



Government Response to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Community Cohesion and Migration



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*Presented to Parliament
by the Minister of State for Communities and Local Government,
by Command of Her Majesty
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Introduction

The Government welcomes the Select Committee's report on cohesion and migration. The report recognises much of the work already underway across Government and locally on cohesion and migration issues, and that much of this is new work.

The Committee's report is a useful contribution at a time when we are implementing the biggest changes in our immigration system in forty five years. We are strengthening our borders, ensuring fair and effective management of the flow of migration into the UK, while continuing to provide a refuge for those fleeing persecution. The changes we are bringing in will reduce the numbers of economic migrants coming to Britain and staying – though more importantly they will ensure we attract and keep the right people, those with the skills our economy needs. We are clear in our expectations of newcomers to the UK: to work, pay taxes, speak English and obey the law.

The changes we are introducing will enhance the positive contribution migration makes to the UK economy. Migrants have supported the strong growth in GDP per head in the UK over the past ten years, meeting skills and labour shortages and adding to the working population. Most migrants are self sufficient, privately housed, employed, contribute to the local economy and do not put any significant pressure on local services. However, we recognise that increasingly mobile migrant populations can lead to transitional pressures on public services and challenges to cohesion in some local communities – we are committed to helping local areas address these.

The Government has already given significant additional resources to support local authorities, who will receive an increase of over £2.7 billion next year alone. In addition, as set out in *Managing the Impacts of Migration: A Cross-Government Approach* published in June this year, the Government has put a programme of financial and practical support in place to help local services manage migration. This includes £12 million over the next three years to improve population statistics to ensure the best possible data is used to determine local government funding, and an estimated £6 million Exceptional Circumstances Grant for 2008-9 to support schools dealing with large increases in pupil numbers during the academic year. We also announced in February this year our intention to set up a fund to manage the transitional impacts of migration, providing tens of millions of pounds to local public services dealing with high levels of migration.

Evidence suggests that the UK is a place where the vast majority of people feel they belong, and are comfortable and confident about diversity. The 2007

Citizenship Survey confirmed that just over 80 per cent of people think that people of different backgrounds get on well in their local area. 85 per cent felt they belonged strongly to Britain and 77 per cent felt they strongly belonged to their neighbourhood.

We welcome the Committee's recognition that there is no simple relationship between migration and levels of cohesion. High levels of migration do not automatically lead to poor cohesion, but can have an impact when combined with deprivation and a lack of experience of managing the impacts of migration.

The Government's programme of work to support cohesive communities complements our work on migration but has a broader remit of promoting cohesion between and within all communities, settled and new. Last October we announced a £50 million investment in community cohesion over the next three years, and since then we have published an Inter Faith strategy (*Face to Face and Side by Side*) and the first part of a cohesion delivery framework. We plan further guidance for local authorities in the future. The new duty on schools to promote community cohesion is recognition of the excellent work that a lot of good schools are already doing to encourage community cohesion. Ofsted began inspecting against the duty last month.

We are committed to an ongoing dialogue with local government and other local service providers about the impacts of migration. We recognise the need to ensure that our programme of work to maximise the benefits of migration and mitigate transitional impacts on local communities needs to keep pace with the issues local areas face. As the Committee notes, we will report back on our work programme early in the New Year.

Housing

- 1. Public concerns about the effects of migration cannot simply be dismissed as racist or xenophobic. Tensions often arise on real practical issues, such as the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). (Paragraph 16)**
- 2. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring that the review of the private rented sector examines the effect of migration on housing. We recommend that the review include a detailed assessment of the effects of migration on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the problems which result both for existing communities and for the individuals who live in them. We also welcome the Government's commitment to supporting local authorities in the use of their discretionary licensing powers. However, further action is needed. We reiterate the recommendation made in our Report *The Supply of Rented Housing*, where we argued that the Government should make it easier for local authorities to regulate HMOs, and in particular that the process of applying for extended licensing should be easier. In areas where migrants tend to live in HMOs, public concern about migration can be reduced if the problems of HMOs are tackled. (Paragraph 21)**

Migration brings benefits to the UK as a whole, but the impact of recent inflows differs from place to place. The scale and pace of migration can have an impact on local communities and services, in parts of the UK experiencing significant migration for the first time this impact is felt more acutely. Therefore, public concern remains about migration, particularly about its pressure on services. *Managing the Local Impacts of Migration: A Cross Government Approach* sets out the support that Government is providing to local services.

