UK migration: the leadership role of housing providers

What leadership is required at regional and local levels to handle the consequences of national policies and trends relating to UK immigration and the effects on community cohesion and integration that result? How are housing providers contributing? Can their leadership role be developed further?

Key points

- While migration policy focuses strongly on controlling levels of new immigration, the impacts of migration in the neighbourhoods where new arrivals already live receive much less attention.

- Central government is withdrawing from engagement with these issues at local level; this may leave a vacuum in which regional and local leadership is even more important than it is currently.

- More than in most areas of policy or local service provision, taking leadership on migration issues requires *trust* between the key figures involved, and a willingness to take *risks*.

- Leadership is required at and across different levels and in different spheres – whether in the political arena, in neighbourhoods or in frontline services.

- Housing organisations have a particular role: many have already taken a lead in achieving better neighbourhood cohesion and integration. More housing organisations could build on the experience that others have. They could support the development of positive community leadership within neighbourhoods in which they operate. This is likely to be more sustainable than organisation-led leadership initiatives.

- A balancing act is needed if local leadership is to be effective – dealing with local fears and resolving tensions, while recognising that migrants now live in many neighbourhoods and have a legitimate desire to be accepted.

- Spending cuts are already having a drastic effect on services and organisations that help migrants, for example on refugee support services. Perceived or actual competition for resources between migrants and host communities is therefore likely to get worse. Housing is one of these key resources and housing providers need to face the issues raised.

- Examples exist from different parts of the UK of strong regional or local leadership based on partnerships between local agencies. Housing providers often have a key role in this, and have facilitated involvement by communities. Their experience offers lessons that can be more widely applied.

Author
John Perry,
Chartered Institute of Housing

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

www.jrf.org.uk

Introduction

International immigration is a key element in Britain's changing population. In the last five years, the foreign-born population has grown by 1.6 million; about one-third of this growth comes from new European Union (EU) countries such as Poland, but another feature of the inflows of recent years has been diversity, with migrants coming from all parts of the world. Even though inward migration is now stabilising and Government policy is to reduce it further, the Government can only do so much because (for example) EU citizens have the right to free movement and the Government remains committed to international agreements about humanitarian protection.

For several years, policies at central government level have focused on putting limits on new immigration, because this is seen as a popular measure that responds to public concerns. Yet over the same period there has been rapid change in the make-up of the many cities, rural areas and local neighbourhoods that have absorbed new migrants. In contrast to the attention given to controls at national level, regional or local measures to deal with the pressures and benefits of migration have been much more modestly developed, resourced and publicised.

Yet it is at local level where the real impacts of migration are felt – especially in changes within neighbourhoods and increased pressure on scarce resources such as housing. It has largely been up to regions and localities to deal with these impacts themselves, by creative use of resources already available and by developing relationships and trust between key people and organisations. This is the starting point for the discussion in this paper.

Crucial in this process has been the leadership shown by key politicians, regional and local organisations and community organisers who have risen to the challenge that migration poses. Among these, housing providers have often been prominent for two reasons: access to housing has been a contentious issue in the debate, and housing providers' neighbourhood focus often means they have the local contacts, the resources and the engagement with the issues.

The challenge faced is both to ensure that migration benefits their area and to respond to the pressures it creates. This involves a difficult balancing act if leadership is to be effective. On the one hand leaders must deal with local fears in a positive way, recognise and address wider disaffection which can result in the scapegoating of new arrivals, and try to resolve tensions. On the other they recognise the reality that migrants now live in many neighbourhoods and want to become fully involved in their communities, legitimately accepted and live safely.

How could leadership on these issues be promoted in all of the places with significant migrant communities? Although the government's localism agenda has not yet been seen as directed at issues about migration, does it in fact provide opportunities for regional or local responses that may be easier and more relevant than top-down policies from national level?

This *Viewpoint* addresses these questions. It does so by drawing on the work of the Housing and Migration Network (HMN), which includes experienced practitioners and has used its resources to talk to regional and local leaders who are addressing the effects of migration in different parts of the UK. It also draws on research about the effects of migration and how they have been tackled in different localities – particularly that summarised by Perry (2008).

Migration: an issue tackled at national level but effects are local

Politicians of all parties have been aware of the importance of immigration as an issue, triggered particularly by the unanticipated levels of asylum applications up to 2002 and then by the far greater numbers of migrant workers arriving from new EU member states since 2004. At the time of the May 2010 election, Ipsos Mori reported that it was the public's second most important issue, with 38 per cent expressing concern about race relations and immigration; the figure has since fallen back to 26 per cent (at April 2011) but it remains the second most important issue after the economy.

Politicians are also well aware that the effects are seen at local level, illustrated by the response of Margaret Hodge MP to housing pressures in Barking and Dagenham in 2007 and in the 2010 election campaign by the exchanges between Gordon Brown and Mrs Gillian Duffy in Rochdale. Especially in deprived areas, it is common to blame newcomers for inadequate neighbourhood services or lack of housing or jobs: this has been called 'victims' blaming 'victims' (Hudson *et al.*, 2007).

