



A Report on the Housing Needs of New Migrant Communities in the Boston and South Holland Districts of Lincolnshire

Prepared by Alex Ray and Diane Raphael as part of Opening Doors project -
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We would also like to thank Hact and Chartered Institute of Housing for the support they provided to us throughout the project.

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of a survey carried out between July 2008 and December 2008 into the housing needs of new migrant communities within the Boston and South Holland districts of Lincolnshire.

The decision to undertake the survey was linked directly to Longhurst Homes' involvement with the Opening Doors project, sponsored by Hact and CIH. The main aims of this work were to seek to mainstream access to housing for new migrants and refugees.

2.0 Opening Doors

The Opening Doors project was sponsored by the Housing Corporation and the Connecting Communities plus funding stream. There were five overall outcomes that the project was expected to meet and these were as follows:

“The expected outcomes from the application to the Housing Corporation were that, by making the business case for and promoting delivery of HA involvement in meeting the needs and aspirations of refugees and other new migrant communities, the project would increase:

- Appropriate and decent housing options available to refugees and new migrants in all regions.
- Integration of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Wider utilisation of the experience and skills of refugee community organisations.

The additional expected outcomes from the Connecting Communities Plus application were to:

- Improve access to decent housing for new migrant communities through scoping their housing needs and identifying ways in which these can be addressed.
- Equip housing and related service providers to address housing needs of new migrant communities settling in their areas of operation, through raising their awareness.

These two sets of planned outcomes became the five overall outcomes intended from the Opening Doors project.” (1)

There were six local partnerships, involving a total of 11 housing organisations. Longhurst partnered with Tuntum Housing Association. Whilst Tuntum focused

largely upon the needs of refugees in Nottinghamshire, Longhurst with its head office in Boston decided to focus principally upon the housing issues related to the new migrant worker population within the county and specifically within Boston and South Holland which has the highest volumes of new migrants within the county.

3.0 The Scope of the Research

As part of Longhurst's work on the project it was felt that more information was needed about current housing needs and circumstances, before appropriate solutions could be found. An earlier survey, "The Dynamics of Migrant Labour in South Lincolnshire" (2), carried out in 2005 looked at a range of issues faced by new migrants, but did not look in any detail at housing issues. In particular, it did not investigate the take up of social housing or look at more recent emerging problems associated with new migrants, including destitution.

Other reports such as the CIH's "Allocation of Social Housing to Recent Migrants" published in May 2008 (3) indicated limited take up of social housing amongst new migrants and we wanted to assess the picture within our area. In particular we wanted to identify the reasons which might have assisted or hampered the take up of social housing. It was also felt that the findings could contribute to challenging the myths associated with migrants in recent years; namely the suggestion of 'queue jumping' to gain access to social housing in disproportionate numbers to member of existing local communities.

It was also felt that the research should provide an insight in the housing aspirations of the new migrants. In this respect the survey asked questions about both the length of stay to date and anticipated length of stay in the area and the UK.

Other reports have also identified increasing levels of destitution amongst migrants from central and Eastern Europe. More recently, during the course of this research an article in Inside Housing also reported the emergence of so-called "tented communities" in Peterborough. (4) The questionnaire therefore also incorporated a focus upon levels of destitution experienced by respondents.

The questionnaire which we devised was divided in to the following sections:

- the demography of the new communities
- how long they had been in Lincolnshire
- current accommodation
- access to social housing
- housing aspirations of new communities
- extent to which destitution is experienced by new communities

Specifically, it was anticipated that that the findings of the research would help to further raise awareness of the housing circumstances for migrants not just in the survey area, but across partner organisations in Lincolnshire. It was also hoped that the findings may, in part, help to influence housing strategy at the sub-regional level incorporating reference to the specific needs of new communities within the area.

4.0 Methodology

The basis of the research was a paper based questionnaire. This was questionnaire was put together with the support of Hact and the CIH and after consultation with local partners. The questionnaire was also reviewed by both Alona Tirzite and a polish staff member of Rainer, to ensure that the phrases and terminology used would be likely to be understood by those completing the survey.

In the first instance the survey was conducted with new migrants who visited the Citizen's Advice Bureau offices in Boston and Spalding. The surveys were translated into Russian, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese. Migrants were asked to fill out the survey alone and the results were anonymous.

Unfortunately, despite an assessment of the predicted numbers of visitors to the CAB offices only 49 surveys were completed in the first instance. The feedback was that visitor numbers were lower and that callers were reluctant to stay and complete questionnaires.

As a result it was necessary to explore other options and we managed to secure the support of Alona Tirzite one of the original authors of "The Dynamics of Migrant Labour". Herself a new migrant from Lithuania in recent years, she was currently working to support ESOL groups within the area and as such had contact with a larger pool of new migrants. Alona was able to communicate with a range of migrants, speaking Russian, a language which many migrants from Eastern Europe are able to understand. She was also able to build trust with the migrants and re-assure them of the purpose of the questionnaire and of its anonymity. She was also able to help with understanding of key questions. As a result a total of 313 questionnaires were completed.

Within the timescale, resources and access opportunities it was not possible to seek to ensure a statistically valid or fully representative group of individuals were surveyed. In reality it was recognised that the results would simply be a snapshot, but one which nonetheless could provide useful insights into current housing circumstances and future aspirations.

