

Metropolitan Borough Council of Sefton
Merseyside, United Kingdom

Case Study on Housing

Jan Egerton

Christiane Wirth Forsberg

1. Background information on the country

1.1 History of migration and composition of migrant populations

The history of immigration in the United Kingdom dates back beyond the 18th century. In the immediate post-war years, displaced people and refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe settled in the country, followed by significant primary immigration from the UK's former colonies, meeting a demand for labour in the post war economic boom, followed by migration for family reunion. The UK's colonial past and its persisting links with nations now in the Commonwealth have remained a determining influence on patterns of migration to and settlement in the country, the majority of people with a migration background in the UK coming from countries with a historical and economic link to the UK. Nevertheless, from the early 1990s in particular, refugees, labour migrants and international students from across the world have shifted the pattern of entrants to the UK and of those who have made it their home.

In 2001, at the time of the last full census, the migrant population (foreign born) accounted for 4.9 million or 8.3% of the population. The increase in foreign-born in the decade 1991–2001 was greater than in any post-war period: almost 1.1 million people migrated to the UK in that time. Among the foreign born, those from Europe ranked first, while the Republic of Ireland was the largest single country of birth. (National Statistics Online 2006).

Not captured in the census are the East and Central European migrants who came to work in the UK following enlargement of the European Union on 1st May 2004. Over 600,000 have registered to work in the UK, an underestimate of the total arrivals as those who are self employed are not required to register; however the figure also does not identify those who have subsequently left the UK. Many are working in low wage sectors of the labour market where there were significant vacancies such as construction, agriculture and hospitality. As a result, the pattern of residence is very different from earlier migrant settlement in Britain's industrial heartlands: many towns and rural areas, as in Sefton, are experiencing significant numbers of East and Central European migrant workers living in the area for the first time (Home Office WRS data 2006; Anderson et al 2006).

In the post war period, legislation from the 1960s imposed increasing restrictions on immigration for work and family reunion. Since the early 1990s, a succession of Acts of Parliament have restricted access and welfare support for asylum seekers, and provided for the dispersal of those requiring accommodation and support to designated areas across the UK. Sefton was not among the designated areas. Skill and labour shortages in sections of the labour market led the Government, from the late 1990s, to allow employers greater access to labour migrants and to a shift, from 2000, to a 'managed migration' policy intended to maximise the economic benefit to the UK from labour migration. Opening up the UK's labour market to the countries, which joined the EU in 2004, was part of that strategy, to reduce the UK's need for migrant workers from beyond the EU (Spencer 2007).

1.2 General national integration policy

With the exception of refugees, the UK has no national integration policy for new migrants. This may change, following publication of the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion ('Our Shared Future', June 2007) which recommends that an agency be set up to manage integration of new migrants, and an earlier report focusing on the impact of migration on local authorities (Audit Commission 2007a).

Discrimination against migrants from Commonwealth countries and their descendants had led to legislation, from the 1960s, addressing discrimination on grounds of race in employment and in provision of goods, facilities and services (such as housing and education). It was strengthened by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to put a statutory duty on public authorities to promote race equality and good race relations. In 2003, following the EU Employment Directive, the UK also legislated to make discrimination on grounds of religion or belief unlawful in employment and training, extended in 2006 to cover discrimination in goods, facilities and services, but without a duty on public bodies to promote equality. The focus of initiatives to address discrimination has been on race and (recently) faith minorities, rather than on new arrivals to the UK. The Commission for Racial Equality, established in 1976 to promote and enforce the Race Relations Act, is to be replaced in 2007 with a Commission on Equality and Human Rights addressing broader equality, human rights and community relations issues but without a specific focus on migrants.

2 Background information on the city and its integration policy

2.1 General structural data of the city

Sefton is located just north of Liverpool, a long strip of land running parallel to West Lancashire up to the estuary of the River Ribble. Sefton is a place of contrasts, from the seaside resort of Southport in the north to the inner urban area of Bootle with the Liverpool docks in the south and high quality agricultural land in between. Possessing a stunning coastline and rural areas, Sefton also contains some of the most deprived communities in the Northwest.¹ Sefton is one of five metropolitan districts that make up Merseyside². In the North West of England, Merseyside is the only area qualifying for funding under objective one of the European Union Structural Fund.³

¹ Metropolitan Borough of Sefton: Corporate Housing Strategy 2005/2006, <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/docs/housing%20strategyTo2005-FinalVersion.doc>.

² Until 1986 Merseyside was one of six metropolitan counties in England. Merseyside County Council included five metropolitan boroughs, one of which is Sefton. After the abolition of the Merseyside City Council, its power was devolved to each of its five metropolitan boroughs. Since then Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council exists. During the 1990s local government was reorganised and a distinction was made between unitary and non-unitary councils. Where the new boundaries described a historic county, city or borough, the name of the authority was kept. Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council is a unitary authority within the North West Region of England.