Government responses at national levels have largely ignored migration's local effects. Measures such as tighter border controls, stricter rules about applying for asylum, 'managed migration' policies and now annual caps on economic migration all assume that it is being seen to control *new* immigration that is important.

As Sarah Mulley has pointed out, policy focuses on reducing net migration – which has indeed stabilised – but this can still mean a lot of comings and goings locally: 50 people arriving in a neighbourhood and 36 leaving is a big change.

> People don't meet 'net immigrants', they just meet immigrants
> (Mulley, 2010b).

Most of the immigrants that people will meet in the next few years have already arrived, and of course several types of migration – like family reunions and influxes of seasonal workers – will in any case largely continue. Furthermore, significant changes in the status of migrants from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (the 'A8' countries who joined the EU in 2004) took effect on 1 May 2011. They now have the same welfare entitlements as nationals of other EU countries, potentially causing another unplanned impact on local services and resources. At the same time, there has been a considerable reduction in the numbers of new people seeking asylum, providing an opportunity to tackle the settlement and integration issues still faced by earlier asylum seekers and potentially making it easier to help new refugees through planned programmes.

The changes that have taken place and which continue at local level may create real or imagined competition for resources such as housing and for opportunities such as jobs, may erode a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood or may lead to actual tensions and conflict. The previous government made a modest response to local pressures by creating the Migration Impacts Fund, financed by an increase in immigration charges. This supported useful though far from comprehensive local projects, but was criticised by the Coalition Government as ineffective, and has been ended. The Coalition Government is currently developing a cross-government approach to integration and tackling all forms of extremism. It is important that it addresses the kinds of concerns mentioned here which have been documented extensively (for example Perry, 2008).

If national leadership and support for tackling the local effects of migration are in doubt or fall short of what is needed, can the issues nevertheless be addressed effectively at more local levels, even in such a challenging climate? This is a key question behind our consideration of leadership. In the context of the government's drive towards localism in public service delivery, it might be the case that in future migration effects will *only* be addressed at local level. Although the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) retains a responsibility to promote integration, it will not be until later this year that it publishes proposals that show how this relates to its drive towards localism. A new policy will in any case have to be implemented in a context of reduced resources both centrally and locally, and almost certainly with no new central funds.

Why is leadership needed at regional and local levels?

Quite apart from the loss of relatively small amounts of money previously targeted at cohesion and integration initiatives, the wider spending cuts are starting to have a major impact on resources that provide services and help integration at local level. Funding for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) has already been cut by 32 per cent over the past two years, and because of changed priorities around 100,000 ESOL students now face charges of up to £1,200 (Action for ESOL, 2011). Local authorities, which face bigger proportional cuts than central government departments, are making significant cuts in their funding of voluntary organisations, including services that help migrants. Real or apparent competition for resources, already an important issue, is likely to be made worse as the effects of cuts are felt and services or facilities are closed, or access to them is restricted or reprioritised.

Migration affects a range of different services and their delivery at local level. Particularly in a context of spending cuts, this makes leadership essential to achieve skilful use of *all* the resources available to address local needs, taking the effects of migration into account. Local needs in areas that have received high proportions of migrants could be an ideal subject for the government's 'Community Budgets': these seek to pool resources across disparate budget areas to achieve better outcomes from available funds, similar to the previous government's 'Total Place' initiative. There is a need for greater cross-departmental commitment to such programmes; migration is an issue that cuts across administrative responsibilities both centrally and locally.

Furthermore, without progressive leadership on these everyday problems, the way is open for their exploitation by extremists who want to put the blame for lack of resources or opportunities squarely on immigrants themselves. Sarah Mulley argues that:

> This vacuum at the progressive centre of the immigration debate has meant that the most prominent voices are extreme ones… it leaves most of the public with nobody sensibly speaking to their concerns. The anti-migration groups get the issues right – people are much more interested in talking about control, compliance and migrants' obligations to contribute than they are in talking about human rights and economic benefits – but they don't reflect public opinion. There is a sensible, moderate progressive position on immigration that reflects both the costs and the benefits, the impact on local communities and on migrants, the need for control and flexibility – but nobody ever sets it out in public.
> (Mulley, 2010a)

The importance of housing as a local resource

Within the context of local services, housing is a particularly important and contentious issue and is likely to become even more so. Figures published by DCLG at the end of last year show that the backlog of unmet housing need has risen to almost 2 million households and that, while need is forecast to ease slowly, by 2020 it is still likely to be higher than it was in the late 1990s (Bramley *et al.*, 2010). At the same time, the regular Citizenship Survey has shown that council housing departments and housing associations are the local services where people are most likely to feel discriminated against on the basis of race. Significantly, social landlords are much more likely to be cited as discriminatory in the survey by white people than by people of minority ethnic backgrounds (25 per cent compared with 10 per cent) (DCLG, 2011). Earlier results from the survey have been similar but comparisons will no longer be possible as the Citizenship Survey is being discontinued.

