondents spent their first night in the UK with a friend, relative or associate (either the agent who had arranged their transit to the UK or a Somali person they had, literally, just met during their first day in the UK) before approaching NASS. Others went straight to the NASS offices and were provided with accommodation. The early-phase housing careers of Somali respondents were therefore largely determined by the decisions and actions of certain key institutions.

Figure 4 A typical Somali housing career: from arrival to secure accommodation



As we will see below, once Somali respondents were granted leave to remain in the UK, the range of housing opportunities open to them mirrored the opportunities open to Liberian respondents who entered the UK as refugees. In the meantime, however, Somali new immigrants were subject to the protocols and practices of the NASS system. Almost immediately upon presenting to NASS, either in London or Liverpool (and sometimes on the very day they approached NASS), respondents were dispersed to other towns and cities and placed in temporary accommodation. Sometimes living in hostel accommodation and sometimes sharing a house or flat with other people seeking asylum, respondents passed through numerous temporary accommodation settings in different towns and cities while awaiting a decision on their application for asylum. By the time they finally received notification that they had been granted leave to remain in the UK, eight out of nine respondents were living in NASS accommodation in Sheffield. Subsequently, they were given 28 days to vacate their NASS accommodation and advised to approach Sheffield City Council for accommodation, their new immigrant status conveying upon them the right of access to opportunities provided by the welfare state, including social housing and associated benefits.

Most Somali respondents approached and were accepted by the local authority as homeless and in priority need of housing, under the terms of the homelessness legislation, and moved into hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people while awaiting an offer of long-term accommodation by the city council. One respondent, however, was not recognised as having a right to housing under the homelessness legislation upon being required to leave NASS accommodation following receipt of a positive decision to remain in the UK. This case is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but the outcome was that this respondent slept rough for two weeks before receiving help from a solicitor who advocated on his behalf. Subsequently, he was recognised as homeless by the city council and was offered and accepted a council tenancy.

Although an exceptional case within the sample of new immigrants interviewed, there is no reason to believe that the experiences of this Somali respondent who became homeless upon leaving NASS accommodation is not common among the wider refugee population. Asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK have the right to apply for help, assistance and accommodation under the homelessness legislation, but are not recognised as in priority need for housing by mere virtue of being a refugee. Like all other homeless applicants, their needs are assessed against a series of priority need categories and unless they are deemed to fall into one of these categories their chances of accessing social housing are limited. The homelessness legislation, however, allows a degree of local discretion in the interpretation of the priority need categories, particularly in relation to the

assessment of vulnerability. Local authorities seeking to limit demand for social housing can therefore use the needs criteria as a rationing device. More draconian interpretations of the legislation are therefore evident in 'tighter' housing markets, such as London (Pearl, 1997; Robinson with Coward, 2003; Reeve with Coward, 2004). This can present particular problems for single people, including refugees, whose only chance of being recognised as in priority need for housing is on the basis of the highly subjective issue of 'vulnerability'. Homelessness among successful (as well as failed) asylum seekers is therefore not uncommon (ICAR, 2006), although the situation varies from district to district. In Sheffield, the city council was able to offer the majority of the refugees interviewed a council tenancy. All seven Somali respondents who were offered a council or housing association tenancy accepted and moved into flat accommodation. At this point in their housing career, Somali respondents had, on average, been resident in the UK for 13 months and lived in five different temporary accommodation settings.

Later-phase housing careers: finding stability

In sharp contrast to the period immediately following their arrival into the UK, respondents' housing careers were characterised by relative stability once they had managed to secure access to longer-term housing. In total, 34 out of 39 respondents had successfully negotiated access to a more secure, longer-term housing situation. Twenty of these 34 respondents were still resident in the first longer-term housing situation they moved into, after an average of 17 months. Levels of mobility among respondents, however, were still more than double the national average of 136 moves per 1,000 households (CLG, 2006).

Mobility rates varied between the groups, with Polish new immigrants being far more likely to have moved than Somali, Liberian and Pakistani respondents. On average, Polish respondents had made 0.7 moves per year since securing longer-term accommodation, compared to the national average of 0.136 (CLG, 2006). In comparison, a mobility rate of 0.4 was recorded among Pakistani, 0.2 among Somali and 0.1 among Liberian respondents.

In part, these variations appear to reflect the different mobility rates associated with different tenures. Consistent with the Survey of English Housing, which reveals that private tenants are four times more likely to move within a 12-month period than social renting tenants and almost eight times more likely to move than owner-occupiers (CLG, 2006), the private tenants in the sample averaged 0.8 moves per year, compared to 0.2 moves among social tenants. All Polish respondents who had

secured longer-term accommodation were resident in the private rented sector, while all Somali and all but one of the Liberian respondents were resident in the social rented sector. Three of the eight Pakistani respondents who had secured longer-term accommodation were living in private rented accommodation, while the other five were living in owner-occupied accommodation.

A total of 21 moves were reported by the 14 respondents who had moved at least once since accessing a longer-term housing situation. None of these moves involved a change in tenure, although there were three cases involving mobility between the local authority and housing association sectors. The most commonly cited explanation for mobility was the desire to improve living conditions. This was particularly true within the private rented sector, where poor living conditions were reported to be common. Of the 13 recorded moves among private tenants, ten were reported to be driven by a desire to improve living conditions. Six of the eight Polish respondents living in the private rented sector reported that their first tenancy was in a shared property. Three of these people subsequently moved into self-contained accommodation. The four Pakistani respondents living in the private rented sector had moved a total of eight times. Seven of these moves were reported to have been driven by a desire to improve living conditions.

Among social tenants and respondents in owner-occupied accommodation, space requirements, overcrowding and problems of harassment and abuse were reported to be the immediate driver of mobility, experiences explored in detail in Chapter 3. Five of the 16 respondents living in the social rented sector had moved a total of six times since securing longer-term accommodation. Four of these six moves were reported to involve relocation to a larger property, for example following the birth of a child or the arrival of a partner and children from overseas. The two respondents living in owner-occupied housing, who had moved house also recounted moving because of problems of overcrowding.

Table 2 Key aspects of early-phase housing careers

	Liberian	Pakistani	Polish	Somali
Initial accommodation situation	Temporarily resident in shared accommodation arranged by the Home Office	Staying with spouse/ spouse's family	Staying with friend or relative as a guest or in prearranged or tied tenancy	Staying with friend, relative or associate as a guest
Location of initial accommodation	London	Sheffield	Sheffield (9) and London (1)	London (7) or Liverpool (2)
Access to initial accommodation	Arranged by United Nations/ UK Government while in refugee camp in Guinea and Ghana	Arranged through spouse while in Pakistan	Arranged with/through friends (9) or employer (1) while in Poland	Loose agreement with distant relation before leaving Somalia (4) or arrived into the UK with no plans (5)
Length of stay in first accommodation	6 people out of 10 stayed 3 days Only 1 person stayed more than 1 week	8 people stayed 6 or more months Only 1 person stayed less than 1 month	6 people stayed less than 5 months Variation from 2 days through to 2.5 years	6 people stayed only 1 night and only 1 person stayed more than 2 weeks
Number of temporary accommodation settings stayed in before securing long-term accommodation	2 accommodation settings (London and Sheffield)	8 out of 10 moved into long-term accommodation upon arrival in the UK	2 people moved into long-term accommodation upon arrival in the UK Other respondents typically stayed in just 1 temporary accommodation setting	People stayed in an average of 5 temporary accommodation settings
Length of time before securing long-term accommodation	Average of 6 weeks	8 out of 10 moved into long-term accommodation upon arriving in the UK	2 people moved into long-term accommodation upon arrival in the UK Most people took between 2 days and 2 months to secure long-term accommodation	Average of 13 months, with the time taken ranging from 5 to 36 months

Table 3 Key aspects of later-phase housing careers – from temporary into permanent accommodation

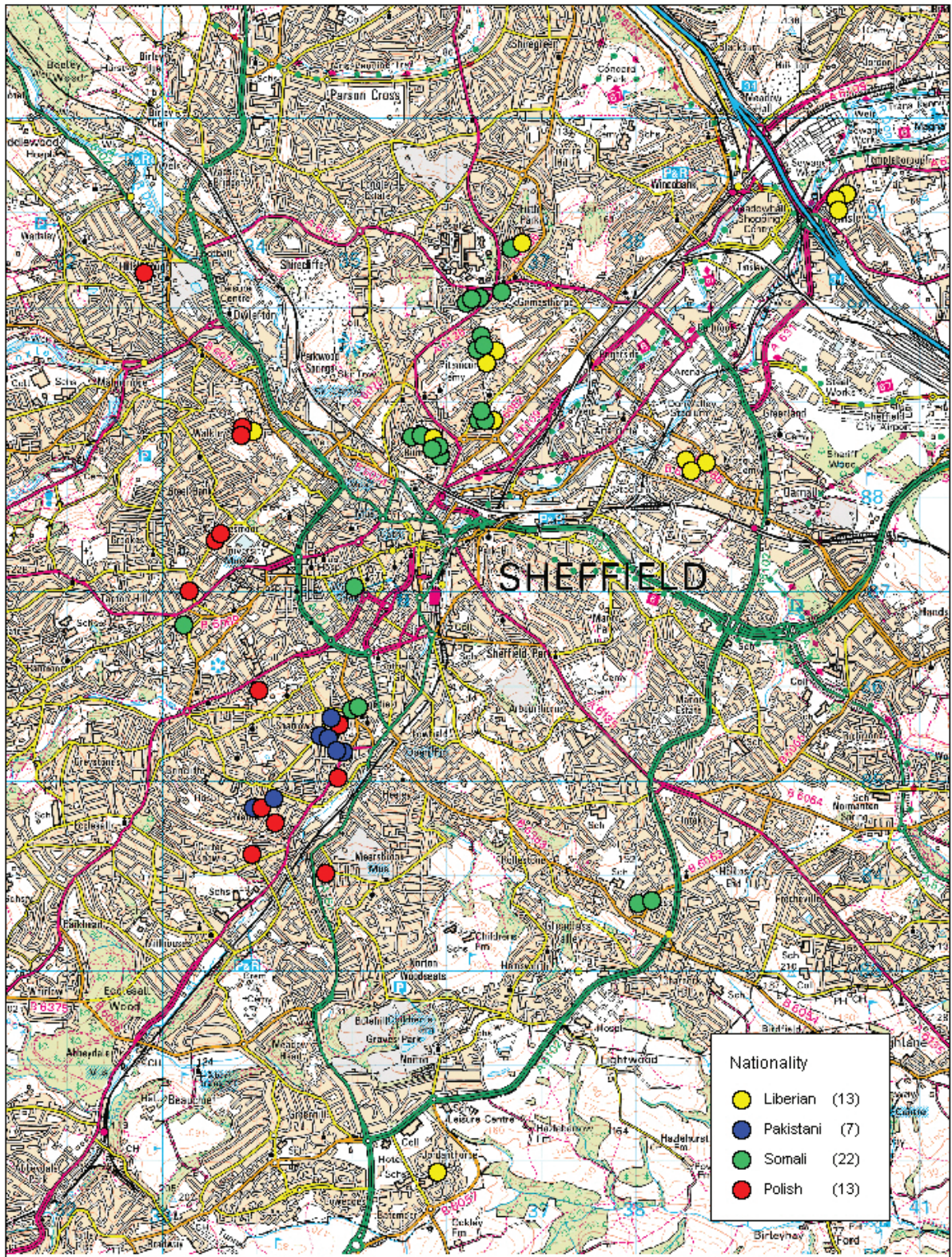
	Liberian	Pakistani	Polish	Somali
Tenure of first secure/longer-term accommodation	Council (7) Housing association (2) Private rented sector (1)	Staying in family's owner-occupied property (4) Staying in spouse's owner-occupied property (2) Private rented (3) Not secured longer-term accommodation (1)	Private rented sector (8) Not secured longer-term accommodation (2)	Council (6) Housing association (1) Not secured longer-term accommodation (2)
Housing type of first secure/longer-term accommodation	House in multiple occupation (1) Flat (9)	Flat (1) Terraced house (3) Semi-detached house (3) Detached house (2)	House in multiple occupation (5) Flat (2) Terraced house (1)	Flat/maisonette (7)
Average number of moves per year	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.2
Change in tenure since moving into secure accommodation	No change – 1 respondent moved between social landlords	No change in tenure	No change in tenure	No change – 2 respondents moved between social landlords
Experience of homelessness	1 respondent made homeless after being evicted from council flat because of rent arrears – subsequently stayed with friends as a guest 1 respondent left the family home but had been unable to secure his own tenancy and was staying with friends as a guest	1 respondent became homeless upon leaving her husband's property, following a breakdown in their marriage 1 respondent has lived with her spouse in insecure housing situations (informal private rented sector) since arriving in the UK	No experiences of homelessness – all respondents in work and able to pay rent, as well as some evidence of people having returned to Poland at points of difficulty with regard to work and accommodation	8 out of 9 respondents recognised as officially homeless by local authority upon leaving NASS accommodation (1 after sleeping rough for 2 weeks) 1 respondent homeless since arriving in UK 3 years ago, but not receiving assistance from the local authority 1 respondent had lost secure accommodation and been made homeless as a result of violent harassment 1 respondent in temporary accommodation still awaiting offer of permanent accommodation

Geography of residence

New immigrants have a limited 'choice set' in terms of housing. In the early stages of settlement the interplay between individual preferences and resources and external constraints tended to be dominated by constraining factors. These included knowledge and awareness of housing opportunities and means of access to different accommodation settings, possession of the resources (social and cognitive, as well as financial) required to negotiate access to housing, and the rights associated with immigration status that can serve to open up and foreclose different opportunities. The similarities within and the differences between the housing careers of the four groups interviewed reflect the interplay of these different factors and have resulted in very different geographies of residence.

Liberian and Somali respondents arrived in Sheffield with little or no financial resources and, in most cases, no personal contacts in the city that they might be able to call on for support, assistance or temporary accommodation. Virtually all were reliant on the assistance of local agencies: NASS accommodation providers in the case of Somali respondents seeking asylum and the city council and its partners in the case of Liberian refugees arriving through the Gateway Programme. Somali respondents were consequently clustered in temporary accommodation settings in locations where NASS providers had managed to source accommodation (see Map 1). These locations tended to be areas characterised by high levels of private renting and houses in multiple occupation. In the Sheffield context, these are also neighbourhoods characterised by relatively high levels of minority ethnic settlement. Liberian temporary accommodation situations were more dispersed, the city council sourcing temporary accommodation for people arriving through the Gateway Programme from the council's own temporary accommodation provision (including flats and hostels), as well as housing associations and private renting.

Map 1 The geography of residence of new immigrants: temporary accommodation



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Liberian and Somali respondents shared a common geography of residential settlement once they moved into more permanent, longer-term accommodation (Map 2). All respondents were reliant on the help of the local authority for access to longer-term, more secure accommodation and all respondents reported accepting the first tenancy they were offered by the council or a housing association. In most cases, the result was the settlement of Liberian and Somali new immigrants in relatively unpopular, peripheral estates characterised by low demand. The early geography of settlement of these two groups therefore reflected the housing actions of others, new immigrants filling the space within the sector created by households leaving or choosing to avoid social rented accommodation in these particular areas of the city. In sharp contrast to the diverse, multi-ethnic inner city neighbourhoods where their temporary accommodation had been located, many of the Liberian and Somali new immigrants interviewed therefore tended to find themselves in historically stable, white-dominated council estates, with little history of minority ethnic settlement and limited experience of accommodating diversity and difference. As we will see in Chapter 4, living within these *new contact zones* of immigration, where different ethnicities and cultures are coming together and grappling and clashing with each other (Pratt, 1991), has had significant implications for Liberian and Somali new immigrants.

Polish new immigrants had no recourse to welfare benefits upon first arriving in the UK. They were reliant upon their own resources to access and maintain both temporary and longer-term accommodation. In all cases, however, their arrival was pre-planned and respondents were able to make arrangements about where to stay before leaving Poland, through either an employer or friend or relative who, in all cases, had themselves only recently settled in Sheffield. No Polish respondents reported making contact with the long-established Polish community in the city, a situation reflected in several other studies and commentaries regarding recent Polish migration, which conclude that the presence of an established Polish community in the UK is of little relevance to the settlement patterns and experiences of recent Polish immigrants (Brown, 2003; Kohn, 2007). New arrivals therefore tended, at least in their early stages of settlement, to reinforce the settlement patterns of other recent Polish migrants into the city (Maps 1 and 2). This tendency was reinforced by the frequent reliance of respondents on word of mouth to hear about housing opportunities and the important role played by friends and relatives in pointing respondents towards letting opportunities.

Map 2 The geography of residence of new immigrants: permanent accommodation



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The particulars of this geography of Polish settlement reflect the reliance of respondents on the private rented sector for both temporary and longer-term accommodation. Polish respondents typically resided in neighbourhoods with a relatively large private rented sector (Maps 1 and 2). These locations might be characterised as turbulent but buoyant. They represent important lubricating parts of the wider housing market, where ready access and high turnover are at a premium. These dynamic and changeable areas have a history of accommodating students, often in houses in multiple occupation, but it appears that some Polish new immigrants are now occupying such accommodation, possibly filling the space left by students who have moved into new purpose-built accommodation recently developed on a large scale within and adjacent to these areas. The area to the south of the city centre has also long served as an arrival point – or reception location – for populations new to the city, including previous immigration streams. In contrast to the neighbourhoods where Liberian and Somali respondents settled, these locations might be characterised as *established contact zones* of immigration, where different ethnicities and cultures have long met, clashed and grappled with each other and, to some degree, come to a mutual accommodation of difference.