³ Although the 2000-2006 Objective One Programme might be seen to end in 2006, in reality, it will not be formally closed until early 2009. <http://www.euandmerseyside.org/>

Southport, Sefton's main urban centre in the north, is an old Victorian seaside resort, which has been a thriving destination for British tourists since the second half of the 19th century. Due to advancements in transportation, mainly cheaper airfares and the development of international package holidays, Southport in the same way as other popular British seaside destinations has seen a decline in tourism. This trend has been slightly halted and in recent years, Southport has started an initiative to be recognised as a "classic resort" which takes into account the city's heritage and its longstanding tradition as a tourist destination. The label is envisioned to provide a quality standard, which will attract holidaymakers. Bootle the main city of the southern part in Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council developed from a resort for the wealthier population of Liverpool into a part of the urban agglomeration of Liverpool. The Liverpool docks are also located within Sefton's boundaries.

In 2004, sixteen years of population decline were interrupted and an increase in population was reported for Sefton (Audit Commission, 2007b). It is not clear what role migration from EU accession states plays in this change. In 2004, the population of Sefton was 281,800 (Nomis 2004). In 2003, Sefton's population showed a number of key characteristics when compared with England and Wales (Baseline report for the Sefton Community Strategy 2003): a high proportion of retired people; more long-term unemployment; a high proportion of people providing unpaid care to dependents; more widowed people; more people travelling to work by public transport; more households without access to their own bath/shower and toilet. That Sefton's population is ageing and that many young people are leaving the area can also be seen from the fact that just 20% of the population are under the age of 20. The number of residents in the 16-29 year age bracket is just 14.6% compared with 17.5% in the rest of the UK.

Sefton has traditionally had a North-South split in terms of economic activity and deprivation – the north being more affluent and with higher rates of economic activity, the south having greater levels of deprivation and lower economic activity. This is illustrated by the fact that there are seven wards in the South of the Borough that are within the 10% most deprived in the country, with just 2 wards (Dukes and Cambridge) in Southport in this category (See Map 1). The Sefton economy has traditionally been based on agriculture, tourism and the Liverpool docks in the south of the Borough. The future economic growth of the area is planned to be within six key growth sectors: tourism; maritime; ICT; construction; social and healthcare; and creative industries. The majority of the Borough's workforce is employed within the service sector, with a major part based around the tourism industry of Southport (see Table 1).

In parallel with the economic split, there are two significant centres of employment in Sefton, which because of their location and associated travel-to-work areas have led to the development of two distinct labour markets: In north Sefton, and here mainly in Southport, 73% of working age residents work in the area making it relatively self-contained. The expanding economy in Southport also relies on labour force provided by economic migrants from eastern Europe. In south Sefton, only 38% of residents work in the area. Although Bootle in the south is only 16 miles away from Southport, only a negligible number of

residents from the south travel to the north to work, manifesting the contrast of an expanding economy in the north and pockets of deprivation in the south.

The overall labour market participation rate in Sefton was 75.8% between March 2004 and February 2005. This was just over the UK average of 75% for the same period and well above the Merseyside average of 68.6% for the same period. The unemployment rate of 6% for Sefton was higher than the UK average (4.8% for the same period) and the Merseyside average of 5.8%. However, these average figures can be misleading as unemployment in some of the wards within Sefton can be as much as 12% and 18% reflecting the high levels of worklessness. In these areas, unemployment and deprivation are geographically concentrated. To close the gap between its nine most deprived wards and the rest of the

Table 1: Employee jobs (2005)

	Sefton (employee jobs)	Sefton (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total employee jobs	101,600	-	-	-
Full-time	64,300	63.3	68.2	67.9
Part-time	37,300	36.7	31.8	32.1
Employee jobs by industry				
Manufacturing	6,200	6.1	12.7	11.1
Construction	4,600	4.6	4.9	4.6
Services	90,300	88.9	81.5	82.9
Services include:				
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	24,800	24.4	25.0	24.1
Transport & communications	3,600	3.5	5.8	6.0
Finance, IT, other business activities	13,500	13.3	17.9	20.7
Public admin, education & health	42,100	41.5	28.2	26.9
Other services	6,300	6.2	4.7	5.2
Tourism-related [†]	9,100	9.0	8.4	8.1

Source: ONS annual business inquiry employee analysis

- Data unavailable

† Tourism consists of industries that are also part of the services industry

Notes: % is a proportion of total employee jobs

Employee jobs excludes self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces

borough, Sefton is one of 86 districts in the UK selected for special measures to encourage neighbourhood renewal. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was initiated in 2001. It aims to improve living conditions for the population in the most deprived wards across the UK that are struggling with a number of indicators of decline including: Poor job prospects, High crime levels, Educational under-achievement, Poor health, Problems with housing and the local environment⁴. The Liverpool City Regional Development Plan anticipates a scenario of an additional 52,500 jobs across the city region by 2010, of which about 4,000 will be located within Sefton. A recent study by Meridien Pure for Sefton Council concluded that there would be in the order of 900 new jobs in the next three years just from housing maintenance and Housing Market Renewal.