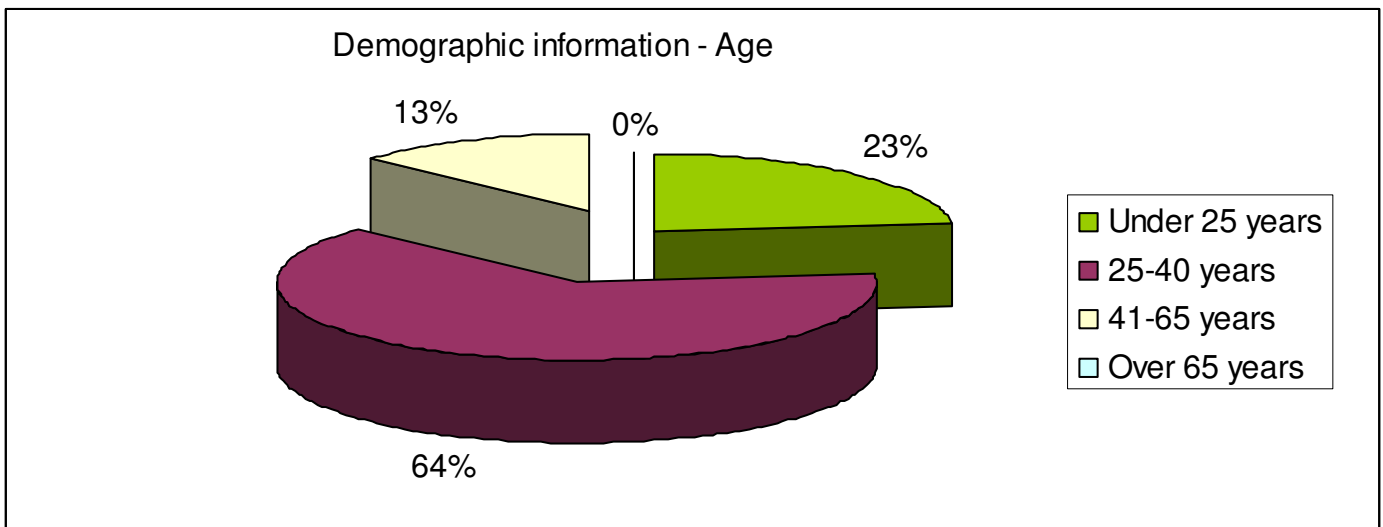
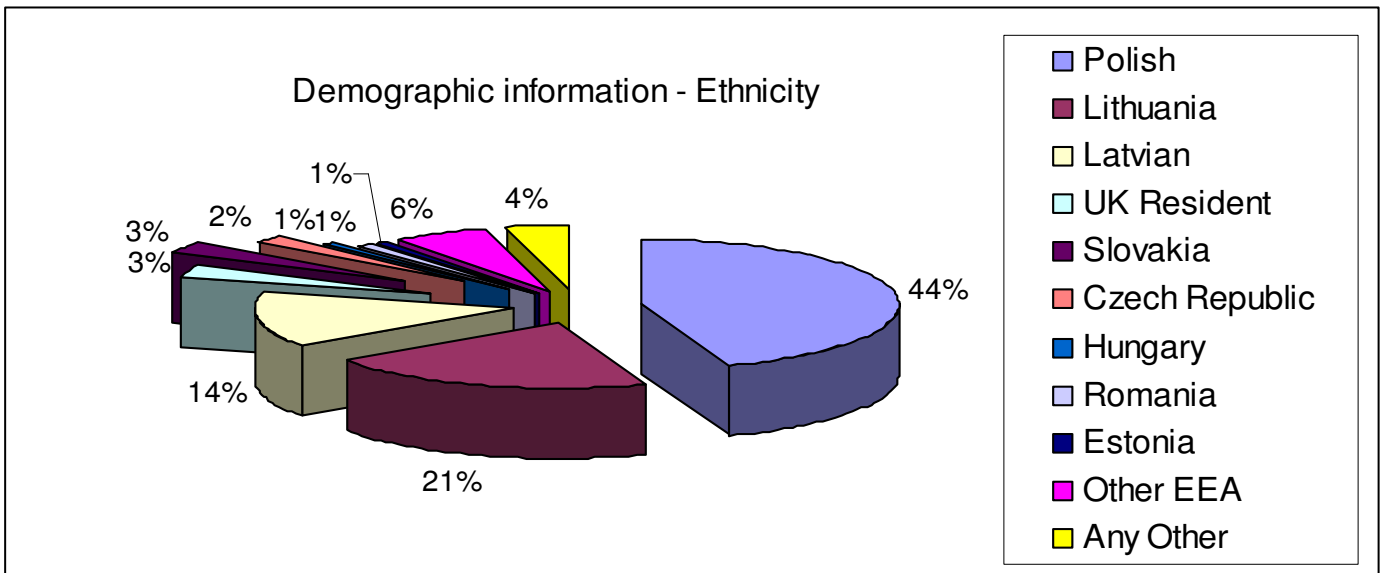
5.0 Research Findings