There are several reasons why actual and perceived competition for housing is likely to intensify even further. For example:

- Public sector resources are being cut, and housing is one of the service areas due to suffer most, with investment due to 'plummet' (The Institute of Fiscal Studies has shown that the DCLG communities budget suffered the biggest cut of all public services in the Spending Review: 67.6 per cent over the four years to 2014/2015. Within that, 'the housing budget seems to have suffered particularly' [Pawson and Wilcox, 2011]).

- Under the government's localism proposals, more responsibility for determining who has access to housing waiting lists, and for subsequent allocations, will be passed to local level (DCLG, 2010). There is already evidence that restricting access to 'local residents' might be the most likely way in which the new freedom will be used (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2011a).

- Quite apart from the scale of unmet need noted above, and the likely continuing difficulty in accessing social housing, the private sector is also likely to become more competitive: more than 100,000 potential first-time buyers are now being prevented from entering the market each year compared with 2007, and in the private rented sector competition for properties at the lower end of the market is likely to increase considerably as a result of the cuts in housing benefit now taking effect (Pawson and Wilcox, 2010).

Gaps in the debate and how local leadership can address them

Leadership is therefore needed at more local levels to mediate competition for resources and to put forward a balanced case for intervention at neighbourhood level, as well as to address the major gaps left by the way the migration debate is handled nationally. Filling the gaps and making more balanced interventions means addressing interrelated issues.

Most migrants want to integrate (or, if they plan to stay only a short time, at least to be minimally accepted). Yet some face multiple barriers to doing so – poor English language skills, inadequate facilities for learning English, difficulty in supporting themselves financially in some cases (e.g. if they lose a job), insecure or temporary accommodation, discrimination, or simply denial of services because of their immigration status. Some of these barriers stem from government policy and restrictions are likely to get worse as the barriers are set even higher. Not only do they face these barriers, but migrants may then be blamed for failing to integrate if they rely on minimal mutual support within their communities, or on limited specialist services that provide a safety net for migrants.

Local leadership can start to tackle these issues. One way might be to give access to services that fill gaps. At the Cities of Migration conference in October 2010, examples were given of local authorities tackling the barriers created by central governments. For example, in New Haven in America, a municipal identity card was issued to all residents who wanted it, including undocumented migrants. This gave them access to local services that required some sort of identification, including libraries and other facilities, and enabled them to open bank accounts (Camilo, 2010).

Another way might be to take the lead in showing that integration is a two-way responsibility: both migrants and host communities need to contribute, otherwise hostility or indifference can be yet further barriers to overcome. As we see in later examples, integration can start to work where both newer and longer-term residents accept responsibility for achieving it.

What does 'leadership' mean?

Leadership has to be more than simply reacting to events. In the context of this paper, effective leadership means having the skills, knowledge and drive to put forward a balanced and coherent message about migration, which shows how to gain its benefits as well as handle its costs, and not only responds to local concerns but positively promotes good community relations. An effective leader would have a vision of an integrated community and be able to envisage how to achieve it within a realistic period.

This leadership challenge is not a simple one; it is multi-faceted. Here are some illustrations of this from presentations to the HMN:

- There are many – sometimes conflicting – leadership demands in an area at any one time. Leadership challenges occur within each organisation, within sectors or interest areas, at different levels (from region to neighbourhood), and within partnerships and structures with more strategic aims.

- The challenges cut across different sectors: local and regional government bodies and politicians; sectoral bodies such as employers, unions, the health service, police; and grassroots, community and voluntary organisations, both at very local levels and in their representative or second tier bodies.

- Leadership on this issue does not require people who boldly stand up for migration because they enjoy controversy. It requires people who are able to articulate a really plausible balanced argument on the pros and cons of migration that has traction with majority host communities as well as new migrants.

- In part this is because the challenge is not 'how do you meet the needs of this group?', but how to respond flexibly to a changing population and deal with potential problems as they arise – addressing wider problems within communities experiencing change, but also encouraging them to respond positively to take advantage of the changes.

- Not everyone is cut out for the job – e.g. a self-appointed community leader (whether from a long-standing or new migrant community) might not necessarily have the overarching vision required. People best placed to lead might include some who are seen not to have a strong vested interest in migration and who are known for their other leadership roles.

- Leaders must be willing to take risks. Although this applies to all leadership situations, the reputational and political risks in the migration field can be particularly acute. It is notable that at regional and local levels, many leaders have been willing to risk unpopularity, for example in taking on major asylum accommodation contracts or in settling refugees under the Gateway Protection Programme which settles up to 750 refugees directly in the UK each year (operated by the United Kingdom Border Agency in conjunction with the UN High Commission for Refugees).

- In a fast-moving policy environment, with ever tighter financial constraints and changes to regional frameworks, leadership needs to be 'ahead of the game' in creating and grasping opportunities; being able to sustain progress already made, embedding it within systems and structures, while also cultivating new leaders for the future.

At the same time, as one network member (Michael Gelling from Tenants and Residents Organisations of England) said:

> Leadership is hollow unless it has the support of the community.