The arrival of the Pakistani new immigrants into the UK was pre-planned and their accommodation in Sheffield was prearranged, other than in the case of a Pakistani woman fleeing violence at home. Eight out of ten new immigrants moved in with their spouse or their spouse's family immediately upon arriving in the UK and in most cases this initial accommodation proved to be relatively secure. The settlement patterns of Pakistani new immigrants therefore served to reinforce the settlement patterns of the city's long-established Pakistani population. This fact is reflected in the residential geography of Pakistani respondents revealed in Maps 1 and 2. The neighbourhoods to the south and east of the city centre, where virtually all the Pakistani new immigrants interviewed had lived since arriving in Sheffield, can be characterised as neighbourhoods of established minority ethnic settlement: *established contact zones* with a long history of receiving new immigrants and witnessing the meeting of different cultures. On the fringes of these areas are the *zones of transition*, into which more socially mobile minority ethnic households have subsequently moved. These neighbourhoods provide access to a range of relevant and appropriate resources, facilities and services, supplied by both community and statutory agencies, including a local mosque, retail outlets, various community-led services and targeted support provided by statutory agencies. Rather than filling a void or vacuum in the housing system left by other groups, Pakistani new immigrants were moving into vibrant localities and already occupied residences. As we will see in the next chapter, the consequence for some respondents has been life in accommodation that lacks the necessary space and is increasingly overcrowded.

Conclusion

The housing careers of new immigrants are characterised by some familiar situations, consistent with the early-phase housing careers of previous immigration streams into the UK. New immigrants continue to fill niches in the housing system, often in stock left behind or avoided by others, while barriers restricting access to particular housing situations and tenures remain important determinants of residential settlement patterns. The housing careers of the new immigrants interviewed, however, also point to some unique aspects of contemporary immigration that are impacting on the housing experiences of new immigrants. In particular, the contemporary political and legal context and the particular bundles of rights and opportunities associated with different immigration pathways are revealed to be promoting clear distinctions in the settlement experiences of different new immigrant populations.

The careers of migrant workers arriving from Poland parallel the well-trodden path taken by many new immigrants who arrive into the UK with restricted rights of access to the benefits of the welfare state, including access to social housing, and are reliant upon their own resources to secure and maintain accommodation. Polish new immigrant respondents were therefore found to be living in dynamic and diverse inner city neighbourhoods characterised by a relatively large private rented sector. In contrast, refugees now have a right of access to social housing. In Sheffield, this opportunity was found to have proved critical to the efforts of new immigrants from Somalia and Liberia to secure longer-term, permanent accommodation. Often threatened with homelessness and therefore deprived of the currency of time that allows applicants to exercise a degree of choice in the allocation process, these new immigrants were typically filling voids in the social rented sector in neighbourhoods that the established population of the city had left behind or avoided. These respondents therefore tended to be living in relatively unpopular, low-demand accommodation on peripheral estates, in a clear break with the settlement patterns of previous immigration streams into the city. Finally, the settlement patterns of new immigrants arriving into the UK from Pakistan on a spouse visa were found to be reinforcing the established settlement patterns of this long-standing immigrant population – respondents moving in with a spouse and his/her family.

3 Housing situations and experiences

Introduction

A critical stage in the early housing careers of new immigrants is the point of transition from insecure, temporary accommodation situations into more secure, longer-term accommodation. Not only does more settled and secure accommodation offer the possibility of stability for people whose lives, particularly in the case of refugees, have for so long been characterised by uncertainty and insecurity. It offers the possibility of 'being at home'; of accessing a sense of security and belonging. On these foundations people can develop the well-being and build the self-confidence that they require to engage in wider society. Settled accommodation also roots people in a place and offers an opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and to engage in the everyday spaces of interaction through which different kinds of resources can be accessed.

The housing careers of the new immigrants in Sheffield reveal that this transition – from insecure, transitory situations to a more fixed, secure residential position – can prove difficult to negotiate and that secure accommodation situations can be difficult to maintain. They also reveal that new immigrants are often exposed to living conditions that are unsatisfactory and inappropriate. This chapter explores these two issues. Discussion begins by considering the issue of security. The problems that some respondents have encountered proceeding along the pathways summarised in Chapter 2 are highlighted, before attention turns to the challenges that some respondents have faced maintaining secure accommodation. Discussion then considers the living conditions that new immigrants have encountered in both temporary and more secure, longer-term accommodation situations.

Security of tenure and residential stability

The problems that new immigrants – in particular, refugees and asylum seekers – can encounter accessing more secure, longer-term accommodation mirror many of the factors frequently called upon to explain high levels of insecurity and homelessness among particular population groups (including young people leaving care, former prisoners and people with substance abuse problems). Refugees and asylum seekers are rarely the skilled players of the welfare system they are portrayed to be in media representations of the immigrant population. Rather, they

often lack the knowledge and understanding (the cognitive resources) required to resolve the problems that can arise in the early phase of their housing career or the awareness of, and contacts and associations with, individuals or agencies (social resources) that can help smooth their route into more secure, longer-term accommodation. The experiences of Farduus and Khatra, two Somali respondents, illustrate that the route through the asylum system and the accompanying housing career – through temporary accommodation situations arranged by NASS, into temporary accommodation for homeless people upon being granted leave to remain and recognised as homeless by the council, and finally into a more secure accommodation situation, which in the Sheffield context was typically a council tenancy – can be fraught with difficulties.

Farduus is a 32-year-old woman whose experiences are illustrative of the well-documented problems that asylum seekers can experience when they fall through the safety net of the NASS system. Farduus arrived into the UK with the help of an agent, who abandoned her outside a shopping centre upon her arrival in the UK. She approached a passing group of Somali women, who offered her a place to stay for the night, raised the money for her to travel by bus to Liverpool and advised her to report to the NASS offices in the city. Upon approaching NASS and applying for asylum she reported that she was told to go to Leeds where there was accommodation, but was not provided with any help to get there:

I claimed asylum then the immigration officers gave me a map indicating Leeds and ordered me to go there since I came to their office on my own! Fortunately, I met a Somali asylum seeker who didn't know how to go to Leeds but offered to take me to the family which he stayed with in Liverpool.

After four days staying with this family she moved in with another Somali woman in Liverpool who helped her find a solicitor. She then approached NASS but reported being informed that she was too late to apply for assistance with accommodation:

After I got a solicitor I went back to the Liverpool immigration officer and they turned down to give me accommodation because they said I over passed the limit to apply for accommodation ... therefore I had to find my own and suggested me to go to Sheffield where NASS were due to accommodate asylum seekers. Then I came to Sheffield.

At this point, Farduus's housing career diverted from the typical Somali housing career sketched out in Chapter 2. Rather than being dispersed to NASS accommodation, she made her own way to Sheffield and proceeded to stay in

a series of temporary accommodation situations. First she stayed with a Somali family in Sheffield that she had been put in touch with by Somali people she knew in Liverpool. This family of nine (husband and wife and seven children) were living in a three-bedroom property, but allowed Farduus to stay for one month. At this point she reported finding out that her application for asylum had been unsuccessful. In response, she returned to London and sought assistance from the Refugee Council at Heathrow Airport, the only place she knew to approach. She slept rough for three nights inside Heathrow Airport, before being directed to a direct access homeless hostel nearby, where she was allowed to sleep for one week. Forced to leave this accommodation, she reported sleeping rough for a total of nine months. After nine months, Farduus reported that the Refugee Council managed to 'persuade' NASS to provide her with accommodation and she was accommodated in a hostel in London. After six months she reported being required to leave, for reasons she was not clear about. On the streets once again, Farduus's health deteriorated significantly, at which point she decided to return to Sheffield:

I started homeless again and all these homeless situations and all the consecutive problems and hardship ... I developed depression and became very sick mentally. Then I came back to Sheffield ... I couldn't make any choice. I was confused and didn't have any control on my decisions. At that moment I thought Sheffield was a better and welcoming city and came back in June 2005.

During this period Farduus had no legal representation and was not involved in any process to appeal her asylum decision. She subsequently lived in a number of homeless situations in Sheffield, typically staying with Somali families and living with local people who had registered to accommodate asylum seekers on a voluntary basis, who she was put in touch with by the local authority asylum team. She stayed as a guest in a number of private dwellings until a GP referred her to a local refugee support agency who arranged accommodation and legal support. Between August 2003 and February 2006, therefore, Farduus had lived in 14 accommodation situations and countless homeless situations and was still no nearer accessing secure accommodation, while her asylum status was still to be finally determined.

Farduus's experience is illustrative of the accommodation difficulties that people can encounter if their passage through the asylum system is problematic. In contrast, the other Somali respondent who had failed to access secure accommodation in the UK had been granted leave to remain. However, her experiences illustrate how the transition from NASS accommodation and into secure accommodation can also be fraught with difficulties. After staying in NASS hostel accommodation in Barnsley for one month, Khatra, who was 22 when she arrived in the UK on her own, was

moved into NASS temporary accommodation (one-bedroom flat) in Sheffield. While resident in this flat she was granted indefinite leave to remain. Required to vacate her NASS accommodation upon being granted leave to remain, she approached the local authority as homeless on the advice of NASS officers. The local authority duly placed her in temporary accommodation while her case was processed. However, while awaiting an offer of permanent accommodation, Khatra reported that she was informed by the council that she was not in priority need for rehousing and was required to vacate the hostel or pay the rent herself:

Three weeks prior to moving [*following accident*] I was told to abandon the hostel or pay the rent myself. Because I had no priority points for rehousing or entitlement to Housing Benefit the council decided to stop paying the rent. It was stressful and I was very worried to what I should do and where I should go or end up to live! But unfortunately, when I was going through this uncertainty, I fell off the bunk bed and sustained injuries and was hospitalised.

Upon leaving hospital she was moved into a shared house, living alongside other Somali women. She reported that the accommodation was provided by the council and that she was awaiting an offer of permanent accommodation.

Khatra's experience is illustrative of the fact that people passing through the asylum system are rarely skilled players of the welfare system, but are rather at the mercy of a bureaucratic procedure that can 'go wrong', with potentially severe consequences for the individuals concerned. In particular, Khatra's case points to the hardship that refugees can experience if they are not recognised as homeless under the legislation, once granted leave to remain and required to vacate NASS accommodation. The importance of this step in the early-phase housing careers of refugees is underlined by Yousef's experience. In contrast to Farduus and Khatra, Yousef had managed to eventually access secure accommodation, but not before he had been exposed to various insecure and unsafe situations because of his failure to be recognised as homeless once granted leave to remain. Yousef arrived in the UK on his own when he was 19 years old and upon approaching NASS was immediately dispersed to Barnsley. After one month he was placed in NASS accommodation in Sheffield. Seven months after arriving in the UK he was granted leave to remain for five years. On the advice of NASS he approached the council as homeless five days before his right to occupy NASS accommodation expired. Advised to return to the council upon leaving his NASS accommodation, he subsequently approached the council as homeless, only to be informed that he was not in priority need and that the council had no legal responsibility to provide accommodation:

I have been in touch with the council's housing officers five days ahead of the end date [of NASS accommodation], in which I filled out housing application forms and they only told me to come back for the decision when I will be bringing the keys. When I handed in the keys they told me, given that I am fit and young, that they have no obligation to give you emergency accommodation. Instead, they told me that I am homeless and advised me to look for hostels and continue bidding [for housing] on my own.

Unaware where to turn for help or assistance, Yousef slept rough for two weeks, returning to the council every day in the hope of being helped to find accommodation. Not until he was put in touch with a solicitor by a homeless advice worker, who subsequently advocated on his behalf, was any assistance forthcoming:

I was homeless, they left me on my own and left me wandering round the city sleeping roughly in restaurants, mosques and the worst times I slept at the train station or the bus interchange chairs. Every morning I was seeing the city council's housing section officers for two weeks. They were calling hostels and since mostly were full, the officers were advising me to come back and try next day. At last one of them helped me to contact a solicitor. That solicitor helped me the same day to secure a hotel accommodation from the same officers who kept me without a roof for two weeks!

After less than two weeks in a hostel arranged by the local authority Yousef was offered a permanent tenancy by the council.

The cases discussed so far have pointed to the various problems that new immigrants – in particular, asylum seekers – can encounter accessing more secure accommodation. Yet, a total of 34 out of 39 new immigrants interviewed had successfully accessed what might be referred to as secure or longer-term accommodation. In many of these cases, however, it was questionable whether these housing situations would serve to provide long-term positive housing outcomes.

New immigrants, and refugees and asylum seekers in particular, have experienced many of the situations that have been identified as risk factors associated with homelessness. These include long-term dependency on institutions for accommodation and material needs, long-term unemployment, mental and physical health problems, limited financial resources and a poor (UK recognised) record of educational and training achievement (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995; Johnston, 2003; Hek, 2004). New immigrants are also subjected to various triggers known to frequently precipitate homelessness among at-risk groups, including eviction from

rented accommodation, abandonment of accommodation because of harassment and violence, relationship breakdown, household expansion (for example, with the birth of a child), a deterioration in mental health and leaving the parental home because of breakdown in relations and financial problems. The interplay of these factors was evident in the experiences of four respondents who had accessed but failed to maintain secure accommodation and had become homeless.

Family breakdown is a major risk to residential security. Two respondents had become homeless following a breakdown in relations with a spouse or other relative. In one case, a Liberian women had arrived in the UK through the Gateway Programme when she was 17 years old and had been accommodated with her brother and his family. Together, they were accommodated in a council tenancy, following a four-month stay in temporary accommodation in Sheffield. Bindu reported that she lived in the council flat for 18 months, but that relations with her family became strained when her niece was born. The flat was overcrowded – four people living in a two-bedroom flat – and she was requested to leave. She reported approaching the council, with the support of the Refugee Council officer working on the Gateway Programme, but failed to secure alternative accommodation and ended up living as a guest with a friend for one month. Subsequently, relations with this friend deteriorated and she moved out into a room in a shared house that she was told about by a different friend. She is currently living in this shared house while waiting for an offer of council housing. However, this situation appears highly insecure, given problems that Bindu reported affording the rent: she is paying £280 per month for her room, but is not in receipt of Housing Benefit, despite working on a part-time basis for minimum wage. Bindu reported that she is in the process of making a claim for Housing Benefit, but appeared uncertain about whether or not she would qualify, given her housing and employment situation. Kobor, an 18-year-old Liberian man who had been living in a council flat with family members since arriving in the UK through the Gateway Programme, also reported difficulties finding secure accommodation after the flat was repossessed by the council. Kobor reported that he had no idea that his relative had got into rent arrears and described how he returned one day to find the locks changed and had nowhere to live. Kobor immediately turned to friends for help, sleeping on sofas and in spare rooms.

The experiences of Bindu and Kobor parallel the difficulties that many young people in insecure housing situations experience negotiating the transition to independent living and their frequent reliance on informal networks of family and friends for support and a place to stay (Robinson with Coward, 2003). The familiarity of these experiences makes them notable, however. Bindu and Kobor have only been living in the UK for two years, yet in this short time they have secured a range of resources that are helping them to survive homelessness and search for a new place to live.

They have friends that they can call on for support and assistance and, in Bindu's case, have the awareness, understanding and skills required to find work and secure a private tenancy. These experiences are in stark contrast to some of the older new immigrants interviewed, who appeared to be taking longer to forge friendships and develop a practical understanding of the housing system and labour market. This distinction might, in part, reflect the participation of younger people in the education system and the interactions and associations developed while at school or on training programmes. Whatever, the experiences of Bindu and Kobor are in stark contrast to the experiences of other respondents who lost secure accommodation and became homeless.

Nivin arrived into the UK on a spouse visa from Pakistan and immediately upon arrival moved into her husband's house, which he shared with members of his family. Problems immediately emerged with the marriage and within three months Nivin left her husband (and her accommodation) with the help of the police. Nivin's case is an extreme example, but her experience illustrates an important point regarding the potential insecurity of accommodation provided by a spouse or spouse's family. Seven out of ten Pakistani respondents were living in accommodation owned by their spouse or their spouse's family. Their residential security was therefore dependent upon their continuing relationship with their spouse and/or their spouse's family. Their immigration status was also reliant on the continuation of their marriage, spouses not being allowed to apply for indefinite leave to remain if the relationship breaks down before they have lived together for four years, other than in cases of domestic violence or death. People resident in the UK on a temporary visa also have no recourse to public funds, including social housing and welfare benefits. People on spouse visas are allowed to work, however, but among the eight Pakistani respondents that had entered the UK on a spouse visa, only two were in work. Threatened with or forced to leave home, people in this situation therefore have few resources to call upon. Nivin knew no one in the town where she had been living with her husband. The only person she could think to phone was the brother of a friend from Pakistan, who lived in a different city but offered to come and pick her up from the police station and let her stay until she secured alternative accommodation. In the event, she lived with her friend's brother, his family and a lodger and his family (a total of seven adults and two children in a two-bedroom house) for six weeks, until she contacted a solicitor who managed to negotiate access to a refuge for South Asian women in Sheffield.

Nivin and Kobor's experiences are illustrative of the housing problems that can arise as a consequence of a breakdown in relations between household members. Another important factor undercutting the residential security of Somali and Liberian new immigrants was problems with people beyond their household: with neighbours

and other local residents. In total, eight out of the 11 respondents (men and women, single people and families) allocated social housing on estates with little or no history of accommodating diversity and difference on the southern periphery of the city (the *new contact zones* referred to in Chapter 2) reported problems of racism and harassment. Two respondents reported that they were forced to leave their home as a result of violence and a further two respondents reported being advised by their landlord to keep a regular diary of ongoing harassment and abuse in a bid to establish that problems were real and substantive and warranted a transfer to a different area of the city.

Reported incidents ranged from intimidating behaviour (including vandalism, graffiti and name calling) through to violence against property (stones through windows) and against the person (physical assault). One Somali respondent reported that he had been forced to flee his home following a violent assault. Hussein lived alone in a ground-floor council flat in an estate on the southern periphery of the city. Hussein recounted how he did not want to move into the area, having lived in temporary accommodation in a more diverse neighbourhood adjacent to the city centre. However, he was informed that if he did not accept the offer he would lose his right to housing, a scenario often encountered by homeless applicants:

I asked where was [*estate*], but they gave me a letter to take to the ... housing office in [*estate*] and told me to catch bus 47 and ask the driver where to get off. At the housing office three women accompanied me to show the flat. When I saw the flat and the area how isolated I gonna be I felt sorrow and tried to complain and refuse but they insisted I have to accept or lose my right to rehousing, considering the effect it can have going to the streets I had to accept with desperation.