Ironically at the same time as there is a concern about an increasing number of unemployed in the south, there is a keen demand for workers in some sectors and mainly in the north of the borough. There are recognised skills shortages in key sectors, particularly low skilled jobs in agriculture, tourism and the care industry. To address the labour shortage in the north, there have been initiatives to attract workers from the south of the borough to work in Southport. Most of these initiatives have to date been unsuccessful. In 2004, following EU accession, migrant workers arrived into Sefton, to take up employment mainly in and around Southport. While migrant workers are welcomed by the local economy especially in Southport, they have arrived into an area that is characterised simultaneously by labour shortage and economic growth on one hand and unemployment and deprivation on the other hand.

2.2 History of municipal migration and composition of migrant populations

Historically, there have been two groups of migrants in Southport since the 1940s, the first group was made up of Spanish and Portuguese migrants working mainly in the agriculture sector; which was in later years joined by a substantial number of Polish people working across a number of sectors. Sefton is twinned with Gdansk in Poland.

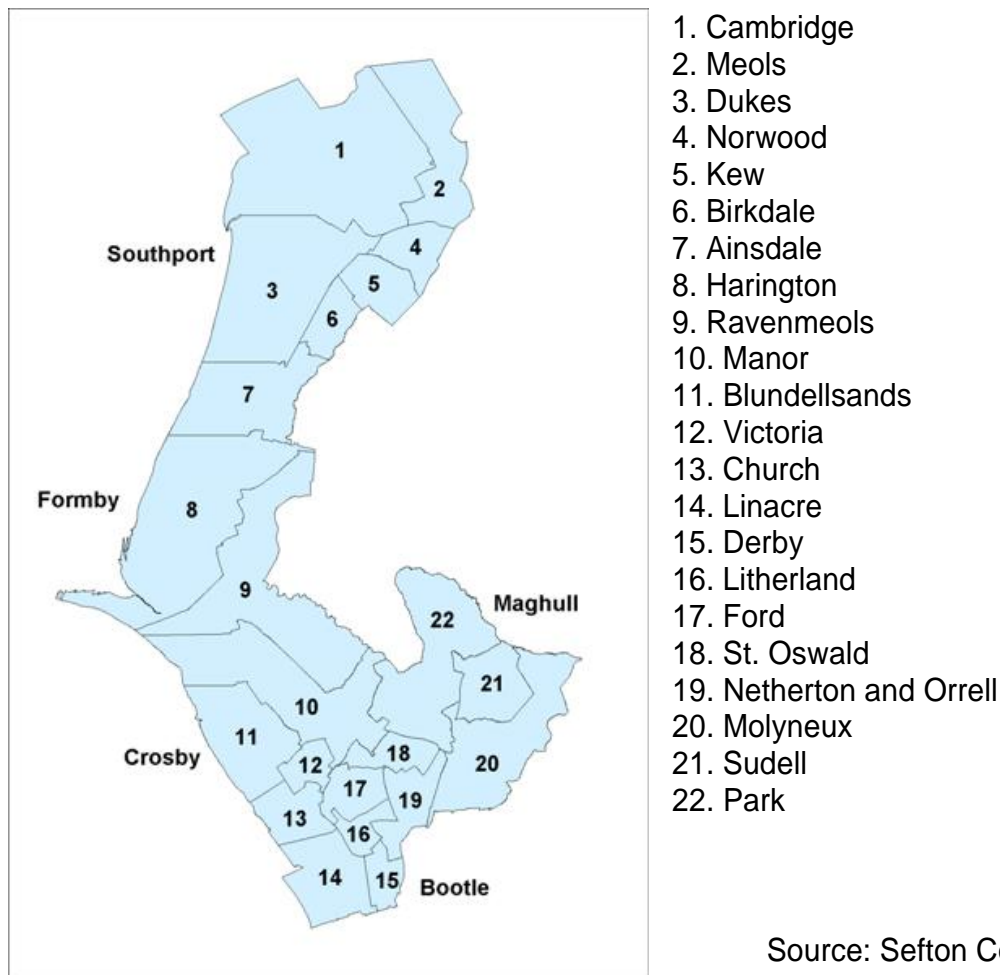
The main source of statistical information on the population in the area is the national census. The latest census took place in 2001.⁵ The 2001 census identified 4,418 members of the

⁴ "What is Neighbourhood Renewal?" Fact sheet 1, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, April 2003.