We also appreciate that in some areas with a concentration of migrants living in poor conditions in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) there have been tensions with neighbouring residents, for instance because of excessive noise or rubbish. Local authorities already have significant powers to tackle these issues through the Housing Act 2004.

Measures introduced by the Act include mandatory licensing for certain HMOs where the risks of poor condition and management are the highest, and discretionary additional licensing for other HMOs where local authorities consider it appropriate.

The introduction of these schemes has significant implications for local residents and landlords. So it is right that local authorities have to make a case for such a scheme to the Secretary of State before it can be introduced. Communities and Local Government aims to turn round applications for discretionary licensing regimes within 30 days. To be able to do so, it is important for local authorities to provide sufficient evidence of their case.

We will consider whether proposals for changes to the current HMO licensing framework should be included in our Housing Green Paper (due to be published towards the end of this year) in the light of the conclusions of the private rented sector review and emerging findings from research we have commissioned from the Building Research Establishment to assess the effectiveness of HMO licensing. In addition, the Government commissioned research from ECOTEC to consider possible responses to HMOs through the planning system. This research was published on 26th September this year – we are considering the reports conclusions and how best to take forward the recommendations.

5. We welcome the EHRC and LGA commissioned study into the allocation of social housing, and welcome its interim report findings showing that there is no evidence to suggest that migrants receive unfair priority access to housing. (Paragraph 35)

We also welcome this study and agree with its interim findings.

6. Tensions between groups caused by issues of access to housing are undoubtedly exacerbated by the acute shortage of social and affordable housing in England. (Paragraph 36)

The Government is providing £8.4bn over the next three years to invest in affordable housing – initially through the Housing Corporation and then through

the new Homes and Communities Agency. This is a 50 per cent increase in funding over the last three years.

Communities and Local Government has estimates of newly arising need for social rented housing that cannot be met in the market or by existing stock based on the methodology used by Alan Holmans (of Cambridge University). Kate Barker used similar estimates in her Review of Housing Supply. These estimates suggest that there is need for at least 40,000 new social rented properties per annum. The figure of 40,000 for annual need is composed partly of need arising from demand-side factors such as newly forming households and partly from loss of stock as a result of supply-side factors such as Right-to-Buy.

Communities and Local Government is commissioning new research to assess levels of housing need, which should report in summer 2009.

We remain committed to a substantial increase in social housing. Our aspiration is to deliver 45,000 homes a year by 2010/11 and 50,000 a year during the next Spending Review period. These will be funded mainly by the Housing Corporation and in future the new Homes and Communities Agency. Given current market conditions it remains too early to predict outputs in 2010/11 with certainty.

8. Local authorities need to have transparent decision-making, including in relation to decisions on the allocation of social housing. Councils also must communicate effectively with their local communities to prevent myths about migrants arising and spreading. (Paragraph 46)

New migrants do not place significant demands on social housing. We agree that access to social housing needs to be fair and transparent. This is why we want all local authorities to offer choice based lettings (CBL) schemes by 2010. CBL properties are openly advertised, and the criteria for applicants being allocated the property are clear, as are any restrictions. Applicants can assess their chances based on who has been allocated similar properties previously and how many people applied.

As at April 2007, 36 per cent of local authorities had already implemented CBL and a further 59 per cent have plans to do so. Our research shows that housing applicants think CBL is fairer and more transparent than traditional officer based allocations schemes.

Our forthcoming Housing Green Paper will look at how we can deliver greater fairness in social housing allocations.

Local management of migration and cohesion

3. The rapid pace of change experienced by many communities has led to increased local public concern about migration and can negatively affect community cohesion. (Paragraph 24)

4. There is no straightforward relationship between the number of migrants in an area and levels of cohesion. Some areas experience high inward migration yet have a good level of cohesion in comparison to the national average. Nevertheless, cohesion can be negatively affected by migration, particularly in areas where there is poverty and/or little previous experience of diversity. (Paragraph 28)

Analysis of the Citizenship Survey has shown that once other factors are accounted for, ethnic diversity is in most cases positively associated with cohesion. However, this does not apply everywhere and we agree that for areas which have not previously experienced high levels of migration there can be cohesion issues as they adjust to this change. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's final report, *Our Shared Future*, noted that migration on its own does not lead to community cohesion difficulties; it has to be combined with deprivation.