The significance of trust

An overarching requirement that relates to all of these points is trust between the key figures involved – politicians, professionals, community and residents' groups, partner organisations and so on. Risks and stakes can be high, and unless there is a climate of trust leaders may not come forward or feel able to deliver. This is possibly more important in relation to migration than in relation to any other single issue, because it is a field in which politicians or government officials are always at risk of losing public trust. There is work in progress on this issue by the Policy Network and Barrow Cadbury Trust (see Box 2).

Box 2: Policy Network project

Policy Network's project *Immigration and Political Trust* is supported by the Barrow Cadbury Trust. It seeks to examine and tackle the problem of public concern about immigration and the way this is eroding trust in politics and political parties, and to develop concrete proposals to restore trust. An initial study by Lauren McLaren showed that in countries across Europe where levels of concern about migration have grown, there are lower levels of public trust in politicians generally. Levels of trust do not seem to correlate with immigration levels, nor do they seem to be adversely affected by the activities of extreme political parties; disappointingly, neither do they seem to respond positively to efforts to integrate migrants (McLaren, 2010). There is therefore no easy message that taking leadership on migration issue will reap benefits in terms of public opinion. But neither is there an easy message that 'closing the gates' to further migration will address the public's concerns: indeed it may increase them.

For further information see www.policy-network.net/content.aspx?CategoryID=332

What difference does leadership make?

Greater Manchester

The need for leadership may seem obvious but in practice it is more evident in some places than others. One area of England in which leadership on migration issues is particularly strong is Greater Manchester. This has been considered in depth by the HMN (see Box 3). The reason that the network visited Greater Manchester was partly because of its track record in accommodating asylum seekers and receiving directly settled refugees through the Gateway Protection Programme, and partly because of its conscious reinvestment of the additional resources this generated in measures to promote wider cohesion and integration within the city region.

Box 3: Leadership in Greater Manchester

The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) represents the ten local authorities in the Greater Manchester region. Its strength has already been recognised by the government's acceptance of the proposal to create a Greater Manchester Combined Authority which will take AGMA's work 'to the next level'. AGMA embodies strong and dynamic sub-regional co-operation which cuts through city/borough and organisational boundaries and is based on political, strategic, provider and community partnership.

AGMA's governance structure has a formal link to the North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP), showing the significance of migration for AGMA. The RSMP is chaired by Councillor Basil Curley, a previous executive member for both housing and adult services on Manchester City Council who represents a ward with low ethnic diversity and a high proportion of older people. He also chairs the regional asylum consortium executive members board. Having an experienced and trusted political leader has been vital in building consensus on migration issues between eleven different authorities (in addition to the ten AGMA authorities, the asylum support work also includes Blackburn with Darwen) and across all communities. Councillor Curley's position not only enables him to champion migration issues within the region but also to take up issues at a national level, where Greater Manchester has developed a respected relationship with UKBA and is seen as a model from which others can learn. He represents the north west on the Local Government Association's Asylum, Refugee and Migration Members' Taskgroup.

The north west region has delivered about two-thirds of the placements under the Gateway Protection Programme and accommodated significant numbers of asylum seekers. Financial resources from the consortium's dispersal contracts were essential to 'glue together' the partnerships needed to deliver these arrangements and to carry out wider integration work at neighbourhood level. This included using the contract surpluses to support Refugee Action as the regional partner, as well as a range of links with small community-based groups. These were underpinned by (quite complicated) formal structures that rely on voluntary input, reinforced by good personal relationships and shared leadership.

Regional geography and history were important factors in the development of Greater Manchester's approach. The industrial revolution left a legacy of post-industrial challenges which hit different authorities at the same time. Geographical boundaries are in any case indistinct in the urban conurbation.

For further information see www.northwestrsmp.org.uk.

Key players in the AGMA authorities, often from the housing sector, have taken leadership roles and established trusted working relationships to handle migration issues. Achievements have included:

- wide-ranging partnerships, not just between different local authorities, but involving other statutory bodies, housing associations and a range of community organisations;

- strong and positive collaboration with UKBA since the early stages, which has enabled many issues that might have affected the success of asylum dispersal and of Gateway to be resolved;

- careful handling of local media and cross-party commitment not to publicly question agreements (for example on asylum seekers) which has helped to avoid conflicts over the issues (parts of the region have seen significant support for extreme right parties).

This leadership has created the environment for successful handling of significant inward migration, often by groups that were barely represented in the region before. The partnerships initially created around asylum dispersal have since been adapted to deal both with the much smaller challenge of Gateway refugees and then with the arrival of migrant workers after 2004.

Other regions and areas

Further examples of strong leadership and some of the outcomes from it from include:

• **Yorkshire and Humberside** which has a strong regional migration partnership and has created structures which are owned by and have the confidence of elected members. The larger local authorities recognise the responsibility that they have to show leadership to others within the region.

• **Sheffield** is an example of a city where there is shared political commitment to the approach to migration issues with a range of services for new migrants and participation in the Gateway resettlement scheme.

• **Barking and Dagenham** where cohesion and integration are under the remit of the council's leader, which sends an important signal about how seriously the local political leadership takes the issue – a message intended to filter down through the staff structure. This enabled the council to successfully challenge the extreme right's political threat, which fed on the use of local housing (often ex-council housing) by inner London boroughs for placing homeless families.