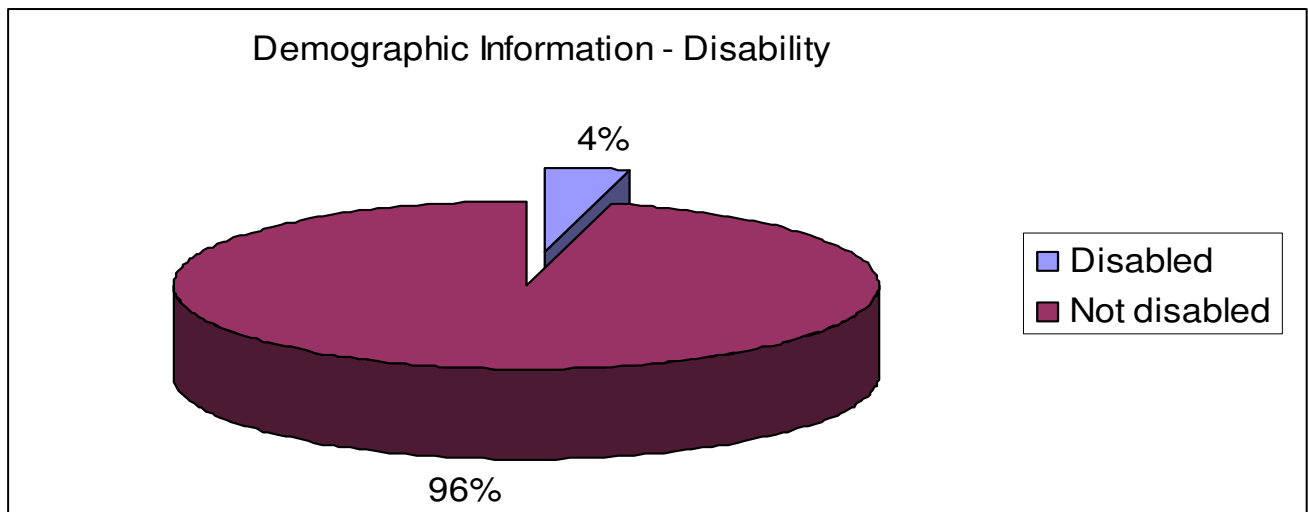
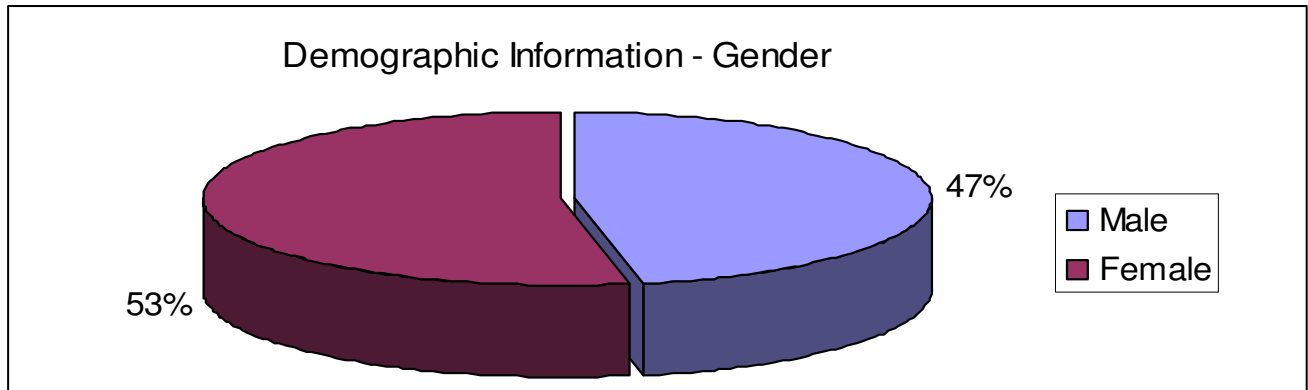
5.1 Demography

The first aim was to identify the demographic makeup of new communities moving to Lincolnshire.

As with earlier survey work in this area (5) the largest group of respondents was Polish (44%), with the second highest group being Lithuanians (21%). 64% of them were between the ages of 25-40. There were no migrants over 60. When asked, 4% of migrants said they had a disability, as compared with a national level of an estimated 18%.

The statistics also showed that there was an almost equal split between males and females, 47% and 53% respectively.





5.2 Length of time in the UK

68% of respondents had lived in the UK for over two years and 20% between 1-2 years. Compared with 20% in the 2005 survey (6), only 5% had had come in the last year. This may be an indication that the economic recession is discouraging new migrants. This appears to be happening across the country. Alternatively, it may be that the newest migrants are not routinely accessing services such as CAB and ESOL classes.

40% of Polish respondents have been residing in the UK for over two years, with 39% having lived in Lincolnshire for the same period. This suggests that there has been little migration within Britain and that most migrants have chosen specifically to come to this area.

Unfortunately, the survey did not ask respondents to indicate their profession so we are unable to identify whether particular groups have been here longer, and whether it is more skilled workers who have been successful in settling.

The survey results showed respondents were living in the following areas:

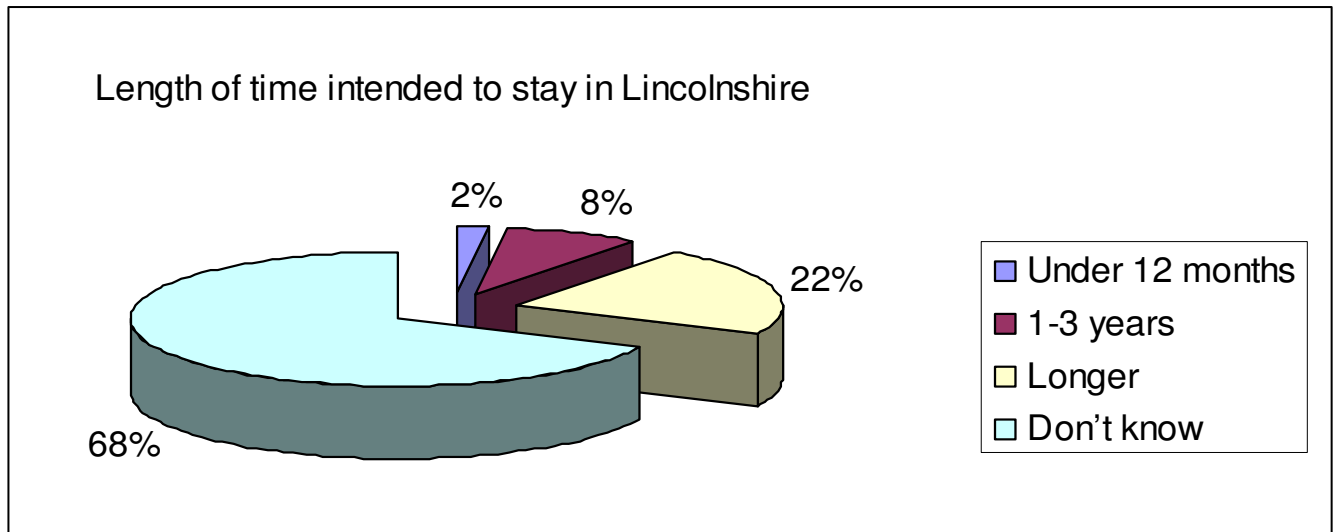
Boston	51%
Spalding	38%
Peterborough	5%
Other	5%

Interestingly the figures suggest that people are coming to the UK through contacts with family and friends and not directly through links with an employer. Many are arriving without a job (49%), as compared to 25% who came to take up employment. The figures suggest that many arrangements for entering the UK are very informal and may rely heavily on family and friends for support. This informality could well leave new migrants vulnerable to destitution.

Since moving to the UK, there is a mixed pattern of mobility and the number of house moves people have had to make. 38% had moved between 1-2 times, 34% 3-5 times and 17% more than five times.