Hussein recalled that soon after moving into the property the harassment commenced. Various incidents were reported to the housing office, but Hussein was informed that action could not be taken without proof. The incidents eventually escalated into two separate assaults, at which time the police intervened and removed Hussein from the property for his own safety:

At first when I came they broke the window. One night I was sleeping and then heard youngsters shout and knock my doors, but I did not respond and ignored them. At last I heard a big bang which broke my kitchen and bedroom windows, then I got out to defend and they continued attacking me, then police came and caught some of them ... Another night a fat man attacked me and suddenly the police caught him ... That night the police took me and I slept at the police station saying that I am in danger

to sleep in my house. At the morning the police called the Housing which invited me to come to arrange another place to sleep. They sent me to a homeless hostel to stay a week.

Subsequently, Hussein was recognised as homeless by the council and placed in temporary accommodation while awaiting a new tenancy offer. This had recently been forthcoming and was once again in an out-of-town location with little history of minority ethnic settlement. Hussein reported turning down this offer, despite being told that the council had fulfilled its obligations under the homelessness legislation and that he would have to vacate his temporary accommodation and find somewhere to live for himself.

Fortunately, few respondents reported problems of the scale or nature experienced by Hussein, but lower-grade forms of harassment were common among Somali and Liberian respondents and were clearly destabilising the commitment of these social tenants to their residential situation and undermining their sense of security. In contrast, Polish and Pakistani respondents did not report problems with harassment in or around their accommodation or their local neighbourhood. These variable experiences are explored further in Chapter 4.

Living conditions

In total, 33 out of the 39 new immigrants interviewed had spent some time living in temporary accommodation since arriving in the UK. These situations included hostel accommodation for asylum seekers and for homeless people, bed and breakfast hotels, shared houses and flats, temporary tenancies with NASS-registered landlords and the city council, staying rent free in accommodation owned by a friend or relative and staying as a guest with a friend or relative. It was unusual for respondents to raise concerns or complain about their stay in these accommodation settings, but when questioned they reported problems and experiences consistent with the substantial body of evidence pointing to poor living conditions in temporary accommodation, that have been revealed to have, often substantial, consequences for health and well-being (Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Bines, 1994; Wilson, 2001; Centrepoint, 2005; Dwyer and Brown, 2005; Phillips, 2006).

The particular problems reported by respondents depended upon the type of temporary accommodation situation they had been living in. All Liberian respondents and the majority of Somali respondents had spent some time in hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation and referred to problems of privacy and restrictions

on their freedom. Personal safety and security of possessions were also raised as problems. Amina, for example, arrived into the UK with a young child and was accommodated for three months in a hostel for asylum seekers in London. Although physical conditions in the hostel were not reported to be a problem, the restrictions placed upon her use of facilities and services were reported to make life difficult and concerns were expressed about safety:

I had some problems in the hostel. The kitchen had an opening and closing time and all those who share were to respect the time limit, this is okay for single person but very difficult for a family with children, a baby may need a bottle of milk or you may need hot water to prepare food. Theft was very high, if you did leave something, even a minute on the table it disappeared. It was also unsafe because some young men were always fighting in groups.

The behaviour of other residents was a frequent cause for concern among respondents who had spent time in shared accommodation, including hostels and shared houses and flats. Kobor (a 20-year-old Liberian man), for example, reported being repeatedly disturbed at night by the man sharing his room in a hostel for homeless people in Sheffield:

I was getting problems with them [*other people in the hostel*], not really body harm but moral and mental. For example, some nights my room-mate drunk heavily and woke me up late and began shouting and forcing me to argue or discuss with him till he fall asleep. I think each asylum seeker had a right to a bedroom but the housing providers were abusing the system.

Abdi (a 32-year-old Somali man) had also experienced problems with a room-mate in a bed and breakfast hotel used by the city council to accommodate homeless people:

The area was good but the hotel was very bad ... My room-mate, a white man from Liverpool, was a smoker, eating in the room and leaving food remains in everywhere, untidy, lack of hygiene and a threat to our health. Even most of the residents were like him. I complained because I felt very uncomfortable.

Farduus, a 38-year-old Somali woman, talked about the problems of living in a mixed-gender hostel when homeless and awaiting an offer of a permanent tenancy from the council:

Farduus: It was very hard to me ... I didn't like it. Sometimes men could come into the toilet because the doors were not secure and also men high in drug might knock the door and make you frightened, it was totally unsafe.

Interviewer: Did you have to share a bedroom?

Farduus: Yes.

Interviewer: With how many people?

Farduus: The first room I shared with three other people, after that they kept me changing from a shared room to another daily! I was moved from my first shared room because the woman sleeping under my bunk bed has drunken a lot then thrown to me the empty can ... very nervous, I couldn't sleep all night.

In contrast to problems encountered in shared accommodation, the comments of respondents who had lived on their own in temporary accommodation – typically Liberian and Somali respondents who had been housed in a temporary flat or house by NASS or by the city council while awaiting a tenancy offer – centred on the physical condition of their accommodation. Problems with the operation or functioning of heating systems were a recurrent theme among Liberian respondents housed in temporary accommodation upon first arriving in Sheffield. One respondent reported problems understanding how to operate the cooker and heating system, eventually seeking assistance from her support worker at the Refugee Council. Other respondents reported problems with malfunctioning heating systems, one person coping in NASS accommodation without any heating or hot water for two weeks, while a Liberian respondent reported that the boiler in her temporary accommodation was declared unsafe and that she had to move at short notice to alternative accommodation.

The majority of new immigrants interviewed reported an improvement in living conditions once they accessed more secure, longer-term accommodation. Problems were still encountered in permanent accommodation settings, however, and when asked about the suitability of the permanent accommodation situations they had lived in since arriving in the UK, two key concerns were reported by new immigrants: overcrowding and poor living conditions.

Severe overcrowding was reported by a minority of the Pakistani new immigrants, while the majority of Polish respondents appear to have spent time in overcrowded HMO accommodation. Pakistani and Polish respondents also raised concerns about living conditions, in both owner-occupied and private rented accommodation. In contrast, respondents in the social rented sector (Liberian and Somali new immigrants) were more concerned about the standard of facilities and the lack of furniture within their accommodation. In contrast to more general surveys of the housing situations and requirements of the minority ethnic population, few comments were made regarding the relevance and appropriateness of accommodation to the needs of household members. No reference was made to either cultural requirements or specific needs associated with health or disability issues. The neglect of these common concerns appeared to reflect the prioritising by respondents of basic material needs – the need for a safe and secure living space – rather than more particular requirements that might not be satisfied in their current accommodation.

Overcrowding was largely concentrated among new immigrants (Pakistani and Polish respondents) living in the private sector (owner occupation and private renting). This finding would appear to be consistent with recorded levels of overcrowding in the wider population, which tend to be higher within the private rented sector (in which Polish new immigrants are concentrated) and among particular minority ethnic groups (26.4 per cent of the Pakistani population of the UK was recorded as living in overcrowded accommodation by the 2001 Census of Population).

Two factors appear to explain why overcrowding was more apparent among new immigrants resident in the private sector (owner occupation and private renting) than those living in the social rented sector. First, many of the new immigrants resident in the social rented sector were living in small (often single-person) households. In contrast, nine of the ten Pakistani new immigrants interviewed moved into established households that often had many members. Second, social landlords were able to transfer the two respondents and their families living in overcrowded social rented accommodation to a larger property. In contrast, Polish new immigrants were reliant on the private rented sector for accommodation and could typically only afford rent levels in a shared house or flat.

Liberian and Somali new immigrants in Sheffield have benefited from the right of access to the social rented sector which seeks to match tenants' needs to the size of property they are allocated and which takes overcrowding issues into account when reviewing applications for housing and transfer requests. They have also benefited from living in a city where the relationship between demand for and supply of social housing is more in balance than in other parts of the UK (for example, London and

the South East), enabling the sector to respond relatively quickly to emerging needs and shifting requirements (for example, arising from family reunion). However, in certain situations social tenants have been living in overcrowded conditions for a number of months, or even years, while waiting for an offer of more suitable accommodation. Zoe, a 37-year-old Liberian woman with four children, for example, recounted extreme problems with overcrowding:

Zoe: It was a flat where I was living downstairs, it was housing association.

Interviewer: And how many bedrooms did that flat have?

Zoe: According to them it was three bedrooms, according to the measurement the council took it wasn't actually three bedrooms, it was something like one and a half bedroom.

Interviewer: OK, because the other bedrooms were so small?

Zoe: They were tiny.

Interviewer: So you were overcrowded?

Zoe: Overcrowded yeah.

Interviewer: And how long did you stay there?

Zoe: Two years and few months yeah.

Interviewer: So who else lived there with you?

Zoe: No one, my kids and I.

Interviewer: Just the three children?

Zoe: The three children were later, January, the other one from Ghana arrived here with us, so I fought for her and she went through the processes, we went through the alien test as well and she was reunited here with me, we were four children and one mum.

Interviewer: So you were definitely overcrowded then?

Zoe: Overcrowded yeah ... the council sent about two representatives there, they came and saw situation and say it was unsafe for the children.

Zoe was subsequently moved to a three-bedroom council house. In contrast, moving house to resolve overcrowding is often not an option for people living in the owner-occupied sector, given the cost implications and financial constraints. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the most severe examples of overcrowding were reported within this sector. A Pakistani woman, for example, reported sharing with her husband and nine other family members (one of whom was a child under the age of 16 years) in a four-bedroom semi-detached house for a total of four years, while another Pakistani woman reported living in a four-bedroom terraced house with her husband, sister- and brother-in-law and their four children for 15 months.

Six out of ten Polish respondents reported that a room in a shared property or HMO represented their first secure accommodation. Although these situations might not officially be deemed as overcrowded – there is no statutory test for overcrowding in the HMO sector, different local authorities applying their own local space standards – they reproduce many of the aspects of temporary accommodation that can prove so problematic. These include lack of privacy, restricted freedom and control (for example, associated with sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities) and issues of safety and security. Other studies have also repeatedly pointed to the poor living conditions experienced by Polish and other European migrant workers in both tied and independent private rented accommodation (CAB, 2004; Coote, 2006; Stenning *et al.*, 2006; Zaronaitė and Tirzite, 2006; Audit Commission, 2007). Polish respondents tended to be phlegmatic about their situation, however, rarely regarding it as problematic or a cause for concern. This finding is consistent with other studies that have found relatively high levels of satisfaction among migrant workers living in what objective assessment might conclude are poor housing conditions (Spencer *et al.*, 2007).

Two factors appear to explain this situation. First, Polish respondents appeared to have low expectations and, second, they tended to regard such housing situations as temporary, before they either moved into self-contained accommodation (three Polish respondents had moved out of an HMO and into their own tenancy on a flat or house) or returned to Poland. Some benefits were also reported to be associated with living in HMO accommodation, including the opportunity to get to know other (usually Polish) people who were also new immigrants to Sheffield and, through these contacts, to tap into informal networks of information, assistance and support.

In terms of living conditions, particular concerns were raised by respondents who had moved from furnished (local authority provided or arranged) temporary accommodation into unfurnished permanent accommodation. Recurrent themes among Liberian respondents were the size of their accommodation, compared to their temporary accommodation, the poor condition of the dwelling when they first moved in (maintenance, aesthetics and key services, including heating systems) and the lack of furniture. Zoe, for example, recounted being pleased to have finally secured a place to live, but concerned with the condition and furnishing of the property:

Zoe: Actually when I enter in the house I felt that there was, I wasn't going to do anything in the house, that was my feeling, but when I enter the house, I really praised god that you know that had made it possible for me to be in the UK, but I wasn't really impressed with the house ... there was no wallpaper, there was no paint, everything was scraped down and the place was very awful. The only thing I saw was a new carpet and two chairs, one big one and one small one with a small little table, four spoons, four plates, four glasses and two pots with a cooker and a very small fridge ... That's all in the house with ... with those small little beds and things.

Interviewer: Did you have beds?

Zoe: Yeah we have beds yeah ... Camp beds yeah, those were just camp beds ... I saw those things in the house and I didn't have any option ... so we enter and the support worker say 'well this is your house' and I say 'well, all right let us pray, it's all right, you are here' and I kept on complaining about the house cos of the situation, you know, how the house was, there was no wallpaper, there was no paint and I didn't know actually know how should have done it.

Interviewer: You didn't know they should have actually done it?

Zoe: They should have done it, yeah. And they didn't do it, I did everything on my own. I did wallpapers ... I was on income support when I first arrived, I was on income support for couple of months and from income support I was able to

do my house, I fixed my house, I bought TV and I bought big fridge because the small fridge couldn't put anything for us, for a family ... And I bought a washing machine as well, I had to buy a washing machine, I had to buy a Hoover, we didn't have a Hoover, we had a kind of little brush where you would just brush and just pick up the thing on the carpet, I bought Hoover, I bought TV, I bought TV set and I bought washing machine and a fridge and I tried to fix the house as best I could.

Somali respondents reported similar and, in some cases, more extreme problems upon moving into their first council or housing association tenancy. A key difference in their experience was that while Liberian respondents benefited from the support provided to people entering the UK through the Gateway Programme, including material support and assistance (witness the provision of basic furniture and other goods, such as knives and forks as recalled by Zoe), Somali respondents reported leaving hostel accommodation and moving into unfurnished social tenancies, with little or no furniture:

Hussein: When I moved to the house it was unfurnished; therefore I bought from the hotel manager a mattress (£20) to sleep with at least. Then applied the social fund but they refused at first instance, and then as a consequence I appealed from their decision through CAB, which secured me little money to begin with.

Interviewer: A mattress, which was the only thing in the whole house?

Hussein: Yes.

Interviewer: So, the council gave you a flat as a homeless person with no possessions and it was unfurnished, but you didn't get any help to get furniture?

Hussein: Yes, they ordered me to leave the hotel and move to an unfurnished flat on my own.

Interviewer: How long have you been without a cooker?

Hussein: A month, I was sleeping on that mattress and eating out at fish and chip shops.

Abdi recounted a similar experience, moving into a council flat with no carpet, fridge, cooker or furniture, and which was also in a poor state of repair:

Abdi: The windows seem not maintained for 100 years, therefore not insulated and thus water floods in when raining, also at winter it is freezing inside even while heaters are on. Kitchen, toilet, everywhere in the house is unbelievably abandoned for long time and not suitable for living, even animals in Europe which have their own rights would not be allowed to live in that property.

Interviewer: It was cold, damp and leaking and you have no furniture?

Abdi: No furniture at all.

Interviewer: No fridge, no cooker?

Abdi: Nothing.

Such experiences are common within the rehousing experiences of homeless people (Crane *et al.*, 2005), despite the provision of furniture and white goods being recognised as central to the provision of a desirable and effective rehousing situation (Pleace, 1995). However, refugees, like other homeless people, can apply to the Social Fund for financial support. The Social Fund makes discretionary payments to help people on specific benefits or a low income meet one-off expenses or to provide help in an emergency. Community Care Grants can be paid to people setting up home after being homeless, while Budgeting Loans are awarded to help people meet expenses, for example for furniture, that cannot be met out of weekly benefits and would prove hard to save up for. Securing financial assistance through the Social Fund, however, demands knowledge of both the opportunities provided and how to apply, as well as meeting the requirements demanded of a successful application.

Abdi did not receive any help from the Social Fund, relying instead on help from a local church-based charity that provided basic furnishings and a neighbour who gave him a fridge:

Abdi: I came back to my community and after telling my situation they indicated me a charity run by a church which gives second-hand furniture to the poor people. I have been there and after one day they brought to me a single bed, curtains, cutlery, a sofa and a small cooker with two rings.

Interviewer: What about a fridge?

Abdi: No, they said they don't give electric appliances because of safety concerns.

Interviewer: Carpet?

Abdi: No, no carpet.

Interviewer: So just to get this right, you moved into a flat with no furniture. Did the women you talked to at the housing office tell you about how to get furniture?

Abdi: Yes, they have also gave me the charity address if I need a furniture.

Interviewer: Did they tell you about the Social Fund?

Abdi: No.

Interviewer: So how long did it take you to get a fridge?

Abdi: I had been attacked or discriminated by my neighbours constantly, really I was in crisis. Humans is very amazing, one of my neighbours, an old lady about 65 years old, white English woman, which I helped a couple of times in carrying shopping to upstairs, gave me a fridge and a microwave when she moved out of the area.

Hamid did make a claim to the Social Fund, but was only successful following an appeal, supported by the local Citizens Advice Bureau:

Hamid: The procedure is when the council gives you unfurnished flat you have to claim the Social Fund to furnish but they wrongly turned down my claim. Then the CAB took my case through the appeal process and won some money to buy furniture after a month ... Getting the refugee status changed my life, but the unfurnished property had a negative effect on my health and well-being. Compared to NASS accommodation, NASS properties were well furnished.

Interviewer: Did you get quite ill?

Hamid: Very ill, even the CAB added my health consequences in the claim. Since there was no carpet I was exposed to much cold and dust and got chest infections with continuous cough, nasal congestion and allergy.

Poor living conditions were also reported by the two Pakistani respondents living in the private rented sector who had arrived in the UK through the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme visa. Both respondents reported moving house in an attempt to improve their living conditions. In one case, moving into a new property in an adjacent neighbourhood owned by a different landlord served to provide a safer and more suitable living environment. In contrast, Qasim recounted how he moved through a series of poor quality, private rented properties owned by the same landlord. One flat that he lived in was accessed by a steep external stairway, while the interior was in urgent need of repair and maintenance. Subsequently, he moved into a flat above a fish and chip shop where 'there was a lot of noise, vibration of the fryer and everything that used to come upstairs and used to disturb me a lot'. After then living in a shared flat with three other men that he did not know, Qasim was joined in the UK by his wife and two young children and they moved into a flat together. Reported problems included the lack of central heating and an infestation of mice:

Qasim: There is no central heating here, that is one thing. The landlord gave us this electric heater that we can move around to different rooms depending on which room we're in.