• **Kerrier** (now part of Cornwall Council) which took the lead in a co-ordinated approach across different services to the problems of poor quality accommodation for migrant workers, especially caravan sites. The co-ordinating group, the Migrant Worker Action Group (MIGWAG), was extended to Penwith and is now (through the new authority) extending across Cornwall. It has led to joint action to tackle poor accommodation and employment conditions, and also responds to local complaints and helps to address local tensions.

Regions where responses have been less successful

In contrast, co-ordination mechanisms in some regions can be much weaker. In some cases local authorities no longer have the incentive to co-operate in running UKBA accommodation contracts, and regional co-ordination mechanisms – once important – have lost their central role. Rachel Pilai (2006) has also pointed to one region's weaknesses in strategic leadership on employment issues, with an evident need for better policy co-ordination and a better communications strategy at regional level. Without these, she argues, the region may not secure the outside labour needed by the regional economy. To her criticism could be added the point that, if there is lack of leadership on employment, then the crucial links between it and housing and work in neighbourhoods are not likely to be recognised either.

More recently a wider risk has arisen from changes in government policy. Abolition of regional structures, including regional housing strategies and regional development agencies, will potentially exacerbate the 'disconnect' that is already a problem in some regions. The role of housing in engaging in local enterprise partnerships (one of which is being established by AGMA – see above) could be crucial. These will provide new forums in which the connections between economic development, migration, housing and employment can be made.

The role of housing providers

What leadership roles might be taken by local housing providers? Housing providers have an important role for several reasons including their strategic responsibility, the sensitivity of housing allocations and their relationships with residents' groups. As has been shown in the discussion of leadership in Greater Manchester, local authority housing services, arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations can all play active and complementary roles, and at all levels from the city region to the neighbourhood. Housing authorities and ALMOs have often themselves had a leadership role – in maintaining regional consortia, running asylum accommodation contracts, championing wider neighbourhood integration and in other aspects.

It may be questioned why social housing providers have a role, given that most migrants live in private rented accommodation. There are several reasons: their role in managing communities where social housing and privately owned housing sit side by side, their wider roles in community development and community cohesion, and the fact that migrant use of social housing, while still small, is growing.

Here are some of the considerations about housing providers that arose in the HMN's discussions.

- Social landlords must ensure that tenants and communities are at the heart of decision-making – if they do not agree with the overall vision, where does that leave the strategy for the area? For example, tenants' organisations are bound to be part of debates about social housing allocations, providing the opportunity to talk through and deal with concerns about the impact of migrants on local housing provision.

- There are particular challenges in engaging private sector landlords, despite the prevalence of migrants in private housing, due to the disparate nature of the sector. This has traditionally been the role of the local authority and there are examples of different-sized authorities (Kerrier, Camden) doing excellent work. This is an area under threat from spending cuts, however. It is also one in which housing associations have rarely played a role and in which they might be able to do so (in exploring the management of accommodation on behalf of employers, for example). Social housing providers may also be able to launch schemes which open up access to better quality, longer-term lettings in the private rented sector (as demonstrated in HACT's Accommodate the Private Rented Sector project, see http://hact.org.uk/accommodate-2).

- Housing providers operating at the cutting edge of cohesion and integration can help to reach excluded and isolated groups; they can play an important leadership role in bridging or brokering partnerships, and can take a lead in encouraging integration by, for example, being proactive in supporting community development approaches that bring different groups together or providing work placements within their organisations.

- It is important not to get too preoccupied with housing providers' reach into distinct community groups. It is equally important for providers – in their housing and neighbourhood management activities – to create environments that people are comfortable living in and where potential conflict is minimised. Although there are issues about funding wider neighbourhood activities that benefit residents who are not tenants, and therefore do not pay towards such services or initiatives from rents.

- Housing providers can to some extent mediate between wider policy changes and the neighbourhoods where they work. For example, how do top-down resources (characteristic of migration and integration funding) reach and impact upon the community, and how might locally based groups be represented in debate and decision-making? Or how are the effects of the economic downturn being felt at local level in terms of funding, social housing partners, regional support and integration?

- There is potential for those housing associations that have a strong base in local neighbourhoods to take a lead role in linking migrant community organisations with service providers, including local authorities and large social landlords. There were examples of this in the Opening Doors and Accommodate projects, and in the project Integrated in Brent (see www.cih.org/policy/openingdoors, http://hact.org.uk/opening-doors, www.innisfree.org.uk/int_00_index.php, http://hact.org.uk/accommodate).

Whether and to what extent housing providers act as leaders on broader migration issues at regional or local levels is bound to vary from place to place. However, as a minimum they should be very aware of the need for leadership and be conscious of whether or not it exists in the areas where they work. They can ask whether they could help to build on what already exists, or take steps to fill gaps.

Quite apart from the broad implications of migration as a national, regional and local issue, it is bound to have a direct effect on the work of most housing providers. Poor local leadership is likely to increase the risk that areas will not only miss the benefits of migration but will stumble into conflicts over its consequences. Housing organisations can work to prevent this happening and to gain the benefits of migration and of better integrated communities.