We are investing £50m over the next three years to promote community cohesion and support local areas in preventing and managing community tensions. Of this, £34m will be as part of the Area Based Grant paid directly to local government. Resources will be targeted at those authorities where perceptions of cohesion were lower than average in 2006. We are currently piloting with Breckland District Council in Norfolk specific support for areas experiencing such issues. The cohesion delivery framework will also provide guidance and good practice examples for such areas.

The Government is committed to addressing the economic factors which cause deprivation and are a barrier to cohesion. We also need to address social factors such as perceptions and lack of experience of managing the impacts of migration which are barriers to cohesion.

We believe that the way to address these barriers is by promoting integration – helping new and existing residents to adjust to each other. This involves providing English classes, giving basic guidance on how to live in the UK and encouraging meaningful interaction between new and existing residents.

7. In order to respond to migration effectively, it is critical that local authorities do all they can to improve their local intelligence on current and future migration flows and plan ahead. (Paragraph 42)

29. We recommend that the Government's guidance to local authorities on migration and cohesion take into account that many overseas migrants are not here to stay long term, which presents increasing challenges for achieving integration. (Paragraph 108)

Local authorities are undertaking their own work in this area, and the Local Government Association (LGA) is leading a project to produce a resource guide for local authorities and their partners. This guide will help them to make the best use of national and local sources, and to get early warnings of changing trends, to enable them to plan ahead or respond.

As part of the cross Government programme to improve population statistics at national and local levels, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is working to improve local data and to develop local indicators of migration flows.

Local government is closely involved in this work and the senior programme board includes officials from the LGA. ONS also worked with local authorities on a series of local authority case studies, resulting in the publication of a final report in February 2008. The report's recommendations are being taken forward by the programme. It is envisaged that regular workshops with local authorities will be held throughout the programme's lifetime.

Communities and Local Government is committed to developing greater understanding of the changes that are taking place in our communities. As set out in *Managing the Impacts of Migration: a Cross-Government Approach*, Communities and Local Government will be leading a research programme to identify the drivers of migration from different countries, the patterns of where migrants settle and for how long and the sub-national economic impacts of migration. This research, combined with the enhanced structure of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) in the regions, will enable Government to share available information with local service providers about migration flows in a timely way. We will report back on the development of this research and information-sharing function in early 2009.

9. Local authorities need to take the lead in countering local myths on migrants. We see no necessity for a national rapid rebuttal unit, but recommend that central Government share best practice on myth-busting and communication strategies. (Paragraph 48)

Effective communication can ensure that the benefits of migration are clearly demonstrated, breaking down myths and misunderstandings. *Reporting Diversity* from the Society of Editors provides helpful guidance. Communities and Local Government also has guidance on its website on myth-busting. We are working with the Institute for Community Cohesion to provide a single web-based source of good practice, and to renew their guidance on communication.

In addition, Communities and Local Government is providing funding to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to run the Migration Excellence Programme, to identify and share good practice among local authorities managing the impacts of migration and to promote peer mentoring. This includes work with local media and myth-busting.

10. Local authorities need the freedom to develop local responses to migration; a one-size-fits-all solution is not appropriate. The Government should encourage local authorities to learn from each other, particularly where there are examples of innovative solutions to migration, such as establishing educational assessment centres and local welcome centres for new arrivals. (Paragraph 54)

The Government's cohesion delivery framework aims to provide support for local authorities, without trying to impose a one-size-fits-all solution. It has three parts:

1. An overview document which provides local areas with up-to-date knowledge about our understanding of cohesion and suggests how they might undertake local mapping to identify issues and take appropriate action.
2. Existing guidance on specific topics – we are currently discussing with local government where additional guidance would be valuable.
3. Good practice available from a single web-based source.

We will also be working with partners such as IDeA and the Institute for Community Cohesion to bring local areas together, and will be helping local areas help themselves and each other through the new Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs).

In addition, the Migration Excellence Programme is facilitating the identification and dissemination of good practice among local authorities. Communities and Local Government are providing up to £160,000 of capacity-building funding for those local authorities directly supported by this programme and a further £360,000 for IDeA, covering the programme's research, production of reports, conferences and events, peer training and accreditation, evaluation, management and other costs.