This appears to show that for a significant number there is a pressure or need to move. This may also reflect the informal arrangements that people rely on when arriving in the UK.

Respondents were also asked about the length of time they intended to stay in Lincolnshire. 68% indicated that they were not sure. Once again this seems to suggest increased transience within these communities.



5.3 Accommodation

The survey also examined the type of housing that new migrants currently occupy, as well as some investigation into housing aspiration.

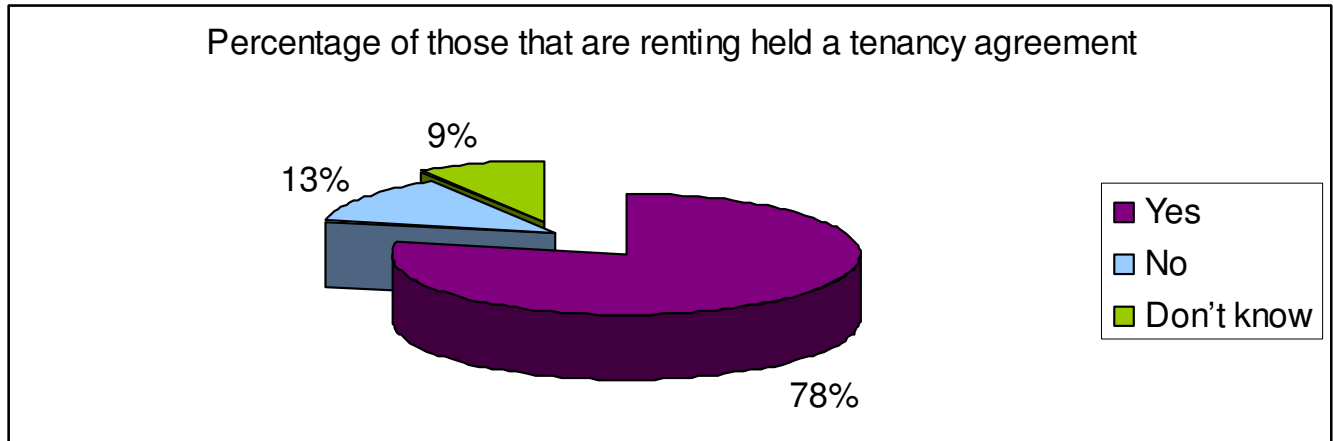
Type of housing being lived in at present:	Rented through estate agents	Rented through employer/ agent	Other private rented	Lodging with family/ friends	Bought/ buying own home	Council rented	RSL	Total replies
TOTAL	91	19	118	25	39	10	5	307
%	30%	6%	38%	8% Some of these pay rent	13%	3%	2%	

These results reveal that despite popular assumptions, for those who have lived here longer, there appears to be limited dependence upon accommodation from employers. However, it is important to note the earlier survey findings (8) which suggested that whilst this may be strictly the case, many people do find accommodation through links with the employer. E.g. a Gangmaster's relative. Also later when asked about deductions of rent from wages, 27% indicated that this occurred.

Most respondents live in private rented accommodation, with only 5% occupying housing association or council accommodation. Once again this challenges the stereotype of new migrants enjoying easy access to social housing, and points to a likely under representation of migrants in this sector.

Some 13% indicated that they had bought or were buying their own home. This compares with 5% in 2005 who said they owned their own home.

We went on to analyse the circumstances of those in rented accommodation. 78% indicated that they had a tenancy agreement.



For those who were renting the following results were gained:

65% of those that rent accommodation paid a deposit.

46% keep their deposit in a deposit scheme.

18% have experienced problems with un-returned deposits at the end of their tenancy

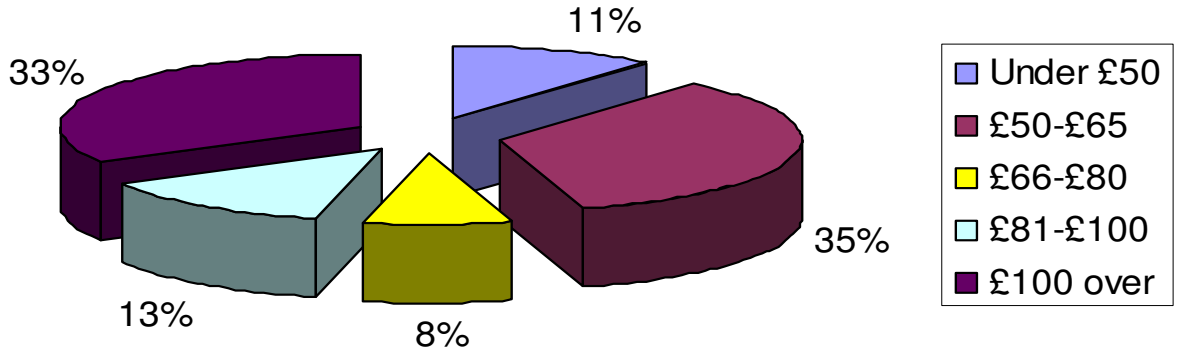
27% of those that pay rent pay directly from their wages.

92% of those that pay rent share the property with 1-5 others.

8% of those that pay rent share the property with 6-10 others

Over one third of respondents were paying over £100.00 a week in rent, although only 21% said they could afford a rent of £120 – £200 or more per week. A third of respondents paid between £50 - £60 per week and this was reflected in perceived levels of affordability with 37% saying this was the maximum they could afford. It appears that those needing smaller cheaper accommodation find rents more affordable, whereas larger and or presumably better quality accommodation appears less affordable. 36% of respondents gave high rents as a reason for dissatisfaction with their current accommodation. This latter figure may be an indication of a perception of poor value for money with the accommodation occupied.