⁵ Efforts to gain a better understanding of the numbers and characteristics of the British minority ethnic migrants in Sefton before the 2001 census included a study commissioned by the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) in 2002. A report, "*Less than 1 % - so what's the problem?*" was published in 2003. Based on statistics from before the 2001 census, it showed that although less than 1% of the overall population, people of more than 35 nationalities lived in the borough. The main ethnic groups were Chinese (708), Indian (367), Black Caribbean (243), Black other (207), Black African (143), Bangladeshi (125) and Pakistani (74). The report estimates that there were around 350 asylum seeker and refugee households in Sefton. In January 2002, there were 60 children aged 4-13 from asylum seeking families mainly resident in the south of the borough. Kosovans accounted for 25% of asylum seeking families in Sefton. However, Sefton was never recognised as a dispersal area under the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

British minority and ethnic (BME) community in Sefton. This corresponds to 1.6% of the total population of roughly 280,000. It is unclear to which extent this group is made up of members of ethnic minorities and to which extent of migrants. By the time of the 2001 census, the Chinese population in Sefton included 901 individuals and was identified as the strongest subgroup of the BME community. At ward level, the 2001 census information showed that six wards had a proportion of BME above the borough average. These were Suddell (1.6%), Linacre (2.0%), Norwood (2.2%), Dukes (2.6%), Blundellsands (2.7%), Kew (2.9%). As Map 1 shows, three of these are located in the south of Sefton; the remaining three are located in the north adjacent to the border with neighbouring West Lancashire.

Map 1: Sefton by electoral wards



Only in the past few years, however, has the number of migrants grown more significantly in Sefton, following the opening up of the UK labour market to people from the new EU member states after EU enlargement on 1st May 2004. This has meant that, unlike parts of the UK with a longer experience of migration, it is only in recent years that local residents in Sefton have become significantly aware of the presence of migrants: “you can hear them talking different languages in ASDA [*British supermarket chain*] on a Friday evening” (CLES, 2006). Although a relatively small number of migrants arrived, they did so in a relatively short period of time. For the until then rather homogenous population in Sefton, this is a considerable change.

In response to the population changes, CLES Consulting was appointed by Sefton Borough Partnership in January 2006 to: ‘Research the causes and consequences of migrant labour in the Sefton economy and recommend an Employment, Skills and Support Strategy.’ Sefton Borough Partnership constructed the brief for this work with a focus on Sefton Borough as a whole but with a specific focus on Southport; on migrant workers from the EU accession countries; on employer intermediaries with a significant migrant worker clientele; and on employers in key sectors with disproportionate migrant labour input: horticulture, care industry, tourism and hospitality.

Determining the current number of migrant workers in Sefton is however still difficult as there is not a unified means to collate this information. Local authorities have to rely on their own ways of collecting the information they need. Among the available sources are national and regional reports related to migrant worker populations in the UK and the North West; data for the government’s Workers Registration Scheme (WRS)⁶ for nationals from EU accession states (available for postcode areas within Sefton and West Lancashire); migrant pupil numbers at local Sefton schools; employer surveys; Jobcentre Plus and other work related organisations within Sefton and the local office of a government service for young people.

Most likely, these sources provide only an incomplete picture of the actual numbers of migrant workers in Sefton. None the less, they are an important tool in understanding recent population changes. The WRS is the most useful to determine numbers of migrant workers at a regional level.

Under the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS)⁷, 1,345 accession countries migrants had registered for work in Sefton between 1 May 2004 and December 2005. There are a further 1,094 registered in the area immediately west of Southport who are thought to be working in West Lancashire but living in Southport. The total number of economically active people in Sefton for this period stands at 126,100, 58.4% of the total population, meaning the number of registered accession country migrants in Sefton is around 1% of the total working population of

⁶ The Home Office set up the Worker Registration Scheme in 2004 prior to EU enlargement. Of the 10 countries joining the EU only nationals of Malta and Cyprus were granted free movement and employment rights. For the remaining eight countries (A8), the WRS was created. Nationals from the A8 countries are required to register when entering the UK for work. There are a few exceptions from the obligation to register, including a length of stay of less than one month or having been employed legally prior to May 2004. Further WRS information and trends are monitored and published quarterly. EU Accession Monitoring Reports are available at http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/reports/accession_monitoring_report

the whole borough but significantly higher in Southport. If the number of accession country migrants in adjacent area, this increases to 2% of the working population and to about 0.86% of the total population in Sefton as a whole but again the figure is significantly higher for Southport. It is important to note however that there are migrant workers from the accession countries known to be either working or searching for employment in and around Southport, who do not have a National Insurance number and are not registered with the WRS.

Migrant workers are currently working in sectors ranging from horticulture and catering, sheet metal working to high skilled sectors such as medicine. However, at present, it would appear that the majority of migrant workers are filling low skilled vacancies although the migrants themselves are not necessarily low skilled. The skills of migrant workers are not always easily transferred to the UK because of differences in quality standards and education systems and because of their limited knowledge of the English language.