National support for local communities

11. We recommend that the Government monitor the extent to which schools are more ethnically segregated than the communities they serve. (Paragraph 58)

The ethnic make-up of a school reflects a number of factors including the characteristics of the local area, admissions policies and parental choice. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) already collects data on the characteristics of school pupil populations, including ethnicity, on an annual basis in the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which is then analysed at the local authority level.

Additionally, DCSF recently published *The Composition of Schools in England* bulletin (June 2008) which includes analysis of actual segregation of particular groups of pupils within schools compared to the segregation that would result if all pupils attended their nearest school.

The Government agrees with the Committee on the positive benefits of promoting contact between young people from different backgrounds. The *Children's Plan* published by DCSF in December 2007 included the aim of all children having real and positive relationships with people from different backgrounds, and feeling part of a community, at a local, national and international level.

Contact can take place in a variety of ways and it is important to look beyond the make-up of individual schools to take into account joint activities across schools and provision of positive activities for young people outside school.

A range of DCSF policies are aimed at ensuring fair admissions policies and facilitating contact between young people:

- School admissions in England are regulated by a statutory framework including a School Admissions Code which imposes mandatory requirements on local authorities and schools. This is designed to prevent unfair and covert practices in the allocation of school places – for example, taking account of parents' background or status. Objections about unlawful arrangements can be made to an independent Schools Adjudicator. A public consultation is currently underway on proposals for further improving the school admissions system for parents to help ensure fairness and transparency in the allocation of school places. These proposals include a new duty on local authorities to report annually on the legality, fairness and effectiveness of admission policies in their area.
- The Education and Skills Act 2006 introduced a statutory duty for all maintained schools to promote community cohesion. This came into force in September 2007 and has been included in Ofsted inspections from September 2008. DCSF guidance to schools on the implementation of the duty emphasises the importance of schools ensuring all pupils develop an understanding and appreciation of others from different backgrounds.
- The Government is investing £2 million over the next three years in a new School Linking Network to support schools and local authorities to develop and establish linking projects between schools with diverse in-takes so that pupils have opportunities to interact with others from different backgrounds.
- Bringing together young people from different backgrounds in order to develop social skills, building understanding and appreciation of others from different backgrounds through Positive Activities for Young People, as well as improving youth facilities through MyPlace to encourage participation by young people.

12. Integration should not be forced; rather, opportunities to promote sustained and meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds should be encouraged, for example through encouraging participation in community groups around issues of common concern.
(Paragraph 59)

13. To promote cohesion effectively, all activity that promotes contact between people of different backgrounds should reach out as widely as possible to people who are not normally involved in community initiatives.
(Paragraph 61)

Increasing meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds is one of the three key measures for the Public Service Agreement on cohesion. This is more than just getting different people to mix or come into contact with one another, it is about encouraging relationships between

people which are sustained, more than surface-deep and in which individual differences are not ignored.

We are working with the National Community Forum and others to produce initial guidance in the autumn for local authorities on the importance of interaction. This will include both encouraging participation in community groups around issues of common concern, and promoting the benefits of interaction, to ensure the guidance reaches out as widely as possible to people who would not normally choose to get involved in community initiatives. This will encourage interaction between people and groups who are different, beyond those groups in which people normally feel comfortable.

In July we published *Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society*. This document sets out how faith communities, Government and wider society can work together at all levels to encourage and enable greater local activity which brings people with different religions and beliefs together.

14. Community groups, such as residents' associations, have an important role in promoting community cohesion and participation in community life. Local authorities should encourage community groups to involve migrants in their organisations. (Paragraph 63)

15. We recommend that the Government ensure that its work on community empowerment, and the development of a Community Empowerment Bill, include measures to encourage the participation of migrants in civic life. (Paragraph 64)

We agree that local authorities and the third sector play a crucial role in encouraging the widest possible participation in community life. Local residents have a strong understanding of what they want and need in their neighbourhood, and third sector organisations, especially community organisations, help to strengthen and empower all members of a community to become actively involved in the wellbeing of their local area.

We are committed to further strengthening the role of community-led organisations across England. Our £70m Communitybuilders fund, a joint programme between Communities and Local Government and the Office of the Third Sector, is the largest single programme in our White Paper *Communities in control: real people, real power* published in July.