Interviewer: So the other two bedrooms that you have, they don't have a heater or anything fixed into that room?

Qasim: No they have gas heaters in there, I don't use much of this heater, the electric one, because if we use it, it will cost me more, the bill will be high and I can't afford to pay a very high bill but other than that we don't have a problem with the flat, it is in a pretty much good condition and there is heating. The heating is here, is for us to use and how much we can use depends on how much we can afford to pay the bill ... The one problem that there is, is that there are a lot of mice about ... I have seen them as well and they make a lot of noise when they are moving up and down

so we get to hear and that it is a bit disturbing to know that they can go about, especially in the food area in the kitchen as well and my wife and my children get scared as well so I need to sort that problem out, but then I don't think there is any other problem.

In addition to these concerns, Qasim also raised concerns about the lack of play space in and around the flat for his two small children:

They spend all day inside the house, they hardly ever go out. They don't get a chance to go outside or play with other children, so they're a bit cramped up and they're a bit bored and get restless because of that but other than that, everything seems to be good.

Qasim reported that his occupancy of these various properties was informal and that no tenancy agreement was involved. Similar informal arrangements were also apparent within the housing careers of other migrant workers. Information about available opportunities was circulated through word-of-mouth networks and access was negotiated through direct contact with the landlord. An apparent consequence was that Pakistani landlords were often accommodating Pakistani tenants and Polish landlords were often accommodating Polish tenants. All had a shared experience, however, of living with the insecurity of such informal arrangements, as well as the exposure, in Qasim's case, to poor living conditions.

Conclusion

Most of the refugees and migrant workers interviewed had moved into temporary accommodation situations upon first arriving in the UK and into Sheffield. The situations endured and experiences reported were consistent with established understanding of the problems encountered living in temporary accommodation, including:

- poor living conditions
- insecurity and uncertainty
- restrictions on freedoms
- limited privacy, particularly in hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation

- poor facilities and services
- threats to safety and well-being.

However, while Liberian respondents typically lived in these situations for a matter of days and Polish respondents often reported choosing to 'put up' with such situations (to minimise costs and maximise capital accumulation), Somali respondents were forced to endure these circumstances for, on average, 13 months, while their asylum application was being processed. One can only begin to guess what impact these experiences have had on the mental and physical health and well-being of these new immigrants, although established understanding of the health consequences of living in temporary accommodation suggests it is likely to have often been severe.

Perhaps a more striking finding is that these problems often continued after new immigrants had moved into more secure, long-term accommodation. At the point in the new immigrant arrival experience when it might be presumed that a settled situation had been negotiated and targeted support and assistance were no longer required, new immigrants were reporting problems of insecurity and poor living conditions. Basic material needs were often not satisfied and security of tenure often proved to be an illusion, with new immigrants struggling to maintain, and in some cases losing, their place in the housing system and becoming homeless.

4 The residential spaces of new immigration

Introduction

Any attempt to understand the factors shaping the housing actions and determining the housing outcomes of new immigrants must consider the distinct places that the housing pathways of new immigrants pass through and bypass. Recognising this fact, this chapter explores new immigrant attitudes towards and experiences of different places. It seeks to understand the importance of place to the residential choices and preferences of new immigrant households and to situate their settlement experiences within the specifics of the places in which they have lived. Discussion begins by exploring the residential priorities of the new immigrants interviewed and the relative importance placed on two key aspects of the residential situation: place and living space (or accommodation). Attention then turns to the importance of place and the impact of living in different kinds of place on the settlement experiences of new immigrants.

Residential priorities and preferences

Exploring the residential priorities and attitudes to place among the new immigrants interviewed, two different and distinct perspectives emerged. On the one hand, Polish and Liberian new immigrants were, first and foremost, concerned about their accommodation and place of residence was an issue of surprisingly little importance when discussing residential concerns. In contrast, Somali and Pakistani respondents were found to prioritise place-based concerns above the specifics of the accommodation in which they were living. These two positions and the reasoning underpinning each perspective are explored in turn below.

Prioritising place

Somali and Pakistani new immigrants attached great importance to the nature of the place within which they lived, prioritising place concerns above housing issues when discussing residential preferences and mobility. For these new immigrants, place represented a repository of difference and the challenge was to negotiate access

to particular places within the city where they 'fitted in' and which provided access to community facilities and social and cultural networks which were perceived to be crucial to their well-being, sense of belonging and security, and to their residential satisfaction. As one Somali respondent explained, when discussing his reading of an area:

I'm not looking the good place, I'm not looking the good house, I'm looking at the community ... is it my community? ... I look the community, first impression, what is this area? Can [you] find your culture, whether you want your food, your people to talk, your community?
(Hamid)

Hamid was searching for the right place to live, rather than the right property to live in. The offer of a council tenancy on an estate on the periphery of the city failed to live up to this residential aspiration:

When I see the flat [on estate] I say 'I don't want this flat, I don't want this area' ... this is isolated, this is not my community ... and I can't get what I want here like food, like so many things.

Pakistani new immigrants also emphasised the importance of place to their residential preferences, and reported actively seeking to live in ethnically mixed communities, which were perceived as safer neighbourhoods where relevant facilities and services were more readily available. As Nasha, a Pakistani new immigrant, commented when asked what types of area he would consider living in (although he could not readily identify or name such neighbourhoods within Sheffield):

A mixed community ... because you have community you've got facilities there, shops, maybe Pakistani shops, halal meats and mosque ... if you go to English communities some areas are not very good and the English people don't like to see black people to their neighbourhoods.

Pakistani and Somali new immigrants put a high value on living in what might be referred to as a cosmopolitan neighbourhood. This factor was prioritised above other neighbourhood attributes and the specifics of their accommodation situation:

The area I'm living in right now is a good area because there are a lot of Pakistani families living round there [and] we've got our daily life facilities there.
(Abdul)

To me it is good because the availability of Somali community, the Somali mosque, the Somali local shops and the general mix of ethnic groups are a good place for us.

(Farduus)

Such place-based preferences should come as no surprise. The concentrated areas of minority ethnic settlement that public policy has increasingly sought to problematise can represent a rich source of information, support, assistance and security for people faced with the challenge of meeting their material needs and establishing themselves within a society that can often appear suspicious and hostile. Safety and comfort can come from living alongside people from a shared (ethnic or cultural) background, while targeted provision and community-led services can provide an alternative to, as well as a bridge into, formal service provision (Phillips, 1998; Robinson and Reeve, 2006; Hudson *et al.*, 2007).

Securing access to these resources appeared to overshadow any concerns that Somali and Pakistani respondents might have had about other attributes of the local neighbourhood. Issues such as crime levels, the quality of local schools, the physical environment and availability of green spaces were rarely mentioned when respondents were discussing attitudes towards different places within the city. Some Somali respondents did stress the importance of living somewhere that was 'peaceful', but these comments often led into reflections about the safety and security available in ethnically diverse areas of the city, compared to less diverse, White British-dominated neighbourhoods. Hamid, a Somali respondent, for example, talked about feeling more settled in temporary accommodation, which he had moved into since being forced to leave his permanent tenancy because of racial harassment, than he did in his permanent tenancy on a predominantly white estate where he had suffered harassment:

Now is peaceful, I live in a peaceful area, I have all my neighbours from Somalia, Chinese, Pakistani, Yemeni, multicultural people, so now I feel I am relaxing.

A subtle, but important, point apparent that emerged during analysis of such comments was that Somali and Pakistani new immigrants often referred to the benefits of living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, rather than making explicit reference to the benefits of living alongside people with a shared ethnic, cultural and religious identity. To put it another way: rather than self-segregating into comfort zones of people from the same ethnic, cultural and religious background, many respondents expressed a preference for living in areas that are 'diverse'. This affinity for living with difference was rooted in the perceived benefits associated with residing

in more diverse, cosmopolitan spaces, where difference is tolerated and people do not 'stand out' as different merely by virtue of not being white. As Khatra, a Somali man currently living in a predominantly white neighbourhood, explained:

I would have chosen where there is a mix of communities. Not necessarily Somalis, I mean where there is no standing out.

The early-phase housing careers of Somali and Pakistani new immigrants had often passed through such ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, raising awareness among respondents that such locations exist within the city. There was some evidence, however, that these place-specific preferences sometimes pre-dated arrival in the city. A Somali man, for example, was placed in NASS accommodation in London prior to dispersal to elsewhere in the UK. When asked where in the UK he would like to be dispersed to he was not able to specify a particular town or city, having no prior knowledge of the UK beyond London, but was, nevertheless, able to express a preference for the kind of place he wanted to live in:

They asked me where I would like to be moved and since I knew nothing I said 'where there is Somalis'. Then they chose Sheffield for me ... because they said there are a lot of Somali people.
(Mohamed)

Over time, as awareness of the city developed, this principled prioritising of particular types of place was translated into preferences for specific locations:

When I realised that there were more multicultural areas like Pitsmoor where I could get even Somalis, I liked to move and settle there and leave [*estate*] where I was isolated.
(Abdi)

I say I wanted this area, my community area ... I say Burngreave, Pitsmoor, Uppertorpe, Netherthorpe, Broomhill ...
(Hamid)

These two comments are indicative of the nuanced reading of the city and its neighbourhoods, evidenced by many of the Somali new immigrants interviewed and reflecting the racialised notions of space revealed by other studies exploring the mental maps of urban space among different minority ethnic populations (Phillips *et al.*, 2002; Robinson *et al.*, 2005). Respondents often carved the city up into 'inner city' and 'suburban' rings, with inner areas being regarded as cosmopolitan places of safety and outer areas being regarded as hostile spaces. Others pointed to

particular neighbourhoods dotted around the city that they considered unsafe. These fine-grained mental maps of the city reflect the fact that Somali new immigrants had moved more frequently than other new immigrant groups and had, at some point in their housing career, lived within more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in the inner city (for example, when in NASS accommodation) as well as in peripheral council estates, allowing ready comparison between these two extremes.

Prioritising housing

Liberian and Polish new immigrants were relatively indifferent to the nature of the place they lived in, instead prioritising housing issues above place-related concerns when discussing residential experiences and preferences. Liberian new immigrants, for example, when asked to recount their first impressions of where they were living, would always focus on the accommodation (conditions, suitability and security of tenure), in contrast to Somali respondents, who would immediately begin discussing the nature and characteristics of the local neighbourhood. Polish new immigrants were even less concerned with the place that they lived in, reporting that where they lived and the characteristics of the local neighbourhood were of little interest to them and 'wasn't important at all'. Rather, their priority was to secure affordable housing and to pursue the objectives of securing work, saving money and learning English.

Polish new immigrants had all made a conscious choice to move to Sheffield, unlike the refugees, asylum seekers and new immigrants entering the UK on a spouse visa who were interviewed. However, few appeared to have paid any mind to the nature of Sheffield as a place to live before they arrived. As one Polish new immigrant reflected, 'it just happened that we ended up here'. Rather, it was the possibility or promise of work that had drawn people to the city:

My cousin suggested it [*coming to Sheffield*]. He said I could come over, he'd help me find work ... I'd have somewhere to live on arrival, so I decided to come.

(Kasia)

Interviewer: Why did you come here? What motivated you?

Andrzej: Well work of course. Above all, the chance to work. That and only that. There was the option of work, that we would be able to earn a bit more than in Poland. So it was the only reason.

The search for accommodation tended to focus on accessing cheap housing. Maximising disposable income was the key priority and securing cheap accommodation was an important part of this strategy. Residential location was rarely a priority; if accommodation was available and affordable then it was suitable:

Interviewer: When you went to look for somewhere else to live did you look at particular areas?

Marzena: No, it was simply that a friend at work told us there was something to rent here.

Interviewer: Had you heard anything about this area?

Marzena: No. We simply heard that there was accommodation, cheap accommodation.

Racialised notions of the cityscape were absent from the reflections of Polish new immigrants. When asked for their thoughts about different neighbourhoods within the city, respondents rarely interpreted the city as being composed of neighbourhoods that were home to distinct and different populations. One Polish respondent explained this reading of the city as rooted in the Polish urban experience, where stark differences were reported as not being readily apparent between neighbourhoods:

In England you've got that background [*of thinking about different places*] ... but in Poland it doesn't exist. So all areas are *comme ci comme ça*, they are alright, but with some exceptions nowadays where you've got areas where the land is very expensive, but within Krakow, no. Even in [*X district*] which is an old industrial district you still make a living over there. But in England it is association strongly with place ... In Poland maybe one street within one area [*where you wouldn't want to live*] but there's no such issue discussed. You just say 'that is nice house', that's all.
(Janek)

This apparent lack of interest in the socio-spatial contours of the city also appeared to be rooted in the self-perception among Polish respondents that they were temporary visitors to Sheffield and the UK. Their objective was economic gain: to work and accumulate as much money as possible before returning to Poland. Where they currently lived appeared unimportant, as long as it provided ready access to cheap accommodation and employment opportunities, and where they might live in the future was of no interest, given they were intending to return to Poland within

a year or two. However, among Polish new immigrants who had come to recognise that their stay in Sheffield was likely to prove a longer-term situation, more refined attitudes towards place had begun to emerge. Andrzej's story illustrates how attitudes towards place and residence can shift in such circumstances.

Andrzej originally planned to work in the UK for a short period of time, working as many hours and accumulating as much income as he could, before returning to his wife and child in Poland, having ensured the financial security of the family. However, things did not progress entirely to plan: Andrzej did find work quickly and was satisfied with the income but the extra shifts and overtime he had hoped for were not available, limiting his ability to save. Nevertheless, his wage was higher than in Poland so he deemed it worthwhile to remain in the UK for the foreseeable future. Andrzej's wife and child therefore moved to the UK from Poland, necessitating a move out of shared accommodation. Discussing the early phases of his housing career, Andrzej was adamant that the quality of his housing and the neighbourhood in which he lived were of little concern and expressed no particular views about the areas where he lived. As long as he was able to work and his accommodation was affordable he was content. However, having made the decision to settle in Sheffield this began to change: he decided that he did not like the local neighbourhood (around Abbeydale Road), finding it 'very sad, drab', and too noisy – 'the noise and too many people, too much going off ... it's too busy'. He also grew dissatisfied with his accommodation ('here it's not great, the standard of the flat I mean'). His attention therefore turned to 'finding something nicer ... we decided to change to something better and somewhere quieter too'. In contrast to previous moves, he took his time viewing properties and carefully considered where to relocate with his family. Financial considerations remained relevant but location and housing quality entered his considerations in a way which they had not done previously:

We took our time choosing so that we could live better. Of course the costs were taken into account so that it would not be too expensive. So we looked at price, location and standards [*of the accommodation*] so that it [*the property*] looked decent.

Liberian new immigrants also attached greater importance to property-related aspects of their residential situation than place-based concerns, although they were less dismissive about the importance of place than Polish respondents. In particular, Liberian new immigrants prioritised security of tenure: finding a place to live where they could 'put down roots' and finally secure the ontological security for so long absent in lives that had been in a state of flux for so many years. Temporary tenancies were often reported to have provided a better living space and to be in preferable locations, but permanent accommodation provided security, which was all-important. After moving into permanent accommodation one Liberian woman

described feeling like a stranger in the neighbourhood and talked about not ‘fitting in’. Nevertheless, she expressed satisfaction with her residential situation, referring to the sense of security that comes from having a permanent home. Other Liberian respondents reported more extreme problems in their local neighbourhood, but also remained committed to staying. Several reported serious incidents of abuse and harassment perpetrated against them by local residents – an issue discussed in more detail below – but expressed no desire to move. One woman, for example, described suffering a series of racist attacks on her home on an estate on the southern periphery of the city and reported that she was ‘fed up’ and ‘not happy’ with this situation. However, she went on to report that ‘[the estate] is fine’ and that she wanted to continue living there.

The central importance of security to the residential satisfaction of Liberian new immigrants is an understandable response to the years of insecurity, instability and uncertainty that respondents had typically experienced before arriving in the UK. Some Liberian new immigrants had spent up to ten years in refugee camps in Africa before arriving in the UK:

I was not bothered much about what was going to happen in the UK ... because I’d left Africa and that was the most important thing, so when he was to hear Red Cross where is going to be his permanent settled area, to just realise, and carry on.
(Tarper)

Arrival in the UK offered the possibility of security and the opportunity to create a settled and stable life that for so long had been impossible:

The first impression was ‘oh yeah, I’ve come to the UK ... and I’m guaranteed security here’.
(Flomo)

Moving into permanent accommodation in Sheffield was the end point of a long winding path, stretching from insecurity and uncertainty in Africa through to stability and security in the UK. Significant emotional and psychological capital was invested in the first permanent housing situation in the UK and, in many ways, people could not afford for it to fail. Hence, one Liberian woman talked about *deciding* to like the area where she was living. Despite suffering harassment, broken windows and verbal abuse and being deeply dissatisfied with the neighbourhood, she reported being determined to stay put. Such determination to remain, even in extreme circumstances, was not uncommon, the prospect of being uprooted once again and of relinquishing a home which was symbolic of the hopes with which people entered the UK being too much for some Liberian households to cope with at present.

In contrast to Somali and Pakistani new immigrants, Liberian respondents rarely talked about the benefits that might be associated with living in more diverse, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Indeed, it appeared that Liberian new immigrants were often unaware of the particulars of different neighbourhoods and the residential offer they provided and certainly did not share the nuanced reading of the city apparent among Somali new immigrants:

... the fact that we are in Sheffield now, we see Sheffield as our home so we feel like we can live any part of Sheffield now.
(Gbanjah)

Some Liberian participants even expressed an *unwillingness* to live in the very neighbourhoods that Somali new immigrants valued so highly, suggesting that these particular areas provided a poor living environment and were characterised by social problems, including anti-social behaviour.

