

Public services

Summary

January 2007

# Crossing borders

Responding to the local challenges of migrant workers

# Summary

## Migration for work is increasing rapidly, bringing economic benefits...

- Foreign nationals made up 3.5 per cent of the workforce in 1996, but 6 per cent in 2006.
- Most migrant workers are young and few bring dependants, so their need for public services is low.
- The accession of ten new states to the European Union in 2004 greatly increased both the scale and pace of change.
- In 2005/06, 662,000 new national insurance numbers were issued to foreign nationals, almost twice as many as in 2002/03.
- Migration for work has been welcomed by the government, the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress, as well as by local employers.

## ...and affecting different parts of the country very differently.

- Recent changes mean that areas with a history of immigration have seen an increase in the number of foreign workers.
- Migration for work has also made ethnic diversity a significant issue in other areas for the first time.
- The impact varies greatly across the country, depending on patterns of employment, housing and transport.
- The capacity of local public bodies to respond is not always linked to the scale or pace of local change; previous experience of diversity and community development is also important.

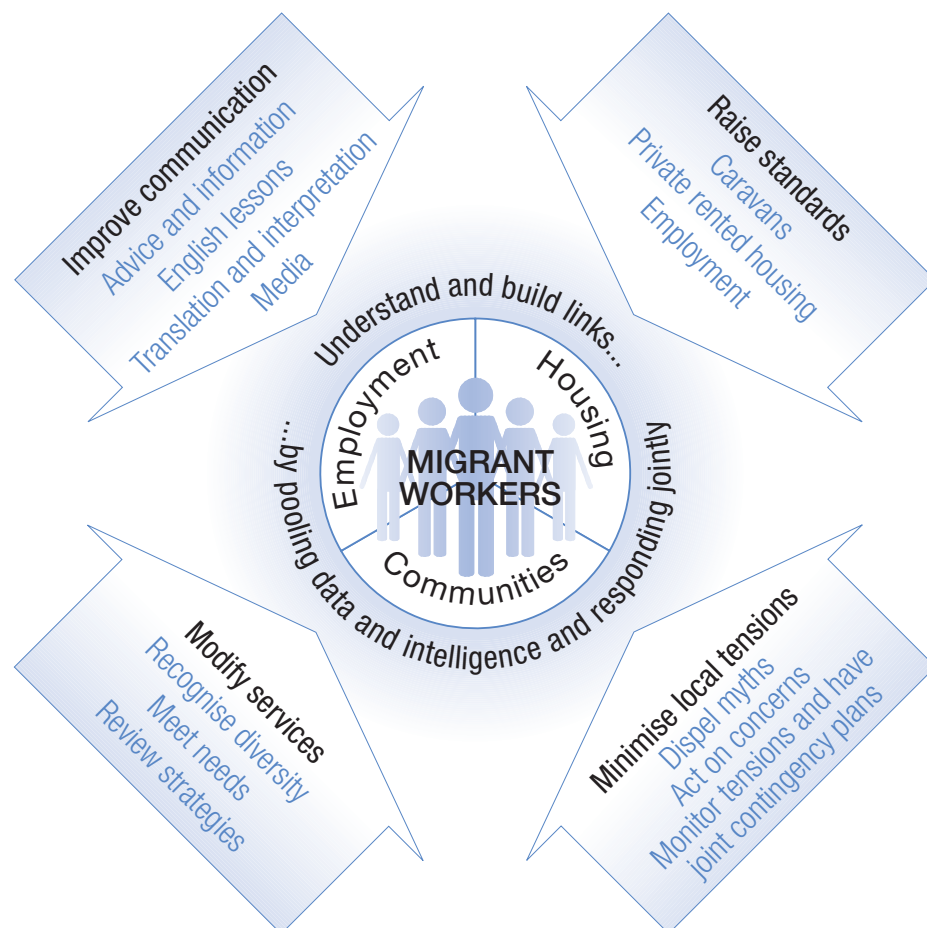
## Local authorities need to take a leading role in coordinating local responses...

- A wide range of issues can emerge, linked to employment, housing, communications, entitlements, education, law enforcement and local nuisance.
- Many public bodies are involved in responding, and they need to work jointly.
- They also need to work alongside those who often have the best links to migrant workers: voluntary and faith organisations, and employers and landlords.

...and developing locally tailored responses to locally specific issues (Figure 1).

- Understanding how local populations are changing by analysing national and local sources of data and intelligence.
- Balancing enforcement of regulations with encouragement for employers and landlords to improve standards.
- Addressing language, advice and information issues.
- Minimising local tensions by dispelling myths, responding swiftly to emerging problems and maintaining contingency plans.
- Modifying services to meet the diverse needs of a changing population.

**Figure 1**  
A framework for local improvements

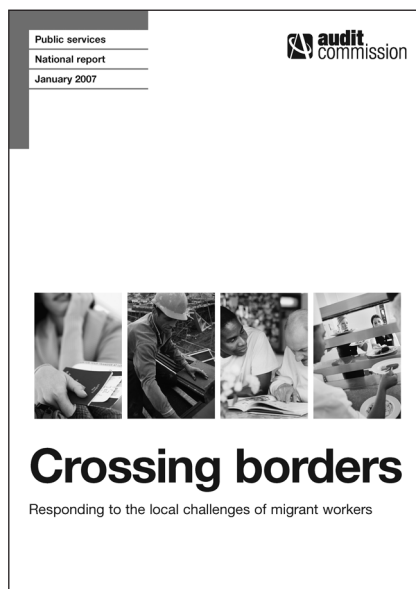


Source: Audit Commission

### The government and regional bodies could help local areas more effectively...

- Coordinating activity across government departments to support local areas in respect of data and information, and to prepare for future increases in migration.
- Analysing trends and demand for skills and training regionally, and coordinating regional information, advice and guidance.
- Developing a regional approach to address the issues raised by migrant workers in housing, planning and economic development strategies, and teaching English to adults.

...and the Audit Commission will be working with Communities and Local Government and the Improvement and Development Agency in 2007 to help local authorities share good practice.



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