The Communitybuilders scheme is a powerful and practical way to help empower people in their local community. It will support and develop local organisations that provide a focal point for community life, bringing people together and providing services and activities for everyone in the area. Communitybuilder organisations will address the needs of their neighbourhood in a multi-purpose and holistic way and will aim to involve all sections of the community in their work including marginalised and hard to reach groups.

The Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill will implement the proposals in *Communities in control: real people, real power*

which require primary legislation. Some of the White Paper's proposals will make a positive contribution to encouraging the participation of migrants in civic life, for example, encouraging candidates from a wider range of backgrounds to stand as councillors. However, none of these proposals require legislation at this time.

16. Funders should expect community groups to look for opportunities to maximise interaction between people of different backgrounds. Where funding is granted to single identity groups, the criteria against which funding is awarded need to be clearly publicised to all communities in the local area. (Paragraph 68)

We consulted on this issue earlier this year. A range of views were expressed by stakeholders and we are carefully considering our next steps. We expect to publish a summary of these responses and make an announcement later in the autumn.

We know that people who have personal contacts from different backgrounds are more likely to believe their area is cohesive. We are therefore working on ways to promote more positive interactions between people from different backgrounds. We will issue guidance to local authorities on this shortly. We are also working across Government Departments and with other bodies such as the National Community Forum on further ways to increase interaction.

It has been suggested that the funding of community groups based on a single identity prevents interaction between people from different groups. However, at the same time the funding of such groups plays an important role in reducing inequalities.

17. We welcome the inclusion of community cohesion within the Comprehensive Area Assessment. This will be useful in encouraging local authorities actively to promote community cohesion and respond to migration, particularly in areas where there are tensions. (Paragraph 70)

We are working with the Audit Commission on how best to include cohesion in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process. We welcome the Audit Commission's suggestion in its recently launched second stage of CAA Consultation that the CAA includes the question 'How strong and cohesive are local communities?' as one of its key themes.

There are two measures of cohesion which local authorities can sign up to deliver as part of their Local Area Agreement. In total, ninety four authorities chose one or both of them. This makes cohesion one of the ten most important issues identified by local authorities in this process.

20. We welcome the Government's increased activity on community cohesion and migration. As much of this activity is new, we recommend that the Government review the overall effectiveness of its activities in response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in 2009. (Paragraph 80)

Our work on cohesion is being measured by Public Service Agreement 21. We have ongoing measures of success from the national Citizenship Survey and will have local measures from the Place Survey by March/April 2009.

We are also committed to providing an update of the progress made on the Government action set out in *Managing the Impacts of Migration* early in 2009. This will include reporting back on the progress of the cross government ONS led work to improve population statistics. A programme board meets quarterly to steer this work and a ministerial group meets every four months to monitor progress. This will enable improvements to be in place in time for key funding decisions in 2010.

The Interim Evaluation Report on the Migration Excellence Programme is due to be published in October. The Report will be followed by twelve case studies, arranged into themes such as data, tension monitoring and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). A National Conference took place on the 16 October featuring presentations and workshops from the eleven projects and marked the closure of the programme. The final evaluation report is due to be published in early 2009.

21. We welcome the EHRC's intention to convene regular forums for employers and employees on integration and cohesion. In addition, we call on the EHRC to encourage and support employers in taking action to integrate their migrant employees into local communities. (Paragraph 83)

We agree that the workplace is important for promoting integration and community cohesion. We will support the EHRC's work in this area. We also plan to work with the Institute for Community Cohesion on a project addressing cohesion in the workplace.

22. The effect of migration on community cohesion should be central to decisions on migration policy. We recommend that the Government closely monitor the effects of the new points-based system on community cohesion and publish regular evaluations of its findings, starting next year. (Paragraph 86)

Criteria for entry under the points-based-system (PBS), such as the English language requirements, are designed to facilitate integration into UK communities. As with all new policy, we will undertake a review of the effectiveness and impacts of PBS in due course. The exact timing and scope of this review is under consideration. Presentations have been made to the Migration Impacts Forum (MIF) on Tier 1 and Tiers 2 & 5 of the points-based-system on 16th January and the 21st May 2008 respectively. Views of MIF members have also been sought in correspondence.