Examples of issues where leadership may be needed

The remainder of the paper considers in more detail some of the issues on which leadership is needed, and gives examples. Many of these are practical, local issues. Their importance shows the ever-present need to ensure that strategic planning at city, regional or local authority level always connects with micro-level work within neighbourhoods and by and with communities.

Issues about competition for resources

Community tensions emerge very often because of real or perceived inequalities in the distribution of scarce resources… As we saw in Barking and Dagenham, the lack of affordable housing in London is one crucial driver of this and resolving the capital's housing shortage will be essential in reducing these tensions over time. Council leadership and communications strategies can only do so much: if families are on a housing waiting list or a transfer list, living in overcrowded conditions or in temporary accommodation, they will be understandably frustrated and are likely to become resentful of others who they perceive to be doing better than they are. Explaining how the allocation system works, whatever its merits in principle, is unlikely to really address these frustrations and the sense of disempowerment that comes with them.
(Muir, 2008).

Perhaps the biggest challenge that migration poses is the extra pressure on facilities and services, including of course housing. There is no easy answer in a situation where the gap between need and supply is very wide. Nevertheless, action can be taken to:

• be seen to address the problem, even if resources are limited (so, for example, Barking and Dagenham has led the field in developing new council housing);

• ensure that the benefits of investment, if it takes place, are shared:

    …addressing the needs of new arrivals can become a new and visible opportunity for enhanced support for long-term residents, in order for the arrival of new groups to be seen as bringing rather than taking from local communities. (Hickman *et al.*, 2008);

• have processes that are seen to be open and accessible. For example in developing a choice-based lettings scheme, Leicester City Council promoted its accessibility to all. This included training librarians in accessing the scheme, as many people – including migrants – use libraries for Internet access;

• be prepared for rapid and robust responses to criticism (e.g. about social housing allocations).

Neighbourhood quality and neighbourhood regeneration

Tensions can result not only from perceptions of favoured access to facilities or services but also because of decline of neighbourhoods, prevalence of anti-social behaviour, and so on – which may be blamed on immigrants or more generally on neighbourhood change of which migrants are symptomatic. As Muir says of London:

Frustrations with so-called 'crime and grime' issues can also heighten community tensions, as we found in Barking and Dagenham. The poor quality of the physical environment and a perceived rise in anti-social behaviour in some areas were believed to be a major factor in voters turning to the BNP. If the council is to prevent extremism of that kind, it will need to get those important 'cleaner, safer, greener' issues right.
(Muir, 2008)

Examples of this are given in Box 4.

Box 4: Addressing issues of neighbourhood quality

A number of authorities are experimenting with area devolution, often focusing on the 'cleaner, safer, greener' agenda, providing funds to deal with local problems and hence getting 'quick wins' in engaging local residents. Some have also taken on the issues that arise when newly-arrived migrants do not understand cultural norms. One example from an ALMO in Manchester was Northwards Housing's employment of a Polish neighbourhood warden to tackle issues such as people not knowing about rubbish collection systems.

Sometimes, neighbourhood issues can be dealt with by leaders within the community, such as in Northfields, Leicester, where the residents' association positively welcomed dispersal of asylum seekers to the area as a way of reviving it and filling empty properties. In doing so, they worked to provide a welcoming atmosphere for the new arrivals, and also dealt with concerns that arose as people moved into the area (e.g. complaints about women spitting in public).

From Perry and Blackaby, 2007.

Worklessness and job opportunities

A further cause of tension is jobs: migrants having jobs in areas where high proportions of long-standing residents do not. Even though the jobs may well have been available to locals if they had tried to obtain them, the disparity can fuel tensions (Markova and Black, 2007).

Economic development activity is not seen as related to community integration of migrants but in fact it can help to ensure that long-standing residents get jobs and so reduce tensions. If people are in work, they will also meet people from different backgrounds in the workplace (Muir, 2008). Initiatives to tackle worklessness can therefore have incidental benefits for migrant integration (Cope, 2009).

The challenges of community development

> We need to invest in communities today if we want to have integrated communities tomorrow.
> (Krys Stankiewicz of Polacy Duzi i Mali Polish community group, Bolton).

Investment in community development work can bridge gaps between new and long-term residents and old and new migration streams, and it can strengthen cross-generational ties within and between migrant communities and with long-term residents.

Multi-layered approaches are likely to be needed. Here are some examples:

- support for community-based groups that aid new arrivals from the same community (see examples from the HACT Accommodate and CIH/HACT Opening Doors projects at http://hact.org.uk/accommodate, www.cih.org/policy/openingdoors, http://hact.org.uk/opening-doors);

- work with particularly deprived or isolated groups to assist their integration (see examples in Perry and El-Hassan, 2008);

- support for long-standing communities experiencing rapid change (see examples in Peterborough, Glasgow etc in Hickman *et al*., 2008);

- cross-community work with young people (see examples in Muir, 2008, and Perry and El-Hassan, 2008);

- cultural and sporting events or activities that genuinely bring people together, celebrate different community identities, and are open to everyone (see examples in Muir, 2008 and Perry and Blackaby, 2007);

- neighbourhood-based community groups taking their own action (for example the Barton Hill Together project in a high-rise estate in Bristol where rapid change has resulted from migration (see www.bridgingcultures.org.uk/Results/2009/VoluntarySectorOver500000).