At least two factors help explain the very different attitudes to place and distinct readings of the city reported by Liberian new immigrants. First, the Liberian population has no long-standing history of settlement in Sheffield, it is relatively small and is residentially dispersed across a number of neighbourhoods on the southern fringe of the city. There are therefore no distinct and readily identifiable areas of Liberian residence. Second, and perhaps related to this pattern of residential settlement, the Liberian community was reported to be organised through a diffuse network of communication, rather than being a community defined by physical co-presence in a particular place. Contact is maintained through word of mouth and internet and mobile phone communication, with particular individuals serving as key nodes within this network through which information flows. Community members come together only periodically, for example at social events, cultural celebrations or religious services.

Neighbourhood experiences: the importance of place

You can live around the city centre a normal life without fear because there is a mix of communities, but in the suburbs you can't because a single race is there.
(Yousef)

Place emerged as a critical determinant of the settlement experiences of new immigrants. In particular, there was a clear dichotomy between the experiences of new immigrants living in the new contact zones of immigration discussed in Chapter 2

(white-dominated peripheral estates with little history of accommodating diversity) and new immigrants living in *established contact zones*: more cosmopolitan spaces in and around the city centre.

As revealed in Chapter 3, harassment was a common experience for new immigrants living in new contact zones of immigration. Verbal and physical abuse, attacks to property and racist chanting by neighbours and other local residents were commonplace occurrences in and around the home, as the following experiences testify:

At the first days in [*estate*] I met constant harassment ... one day when I was inside my home teenagers have thrown a big stone which broke the window glass. From that time I realised that the situation again was deteriorating because the only white neighbourhood singled me out and normal life was becoming hard.

(Khatra)

My window was broken, my window was smashed down, and the kids, sometimes when I'm walking on the road they use the F word on me and lots of different things, you know ... 'black shit' ... They bang on the door ... [*my children*] are booed at 'you leave your country, your country don't even have water in your country, don't even have food in your country, look at you black dog'.

(Zoe)

Sometimes they used to write on her door 'go home, you don't have to be here' and sometimes they were breaking the door, or switch the light off.

(Tarwah)

These experiences were reported to have an alienating effect on new immigrants, who were left fearing for their safety and feeling unwelcome in their local neighbourhood, the city of Sheffield and the UK more generally, a finding that chimes with studies in other towns and cities (Chahal and Julienne, 1999; Buck, 2001; Craig *et al.*, 2004).

In the face of such abuse, many Liberian respondents remained committed to their home and were attempting to cope with their victimisation, rather than seeking to relocate outside the area. In contrast, Somali new immigrants prioritised relocation to a new neighbourhood above all other concerns when faced with more extreme forms of harassment. In a bid to move property and neighbourhood, some Somali respondents had sought a transfer within the social rented sector. Others reported being unaware how to go about doing so.

The experience and fear of harassment were reported to be impacting on the freedoms of new immigrants living in new contact zones of immigration to move within and around their local neighbourhood. Several Somali and Liberian respondents reported having devised safety strategies which involved avoiding certain streets at certain times of the day. Respondents also reported that they avoided being out and about in the local neighbourhood at certain hours of the day. One Liberian woman explained that 'I stay in the house', while a Somali man explained how he always returned to the area before dark:

I am scared to return home at night, and go back early because I know what I am experiencing daily at bus stops, and in front of my flat can become deadly at dark.

(Yousef)

The contrast between these very deliberate strategies for negotiating everyday spaces of residence and the experiences of new immigrants living in more ethnically mixed, inner city areas was striking. This point is well illustrated by a young Pakistani woman's description of life in her neighbourhood shortly after arriving in the UK, which evokes a sense of safety, social engagement and friendliness:

We could come in and out of the house at any time of the day and night and you'd find someone to speak to, to talk to, or drop by someone's house.

(Saeeda)

Pakistani people also talked about the invaluable advice and assistance received from family and friends and community-led services, such as a local Muslim community centre, that helped them negotiate their way through various bureaucratic procedures and access key services such as health care.

Polish respondents insisted that where they lived was not a major concern but, nevertheless, still pointed to benefits associated with living close to other Polish new immigrants. Marzena, for example, explained feeling happier after moving to Abbeydale Road because 'there are lots of Poles here. There is someone to talk to, somebody to visit'. She also reported a greater sense of safety and confidence and feeling more able to move freely about her local neighbourhood and to travel further afield:

I can go into town by myself, we can go for a walk at least with our child, in the park. Now it's better *[than before]*.

Polish new immigrants also talked about the help and assistance they received from other Polish people living nearby, as well as access to employment opportunities, for example in a local Polish restaurant, and the informal information sharing, for example through adverts in a Polish shop.

Polish respondents reported few problems with harassment or abuse, regardless of where they had been living. It is difficult to unpick the reasons for these experiences, which contrast so sharply with the reported experiences of Liberian and Somali new immigrants. One obvious explanation is that Polish new immigrants do not stand out as readily by virtue of being white and are less readily identified as 'new immigrants' (Stenning *et al.*, 2006). This conclusion would appear to be supported by the findings of a recent study that recorded white migrants into England as receiving a more positive reception than non-white migrants (Pillai *et al.*, 2007). It is also the case that Polish migrant workers have received a largely favourable press since their arrival in large numbers, following the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004, especially when compared to the less welcoming reception that has greeted refugees and asylum seekers (Barclay *et al.*, 2003; Craig *et al.*, 2004; ICAR, 2004; Kohn, 2007). Kohn suggests that, in contrast to many previous immigration streams, Polish migrant workers are perceived as correcting problems rather than creating them, and as embodying the values and attitudes of a nostalgic bygone era: they are 'keen, young, white people, taking whatever work is on offer and going to church every Sunday' (Kohn, 2007, p. 9). This has not, however, prevented Polish new immigrants from being the target of abuse and harassment, particularly in rural areas (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007), and the relatively positive perception of Polish migrant workers does not necessarily extend to other European migrant groups.

In contrast to the largely positive experiences of neighbourhood life reported by Polish and Pakistani respondents, stories of neighbourliness and positive interactions with fellow residents were virtually absent from the narratives of respondents living in peripheral areas of the city. Rather, isolation and a sense of 'not belonging' were key themes. Respondents talked about having no friends living nearby, of having no contact with neighbours and feeling alone and out of place. One Liberian woman articulated a feeling of 'difference'. As both a new arrival to the neighbourhood and a black woman, she described this in terms of feeling 'like a stranger' and feeling different because of 'my colour'. Other respondents expressed similar feelings of not belonging, stemming from the hostility of their neighbours:

Many of them [*the local residents*] are racist. The impression people have got about black people especially is like you leave your country, you just come here to live on benefit.

(Zoe)

In response, some Somali respondents reported spending little or no time in their local neighbourhood, frequently travelling across the city to spend the daytime in neighbourhoods where other Somali people were living and they recounted feeling a sense of belonging and safety, only returning home to sleep.

Previous studies have reported that attitudes towards new immigrants apparent in the popular media and political debate can have a major impact on the views and opinions of new immigrants about life in the UK and their feelings of belonging (Craig *et al.*, 2004; ICAR, 2004). The residential situations and everyday experiences of new immigrants can also have a major impact on such opinions. Unsurprisingly, new immigrants living in new contact zones of immigration and suffering abuse and harassment often regarded the UK as a hostile and unfriendly place to live. In contrast, new immigrants living in more cosmopolitan neighbourhoods reported more positive views:

I really feel very happy. I think the [UK] Government is doing very good ...
I think this sort of utopia you can say. I feel good, happy about this in that everybody is given equal rights and there is no racism here and there are very good strict laws against racism.
(Mustaq)

Living in ethnically mixed communities also seemed to foster positive interaction between new immigrants and the White British community. New immigrants living in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods often spoke positively about their White British neighbours in a way that respondents living in new contact zones of immigration rarely did. Liberian respondents did, however, report some positives about living in the peripheral social housing estates. For example, the green and pleasant environment of these estates was reported to compare favourably with more cosmopolitan, inner city areas where anti-social behaviour and drug-related activity were perceived to be problems. Liberian new immigrants also pointed out that, although relatively dispersed, the majority of the Liberian population in Sheffield live in the peripheral council estates in the south of the city:

A lot of Liberians live in [name of estate], a nice place to settle down, a lot of Liberian people live there.
(Flomo)

Conclusion

Place is an issue of varying importance to the residential priorities of different new immigrants. Some new immigrants are focused on negotiating access to particular kinds of place. Established contact zones – locations with a history of accommodating diversity and difference – can prove particularly attractive to new immigrants concerned about the potential consequences of standing out as different and distinct, such as racist abuse and harassment. As well as proving safer places to live, these locations can provide access to a wealth of resources (community-led services, targeted support from statutory agencies, relevant shops and other facilities) often not apparent in new contact zones of new immigration, which have little history of accommodating diversity and servicing the needs of different populations. Other new immigrants are less concerned about their place of residence, focusing instead on the particulars of their housing situation. For migrant workers the priority might be minimising housing costs to maximise capital accumulation. For refugees the priority might be realising stability in a life for so long characterised by uncertainty and insecurity.

These attitudes reflect and inform different perspectives of places across the city, with some new immigrants rapidly developing nuanced mental maps of the city that include notions of safe places and hostile spaces, while others appear unaware or unconcerned about the contours of difference manifest in different neighbourhoods. Whatever their perspective, place proved to be a critical determinant of the experiences of new immigrants, more extreme problems arising for new immigrants settled in locations with little previous history of accommodating diversity and difference.

5 Engaging with the housing system

Introduction

Access to housing is determined by income, wealth and public sector processes that sort, sift and supervise people on the basis of ascribed identities and associated rights. Discussion in previous chapters has pointed to the importance of these structural factors in shaping the housing pathways of new immigrants in the early years of settlement. As Harrison (2003) points out, however, there are always opportunities for people to make their own histories against this backdrop of structural factors. Recognising this fact, this chapter explores how and to what extent new immigrants have been able to determine their housing situations.

The ability and opportunity for new immigrants to exercise agency – to make and act upon decisions and choices – within the housing system are dependent upon numerous factors. These include immigration status and associated rights, financial resources, domestic circumstances, knowledge and awareness of the housing system and access to associated rights and opportunities that might have been secured by a particular community over a number of years (for example, funding for a community-led advice centre). The interplay of these factors is informed by personal and collective value systems, norms and preferences, as well as by experiences since arriving in the UK, during encounters with their own communities and wider society. It is hardly surprising, given this complex interplay of individual preferences and resources and the array of external constraints and opportunities that inform engagement with the housing system, that different new immigrant groups reported different experiences negotiating access to housing. These distinctions were evident within the early months and years of new immigrants' housing careers, when they were moving through temporary situations and striving to access secure, longer-term accommodation situations, as well as in the later phases of housing careers, when new immigrants were attempting to maintain their position in more secure, permanent accommodation. Engagement with the housing system during these two phases of the housing career is explored below.

Powerless pawns? Early experiences of engaging with the housing system

The most striking aspect of the experience of the new immigrants interviewed in the first days, weeks and even months of settlement in the UK was the limited power that they had to shape and direct their housing outcomes. This lack of individual agency was most apparent in the arrival experiences of Pakistani and Liberian new immigrants. Pakistani new immigrants, who came to the UK on a spouse visa, were initially reliant on their spouse and/or their spouse's family for accommodation and rarely exercised any individual agency in the early phase of settlement in the UK. Liberian new immigrants arrived in the UK with a very different bundle of rights and opportunities, but had a shared experience of disenfranchisement from the decisions affecting their housing situations in their first days and weeks of settlement in the UK.

The Liberian new immigrants interviewed had, upon arrival in the UK, been guided into temporary accommodation, under a pre-planned programme managed by the Home Office, Refugee Council and Sheffield City Council. Respondents reported that they were unaware how their temporary accommodation had been arranged or who had provided it. The transition from temporary to permanent accommodation was also a managed process and respondents reported few opportunities to exercise choice or influence the outcome. Not only unfamiliar with the residential offer provided by different neighbourhoods of the city and available through different sectors of the local housing market, Liberian new immigrants had limited knowledge and understanding of the operation of the UK housing system.

Liberian respondents reported being unaware that they could express a preference for where they would like to live (some respondents reported that they were keen to remain in the area where they had been living in temporary accommodation). They also pointed out that they could hardly refuse an offer of housing, even if it was considered inappropriate or undesirable, given the lack of realistic alternatives. It was also apparent that Liberian respondents had chosen to *trust* the various agencies involved to provide a satisfactory housing offer, partly out of necessity (given their limited understanding and awareness of rules of engagement with the housing system) but also in good faith. It was assumed (accurately) that they would not be housed in temporary accommodation for long and (sometimes incorrectly) that their permanent accommodation would be of a reasonable quality. There was therefore little reason to become actively involved in the complicated business of finding a place to live.

Unfortunately, it appears that this trust was sometimes misplaced. Gbanjah reported presuming that moving out of a temporary furnished tenancy into more secure, long-term accommodation would represent a move to better living conditions. This optimism was proved wrong, however:

Interviewer: Can you tell me what your hopes were about moving into this house, you said something about ...

Gbanjah: My hopes were high.

Interviewer: And what were you hoping for?

Gbanjah: I think that it was better than Darnall [*location of temporary accommodation*].

Interviewer: And what would that be?

Gbanjah: I think that, just, because I were thinking that it were temporary, so I was thinking that when I was moving here it would be bigger, spacious ... I mean we came to an empty place, we came, there was only this chair that they brought us, can you imagine, five family members.

Kerbah had been happy living in temporary accommodation in Pitsmoor (an inner city, multi-ethnic neighbourhood to the north of the city centre) and presumed that her permanent accommodation would be in a similar type of location:

I assumed that wherever I was going to move would be a very lovely accommodation as Pitsmoor's was. Even though I didn't have a choice as to where to go, because I didn't know anywhere in Sheffield. The first address of where I need to go was Pitsmoor. And because of the lovely neighbours and the fine community, I felt that wherever they are going to carry me will be just as Pitsmoor's was, but whether it is, that's another thing.

With the wisdom of hindsight, some Liberian respondents reported being annoyed that they had not become more actively involved in making their own housing history, so to speak, in the hope that they might have been able to change the course of events and effect a more positive outcome. However, their ability to exercise individual agency during these first days and weeks of their housing career in the UK was severely curtailed by their limited knowledge of Sheffield, the local housing

market and the bureaucratic regime governing the allocation of social rented accommodation.

In stark contrast to Liberian and Pakistani respondents, Polish and Somali new immigrants were often reliant upon their own resourcefulness to find a place to stay immediately upon arriving in the UK. In two cases, Somali respondents recounted that initial accommodation had been prearranged, for example, through the agent who had organised their passage to the UK. Some Somali respondents reported arriving in the UK and approaching distant relatives who had already agreed that they could spend a night with them upon arrival in the UK. However, in several cases respondents found themselves outside Heathrow Airport with no money, no possessions, limited English language skills, nowhere to stay and no knowledge of where to turn for help. In these instances, Somali new immigrants sought out other Somali people in the airport or through Somali community and religious facilities in London in the hope of securing assistance and a bed for the night. The resourcefulness of these Somali new immigrants is illustrated in the stories of Abdi, Hamid and Hussein:

At first when he came [*to the UK*] he got some help from the mosque, he got in the mosque and someone has given to sleep with him that night ... for that night he welcomed me.

(Abdi)

It [*the NASS office*] was closed, the time was 5 o'clock, it was Friday ... then I see another guys, we meet Congolese, Somalian ... One guy, Somali, they have some friend is not far away. He took us, we sleep there two nights.

(Hamid)

She [*the Somali woman*] brought to the airport her family members and I have seen that she's Somali and I ask her 'can you help me?' ... [*she said*] 'I will help you, tonight I give you somewhere to sleep and tomorrow can take you to the Home Office offices'.

(Hussein)

This last quote points to the common reliance of Somali respondents on personal contacts (friend or relative that they stayed with on their first night in the UK, the agent that transported them to the UK or a member of the Somali community whom they approached for assistance) for advice about what action to take upon arriving in the UK. No more than a matter of days after entering the UK, however, all Somali respondents had approached NASS seeking asylum and were bound into the

dispersal programme. Some respondents reported that they were delivered directly to the NASS offices by the agent who brought them to the UK and others were directed there by the household providing their first night's accommodation, while one man was provided with instructions by a Somali person he approached at the airport.

Once bound into the NASS dispersal programme, the assumption might be that Somali respondents were able to exercise little agency and had no scope for affecting the locations to which they were dispersed or the accommodation in which they resided while waiting for their asylum application to be processed. This was often true, but there were also examples of Somali new immigrants exercising agency and shaping their residential experiences while under the authority of NASS. The overriding motivation in these cases appeared to be negotiating access to more secure and safe residential situations and maintaining contacts with social networks developed since arriving in the country. Actions were sometimes based on scraps of information. One respondent, for example, had been informed, since arriving in the UK, that Sheffield had a relatively large Somali population. He therefore resisted the suggestion that he would be dispersed to Doncaster and lobbied to be placed in Sheffield:

When we [the respondent and other asylum seekers] came, the housing agency which was Safe Haven and they told us that we'd be transferred to Doncaster and I complain, I said, 'you not send us to Sheffield? Why you send us to Doncaster, you want to send us, I will never go. Sheffield or send me back to London', and I've got another meeting and they decided since I complained only to remain, and [the] others, they were transferred to Doncaster, and I was accommodated in Sheffield.
(Hussein)

Another Somali asylum seeker successfully made a case for dispersal from London to Sheffield (rather than Scotland or Newcastle), citing the importance of being located near his wife and children who were already living in Sheffield. These cases are evidence of the fact that, even within the tightest of constraints, people are able to exercise a degree of agency and affect outcomes, a fact evident in the housing experiences of previous immigration streams into the UK (Harrison, 2003). This said, there is little room for manoeuvre within the NASS dispersal programme, in terms of area of residence or accommodation type, other than on grounds of health or safety.