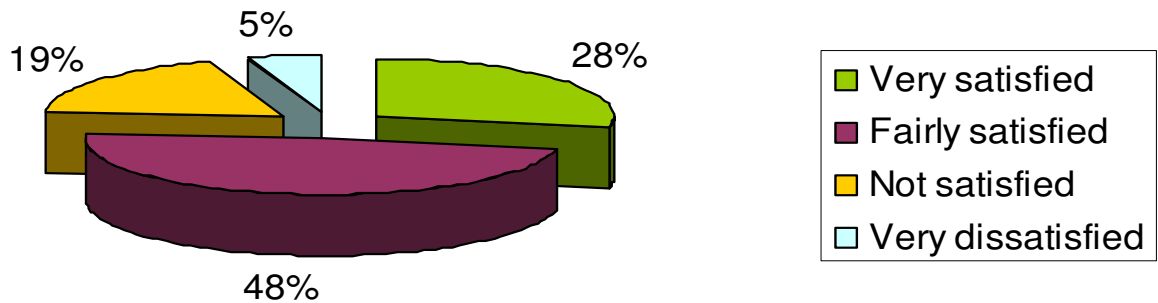
Amount of weekly rent paid



Maximum affordable rent	£30 - £45	£50 - £60	£70 - £80	£90 - £110	£120 - £200 and over	Total replies to question
Total	6	61	25	40	35	167
%	3%	37%	15%	24%	21%	Representing 53% of surveys returned

Those that are renting their homes gave the following levels of satisfaction and the reasons why they are dissatisfied living in their current accommodation.

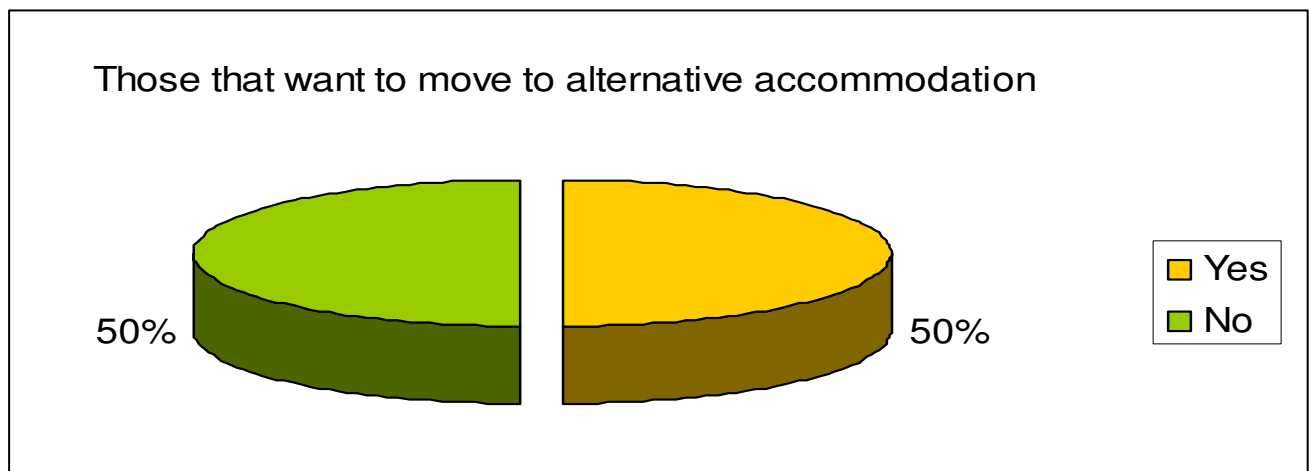
Current levels of satisfaction



The 24% that were not satisfied or very dissatisfied with their accommodation gave the following reasons:

Rent too high	36%
Poor housing conditions	26%
Don't want to share outside the family	22%
Overcrowded	10%
Other reasons	6%

The third aim was to gain an understanding of the housing aspirations of new communities. 50% indicated that they wished to move to alternative accommodation.



Those that stated that they wished to move to alternative accommodation have aspirations to:

Buy own home	40%
Council or Housing Association	22%
Private rent but self contained	20%
Private rented or shared	10%
Part by or Part rent property.	8%

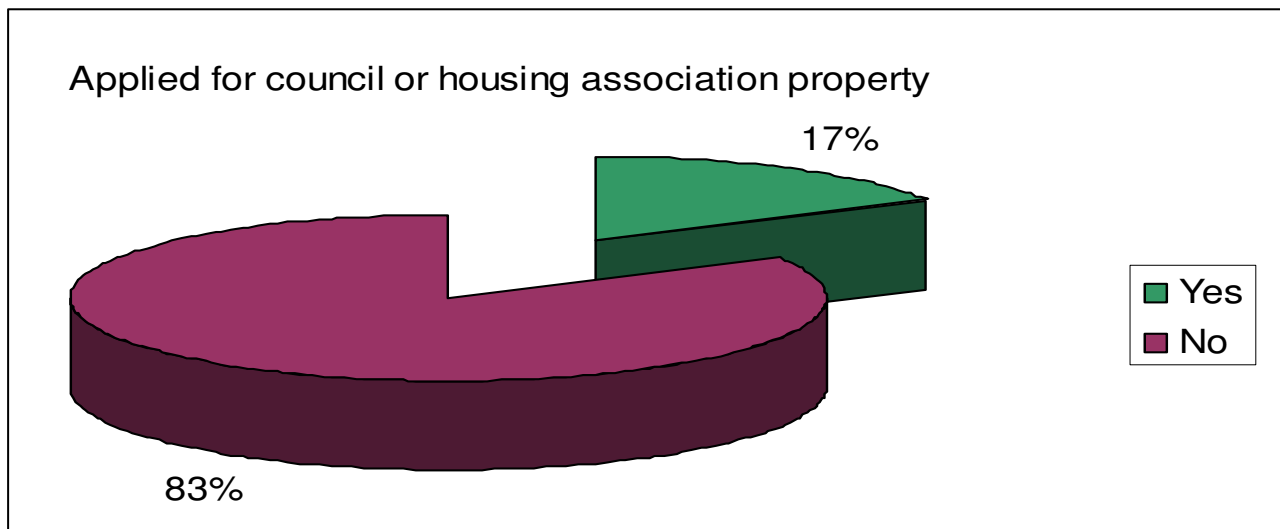
They indicated that the following types of accommodation were required.