23. We welcome the Government's recent publication *Managing the Impacts of Migration: A Cross-Government Approach*. Success in achieving a joined-up approach on community cohesion and migration depends on the leadership and influence of CLG. The publication of the migration plan is a promising development: the Government now needs to build on that plan to ensure that all its departments, and their respective

policies, take account of and prioritise community cohesion in their day-to-day work. (Paragraph 87)

We share the Committee's view on the importance of consolidating our cross-Government approach to helping local areas manage the impacts of migration. As mentioned, Communities and Local Government will provide a progress report on the programme of support set out in the Migration Impacts Plan early in 2009. A continuing dialogue with the local authorities and services whose experiences and initiatives helped inform our Plan is essential to ensure that policies to manage migration positively are embedded centrally and locally.

Therefore, we have established a Communities Group within Communities and Local Government with a strong migration function to draw together policies and programmes of departments across Government which help to manage the impacts of migration and share good practice locally.

We also agree that Communities and Local Government has the central role in Government's approach to building community cohesion. Communities and Local Government's aim is to create and support vibrant communities and places where people will want to live, and provides a focus for Government's relationship with local authorities. Local authorities are critical to delivery of improved cohesion at the local level, for new approaches to community engagement and empowerment, and are managing the benefits and transitional impacts of migration on our communities.

24. The long-term nature of work to promote community cohesion and the integration of migrants should not be a barrier to, or an excuse for lack of, effective evaluation. The spread of best practice on community cohesion and integration is meaningless without a shared understanding of the actual effectiveness of different initiatives. We recommend that the Government develop and disseminate guidance on the evaluation of community cohesion and migration initiatives. (Paragraph 90)

We recommend evaluation of all projects as part of our guidance on particular topics, which is more effective than a separate guidance document. We will also require a project to have been evaluated before it can be included on the Institute for Community Cohesion's web-based single source of good practice, to verify its effectiveness.

Integration

18. We agree with the Government's conclusion [on the establishment of a new national body with responsibility for the integration of migrants]. We did not hear sufficient evidence to convince us that a new body is necessary at this time, and we find persuasive the Government's analysis that establishing a new body could risk duplicating the work of existing bodies and prove costly. Instead, we recommend that all bodies with responsibility for the integration of migrants take further concerted steps to ensure that they are working together to follow a common strategic approach to the task. We also recommend that the Government review the case for further rationalisation of existing structures on migration and

cohesion when it reports in early 2009 on its progress in implementing the actions set out in its report *Managing the Impacts of Migration: A Cross-Government Approach*. (Paragraph 76)

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of our decision not to establish an Integration Agency. We work closely with bodies which have responsibility for the integration of migrants to develop a common strategic approach. As part of this, and where appropriate, we will explore opportunities for closer working and rationalisation, and will work to ensure that roles and responsibilities do not overlap.

19. If the Government decides to introduce a single national 'Migration Integration Strategy,' it must not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Central Government should not dictate to local authorities what practice should be adopted locally. Rather, the role of central government should be to set a national policy framework for action on integration and community cohesion, and provide guidance and support to others, particularly local government. (Paragraph 78)

We are considering the case for developing a national integration strategy. The purpose of such a strategy would be to set a national policy framework for action on integration, providing flexibility for local authorities to decide what practice is appropriate in their local context. Any strategy development would involve close working with partners in local government and elsewhere, and would start from the basis of the following definition;

Integration is a two-way process by which both new and existing residents adjust to one another, and understand the rights and responsibilities that come with living in the UK. Opportunities should exist for the full economic, social, cultural and political participation of migrants so that over time, migrants can achieve equality of both opportunity and outcomes with the existing population. And cohesion should be built so there is meaningful interaction between new and existing residents, enabling them to make a contribution and participate politically, and build a sense of belonging.

Integration is a long term, non-linear process. Needs will vary according to both the nature of migration and migrants concerned and the communities that they join. This is a process which should primarily take place at a local level.

There is no intention to dictate to local authorities what practice should be adopted locally. We will however be working closely with local authorities and others through the appropriate structures (including the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships), to ensure that guidance and capacity building support is available as required to local government and other local partners to enable them to take forward effective integration of their migrant population at a local level, and in response to local needs.