Somali respondents also reported having little room for manoeuvre once granted leave to remain in the UK and required to vacate their NASS accommodation within 28 days. At this point in time, all Somali respondents reported that they were advised

by their NASS accommodation provider to approach the local authority as homeless. Two Somali respondents were not recognised as homeless by the local authority. The limited resources at their disposal led to both respondents becoming homeless and, in one case, roofless (see Chapter 3). All other Somali respondents were placed in temporary accommodation while awaiting an offer of permanent accommodation. In most cases, an offer of permanent accommodation was forthcoming relatively quickly. However, despite Sheffield City Council running a choice-based lettings system that, in theory, allows housing applicants to view details on, choose between and apply (or 'bid') for currently available properties to let, respondents expressed concerns about the offers they received.

Two key concerns about the negative impact of choice-based lettings on homeless households have been pointed out (Pawson, 2001). First, the system puts the onus on applicants to make an active choice, which could pose problems for people with poor literacy or language skills or for those with learning difficulties. This concern would appear to be of immediate relevance to the situation of new immigrants, but it did not emerge as a concern among the Somali respondents interviewed. Second, problems can arise related to the system of prioritisation. If a local authority gives homeless applicants the right of choice, they could face the possibility of meeting unlimited temporary accommodation costs while homeless people wait to make a bid for the accommodation of their choice. In response, some social landlords have reverted to discharging their duty under the homelessness legislation by making a single offer of accommodation to homeless people. Among the Somali new immigrants interviewed, the result was that respondents had received an offer of accommodation on a peripheral estate that was largely unknown to them and which had not been identified as a preferred location. Having 'gone through the motions' of selecting areas of preference – Somali respondents were often keen to remain in the locations where they had been living while in temporary accommodation, with which they had become familiar and where they had built up a network of friends or associates – only to be allocated a property in a completely different neighbourhood, respondents were understandably cynical about the process:

I say Burngreave, Pitsmoor, Uppertorpe, Netherthorpe, Broomhill ... unfortunately they don't hear what I am talking, they sending me [*estate on southern periphery of the city*] ... They say 'we don't have ...' I don't know, they don't explain it ...
(Hamid)

Advised that turning down the first tenancy that they are offered would result in them losing their 'priority need' status and their eligibility for housing under the terms of the homelessness legislation, respondents typically accepted such an offer. As one explained:

If I don't get what I was looking for, I have to take what is available.
(Abdi)

These experiences are consistent with established understanding regarding the inequalities visited upon populations over-represented in the homeless population, as a consequence of homeless households being limited in the number of tenancy offers they can refuse and typically being considered less deserving of better quality accommodation than applicants with other housing needs (Jeffers and Hoggett, 1995).

There were examples, however, of Somali new immigrants resisting the choices forced upon them and challenging the bounded options they were presented with when homeless. One Somali respondent, for example, decided to reject an offer of temporary hostel accommodation upon becoming homeless after leaving his NASS accommodation and chose, instead, to stay with a friend while waiting for an offer of permanent accommodation. His reported reasoning for this decision was that the cost of hostel accommodation would prohibit him from working:

The council sends a person to hostels which they could not afford if they get a job and I was desperate to work which is why the Somali man [*who put me up*] accepted my plea.

Hussein, whose case was discussed in Chapter 3, refused an offer of permanent accommodation when homeless, having been forced out of his council tenancy on a peripheral estate by racial harassment and violence. The police removed Hussein from the property for his own safety and he was promptly accepted as homeless by the council and placed in a temporary flat on a more ethnically diverse inner city estate until permanent accommodation was available. Subsequently, he was offered a tenancy in another predominantly white neighbourhood on the periphery of Sheffield. Hussein reported wanting to live in 'my community area' and also reported being concerned that if he accepted the tenancy and again suffered harassment (a likely scenario in his view) his experiences would not be taken seriously and he might be viewed as the cause of the problem:

I'm afraid if I took the flat tomorrow something happen with me, I cannot complain again ... If I accept that flat maybe another guy attacks me and same problems so if I call [*the housing office*] again and say 'oh I have another problem' they say 'oh you create the problem'.

Hussein had therefore determined that challenging the latest offer from the council was likely to be his best opportunity of negotiating a tenancy in a preferred location, despite the risk that the local authority might determine that they had discharged

their duty under the homelessness legislation and subsequently demand that he vacate his temporary accommodation. Hussein had just received a letter to this effect.

The situation that Polish new immigrants found themselves in upon arrival in the UK was markedly different to that of the other new immigrants interviewed. With no right of access to welfare benefits upon first arriving in the UK and often with no family or friends able to provide long-term support or accommodation, Polish respondents were reliant on their own resourcefulness to meet their housing needs. However, the right to work provides migrant workers with the possibility of securing the financial resources required to meet their housing needs in the private sector.

Undoubtedly, this self-reliance can represent a significant challenge, with other studies revealing the difficulties that economic migrants can encounter negotiating access to and maintaining a position within private rented accommodation, and consequent problems of homelessness (Coote, 2006). Polish new immigrants in Sheffield did talk about problems caused by lack of adequate funds and problems searching for accommodation because of limited English language skills. However, in the Sheffield context, Polish new immigrants emerged as the group best placed and most able to exercise a degree of choice in determining their housing situation in the early period of settlement in the UK.

In contrast to Pakistani, Liberian and Somali new immigrants, Polish respondents became actively engaged with the UK housing system immediately upon arrival (and even prior to arrival in some instances). Their accommodation search focused exclusively on the private rented sector. Institutional or organisational engagement was, therefore, limited and, with the exception of one person who received advice from the university, no respondents reported approaching advice services or similar agencies for help. Instead, respondents reported drawing on informal networks of friends and associates, approaching letting agencies (usually on the advice and direction of friends) and searching websites and more traditional information sources, including newspapers and community noticeboards:

Word of mouth, I ask people how to find accommodation and I posted some information on internet asking for accommodation ... and I look in *The Star [daily newspaper]* and I think that's it. Actually I found the place with a friend who was renting that place from the person. I got at the same time a response from the owner on my email.

(Kuba)

I found it [*accommodation*] on the university website. They provided some information about private accommodation, hotel accommodation.

(Janek)

There was a lot of information on the fridge in the [*Polish*] shop ... People leave a lot of notices there.

(Kasia)

The right to work and the relative ease with which respondents found work – typically within a week of arriving in Sheffield – provided the Polish new immigrants interviewed with a position of relative stability from which they could negotiate access to accommodation in the private rented sector. While other new immigrants encountered problems finding work, reported barriers including problems converting training and expertise into qualifications recognised in the UK and limited English language skills, Polish migrant workers appeared to benefit from a reputation (propagated in the media) for being hard-working and willing to put in long hours for relatively low wages.¹ The result was an apparent readiness among employers to recruit Polish workers, allowing respondents to secure and maintain a position in the private rented sector. Two Pakistani migrant workers who had managed to find work shortly after arriving in the UK had also successfully negotiated access to private rented accommodation.

The obvious flip side of this relationship between work and housing security, however, is the potential for migrant workers to be made homeless if they lose their job. This scenario was not evident among the Polish new immigrants interviewed in Sheffield, but has been revealed to be relatively common in locations with ‘tighter’ housing markets characterised by affordability problems (Briheim-Crookall, 2006; Coote, 2006; Shaw, 2006; CRC, 2007). In addition, it is interesting to note that six out of ten Polish new immigrants interviewed were not registered with the Workers Registration Scheme and so could not accumulate the welfare rights, including access to social housing, that are made available to migrant workers who are registered with the scheme and are in employment for a 12-month period.

Making choices, exercising agency: ongoing engagement with the housing system

The housing careers of the refugees and migrant workers interviewed were characterised by increasing engagement through time with the housing system, as households sought to move house in a bid to resolve problems in their current

accommodation and/or to seek out more preferable situations. The incidents, events and emerging preferences and aspirations prompting residential mobility included:

- *A change in immigration status* – when granted leave to remain, people seeking asylum are required to leave NASS-sponsored accommodation within 28 days.
- *Family or marital breakdown* – a commonly recognised trigger of household mobility, family or marital breakdown was revealed to have particular, and often extreme, consequences for some new immigrants. Pakistani new immigrants who enter the UK on a spouse visa who were forced to leave home following the breakdown of their marriage have no recourse to public funds (unless they have been granted indefinite leave to remain or were forced to leave as a result of domestic abuse or death of their partner). By leaving the marital home they also lose the financial support of their spouse, on which many respondents were reliant, and face the possibility of estrangement from their family. In Liberian families, the potential impact of marital breakdown can extend far beyond the couple concerned, the social norm apparently being that all female members of the household move out in such an event.
- *Other changes in domestic circumstances* – new immigrant households are often in a state of flux. Households can grow, for example through the birth of a child or the arrival in the UK of additional family members, while new households can form, for example when a younger member of a household decides or is required to seek independent accommodation.
- *Experiences and perceptions of racism, crime and anti-social behaviour* – the experience of racial harassment and/or violence can have a corrosive effect on the security and commitment of new immigrants to a particular property and neighbourhood. More general incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime can also trigger mobility, as new immigrants move in a bid to secure a greater degree of safety and security.
- *Shifting intentions* – the realisation that they might remain in Sheffield for longer than originally anticipated was a common mobility trigger among Polish respondents. Upon committing to remain in the UK, housing expectations and aspirations were ratcheted up, with attention focusing on moving into a ‘more desirable’ residential situation. The arrival of family members, including children, upon making the decision to remain in the UK for a longer time, also prompted mobility.

Pakistani new immigrants who had entered the UK on a spouse visa had moved less frequently than other respondents. In cases where these new immigrants had moved house, this process was typically managed by their spouse and/or their spouse's family and only in instances where relationship breakdown had led to a respondent being forced to strike out alone and secure alternative accommodation had respondents had any contact with the key institutions within the housing system (emergency accommodation providers, social or private landlords, letting agents, estate agents and such like).

Liberian respondents were also notable for their tendency to 'hunker down' and remain in their first secure, permanent residence in the UK. However, mobility was more common among those respondents who had experienced racial abuse and harassment, an issue that emerged as one of a series of incidents that were found to have prompted residential mobility among the new immigrants interviewed. The majority of Liberian participants who had experienced more extreme forms of harassment had approached their landlord to explore the possibility of a transfer out of their current area of residence. Talking to these respondents it was apparent that no other options were explored, reflecting limited awareness and understanding of the alternatives, as well as limited financial resources, that restricted access to opportunities in the private sector (renting or owning). There was some evidence, however, of some new immigrants developing an awareness and understanding of the bureaucratic regulations and processes governing the social rented sector. In particular, respondents with more developed English language skills had clearly grasped the mechanics of the process through which they might secure a transfer in the face of racial harassment and, in particular, the importance of providing evidence to support their case. Consequently, they were filling in incident diaries, in contrast to other respondents who were either unable to take part in diary filling because of limited literacy or language skills or were collecting evidence in a less systematic manner, apparently unaware of the critical importance of this evidence base to their chances of securing a transfer.

Polish respondents, Pakistani migrant workers and Somali refugees had moved relatively frequently (although never between tenures). Analysis of the processes through which respondents negotiated access to accommodation revealed three forms of support, advice or assistance as being critical in facilitating engagement with key institutions of the housing system and promoting the likelihood of a positive outcome:

- informal support provided by kith and kin

- chance encounters with key actors – or gatekeepers – sympathetic to an individual's plight and willing and able to assist
- third-party advocates able to draw on professional expertise and standing to challenge the decision making of housing agencies such as social landlords.

Networks of kith and kin were revealed to be an important resource for migrant workers and Somali refugees. For Polish and Pakistani respondents, these networks appeared relatively informal, word-of-mouth communications serving as a key source of information facilitating access to housing, a finding that chimes with evidence emerging from other studies exploring access routes into housing pursued by Polish and other European migrant workers (Brown, 2003; Markova and Black, 2007). Somali respondents, meanwhile, reported benefiting from support and advice provided by Somali community-led services and facilities, which represented both an alternative source of information and assistance and a bridge into formal service provision. There was also some evidence that Somali new immigrants benefited from the long-standing presence of a Somali community within the city, local agencies, for example, being geared up to provide translation and interpretation services.

Among Polish respondents, informal networks, information sharing and mutual assistance appeared to have generated a local 'accommodation circuit' which was heavily utilised by new immigrants. Indeed, several respondents reported renting from Polish landlords or having had a tenancy in shared accommodation with other Polish people. Respondents also talked of hearing about forthcoming vacancies via Polish friends or colleagues and contacting landlords before rooms for rent were advertised. Constant churning appears to be a feature of this micro-market, with informal networks within the Polish new immigrant population lubricating the regular movement of people in and out of shared accommodation:

I am moving out any day now ... there's accommodation here [*in this area*], I'm just waiting for a gentleman who's moving out.
(Kasia)

Evidence of a local Pakistani 'accommodation circuit' also emerged, with respondents revealing their disengagement from formal access routes into housing and their reliance on informal alternatives. Respondents talked about news of rented properties travelling by word of mouth through friendship and family networks and of this being the main way in which they identified and accessed accommodation:

Someone told my husband's aunt about it [*the rented property*] and she 'recommended' it to us.
(Nasha)

The disengagement of Pakistani new immigrants from formal channels and procedures was also facilitated by the reliance of some respondents on informal arrangements with Pakistani landlords (without a formal tenancy agreement). In these cases there was a tendency for respondents to move frequently between different properties owned by the same landlord. The benefits of these informal arrangements were reported to include ready access to affordable housing, with potential barriers, such as the requirement that tenants provide character references and proof of identity in the form of bank account details or household bills, being absent:

I didn't have my bank account, I didn't have bills with my name, I didn't have any kind of reference ... it would be very difficult for me to find a house because you need to have a reference.

(Salma)

I remember I went to two property dealers ... and when they ask me if I need a house they say 'have you got employment letter'. I said we haven't got a job, we want to find accommodation first and then get a job ... they said 'no sorry can't give you ...'

(Salma)

Problems were also reported to be associated with living in the informal rented sector, however, with poor conditions and limited security being two particular concerns (see Chapter 3) and the risk of eviction hanging over tenants, given that there was 'nothing signed, nothing on paper, nothing agreed, the tenancy was by word of mouth' (Yasmin).

The links in the chain of advice, support and assistance leading respondents into (secure or temporary) accommodation were often varied in nature and many in number. Friends or relatives often represented the initial link in this chain of support, putting people in touch with agencies that were able to mediate between new immigrants and housing agencies. These mediating agencies included community-led organisations and/or refugee-targeted services, as well as individual officers in housing agencies and third-party professionals, in particular solicitors. These linkages between informal networks, non-housing services and housing providers are evident in the case of Nivin (discussed in Chapter 3). Nivin, a young Pakistani woman, was totally reliant upon a friend who was living in a nearby city for information about, and help contacting and engaging with, key agencies (the police, a solicitor and an advice agency), whose help and assistance proved critical to her escaping the abuse she was suffering and securing safe and appropriate alternative accommodation in a women's refuge:

The woman, her friend, she took her to the advice bureau ... got her in touch with a solicitor ... so she [*solicitor*] arranged this place for her in Sheffield.

(Nivin)

The case of Khatra, discussed in Chapter 3, also illustrates the importance of, often complex, chains of advice and support. Khatra was not recognised as homeless upon being granted leave to remain and being required to leave NASS accommodation. With nowhere else to go, Khatra had no option but to sleep rough:

The same morning in which I had to leave the [*NASS*] property I went straight to the Sheffield City Council to claim housing. At first I filled an application form and according to the details I given, namely that I am single, young and fit, they said that I was not eligible to be accommodated ... I think according to my refugee status I had a right but they never considered and as a result I suffered two weeks without a roof.

Khatra subsequently visited the homelessness unit on a daily basis for two weeks and was repeatedly told that he was not in priority need and that no temporary accommodation was available. After two weeks, however, one officer pointed him towards a local solicitor, in the apparent knowledge that the city council's stance was, at best, questionable. The solicitor mounted an appeal against the homelessness decision, threatening court action if his client was not accommodated urgently. The Homelessness Department promptly reversed their decision and placed Khatra in temporary accommodation while he was awaiting an offer of permanent housing.

The importance of such chains of support to the residential mobility of new immigrants reflects the limited knowledge that many respondents displayed regarding the operation of the housing system, the opportunities available on the basis of income, wealth and welfare rights, and the access routes leading into different housing situations. Polish and Pakistani respondents, for example, admitted to knowing little about the social rented sector, although a degree of understanding and awareness did appear to accumulate with time:

I was not aware of [*the council or housing association*]. It takes you some time to know about the ins and outs of any city or any country. If you ask me now I know so many things ... and I'm meeting people every day, where at the time I was new, so I was very innocent, when I think about it.

(Salma)

Other respondents had become aware of the sector but remained convinced that they had no right to access it, even in cases where people appeared to actually meet eligibility criteria. Limited knowledge and understanding were in some cases, no doubt, compounded by limited English language skills. In these cases, individuals (friends or relatives) or community-led services played a critical role in advising and advocating on behalf of new immigrants. The latter were particularly important to Pakistani and Somali respondents, who were able to take advantage of the services provided by, often long-established, community-led organisations.

Conclusion

Upon arrival in the UK, new immigrants possess a relatively limited package of housing rights and opportunities, reflecting factors including their immigration status, personal experiences and individual resources (financial and cognitive), as well as group affiliation, which can provide access to resources secured, perhaps over many years, by group members. Through time, this package of housing rights and opportunities was found to shift and change, affected by events and incidents both within and beyond the household unit, ranging from resource accumulation by individual new immigrants through to government policy and law making. The result is something akin to a continuum of individual agency within the housing system, ranging from relatively *constrained/dependent* engagement upon arrival in the UK through to increasingly *unconstrained/independent* engagement as resources and rights are gradually accumulated.