2.2 Municipal integration policy

When migrant workers arrived in Sefton after EU accession in May 2004, they were facing a number of challenges including lack of decent housing, language difficulties and lack of information about migrant workers' rights. Even before migrant workers arrived, a general shortage of available and decent housing especially in the north of the borough had been identified. With migrant workers accessing some of the same rent properties in Southport, in a few incidents, local residents have complaint that it is increasingly difficult to find affordable housing because of competing for places with migrants. As this happens mainly in the north of Sefton, and around Southport, Southport Partnership, is concerned not only about tensions in community relations between migrant workers and local residents but also that a lack of affordable housing might result in migrant workers moving on to other areas depriving Sefton of its much needed workforce.

In recognition of the changing numbers of migrants in Sefton, Merseyside Legal Services Commission acknowledged the development needs of migrant workers in Sefton in their budget in 2004. This enabled Sefton Council to organise an information event for migrant workers. Although only six migrant workers participated, 35 organisations were represented whose services were affected by migrant workers. The organisers did not want to lose the momentum created by the meeting and put together information for a 'Welcome Pack' for migrant workers. This initiative was consequently developed into the International Workers Steering Group (IWSG). The IWSG is a multi-agency initiative to address issues that cut across traditionally separate areas of local governance. The IWSG reports to the Equalities Partnership

⁷ One of the national tools for data collection about migrant workers is the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS).



and also to Sefton Borough Council through its formal cabinet structure. The structure of the IWSG is described in more detail in Section 6.1.

With the help of the IWSG, Sefton Council is planning to take action on issues concerning migrant workers and to incorporate issues migrants are facing into council policy and practice. The aim is to avoid any ghettoisation and perception that migrants in the north of the borough are different from the rest of the population. And with a considerable proportion of Sefton's population facing issues similar to those faced by migrant workers, the council does not want to single out migrants. Rather a mainstream approach is been taken to create equal opportunities for all. In their policy initiatives, the council is attempting to mainstream migration related aspects into services so that there is no mentioning of a particular "migrant" worker.

In creating the IWSG, Sefton MBC wants to ensure that whilst it is understood that there might be a tendency for people to seek close links with other people from their own country of origin, there must be in place sufficiently robust community services for all residents so that a migrant worker's engagement with the broader community is encouraged and made as easy as possible. **Sefton's strategy is to encourage and facilitate integration and to ensure that measures lead to greater social and economic stability.** Sefton Council has seconded an officer to the Southport Partnership 3 days a week to lead on issues relating to migrant workers. This officer works in partnership with all key stakeholders and is responsible for the coordination of the IWSG and its sub-groups. The housing subgroup of the IWSG is concerned with housing in general while incorporating migrant workers in their planning. Even if the main focus of the IWSG is on Southport, the work of the group covers the whole of Sefton and is also concerned with encouraging mobility from south to north Sefton. This is in line with Sefton's policy to mainstream migrant issues into general policy and service provision.

In order to exchange information with other areas in the North West of England, Sefton is a **member of Migrant Workers North West**. This is a recently established forum aiming to take a leadership role 'to improve the support available to migrant workers and to champion their treatment in the workplace and the community'. **The organisation works mainly through a website that provides information on different areas including on housing and homelessness of EU accession country nationals, how to apply for a TV licence, how to rent or buy a home and how rubbish collection functions.** This information and good practice examples are collected for the whole North West Region and provide only limited and indirect information for migrant workers in Sefton.

1 Housing situation of the city

The north of Sefton Borough features predominantly private sector housing in owner occupation or private renting. The condition of some private sector housing gives cause for concern as well as the concentration of houses in multiple occupation (HMO). House and



land prices are high (see Table 2). Sefton is a 'land poor' council and land for future housing development in and around Southport is scarce. These two factors lead to a shortage of affordable housing and limits the council's ability to alleviate the situation.

The chronic lack of affordable housing in the north of the Borough means that a first time buyer needs to borrow around eight times the figure for average earnings to purchase a house in Southport. This has an adverse effect on the local economy by restricting low cost - housing opportunities for job seekers in the tourism and leisure sector. There is also an increasing proportion of predominantly elderly households who are 'asset rich, cash poor' living in valuable properties but with insufficient disposable income to cover basic requirements such as heating and warmth. In many cases, home ownership is not an option for migrant workers as conditions and house prices are difficult to meet. This results in migrant workers being dependant on housing in the private rented market.

Table 2: Comparison of Average House Prices

Southport	Sefton	North West	England & Wales
£178,947	£156,462	£132,015	£ 184,918

Source: Land Registry, Residential Property Prices Report, April to June 2005 (cited in Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy for Southport, 2005)

Heavy industry, pre 1919 private dwellings but also modern housing association stock dominate the south of Sefton. Disrepair, low demand, non-compatible land uses and empty properties are the main issues in this area. Low property values and negative equity are of increasing concern and housing markets in the south of Sefton have more in common with Liverpool and Knowsley than the north Sefton area (Corporate Housing Strategy 2005/2006). In the south of Sefton in the areas outside those designated to participate in the Housing Market Renewal (HMR), about 4.5% of properties have been empty for more than six months (CURS 2006).