Any future strategy will be developed in close liaison with key stakeholders, and will be subject to public consultation. An integration strategy would link closely to our cohesion delivery framework. This framework aims to provide support for local authorities without setting a one-size-fits-all approach. It has three parts – the first is an overview document which provides local areas with up-to-date knowledge about our understanding of cohesion and suggests how they might undertake local mapping to identify the issues and then take appropriate actions. The second part is guidance on specific topics. The third part will be good practice available from a single web based source.

English Language Skills

25. We recognise that there are finite resources for free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the effect of the Government's restrictions on access to free ESOL provision on community cohesion. We are also concerned about the absence of national data on the type of learners who access tuition and levels of unmet demand. Given the Government's stated priority to encourage the speaking of English to promote integration, the absence of data is a major flaw. We recommend that the Government take immediate action to collate these national data, which will enable an assessment to be made of the effectiveness of ESOL provision in promoting integration. We further recommend that, in light of these data, the Government review ESOL provision. This review should include considering the case for removing the requirement for spouses to be resident in the UK for 12 months before they are eligible for free ESOL provision. (Paragraph 98)

27. Speaking English is vital for participation in community life, not just vital in the workplace. It is important that the Government's current emphasis on employers paying for ESOL does not detract from the need to ensure that English classes are available to all those in greatest need, including in particular Asian women in settled communities. (Paragraph 104)

English language skills are needed by both settled communities and those coming to the UK to integrate fully and contribute to communities as well as to progress in life and work. The Government's aim is to focus English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and funding on those in greatest need. Migrants themselves and their employers also have a role to play both before and after entry to the UK.

Government funding has tripled since 2001 and demand for ESOL provision remains high. Rather than restricting access, changes to ESOL provision were introduced in August 2007 to refocus funding and improve accessibility for the most vulnerable learners.

ESOL provision is being restructured to ensure that it is more targeted towards fostering cohesion and integration within our communities. The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) undertook a consultation between January and April this year on new ESOL proposals. These would enable local

areas to develop plans identifying local priorities and the needs of vulnerable people. Vulnerable people can include legal residents who might be expected to stay in the country for the foreseeable future, excluded women (particularly those with young children), and refugees who have established their right to remain in the UK.

We know that some spouses without their own incomes find accessing ESOL courses more difficult. DIUS funded £4.6m in 2007/08 through the Learning and Skills Council's discretionary Learner Support Hardship Fund to support vulnerable learners, with dependent women being one of the largest groups. This funding has been made available again for 2008/09.

Following the ESOL consultation we are working with key partners, including the Learning and Skills Council and Local Government Association, to develop proposed next steps in ensuring provision supports community cohesion outcomes. We recognise the need to ensure that adequate data is available nationally to support effective policy making and are considering with partners the data we need to evaluate our approach. But data on local areas' needs, priorities and patterns of demand for ESOL provision can most effectively be gathered by partners at the local level to inform local provision and engagement strategies. We will support partners in developing approaches to doing this.

26. We are not convinced that compulsory measures to make employers pay towards the cost of English language provision are needed. We do, however, consider that the Government is right to encourage employers to pay more. We recommend that the Government examine the case for introducing financial incentives, including through the taxation system, to encourage employers to pay more towards the provision of English language tuition for their employees. (Paragraph 103)

28. The Government's emphasis on targeting free ESOL provision at long-term migrants is right. However, there is still a need for short-term migrants to integrate for community cohesion, and learning English is an important means to integration. Although it may not be the primary responsibility of the state to pay for short-term migrants to learn English, it is the role of Government to encourage short-term migrants to learn English, for the sake of settled communities that are experiencing this type of migration, as well as for the sake of the migrants themselves. (Paragraph 107)

Government policy is to support businesses in accessing a flexible workforce both through up-skilling our existing population and enabling them to recruit migrant workers where they are needed. UK business needs a flexible supply of labour to respond to market conditions and compete in the global economy.

However, it is important that employers are encouraged to support migrants they bring in so that they are more effective in their employment.

Both businesses and communities clearly benefit from a well-integrated workforce with English language skills. Employers should look to include English language training as a part of creating a successful long-term sustainable business. Having employees who are able to speak English also adds value to communities as employees are able to interact with the existing population and this, in turn, minimises the cost of providing services to migrants.

It is important that both local authorities and employers consider impacts on their communities arising from migration. Communication between employers, local authorities and their partners about how migration affects the locality can be facilitated through Local Strategic Partnerships, where local agencies come together to consider and steer action on issues that affect their communities. Local Strategic Partnerships often include private sector businesses in their membership and these partners can play a useful role in awareness of and planning for migration.