Live in a 3 bedroom house	33%
Live in a 2 bedroom house	28%
Live in a 1 bedroom flat	18%
Live in a 2 bedroom flat	14%
Live in a 4 bedroom house	6%
Other	1%

Although 68% of respondents indicated that they did not know how long they would remain in Lincolnshire, the above figures do suggest that if possible migrants do want to settle, purchase a home and with the aspiration for larger property, presumably also wish to raise families here.

As with the survey work carried out in 2005 there remains a clear aspiration to purchase a home. There is also a clear mismatch between the 22% who would like to access social housing and the 5% who currently do so. (7)

The survey specifically asked respondents if they had applied for council or housing association accommodation.



Those that answered 'no' (83%) to applying for council or housing association properties gave the following reasons why:

Didn't know had to register	35%
Decided not to register	22%
Don't know how to register	22%
Language difficulties	18%
Office hours not convenient	1%
Not accepted on the list	1%

Of the 260 (83%) responses that show they haven't applied for council or housing association properties 63% were between the ages of 25-40 years, 24% were under 25 and 12% were between 41 and 65.

Of those that decided not to register they have lived in Lincolnshire for:

Over 2 years	57%
In the last 1-2 years	19%
In the last 6 months	11%
In the last 12 months	9%
In the last month	1%
In the last 7 days	1%
Unknown	1%

Of those that did apply for council accommodation, 25% applied for accommodation for them selves and 27% applied for others including themselves. 34% currently live in rented accommodation.

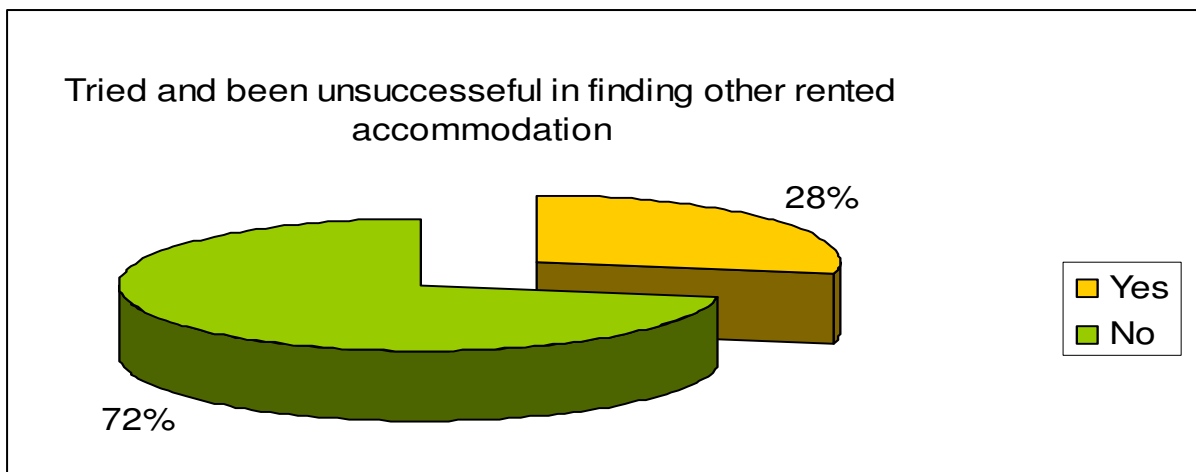
The figures show that there appears to be a significant number of people who do not know how to apply or that they had to register, despite the fact that most respondents had been living in the UK for over two years. This strongly suggests that there is a need for better and more accessible information for new migrants. For the survey as a whole 51% said they did not have a clear understanding of housing rights.

This problem is potentially further compounded when we look at the level of spoken English for this group. Only 33% said there level of spoken English was good or excellent

Level of spoken English amongst those who had not applied for council housing.

None	4%
Poor	24%
Fair	31%
Good	30%
Excellent	3%

Respondents were asked if they had tried and been unsuccessful in finding alternative accommodation.

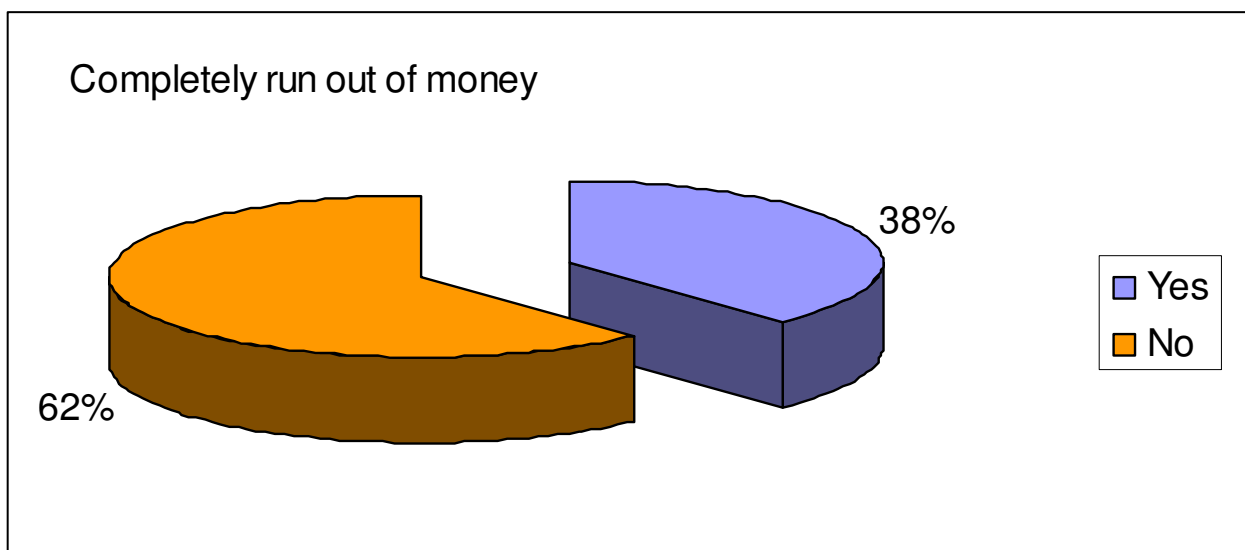


The 72% who said they had been unsuccessful in finding other rented accommodation gave the following reasons why:

Too expensive	46%
Required deposit	20%
Required references	12%
Required identification	0.8%
Nothing suitable	21%

5.4 Destitution

The final aim of the research was to look at destitution levels amongst new communities, what position they were in and what help could have been useful to them when moving to Lincolnshire. 38% of respondents had completely run out of money at some point, although only 14% said that they had had no where to stay.