There is relatively little migration between south Sefton and the neighbouring Liverpool. Research carried out by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, CURS (2006) found that most internal migration happens from south Sefton towards Southport and from Sefton as a whole into neighbouring West Lancashire. Internal migration reflects the local understanding that the north is the more affluent area promising a better quality of life. At the same time this internal mobility among groups of the more affluent population is in contrast to the local divide at the low wage end of the labour market between the south and the north.

Throughout Sefton, a high proportion of private housing is in unsatisfactory repair (3.5% unfit) and nearly a third of all private rented housing within Sefton borough falls below the decent housing standard. Council research has found that up to 30,000 dwellings are at risk of suffering from 'fuel poverty', which contributes to an estimated excess winter mortality of about 214 per annum. This is distributed throughout the borough, but is particularly concentrated in parts of south Sefton and parts of Southport.



Significant interventions such as the Housing Market Renewal initiative are meant to tackle specific areas in acute need but only a few wards in south Sefton are part of the project. Those in between these areas and throughout the rest of the borough are still in need of assistance. National government has developed the Decent Homes Standard to work towards better standard accommodations. In its Green Paper 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All' (July 2000), the Government set two targets: 1. To reduce by 1/3 the number of social housing properties which fail the Standard by 2004 and 2. To have all social rented homes meeting the Standard by 2010. As it was not possible for Sefton to meet these standards, Sefton Council transferred all its housing units to a new housing association "One Vision Housing" on October 30, 2006. As a consequence, the Council does no longer own any housing, with the exception of a few properties marked for demolition. The role of Sefton Council in housing has changed accordingly from a landlord towards strategic forward planning, identifying and releasing land for development of new housing and regeneration. One Vision Housing is a registered social landlord (RSL)⁸ registered with the Housing Corporation.⁹ One Vision currently has over 11,000 properties across the borough. The area covered runs along the coast from Southport in the North of our area to Bootle in the South, and Crosby in the West to Maghull in the East. Within certain areas of the borough such as Southport but also in the more rural areas of Formby, Maghull, Lydiate, Old Roan and Melling, One Vision has a relatively small number of housing units. While the newly created RSL 'One Vision' still uses the council strategy in allocation of places, the stock transfer also meant that private investment can now be brought into the development of new housing.

RSLs base their lettings on the demographic profile of the population. Migrants are included as tenants in proportion to their size of the population. At present there is no accurate information on the proportion of more recent migrant workers in RSL housing. The newly arrived migrants from the EU accession states, however due to legal restrictions linked to their immigration status, cannot access social housing unless they have worked in the UK for a consecutive period of 12 months.

Already before the arrival of migrant workers from the EU accession countries, a need for affordable housing was identified within the north of Sefton. The 2005 Housing Needs Survey update (on the basis of population data and forecasts from before EU accession in 2004) which provides a detailed analysis of housing requirement issues

⁸ Housing associations are non-profit making organisations, which provide housing for sale or rental. The transfer of housing from government and local councils to housing associations started in the late 1980s. By 2006 about one million local authority homes have been transferred. The transfer is generally judged a success as it has resulted in improvements to people's homes and neighbourhoods. The stock transfer is not equal with privatisation as housing associations or registered social landlords (RSLs) are not for profit organisations regulated by a government agency. National Housing Association Press Release: "Housing transfers top one million homes – a national success story", Monday 30 October 2006, <http://www.housing.org.uk/newsroom/view.asp?newsid=629&title=Housing+transfers+top+one+million+homes+-+a+national+success+story>.

⁹ The Housing Corporation is a government agency that funds new affordable homes and regulates housing associations in England. Housing Associations, or registered social landlords (RSL), have to register with the Housing Corporation (www.housingcorp.gov.uk). The National Housing Federation (www.housing.org.uk) represents housing associations across England.



across the whole housing market in the Borough shows a requirement to provide an additional 1,262 affordable dwellings per annum if all housing needs are to be met (for the next five years). According to information provided by the Strategic Housing Forum, an output of housing units at this rate is very unlikely. The regional spatial strategy set a target of 350 dwellings per year for Sefton. Because the average annual completion rate exceeded 455 units for three consecutive years, the statutory local development plan introduced a housing restraint mechanism preventing new housing development with the only exception of conversion of existing stock and the regeneration initiative in the Housing Market Renewal in four wards in south Sefton.