By seeking to aggregate such a complex and variable situation into a procession down a linear pathway, this continuum risks denying the full diversity and difference evident within the experiences of the 39 people interviewed, not to mention the thousands of other new immigrants who have arrived into the UK in recent years. It usefully summarises, however, an important pattern evident within the housing pathways of the new immigrants interviewed: new immigrants gradually accumulate an increasing package of rights and resources that allow individual agency to assume greater significance in the process and patterns of residential mobility. Three important clarifying statements must be added, however. First, new immigrants arrive in the UK with different packages of rights and opportunities and therefore start at different points along this continuum. The discussion above has pointed, in particular, to the stark differences between migrant workers and people seeking asylum. Second, the accumulation of rights and resources is not inevitable and can proceed at very different rates for different individuals and groups. In the early months and years of settlement, the status of being a 'new immigrant' appears to be a critical

determinant of the space available for human agency. Through time, other aspects of difference (ethnicity, religion, culture, class, gender and such like) that are likely to prove more persistent influences gradually come to the fore. Third, the opportunity to secure (individual and collective) resources and exercise increasing individual agency within the housing system is place-specific. Indeed, it is very possible that the experiences of Polish, Liberian, Somali and Pakistani new immigrants in other cities, towns or rural spaces will vary in a number of distinct ways from those of the new immigrants interviewed in Sheffield.

6 Conclusions and policy challenges

Introduction

The preceding chapters have sought to detail the early housing careers of new immigrants and the specific accommodation situations encountered, and to explore the specifics of the relationships and interactions underpinning these experiences. Attention has focused on exploring the rich data gathered through in-depth interviews and casting new empirical light on the interactions, identities, experiences of place and the individual agency of new immigrants. This final chapter aims to take a step back from the fine detail of these findings and tease out the key points of significance that can be taken from the study. To this end, discussion begins by reflecting on the key points of note to emerge from the study, before providing some broader reflections regarding the policy challenges raised by the housing experiences and housing market consequences of new immigration.

Critical findings

The discussion below presents the key points of significance to emerge from this study of the housing pathways of new immigrants and is organised around a number of key statements developed from the findings presented in preceding chapters. These statements are organised under four broad headings:

- arrival experiences
- housing experiences
- engagement with the housing system
- the importance of place.

Arrival experiences

Key findings:

- The differential package of rights and opportunities associated with different immigration pathways is an important determinant of the arrival experiences of new immigrants.
- New immigrants arrive into a particular town or city for very different reasons, but there is a shared tendency to 'hunker down' and remain.

The rights and opportunities associated with different immigration pathways are a critical determinant of the arrival and settlement experiences of new immigrants and help to explain differences apparent between different new immigrant populations. In particular, the planned or enforced nature of immigration and the rights and opportunities associated with different types of legal status are critical determinants of the choices and actions available to new immigrants.

At one extreme on this continuum are asylum seekers. Their migration is usually forced and their personal plans and objectives initially centre on survival and negotiating a degree of safety and stability in a life that might have been in a state of flux for months or even years. The UK is not necessarily their chosen destination and their choices and actions are immediately curtailed upon arrival. They are barred from formal employment and have only restricted access to welfare benefits, provided through NASS. Their immediate social, physical and material context is largely determined by others. They are directed to particular towns and placed in specific neighbourhoods and housing situations.

At the other extreme are (legal) migrant workers, whose arrival into the UK is typically a planned process. Economic gain is their personal objective. The attitude and approach to settlement centres upon finding a job, with the possibility of work drawing people to particular towns and cities, while their initial reliance on an employer or friends or relatives for a place to stay draws them to particular neighbourhoods. Restricted rights to welfare benefits demand personal resourcefulness and reliance on the private sector for meeting their material needs, including housing, but the right to work provides the opportunity to secure the financial resources required to access housing in the private sector.

Of course, these pen-portrait descriptions cannot fully capture the complexity and variability of refugee and economic migrant experiences. They underline, however, the critical importance of immigration pathway and legal status as determinants

of the choices and actions of new immigrants and their attitudes and approach to settlement, personal plans and objectives and the social, physical and material context in which they live.

Whatever their route into the UK and their reasons for coming to Sheffield, the new immigrants displayed a shared tendency to 'hunker down' and remain in the city. This finding is perhaps not surprising: moving to a new city can represent a significant challenge, demanding knowledge and awareness of the housing and labour market opportunities available, as well as possession of the resources required to manufacture and finance a move. Mobility between neighbourhoods was more common and was typically driven by the desire either to leave behind an isolated or troubled situation and live alongside people with a shared ethnic or cultural background, or to be reunited with family members. New immigrants were frequently committed to their area of residence, however, a tendency associated with concerns about leaving behind an arena of predictable encounters (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001) where people reported feeling comfortable and secure in a situation that might have taken months or even years to develop. Familiarity with the local environment, facilities and amenities and established social networks all served to bind new immigrants to a particular location. Refugees, who had often been through traumatic experiences, characterised by instability, uncertainty and frequent mobility, and who had no immediate hope of returning home, were also keen to 'put down roots' and establish themselves in their new home, even if they felt uncomfortable or threatened within their new neighbourhood.

Housing experiences

Key findings:

- The housing situations and experiences of new immigrants represent a composite of the familiar experiences of various disadvantaged groups within the housing system.
- The opportunities for new immigrants to effect a positive change in their housing situation are distinct and different from those of other disadvantaged groups.

The housing problems that new immigrants had encountered when living in temporary accommodation – lack of privacy, freedom and control, poor living conditions, insecurity, safety concerns – reflect dominant themes in the extensive literature on experiences and impacts of homelessness. The problems encountered in more secure, long-term accommodation, meanwhile, reflect the familiar themes to

have emerged from the extensive evidence base regarding minority ethnic housing experiences that has accumulated over the last 40 years. The institutional practices within the social rented sector that serve to restrict choice, the disadvantages associated with entering social housing through the homelessness route, the corrosive effect of racial harassment in and around the home, the poor conditions encountered in HMOs and the overcrowding experienced by multigenerational households in the owner-occupied sector are all familiar themes that were evident within the experiences of the new immigrants interviewed.

The housing circumstances and experiences of new immigrants might be familiar, but the opportunities to effect a change in these housing situations are distinct and different from those of other disadvantaged groups. New immigrants are active agents and can and do challenge and transform the system of constraints within which they exercise their housing choices. This system of constraints is complex and tightly bound, however, and the scope to act in a strategic and calculating manner is severely limited. In addition, the new immigrants had arrived into the UK with little understanding of the subtleties of the housing system and routes of access into different tenures. They were also rarely the skilled players of the welfare system so often portrayed in popular representations. Asylum seekers, in particular, were revealed to be relatively powerless to effect a change in their housing situation, given the limited rights associated with their legal status. Even when granted leave to remain they often lacked the cognitive, social and financial resources to exercise any choice in the housing field.

Engaging with the housing system

Key findings:

- The early housing careers and associated settlement patterns of new immigrants reflect the housing actions of others, new immigrants typically filling voids in the housing stock left behind or avoided by other households.
- Immigration status and associated rights of access serve to root the early housing careers of new immigrants in particular sectors of the housing system.
- Through time, increasing opportunities arise for new immigrants to exercise individual agency, as new rights are secured and resources are accumulated.
- The productive engagement of new immigrants with the housing system is often dependent upon information and advice received from both formal and informal sources, particularly in the early months and years of settlement.

Immigration status and associated rights serve to root the early housing careers of new immigrants in particular sectors of the housing system. In the Sheffield context, migrant workers were relying on the private rented sector, refugees had entered social housing and new immigrants arriving into the UK on a spouse visa had entered the sector occupied by their spouse (typically the owner-occupied sector in the case of Pakistani new immigrants). The particular geographies of settlement associated with these early housing careers tended to reflect the housing actions and residential mobility of others, new immigrants filling voids in the housing stock left behind or avoided by other households. The particular gap within the local housing market that new immigrants had filled depended upon the particular package of rights and opportunities at their disposal and the constraints within which choices were made.

Refugees have the right of access to social housing, but have little opportunity to exercise choice in the allocation process. Often in immediate and desperate need of accommodation, they lack the currency of choice – time. The result was that they end up living in the most readily available and easily accessible accommodation: low-demand or difficult-to-let housing in unpopular neighbourhoods. The consequence was a very particular geography of settlement, with clusters of new immigrants emerging on traditional White British working-class estates on the periphery of the city, which have little or no history of accommodating and living with difference or diversity (new contact zones of immigration). Evidence suggests that this picture will become more diffuse with time, with some new immigrants ‘hunkering down’ and trying to make a life for themselves in these locations while others desperately seek to escape (for example, in the face of harassment) and move to ‘safer’ (multi-ethnic) neighbourhoods.

In the early stages of settlement, migrant workers have no right of access to the benefits of social housing. They are therefore reliant on the private rented sector. Migrant workers in Sheffield were therefore found to have been drawn to neighbourhoods with a relatively large private rented sector. Limited financial resources can also restrict choice to shared or HMO accommodation. The result in Sheffield has been settlement in neighbourhoods that are often dynamic and changeable in nature, reflecting the lubricating role they play in the local housing market. In the Sheffield context, the Polish migrant workers also appear, to some extent, to have moved into a void left by the withdrawal of some student households from neighbourhoods immediately south of the city centre, who have relocated into nearby, purpose-built student accommodation. The concentration of migrant worker populations in these neighbourhoods appears to have subsequently been reinforced by the networks of informal advice and assistance that can generate a local ‘accommodation circuit’ servicing the needs of a particular new immigrant community. Evidence from this study suggests that new immigrants will disperse with time,

particularly as they make a commitment to remain in Sheffield and act upon reported dissatisfaction with their residential situation (neighbourhood and accommodation). However, 'back-filling' by more recent Polish migrant workers could serve to sustain the presence of a Polish population in these original areas of settlement.

Movement between tenures was rare in the housing careers of the new immigrants interviewed. The tenure 'loyalty' of the new immigrants appeared to reflect a continuing reliance on what is known, understood and familiar and has proven to be accessible and satisfactory. New immigrants were also found to rarely be informed about the range of opportunities available in other sectors of the housing market and how to negotiate access. Council housing was commonly regarded as a tenure of destination that satisfied long-term housing objectives by the refugee households interviewed. When faced with poor living conditions and problems in and around their home (such as harassment), the typical response was to seek a transfer within the sector rather than to pursue opportunities in other tenures. In contrast, private rented accommodation was regarded as a tenure of compromise by migrant workers who were 'making do' on a temporary basis before returning home. However, as and when a migrant worker recognised that he or she was likely to remain in the UK for a number of years, dissatisfaction with the residential offer provided by the private rented sector quickly emerged.

Through time, increasing opportunities arise for new immigrants to exercise individual agency, as new rights are secured (for example, the right to work for asylum seekers granted leave to remain, or the right to welfare benefits for migrant workers who pass residency criteria) and cognitive, financial and social resources are accumulated. Changing circumstances can also serve to generate a greater disposition to act to improve housing situations. The new immigrants interviewed did not necessarily cash in these resources in a bid to step up the 'housing ladder'. There were also motivations to stay put. Refugees appeared keen on a period of stability, having finally achieved a position of relative security. Long-term housing objectives were skewed in favour of the satisfaction of more immediate priorities, including education, employment and family reunion. This desire for peace and stability in lives that had often been characterised by upheaval and change could be compromised, however, by problems in and around the home, including harassment.

In contrast, a significant transition point in the housing careers of migrant workers was the realisation that residence in the UK might not be a temporary situation, but a longer-term commitment. At this point, dissatisfaction with the residential offer provided by the private rented sector and, in particular, with shared accommodation often emerged and neighbourhood preferences began to inform residential mobility patterns. The result was a move out of the established contact zones of

immigration, that represented initial sites of settlement, to more stable, less diverse neighbourhoods, although the preferred option of owner occupation typically remained out of reach for the time being.

Information and advice received from both formal and informal sources are critical to the productive engagement of new immigrants with the housing system, particularly in the early months and years of settlement. The new immigrants interviewed were rarely aware of the protocols and procedures that govern access to housing, the routes into different sectors of the housing market or the rights and responsibilities of occupation associated with different tenures. Language barriers also restricted engagement with formal provision for some respondents. Informal support and assistance (from networks of kith and kin) and guidance received from non-housing agencies (including refugee services, community-led agencies and legal advisers) frequently served as a bridge into formal provision and provided guidance through bureaucratic procedures that govern access to housing, particularly in the social rented sector. Informal support also appeared to foster the development of an 'accommodation circuit' within a new immigrant community, whereby vacancies are 'advertised' through word-of-mouth networks and are consequently occupied by a succession of new immigrants from the same community. In some instances, these accommodation circuits overlapped with informal provision of accommodation in the private rented sector, whereby property owners rent out accommodation to fellow community members on an informal, non-contractual basis.

The importance of place

Key findings:

- New immigrants do not live in isolated ethnic clusters and their residential settlement patterns are rarely the outcome of self-segregating tendencies.
- Place affiliation can develop quickly and tie new immigrants to neighbourhoods where they first settle.

The new immigrants interviewed had a limited 'choice set' of available housing alternatives and neighbourhood options in the early years of settlement. Residential outcomes were dominated by constraining factors, including the particular profile of opportunities in the local housing market, and often bore little or no relationship to established patterns of residence – witness the allocation of Somali new immigrants to estates on the southern periphery of the city, well away from the established Somali population. This is not to suggest that clusters of new immigrants did not

occur, but to point out that that they tended to be the consequence of the shared constraints encountered in the local housing market, reinforced by the problems that new immigrants can encounter living beyond established areas of minority ethnic settlement, rather than the outcome of cultural isolationism.

Place affiliation often developed quickly and served to tie new immigrants to the neighbourhoods where they first settled upon arrival in the city. Some Liberian respondents, for example, remained committed to their local neighbourhood despite problems, including racist harassment. Having made an investment in the neighbourhood – becoming familiar with the local environment, services and facilities and developing friendships and associations – they were loath to ‘start again’ somewhere new. Somali respondents living in the same neighbourhood, in contrast, were less willing to remain. More familiar with other neighbourhoods in the city, having spent months, if not years, in NASS accommodation across the city, they were able to point to locations that they perceived to be preferable to their current area of residence. In particular, safety and security were primary concerns that were motivating Somali respondents to seek a move to more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods where they perceived problems of harassment to be less common.

Policy challenges

This final section ventures beyond the Sheffield context and details a series of challenges for policy posed by the housing experiences and consequences of new immigration, that will vary in nature and scale in different locations. Discussion is structured around a series of key questions that are organised under three headings:

- the status of new immigrants and other more persistent determinants of disadvantage
- the contact zones of new immigration
- the housing market consequences of new immigration.

The status of new immigrants and other more persistent determinants of disadvantage

Policy challenges:

- reforming the policy framework and legal system governing new immigration to minimise the multiple disadvantages experienced by new immigrants
- limiting the likelihood of new immigrants experiencing disadvantages long after their arrival into the UK.

The inequalities in position and power associated with being a new immigrant inform the broad patterns of disadvantage apparent within the new immigrant population. New immigrants are arriving in the UK through very different pathways, from very different locations and with different attitudes, experiences, strategies and identities. These aspects of difference inevitably inform and shape the distinct experiences of different new immigrant populations. The very fact of being a 'new immigrant', however, represents a critical determinant of the experiences of new immigrants in the early period of settlement. Not only does being new to a country, new to a town or city and new to a neighbourhood present multiple challenges. The status of 'new immigrant' serves to restrict rights and opportunities. Opportunities for exercising choice are rarely apparent in the early settlement experiences of new immigrants. People seeking asylum, for example, are bound into the NASS support and accommodation system and barred from employment, while migrant workers have limited access to various welfare benefits in the early period of settlement and are forced to rely on the private rented sector for accommodation.

Behavioural approaches – that focus on readings of the residential situations and the degree to which they match up to some notion of what is acceptable or preferable and how a revision of these attitudes, possibly in response to an experience or event, can serve to trigger mobility – are therefore of little use in understanding the housing careers of refugees in the early stages of settlement. Neither do ethno-cultural approaches, which focus on cultural differences to explain different experiences and situations between groups, appear to explain the early-phase housing careers of new immigrants. Only through an appreciation of the bundle of rights and opportunities associated with different immigration pathways can the early housing careers of new immigrants be fully appreciated.

Through time, the significance of the 'new immigrant' status declines, as residency brings new legal rights and allows for the gradual accumulation of various resources (financial, cognitive, social, political). As the status of 'new immigrant' diminishes in

significance, however, other aspects of difference can come to the fore. These might include broader patterns of difference and associated inequalities (for example, related to ethnicity or class) which could prove far more persistent. The result could be the emergence of long-standing disadvantage within what is currently referred to as the new immigrant population. Within this broad pattern of persistent disadvantage, however, it is possible that a diversity of experiences might emerge, with critical differences between population groups reflecting different experiences, resources and identities. Will the white European identity of Polish new immigrants, for example, serve to limit the impact of racism on their housing experiences, while Somali, Liberian and Pakistani new immigrants encounter the long-recognised racialised inequalities endured by many minority ethnic households? Will the Muslim identities of Somali, Pakistani and some Liberian new immigrants, for example, increase the likelihood of harassment and restrict the opportunities for engagement in civil society, compared to non-Muslim new immigrant populations?

The contact zones of new immigration

Policy challenges:

- understanding and managing the social dynamics of new immigration in different localities
- recognising the benefits of settlement in established areas of diversity and the challenges raised by dispersal to locations with little previous history of accommodating difference.