Of the 38% (118) of new communities that have run out of money the age ranges are:

Under 25	19%
25-40	62%
41-65	17%
Over 65	0%
Unknown	2%

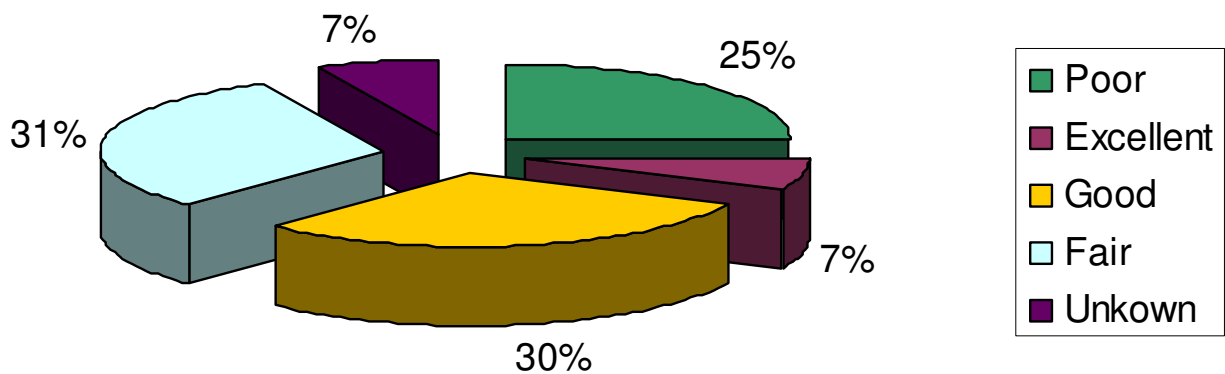
Those that have run out of money have been living in Lincolnshire for:

Over 2 years	61%
1-2 years	18%
12 months	7%
6 months	10%
Last month	0%
Last 7 days	2%

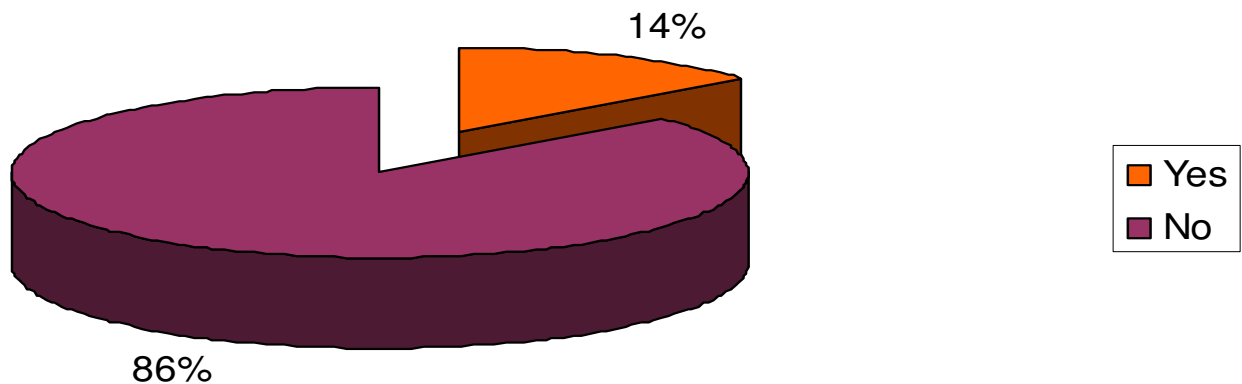
Those that have run of money came to Lincolnshire:

Had a job to come to	28%
Came looking for work	48%
Came to join family	13%
Other reason	8%
Unknown	3%

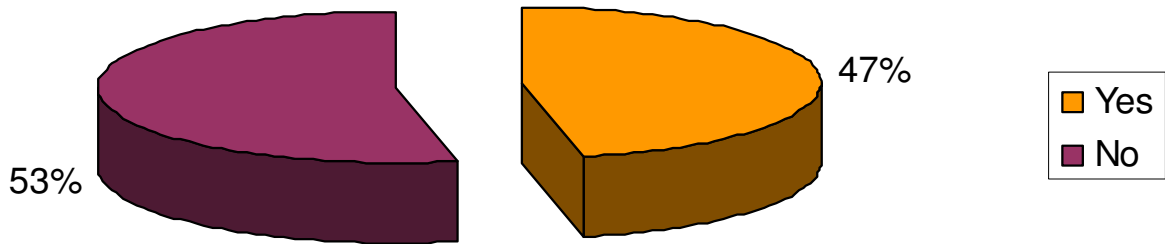
Those that have run out of money - level of spoken English



Had no where to stay or sleep since being in Lincolnshire



Those that have run out of money, do they have an understanding of housing and legal rights



Those 14% (43) of new communities that had nowhere to stay or sleep for a period since arriving in Lincolnshire made alternative provisions or:

Slept on the floor of a friends house	63%
Slept rough on the street	18%
Other	12%
Unknown	7%

The periods of time spent with no where to sleep or stay:

1-2 nights	30%
3-7 nights	16%
1-2 weeks	28%
3-4 weeks	7%
Over 1 month	9%
Unknown	9%

These figures show that whilst figures for 'no where to stay or sleep' are relatively low, they reveal that those who have come here seeking work are most vulnerable to destitution. Once again we also see a significant reliance upon informal arrangements in an emergency.

The final part of the survey asked respondents what they felt would be most helpful in an emergency. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of responses indicated that financial aid and emergency accommodation were seen as the most important. This will be difficult for providers to meet given current restrictions, but importantly support and advice were also seen as important and could help prevent homelessness.