Business will often know about changes in the community relatively early through their customers or employees. They can help local services and the community in planning and preparing for new migrants by sharing their plans to recruit in advance.

The cost of providing English language training for those who come to the UK should be shared by government, individuals and employers.

The Government has taken steps to secure increased voluntary contributions from employers for those people who are recruited from abroad and who come to the UK to work. We have worked with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Awarding Bodies to introduce a new suite of ESOL for Work qualifications and have promoted their take up through Train to Gain and through good practice case studies.

The Right to Request Time to Train legislation proposed for the new Parliamentary session will also cover ESOL and we expect this to further support those with English language skills needs in the workplace.

Requiring migrants to speak English is a key part of the Government's immigration policy. The new points-based system will require non-EU migrants (with the exception of intra-company transfers) to have a basic understanding of English before they enter the UK.

Government Funding

30. It is of vital importance for effective service delivery and community cohesion that funding for local services adequately take into account the number of migrants. (Paragraph 112)

The Government has already given significant additional resources to support local authorities, who will receive an increase of over £2.7 billion next year alone. This financial support includes £34 million to help local communities manage cohesion and promote integration. Three year settlements were

widely welcomed by local government as they provide certainty and stability of funding.

When calculating formula grant allocations, Communities and Local Government use the best data available that treat all authorities on a consistent basis. For the resident population, the best data are the population statistics produced by the ONS. These population statistics reflect changes in population from year to year through natural change, internal migration and the international migration of people who intend to live in or out of the UK for at least one year.

A £12million cross-Government programme to improve the population and migration statistics, led by the National Statistician, is underway and will result in progressive improvements to local population estimates. There are currently no estimates of short-term migrants available at the local authority level. If reliable, consistent estimates for this group at this level became available before the next three-year settlement (from 2011-12), Communities and Local Government would be able to consider whether to include this data in the distribution system in the future. This would be considered in the same way as any other changes to the formula grant distribution system.

31. We recommend that Government urgently prioritise work to incorporate the use of alternative administrative data into local population estimates. (Paragraph 116)

A major workstream of the cross Government programme to improve population and migration statistics includes the use of administrative sources.

In their response to the *Treasury Sub-Committee Report on Counting the Population*, the UK Statistics Authority and ONS identify a range of administrative sources that they are currently investigating with the aim of making improvements to the methods for assessing the distribution of migration to local authority level and providing a more accurate picture of the local population.

The LGA is involved in the programme, and the ONS is consulting with local authorities to draw on their expertise, including on the use of alternative administrative sources. Progress has been made towards sharing a range of administrative data which could be used to improve the statistics. Improvements made to the methods and sources will have a progressive effect on local estimates and projections. Where relevant, improvements using administrative sources will be made to estimates and projections in 2009 and 2010, in time for the next three year local government finance settlement.

32. We are not convinced that the Government's recently announced transitional fund will provide sufficient income to fund local public services under pressure from migration. We recommend that the Government immediately establish a contingency fund capable of responding effectively to the additional pressures which may be put on local government services from migration. The Government should work

closely with the local government sector to develop appropriate funding criteria. (Paragraph 126)

We do not accept the Committee's view that funding is inadequate.

The Government has provided a fair settlement for local services. For example, in respect of local government, the settlement will deliver an increase of more than £900m in 08/09 alone. Government grant for the police has increased by approximately 60 per cent or over £3.7bn between 1997/8 and 2010/11.

All public services have to manage pressures and there is a balancing act between long term stability in local government finance – which is what local government has asked for – and short term funding on specific issues.

However, we accept that migration can bring short term pressures on local public services. This is why we are creating the fund to manage these transitional impacts – providing tens of millions of pounds to local areas. The fund is a positive additional contribution to helping local services manage the impacts of migration, helping them respond quickly and flexibly.

We agree with the Committee that local government should be closely involved in how this money is spent, we also believe other local public services should have a say. Working together, these agencies have the best understanding of where local pressures are occurring, and therefore how the fund should be used.

Therefore, we are proposing that the fund is allocated to the Government Offices for the Regions, who will use forums such as Local Strategic Partnerships to distribute funding to help with migration related pressures identified by local agencies. Further announcements on the fund will follow in due course.



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