There is scope for experimenting with different ways of promoting contacts between different groups. Some of these, such as interactive community forums to discuss local issues, have been explored and evaluated in the context of neighbourhoods experiencing migration in Bradford (Phillips *et al.*, 2010). In three different areas experiencing new migration, HACT's Communities R Us project not only facilitated discussions between groups which led to decisions about what they would like to do together to tackle local issues, it also provided a grant for the groups to go ahead with the chosen actions (see http://hact.org.uk/communities-r-us).

Housing providers should be alert to grassroots or community-led initiatives, and look for ways to support them, not simply launch projects run by providers themselves. As identified in HACT's Communities R Us project, bottom-up initiatives often have more lasting impact and yet require a different kind of leadership.

Of course, the context for community development is changing as local authorities and the voluntary sector enter a challenging period of much-reduced public funding for such initiatives. There is a paradox here: migrant community organisations have long drawn attention to the difficulties they face in relying on short-term funding; some local authorities had begun to recognise this, but now expenditure is being cut and government expects communities and individuals to take responsibility themselves rather than to rely on public funds at all. This difficulty has been acknowledged by the government's policy adviser Lord Nat Wei, who offers a five-point challenge to small community organisations facing funding problems (Wei, 2010).

However, at the same time the government has promised to create:

> …a new generation of community organisers that will be trained to support the establishment of neighbourhood groups and introducing measures to encourage giving and philanthropy.
> (Cabinet Office, 2010).

There will be several key tests facing these 'community organisers', not least whether they will take account of the sorts of issues in, and approaches to, neighbourhoods experiencing migration that are referred to in this paper, and whether they can work successfully to enable neighbourhood groups to be inclusive, especially in areas that have accommodated new arrivals.

Developing leadership within communities

Community development work links to the leadership debate because one purpose of it is to identify and build the capacity of new leaders, especially in new migrant communities. This is a challenging task, however, for several reasons:

- although a widely acknowledged problem, it can be difficult to avoid relying on long-standing community 'leaders' who in fact only represent parts of a community, and perhaps those who are longest established rather than newcomers;

- modern movements of people and information challenge traditional community development models, as people move to a place on a short-term basis, may maintain their social networks through mobile phones and cheap flights rather than place-based contacts, and may not perceive a need to integrate locally;

- in the future there may be much more flux as people flow in and flow out of areas, posing a real challenge to communities and their leaders in dealing with change (see Box 5).

Box 5: Identifying leaders in Polish communities

Krys Stankiewicz of the Bolton group *Polacy Duzi i Mali* (literally *Poles Big and Small*) pointed out to the HMN that Polish communities can be very divided, and that his organisation took a leadership role in bringing together groups that do not readily mix and are very 'closed' to newcomers, especially in the case of long-established communities in relation to migrant workers.

The challenges therefore included how to find people, and then how to unite, motivate and empower them. The migrant population is in flux with people coming and going, and people who have multiple jobs may have little time for community activities. The plethora of third sector organisations is confusing as such bodies do not exist in Poland.

Polacy Duzi i Mali has benefitted from the support which community-based groups receive in Bolton from housing providers and from different parts of the council. This is an example of Bolton's leadership in valuing, investing in and sustaining relationships with such groups, and thereby supporting their voice within the local political arena and civil society. This contrasts with other places which may start 'initiatives' that can quickly fall apart when short-term resources cease to be available.

(See www.polacyduziimali.dbv.pl [in Polish but with a translation facility])

Having noted the challenges, it should be emphasised that facing them can be very worthwhile: the HMN has spoken to many community-based groups which have developed effective leadership at both neighbourhood and local authority levels. An example is the Bolton Solidarity Community Association, which developed as the Somali community in Bolton grew from almost zero in 1992 to being very significant now, and has successfully identified and used support from Bolton Community Homes and from national level schemes such as HACT's Communities R Us programme.

The need for community-level leadership is not, of course, confined to migrant communities, but extends to broader residents' groups at the level of neighbourhoods and estates. This is an area where housing providers are well-placed to play a role and several already do (see below).

Promoting a shared sense of belonging

> Integration takes place at the local level, even if some of its mechanisms are steered by institutional rules that have been established at higher (regional, national or international) levels.
> (Penninx, 2009)

Perry (2008) showed that community development work is important in creating 'common values' about community safety, maintaining the environment and so on and can also aid in creating a prevailing attitude which is accepting towards newcomers and tolerates differences.

But leadership at the local authority and regional level is also very important in creating a culture which welcomes diversity. Both Glasgow and Peterborough provided examples of local authorities tackling initial hostility towards newcomers. Hudson *et al*. (2007) point out how staff they interviewed in Manchester and in Tottenham spoke about atmospheres of tolerance and pride in places being diverse – reflecting the culture of the authorities in which they work.