What would be the most helpful in an emergency	Total replies	Total replies %
Money Advice and grants	85	23%
Other support and advice	43	11%
Emergency accommodation	67	18%
Drop in centre	20	5%
Befriending	42	11%
Employment advice	71	19%
Medical services	45	12%
Other	3	1%
Total replies to question	376	Multi choice answers

6.0 Conclusions

This research does not make a claim to be statistically valid or representative, but is rather intended to give an up to date qualitative based insight into the housing conditions and aspirations of new communities in Boston and South Holland

What emerges is a group of mainly younger people in the 25-40 age range. Many of them have been here for between one and two years, but whom as yet or at least in the current economic climate, are uncertain of the length of time they will remain in area.

Most occupy some form of private rented housing, with very low rates of access to social housing. Despite this, almost a quarter of recipients stated that they would like to access social housing. When analysed by reason, of those who had not applied for social housing over 50% seemed unaware of the appropriate process and 18% stated language difficulties as a barrier to application.

In contrast to the media image of migrants 'flooding' social housing, at least amongst this group, who had been more settled in the area, there was a strong desire to access home ownership. At the same time the percentage who owned their own home had increased from 5% in 2005, to 13% who either owned or were buying their own home in this survey.

Approximately half of the recipients were unhappy with their current accommodation and whilst 36% stated they were unhappy about rent levels, housing conditions and sharing accommodation with those outside of the family remained an issue.

Those who had tried and been unsuccessful in finding alternative accommodation cited cost as the most significant factor, but the requirement for a deposit and references were also significant issues. At the time of finalising this report a recent investigation by a BBC journalist alleges that letting agents in the Boston area were overtly discriminating against Eastern Europeans seeking rented housing in the town. (8) This report echoes the same discrimination experienced by black communities in the 1960's and 1970's and is extremely disturbing.

Apparent levels of destitution were low, but the current economic climate will make migrants more vulnerable to this, particularly where they are not registered on the workers registration scheme, or where they have not been in employments for 12 months and are unable to claim benefits or be accepted as homeless by the local authority.

7.0 Recommendations

The findings of this research re-affirm the key drivers for the Opening Doors project and the need for both social housing providers and local authorities to look at what they can do both strategically and operationally to support migrants to find appropriate housing solutions. We acknowledge that this will be challenging and difficult for providers who are already stretched in terms of resources, but we hope that the following recommendations, if only in a small way will continue to keep the issues of new migrant communities 'live' and that at an operational level practical tasks can be undertaken to ensure equality of opportunity and improved housing outcomes for new communities.

We also wish to make sure that as an individual organisation we continue to be proactive in tackling the emergent issues. Our recommendations include details of action we plan to take to promote this work within the organisation and within the locality.

We would like to make the following recommendations:

8.0 Support for new communities at a strategic level.

Whilst clearly acknowledging the limited nature of this study, the evidence it provides indicates that there is likely to be need for local authorities to take specific account of the needs of new communities in their housing strategies. In this respect we would echo the recommendation of the National Housing Federation report which advocated that all local authorities should develop specific BME housing strategies and that sub-regional housing strategies and the regular updating of housing market assessments should incorporate a BME housing dimension" (9) The research indicates that there is likely to be need for local strategies to reflect and support the needs of new communities.

In light of the above we recent recommendations of the Lincolnshire sub-regional housing strategy which makes two relevant recommendations; those being to devise and implement a specific black and minority ethnic housing plan, and to undertake a detailed evaluation of migration both from within the UK and into the UK to evidence and identify any strategic implications for the region. (10)

In relation to access to housing, equality impact assessments are needed to identify any blocks and barriers for new communities in obtaining housing from RSL's and local authorities. In particular, given the move to choice based lettings systems and common registers, it will be important to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these systems to see how they either assist or hinder access to social housing.

The current economic downturn may also adversely affect new communities and lead to further increases in destitution. Consideration should be given to the

provision of specialist advice and support that may be required to respond to this issue. It is recognised, however, that there may also need to be a change at a national level to ensure that basic minimum support can be granted to these migrants. The “Home from Home” report by the Building and Social Housing Federation in October 2008, states that “The reinstatement of a basic safety net for all marginalised groups in the UK should be seriously considered as a practical, ethical and financial response”. (11)

8.1 Support for new communities at an operational level

- **Information and advice**

For many new migrants getting information that is accurate and up to date will allow them to better understand their housing rights and where appropriate register for, and obtain social housing. To achieve this, housing providers need to ensure that their staff are well trained and qualified to give consistent and accurate advice. We would recommend that providers facilitate training on a rolling programme to ensure that up to date information is given.

The research also indicated that language barriers can be a factor in obtaining social housing. As a result of this research we are producing a leaflet which summarises housing options for new migrant communities. This leaflet will be translated into key languages including Polish and Russian.

- **Promote the full range of housing options**

Despite popular myths this research also challenges the assumptions that many new migrants are simply seeking access to traditional rented social housing. In fact many aspire to home ownership and it is important that local authorities and their housing association partners are appropriately advertising the full range of housing options to new migrants, such as low cost home ownership and more recent initiatives such as Rent to Homebuy.

- **Promote the business case**

The Opening Doors project focused upon housing associations making the business case for mainstreaming access to housing for refugees and new migrants. Our research indicates that new migrants represent a new market for a range of social housing products and should not be overlooked from either a social or financial perspective, in relation to the work of housing providers.

- **Monitoring and target setting**

We would also recommend that housing providers monitor both the proportion of applicants and those re-housed by their nationality, in line

with the current CORE lettings logs and use this to set targets at a local level for improving access.

- **Private sector rent deposit schemes**

This research indicated that for many new migrants, accessing good quality private rented accommodation was a key issue. Any introduction or extension to rent deposit schemes could make a useful contribution. At the same time the continuation of accredited landlord schemes which have been promoted by local authorities could help to improve access to good quality rented housing, and help to prevent issues of overcrowding and poor housing conditions, that are time consuming and costly for local authority departments to resolve when problems occur.

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