A study on housing demand and supply in south Sefton (CURS 2006) finds that despite the housing restraint mechanism, “there has not been an automatic shift in activity from the north to the south, which suggests that policy interventions that complement the restraint policy are required”. In its evaluation of the HRM neighbourhoods in south Sefton the study concludes that more affordable housing is needed:

‘In particular, it would seem appropriate to consider developing a stronger spatial focus to the housing restraint mechanism. There is a clear need to develop affordable housing in the borough, but at the same time new housing to meet the needs of a growing population and household growth will have maximum regenerative benefit if provided in South Sefton as part of a strategic and integrated approach to market restructuring. It seems appropriate, therefore (either by way of explicit policy or by judging the potential effect on the supply of and demand for housing on a case-by-case basis) to bias affordable housing provision towards the north while maintaining a restraint mechanism that has the effect of directing new market provision (and a wider variety of intermediate market housing) to South Sefton.’

Although this recommendation is not targeted at migrant workers, it is in line with the needs of this population group while taking into account the regeneration of housing in south Sefton. The study also warns of the risk of overprovision of flats in the South in the longer term if the housing stock is not diversified (CURS 2006). It needs to be remembered however that new housing developments in the north of Sefton are limited because of a lack of available land.

In Sefton, RSLs are under considerable pressure to build more affordable housing. However, there are a number of constraints that make it difficult for RSLs to develop new housing projects. According to recent estimates, it is thought that around 500 units of affordable housing per year are necessary to alleviate the pressures on the housing market in the area. With a housing restraint mechanism in place and not enough land available in Southport for development, representatives of housing associations are discussing that an output of 100 units is already unlikely. In addition, if new developments are put forward they are most likely not going to be purely units of affordable housing. The main reason being the costs of new development including environmental assessments. RSLs work within a system of capped rents. This in turn prevents them from undertaking a development if the costs accede a certain limit. For this same reason, the refurbishment of existing properties is often not an

option, as refurbishing costs can outstrip the price these refurbished houses could make in the social rented market after completion.

An alternative option for the council to increase the development of affordable housing is the so called 'Section 106' of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act which is a mechanism for achieving affordable housing through the planning system. It stipulates that 30% of all new developments must be available for affordable housing. According to research into the effectiveness of the policy the mechanism only works on development sites of a certain size. Many small-scale developments do not reach the threshold. Thus land availability in residential areas is thought to be one of the main constraints to the effectiveness of the policy. In addition many of the completed Section 106 projects have been built on council land (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2002). Sefton Council is a very land-poor authority, which limits their option to initiate more affordable housing. Sefton applies Section 106 to all housing developments.

Most of council policy and strategic documents, including the 2005 Housing Needs Assessment (Fordham 2005) and Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy for Southport (SHUSU 2005) are based on statistics taken from the 2001 Census and do not reflect the recent changes in population. Because of the recent arrival of migrant workers and their specific needs for affordable accommodations in the rent sector particularly in Southport, it is difficult for the council to make planning decisions based on these existing documents.

3.1 Housing situation of residents with migration background

Migrant workers find housing mainly in the private rented sector. Until recently, the private rented sector in Britain has been declining as in past decades, British national housing policy has emphasised and encouraged home ownership. For a young and mobile population including migrant workers, rented accommodations is however the preferred type and often the only accessible type of tenure. In addition, the immigration status of many of the recent arrivals of migrant workers to Sefton, does not allow 'recourse to public funds', including accommodations in public rented housing and homelessness accommodations. This leaves migrant workers to find accommodations in the private rented sector, or to own their own homes. With high average house prices in Sefton (see Table 2), the latter option is very unlikely for migrant workers. Most migrant workers are renting in the private sector of the housing market. This part of the housing market is however difficult to regulate by local authorities to guarantee adequate standards and conditions.

Table 3: Number of households in each tenure group

Tenure	Total no. Households	% of households
Owner-occupied (No mortgage)	41,103	34.8%

Owner-occupied (With mortgage)	48,811	41.4%
Council	11,951	10.1%
RSL	6,572	5.6%
Private rented	9,347	7.9%
Other rented	216	0.2%
TOTAL	118,000	100.0%

Source: Sefton – Housing Needs Assessment 2005 update

Table 3 shows the number and proportion of houses which are owner occupied, social housing (local council, now all transferred to a housing association), let by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) or in the private rented sector. The figures, however, allow limited insight into the issues in Sefton, as they do not give any information about the concentration of the different types of tenure in different parts of the borough. Also these figures date from before the Council housing stock transfer.

There are a number of issues with regards to housing and migrant workers in Sefton that have been identified both by the Council and migrant workers. One is that of overcrowding and migrants sharing accommodations in order to reduce high rents. Migrant workers interviewed for a study commissioned by the council (CLES 2006) reported that rents were very expensive, as a result of which they often sub-let rooms and tended to live in overcrowded accommodations. It is however very difficult to receive information on the actual scope of overcrowding in order for council officials to address the issue of overcrowding. The fire service report less than decent standards and too many occupants in some properties. But there is no systematic information available through this channel as the fire service comes to a property only by invitation from the landlord. It can take up to three months for a landlord to give permission for the fire service to inspect a property. By then all signs of sub-standard and overcrowded housing might have disappeared.