Perry pointed out that, where prevailing attitudes are positive, as in places such as Leicester and Kilburn, there can be shared acceptance of responsibility for neighbourliness and resolving problems. In contrast, where newcomers are seen as a threat, they are also seen as having the main responsibility for adapting and fitting in, or for having 'failed' to do so if there are conflicts.

Real political leadership is more diffuse than having just a single strong leader at local level – for example, all councillors have a role in leading at a neighbourhood level, reflecting the views of local communities, but also where necessary challenging those views and supporting communities moving through change. (Of course, all will not have the desire or capacity to do this, but it is important that a number do so.)

Tension-monitoring and ability to react

Leadership is particularly important in creating an awareness of, and mechanisms for dealing with, issues that can trigger problems – whether this is a factory closure that will cause sudden unemployment/loss of accommodation for migrant workers or the growth of activities by extreme political organisations and events that they might plan.

As Muir (2008) points out:

> This means ensuring that the council's community engagement infrastructure is robust and that it is connected to the right people, in faith groups, across the generations and in every neighbourhood. Too often agencies have been 'taken by surprise' by events, such as a local election fought on immigration lines or the arrest of local youths on terrorism charges. As one officer said, councils need to be careful of a 'veneer of cohesion' and must not become complacent; instead they must get below the surface to understand what is concerning people.

Local authorities and housing providers need to have robust partnerships in place so that police and other agencies respond quickly, at the appropriate level and in co-ordinated ways (another aspect of the trusting relationships mentioned earlier).

Dealing with the media

Leadership is important in media relations as it is council leaders or other recognised spokespeople who will be called to comment, often at short notice. It is vital that local leaders are willing to talk to their local media – even at short notice and on difficult and sensitive issues. One problem in some places is that mainstream figures are unwilling to weigh into these debates because they can be controversial, and the absence of sensible voices leaves a vacuum which can be filled by extremists.

As well as having good procedures (including out-of-hours response arrangements), agreed 'lines' and carrying out media training, authorities should cultivate positive and trusting relationships with local/regional media that can counterbalance the often hostile coverage in the national media (which is much less easy to influence). Local media may more readily appreciate the effects of news stories on community tensions and may accept that they have some responsibility to avoid fuelling conflicts.

Conclusion

This paper argues that leadership is vital if communities are to deal successfully with the pressures of change brought by migration, and if new arrivals themselves are to be accepted by and integrated within the neighbourhoods where they live. Leadership is vital at all levels, but there is a particular case to be made for effective leadership at regional and local levels, since this is where the main challenges have to be faced.

The paper also argues that housing authorities and social landlords have a vital role to play. They can themselves provide leadership. They can also help to promote leadership within the neighbourhoods where they work. There are many examples of this.

This paper concludes with a challenge to those in the housing sector and in regional and local government to understand the importance of these issues and the roles they can play. Even if overall levels of migration fall – and it is far from certain that they will – the effects of recent migration are here to stay. Many places are engaged in a process of change: migration may be only one of the factors causing that change but it can be a critical and sensitive one. Because of their role in neighbourhoods, housing providers are uniquely placed both to recognise the issues and to act on them.

Housing and Migration Network members

- **Julia Unwin CBE** Chief Executive – Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)
- **Paul Birtill** Director of the Migration Foundation – Metropolitan Housing Partnership
- **Heather Petch OBE** Former Director – HACT
- **Mary Carter** HACT Associate
- **Nancy Kelley** Deputy Director Policy and Research, JRF
- **Azim El-Hassan** HACT Associate
- **Michael Gelling OBE** Chair – Tenants and Residents Organisation of England (TAROE)
- **Arten Llazari** Chief Executive – Refugee & Migrants Centre (Black Country)
- **Elahe Panahi** Director – Royal Docks Learning and Activity Centre
- **Alona Tirzite** Migrant Communities Officer – Lincolnshire County Council
- **Ann Branson** Divisional Director, Housing Strategy and Options – Leicester CC
- **Neil Coles** Housing Services Manager – Maidstone Borough Council
- **Nigel Lee** Private Landlord
- **Jon Lord OBE** Chief Executive – Bolton at Home
- **Rob Warm** Regional Manager – Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership
- **Tom Murtha** Chief Executive Officer – Midland Heart
- **Bill Payne** Chief Executive Officer – Metropolitan Housing Partnership
- **Vicky Stark** Chief Executive – Look Ahead Housing and Care
- **Jenny Edwards CBE** Chief Executive Officer – Homeless Link
- **Leonie McCarthy MBE** Citywide Neighbourhood Manager – New Links (Peterborough)
- **Neil Stott** Chief Executive – Keystone Development Trust
- **Richard Capie** Director of Policy and Practice – Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)
- **Tim Finch** Head of Migration, Equalities and Citizenship Team – Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)
- **Gill Green** Independent Researcher, formerly at the Audit Commission
- **Sue Lukes** Independent Consultant
- **John Perry** Policy Adviser – CIH

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