The particulars of the place in which new immigrants live is a critical determinant of settlement experiences and the related consequences of new immigration for neighbourhoods. Place is the everyday realm in which people act, in which opportunities and constraints are manifest and identities are forged and problematised, clash and are reformed. Different places provide access to different packages of resources, services and facilities. The dominant cultures and identities in a place can serve to offer safety, security and a sense of belonging for some people, while serving to isolate others as distinct and different. A useful conceptual tool for exploring the place-specific determinants of the experiences and consequences of new immigration is the idea of the 'contact zone'. According to Pratt (1991), contact zones are social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of imbalanced power relations. Two extreme types of contact zones of new immigration can be readily identified:

- *Established contact zones of immigration* – these are areas of established minority ethnic settlement that have long served as reception localities or move-on locations for established minority ethnic populations. There is a long history of different cultures meeting, colliding and negotiating a social settlement. They can therefore represent places of safety and security for new immigrants, particularly when they share national, ethnic or cultural identities with the established population. The accumulated benefits of collective action, including social and political resources, can be available. The cosmopolitan nature of such areas can foster greater interaction between new immigrants and established residents of different ethnicities. However, new immigration can serve to reinforce material disadvantage and housing problems, including overcrowding, and rapid population change can unsettle established populations.
- *New contact zones of immigration* – in the Sheffield context, these places were characterised as relatively stable, White British, working-class neighbourhoods, dominated by social housing. Other archetypes might include the small towns or rural areas where migrant workers have settled in recent years, which have traditionally been associated with white, middle-class norms and values. These locations have a limited recent history of minority ethnic settlement and residents can be uncomfortable accommodating diversity and difference. Local service provision can also prove insensitive to emerging diversity. The ‘othering’ of difference, on the grounds of class, ethnic, cultural and religious identity, is common, limiting interaction between new immigrants and established residents and underpinning harassment and persecution.

Of course, many new immigrants will settle into places that lie between these two extremes. The concept of the contact zone is a useful organising device, however, that prompts recognition of the complex and variable interplay of social, cultural and political characteristics of place that inform the settlement experiences of new immigrants. It also poses an important question for policy: what efforts are being made to reflect thoroughly and respond appropriately to the potential consequences of new immigration in different types of place, from inner city neighbourhoods to small towns and rural areas?

The housing market consequences of new immigration

Policy challenges:

- maximising the potential benefits of new immigration in low-demand housing markets, to reinvigorate demand and underpin sustainability, while managing community relations and minimising tensions
- managing the increasing mismatch between supply and demand in 'tight' housing markets, where increasing competition for the scarce resource that is housing can drive down housing conditions and fuel hostility towards new immigrants.

The housing situations and experiences and housing market consequences of new immigration are dependent upon the local housing market context into which new immigrants arrive. In the context of low demand, new immigrants tend to fill the void left by households that are able to exercise a greater degree of choice within the housing system and have vacated or avoided particular segments of the local housing market (housing types, tenures and neighbourhoods). In this context, new immigration can serve to underpin housing demand and neighbourhood sustainability. However, the arrival of new immigrants into a neighbourhood, when unmanaged by mediating agencies working with new immigrants and long-standing residents to resolve differences and counter misunderstandings, can impact on community relations, particularly in new contact zones of immigration. Resulting tensions and conflicts can undermine the willingness of new immigrants and long-standing residents alike to live in an area and risk undercutting neighbourhood sustainability.

In high-demand areas, the opportunities to fill voids in the local housing market left behind by the households moving up and out of particular segments of the market are few and far between. New immigrants and more established residents both face a struggle securing – and are often portrayed as being in competition for – satisfactory and appropriate housing. The consequence for refugees might include relatively long periods spent in temporary accommodation waiting for an offer of permanent accommodation, eventual relocation into unsatisfactory and inappropriate housing, including shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector, and the hostility of local residents, who see themselves, their friends or family as losing out to new immigrants in the competition for access to the scarce resource that is affordable housing.

Within and alongside these broader patterns of variation between high- and low-demand markets, new immigration might have very particular consequences for different segments of local housing markets. Refugees have a right to social housing and often approach the sector as homeless upon being required to leave NASS accommodation after being granted leave to remain in the UK. In asylum seeker dispersal areas a potential consequence is a rise in official levels of homelessness and consequent pressures on temporary accommodation, as well as the challenges of managing rising demand for social housing. Migrant workers have restricted access to welfare benefits, but have the right to work upon entering the UK and can accrue the financial resources required to secure accommodation in the private rented sector. In the Sheffield context, the consequences appeared to include reinvigorated demand for private rented accommodation, including houses in multiple occupation. In tighter market conditions, another possible scenario is the coming together of rising interest in the potential of housing as an investment commodity with the growing need for cheap, short-term private rented accommodation among migrant workers. One potential result is the dramatic growth in the buy-to-let market witnessed in particular neighbourhoods. New immigrants entering the UK on a spouse visa, meanwhile, have restricted rights to welfare benefits but have the right to work. However, rather than filling voids in the housing stock, these new immigrants are often subsumed within existing households, with one potential consequence being an increase in overcrowding.

Notes

Chapter 1

- 1 Management of the Sheffield City Council housing stock was transferred to Sheffield Homes, an Arm's Length Management Organisation, in 2004.

Chapter 2

- 1 Accommodation that a respondent has an express (formal tenancy or owner occupation) or implied (for example, through family membership) right to occupy.
- 2 The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is a department of the UK Government that provides financial support and accommodation to people arriving in the UK seeking asylum and who have no other way of supporting themselves.
- 3 A property occupied by more than one household and more than two people, that may include bedsits, shared houses and some self-contained flats.
- 4 Migrants from the new EU accession states can only gain access to social housing once they have a right of residence, following 12 months' continuous employment while registered on the Workers Registration Scheme.

Chapter 5

- 1 See, for example: *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 January 2007 (<http://news.scotsman.com/edinburgh.cfm?id=119082007>); *The Observer*, 27 August 2006 (www.guardian.co.uk/immigration/story/0,,1859186,00.html); *Daily Mail*, 23 July 2006 (www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=396825&in_page_id=1770).

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Appendix 1: Profile of the sample

The tables below provide summary information regarding the 39 new immigrants interviewed. The information presented was provided by the respondents themselves and the emphasis was on self-definition. In some cases, this results in inconsistencies, such as the case of a woman who arrived in the UK on a spouse visa and reported that she was not allowed to work, a misunderstanding of her legal position regarding formal employment in the UK labour market.

Respondents are organised into the four national/ethnic groupings that represented the focus of the study: Liberian, Pakistani, Polish and Somali.

Pseudonyms are included, allowing cross-referencing between the profile data and the case studies discussed in the chapters above.

Table A1.1 Profile of Liberian respondents

Case identifier	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-defined ethnicity	Religion	Immigration status	Economic activity	Household situation	Current housing tenure
L1	Gbanjah	Male	35	Liberian	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	F-T student	Living with wife – 2 children	LA/ALMO
L2	Zoe	Female	37	African	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	F-T work	Married but living alone with 4 children	LA/ALMO
L3	Kerbah	Female	28	Liberian	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	Unemployed	Living with sister – 2 children	LA/ALMO
L4	Tarwah	Female	38	Liberian	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	Looking after home	Lone parent – 2 children	LA/ALMO
L5	Masa	Female	26	African	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	Looking after home	Lone parent – 2 children	LA/ALMO
L6	Elma	Female	22	Liberian	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	Voluntary work	Single	LA/ALMO
L7	Tarper	Male	31	African	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	F-T work	Single	LA/ALMO
L8	Flomo	Male	28	African	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	P-T student	Single	Housing association
L9	Kobor	Male	20	Liberian	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	Unemployed	Single	LA/ALMO – staying as a guest of a friend
L10	Bindu	Female	20	Black African	Christian	Indefinite leave to remain	P-T student	Single	PRS – HMO

F-T: full-time; P-T: part-time; LA: local authority; ALMO: Arm's Length Management Organisation; PRS: private rented sector; HMO: house in multiple occupation.

Table A1.2 Profile of Pakistani respondents

Case identifier	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-defined ethnicity	Religion	Immigration status	Economic activity	Household situation	Current housing tenure
P1	Salma	Female	27	Pakistani	Muslim	Work permit	P-T work	Living with husband – 1 child	PRS
P2	Abdul	Male	25	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	P-T work	Living with wife and in-laws – no children	OO – owned by in-laws
P3	Mushtaq	Male	29	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	Voluntary	Living with wife – 1 child work	OO – wife's house
P4	Nivin	Female	26	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	Not allowed	Married – separated from husband	Refugee
P5	Saeeda	Female	24	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	P-T student	Living with husband and in-laws – 1 child	OO – owned by in-laws
P6	Nasha	Female	27	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	P-T student	Living with husband	PRS
P7	Yasmin	Female	33	Pakistani	Muslim	Work permit	Looking after home	Living with husband – 4 children	PRS
P8	Anwar	Male	27	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	P-T work	Living with wife and in-laws – 1 child	OO – owned by in-laws
P9	Zinah	Female	27	Pakistani	Muslim	Spouse visa	Looking after home	Living with husband and brother-in-law's family – 1 child	OO – owned by brother-in-law
P10	Qasim	Male	43	Pakistani	Muslim	Work permit	F-T work	Living with wife – 2 children	PRS – informal

F-T: full-time; P-T: part-time; PRS: private rented sector; OO: owner-occupied.

Table A1.3 Profile of Polish respondents

Case identifier	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-defined ethnicity	Religion	Immigration status	Economic activity	Household situation	Current housing tenure
PO1	Janek	Male	28	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	P-T work	Living with wife	PRS
PO2	Marysia	Female	23	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with husband	PRS
PO3	Kuba	Male	27	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with wife – 1 child	PRS
PO4	Marek	Male	55	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	F-T work (informal)	Living with cousin and his family	Owned by cousin – staying as guest
PO5	Kasia	Female	20	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with husband and friend	PRS – staying as guest of friend
PO6	Ewa	Female	47	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with fellow workers	PRS – tied accommodation
PO7	Marzena	Female	30	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with husband	PRS – HMO
PO8	Ola	Female	22	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with husband – 1 child in Poland	PRS – HMO
PO9	Andrzej	Male	33	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – registered with WRS	F-T work	Living with wife – 2 children	PRS
PO10	Robert	Male	23	Polish	Roman Catholic	A8 – not registered with WRS	F-T work	Single	PRS – HMO

F-T: full-time; P-T: part-time; WRS: Worker Registration Scheme; PRS: private rented sector; HMO: house in multiple occupation.

Table A1.4 Profile of Somali respondents

Case identifier	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-defined ethnicity	Religion	Immigration status	Economic activity	Household situation	Current housing tenure
S1	Abdi	Male	32	Somali	Muslim	Leave to remain	Unemployed	Living with wife – 3 children	Housing association
S2	Hamid	Male	42	Somali	Muslim	Exceptional leave to remain	Unemployed	Living alone – wife and children in Somalia	LA/ALMO
S3	Hussein	Male	35	Somali	Not stated	Indefinite leave to remain	Unemployed	Single	LA/ALMO – temporary accommodation
S4	Amina	Female	40	Somali	Muslim	British citizen	P-T work	Living with 2 children (husband in Somalia)	Housing association
S5	Khatra	Female	23	Somali/Black African	Muslim	Indefinite leave to remain	P-T student	Married/long-term relationship but living alone	LA/ALMO – temporary accommodation
S6	Farduus	Female	32	African	Muslim	Appealing asylum decision	Not allowed to work	Single	PRS – temporary accommodation
S7	Mohamed	Male	28	Black African	Muslim	Indefinite leave to remain	P-T student	Married – wife and 3 children in Africa	LA/ALMO
S8	Yousef	Male	20	Somali	Muslim	Limited leave to remain	Unemployed	Single	LA/ALMO
S9	Adam	Male	41	Somali	Muslim	Indefinite leave to remain	Unemployed	Living alone – wife and children living in separate accommodation in Sheffield	LA/ALMO

F-T: full-time; P-T: part-time; LA: local authority; ALMO: Arm's Length Management Organisation; PRS: private rented sector.

Appendix 2: An overview of immigration into Sheffield (1939 to 2006)

Table A2.1 draws on information from various sources, including local reports, the ICAR ‘Mapping the UK’ pages relating to Sheffield (www.icar.org.uk) and insights provided by local agencies working with new immigrant populations, to provide a brief overview of the history of new immigration into Sheffield since 1939.

Table A2.1 Immigration into Sheffield, 1939–2006

Time period	New immigrant populations
1939–	<p><i>Polish</i> ex-servicemen and their families settled in Sheffield following the German occupation of Poland in 1939. Following the war, Polish workers arrived into Sheffield to work in various industries, including mining. The numbers of Polish immigrants subsequently increased as a result of the arrival of European Volunteer Workers. A Polish Ex-Service Men’s Association and Polish Catholic Club were opened in the west of the city in the 1950s and are still operating today.</p> <p>Small numbers of refugees from <i>Czechoslovakia</i>, including children, arrived in Sheffield in 1939.</p>
1950s–60s	<p>Sheffield was not a major destination for people arriving into the UK from the Caribbean, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan during the post-war period. Compared to other industrial towns in the North and Midlands of England, relatively small numbers of people were drawn to the city or recruited directly to fill labour shortages. The post-war period did, however, witness immigration from South Asia (<i>India, Pakistan and Bangladesh</i>), as well as the <i>Caribbean</i>, resulting in the emergence of established and long-standing populations.</p> <p>Sheffield’s <i>Somali</i> population is thought to date back to the 1930s, when Somali seamen who had originally settled in port locations were drawn to industrial centres, such as Sheffield, by employment opportunities. These earlier settlers were followed in the 1950s and 60s by labour migrants filling labour shortages in the industrial sector, including the steel industry.</p> <p>The early settlement history of the <i>Yemeni</i> population in Sheffield mirrored the Somali experience. Early arrivals were typically sailors moving inland to take up employment opportunities in Sheffield’s industrial sector. These first arrivals were followed in the 1950s and 60s by labour migrants encouraged to come to the UK to fill labour shortages in the industrial sector. This predominantly male population was reported to be the third largest minority ethnic group in Sheffield by the 1980s.</p> <p>A small number of <i>Ugandan Asians</i> (estimates suggest some 40 families) that arrived into the UK in 1972 were dispersed to Sheffield.</p>
1970s	<p>It is thought that many of the <i>Chileans</i> who fled Chile and arrived in the UK following the military coup in 1973 settled in Sheffield, drawn to the city by the activities of the Chilean Refugees Committee formed by the Sheffield Trades Council.</p> <p><i>Vietnamese</i> refugees were dispersed to Sheffield from various reception centres as part of the Government’s resettlement programme. The majority of Sheffield’s Vietnamese population are thought to have arrived into the city between 1979 and 1983 as refugees.</p>

(Continued)

Table A2.1 Immigration into Sheffield, 1939–2006 (Continued)

Time period	New immigrant populations
1980s and 90s	<p>The <i>Somali</i> population in Sheffield grew dramatically in the 1980s and 90s, as existing Somali residents were joined by family and friends fleeing the civil war that broke out in 1988. It has also been reported that the population has grown as a result of the settlement in Sheffield of Somali households from other EU states, in particular the Netherlands and Sweden.</p> <p>The <i>Yemeni</i> population grew rapidly during the 1990s through the arrival of refugees fleeing the civil war that broke out in 1994.</p> <p><i>Bosnian</i> refugees arriving into the Yorkshire region since 1992 were initially settled in West Yorkshire towns and cities, but there appears to have been some secondary movement to other locations, including Sheffield.</p>
2000–	<p>Sheffield was the destination for some of the refugees arriving into the UK as part of the <i>Kosovan</i> Humanitarian Evacuation Programme.</p> <p>Sheffield was one of the first cities to receive refugees under the Gateway Protection Programme. The first group of 69 refugees arrived in the UK in 2004 and were resettled in Sheffield. Most of these refugees were <i>Liberians</i> who had previously been living in refugee camps in Guinea-Conakry. In 2005 51 <i>Burmese</i> and <i>Kareni</i> refugees who had previously been living in camps on the Thai–Burmese border were settled in Sheffield as part of the same programme.</p> <p>Sheffield is currently a cluster area designated by the Home Office for the dispersal of people seeking asylum. The dispersal and subsequent settlement in the city of people seeking asylum has resulted in the growth of new immigrant populations and consolidation of existing population groups with a longer history of settlement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The <i>Eritrean</i> population is new and relatively small, but is reported to be growing as a consequence of the secondary migration of Eritrean households dispersed to other locations but drawn to Sheffield by certain key resources, including religious facilities. ■ The <i>Iraqi</i> population is relatively new and has grown dramatically in recent years. It is thought, however, that many have received negative decisions in response to their application for asylum, so the population is likely to decline in subsequent years. ■ <i>Congolese, Angolan, Cameroonian, Zimbabwean, Ethiopian, Ugandan</i> and <i>Sudanese</i> populations are reported to be relatively small in number and dispersed across the city. It is reported that Congolese asylum seekers are receiving more positive decisions than Zimbabweans, and that the population is more stable. ■ The long-standing <i>Iranian</i> population, members of which arrived in Sheffield as economic migrants and post-revolution refugees, have more recently been joined by asylum seekers granted leave to remain. ■ A relatively small number of <i>Chinese</i> refugees are reported to have recently arrived into Sheffield. ■ Other new immigrant populations dispersed to and settling in the city are thought to include relatively small numbers of <i>Afghan</i> and <i>Tamil</i> households. <p>The <i>Polish</i> population is reported to have grown dramatically in recent years as a consequence of migrant workers arriving into the UK following the accession of Poland into the EU in May 2004 and drawn to Sheffield by employment opportunities, particularly in transport and construction. The links between the long-standing Polish population and more recent immigrants is unclear.</p>

(Continued)

Table A2.1 Immigration into Sheffield, 1939–2006 (Continued)

Time period	New immigrant populations
	<p>A small <i>Roma</i> population, thought to be from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, is reported to have emerged in Sheffield since May 2004.</p> <p>The <i>Pakistani</i> population continues to grow through chain migration, and was recorded by the 2001 Census of Population as the largest single minority ethnic group in Sheffield.</p>