Picture 1: Bath Street in Southport



Picture 2: B&B in Southport



Picture 3: Sign for B&B in Southport



In research carried out for the council (CLES 2006), migrant workers also raised the issue of poor quality housing and the fact that this could be 'tied' accommodations: that is, accommodations that is either supplied by a labour intermediary or an employer. Sometimes, the labour intermediary owned the accommodations, although more often labour intermediaries paid local landlords to secure local accommodations for migrant workers. This



accommodation was normally paid for up front and in cash to landlords, which reduced the amount of affordable accommodations available for other residents in the area. Although workers do not necessarily have to live in agency-supplied accommodations to gain employment, if they do, they are more likely to be offered work. There are concerns about this dependence – if for any reason a migrant worker loses their job or becomes unemployable due to ill health, they are likely to lose their accommodations at the same time. Furthermore, in tied accommodations workers have limited control over where and under which conditions they live. The research commissioned by the council (CLES 2006) identified a number of occasions on which workers had returned to their rooms to find that somebody else has been moved in without their prior knowledge. There are indications that workers are more likely to leave tied accommodations when they are settled in the area.

In Southport the demand for rented accommodations by migrant workers has partly been met through rooms in 'Bed and Breakfast' guesthouses in the city centre (See Pictures 1 –3). Evidence suggests that landlords are exploiting individuals who are 'trading' space for cheaper accommodations. Landlords are interested in renting to migrants as this maximises their profits. There is little evidence that these profits are invested into improving the housing standard. This process might also mean that local residents are cornered out of the market, as they are not willing to pay the amounts paid by migrant workers. The Housing Advice Centre, a non for profit advice network, reports cases where landlords have withdrawn places that had been offered to clients of the Centre, and that available rooms were rented out to migrant workers instead who had agreed to paying above market price rents.

The metaphor of the 'property ladder' summarises the situation. In Britain the term 'property ladder' is used to describe how, with upward social mobility, individuals start out in life paying rent but get onto the 'property ladder' by buying a small flat, which with increased value over time, is sold to finance a small home and finally traded in for the family home. There can be many steps on the 'property ladder'. In a caricature, the 'property ladder' for migrant workers in Sefton was described by local authority officials as: Sleeping on somebody's floor, then on somebody's couch and eventually renting one's own room. At the same time, others are moving along with you.

3.2 Segregation: Spatial concentration of residents with migration background

There is no evident pattern of segregation of ethnic minority residents in the borough. The 2001 Census suggested a concentration of the BME community in wards bordering with West Lancashire and in the south of Sefton. Observation and anecdotal evidence suggests that many recent migrant workers live in former 'Bed & Breakfast' guesthouses and small hotels in central Southport. This small-scale concentration of migrant workers in some central areas is not perceived as 'problematic' neither by council officials nor the local population but



the sub standard housing conditions are. On the contrary, representatives of Southport Partnership express hope that due to their central accommodations, migrant workers might find it easier to integrate into Southport.

3.3 Accessibility of the housing market system for people with migration background

In the UK, access to social housing and assistance in the case of homelessness for foreign nationals are restricted. Nationals from countries within the European Economic Area (EEA) are eligible if they are economically active and habitually resident in the UK. Nationals of the countries that joined the EU in 2004 (A8 countries except Cyprus and Malta) enjoy the same rights as nationals of the EEA with the exception that they are required to register as a worker and only become eligible for assistance if they have worked continually for 12 months in the UK. The worker status is linked to employment. Should a person not be employed for any period before these 12 months are completed, they would need to be self sufficient (Hills 2007).

Migrant workers cannot access social housing within the first 12 months of their stay but it might still happen that a migrant workers loses their work and income and might find themselves homeless. There is little information about homelessness of migrant workers from the EU accession countries in Sefton. Another issue identified by migrants interviewed for the CLES study was the need for migrants to have a guarantor and/or a reference in order to rent a property. In some cases, migrant workers have found that a letter from an English resident was sufficient but others had been asked by a letting agency for six months deposit in advance if no reference was available.

There are no facilities for organised housing information and availability of support and advice to migrant workers. Migrant workers have to rely on word of mouth and informal networks, as well as employers to find out about housing in Sefton. The Council has been working towards an updated handbook on information for migrant workers. This will be available during 2007.

These legal and structural barriers to accessing social housing, as well as the high housing prices in the area, leave migrant workers to find housing through employers and agencies and in the private rented market. The lack of affordable quality housing is an issue for the majority of all workers in Sefton. This also includes migrant workers. Tackling the issues within the housing market are critical to the economic regeneration of the town. The impact of large numbers of migrant workers moving into the area and securing semi-skilled work in the long-term means that the pressure on the housing supply is likely to grow.

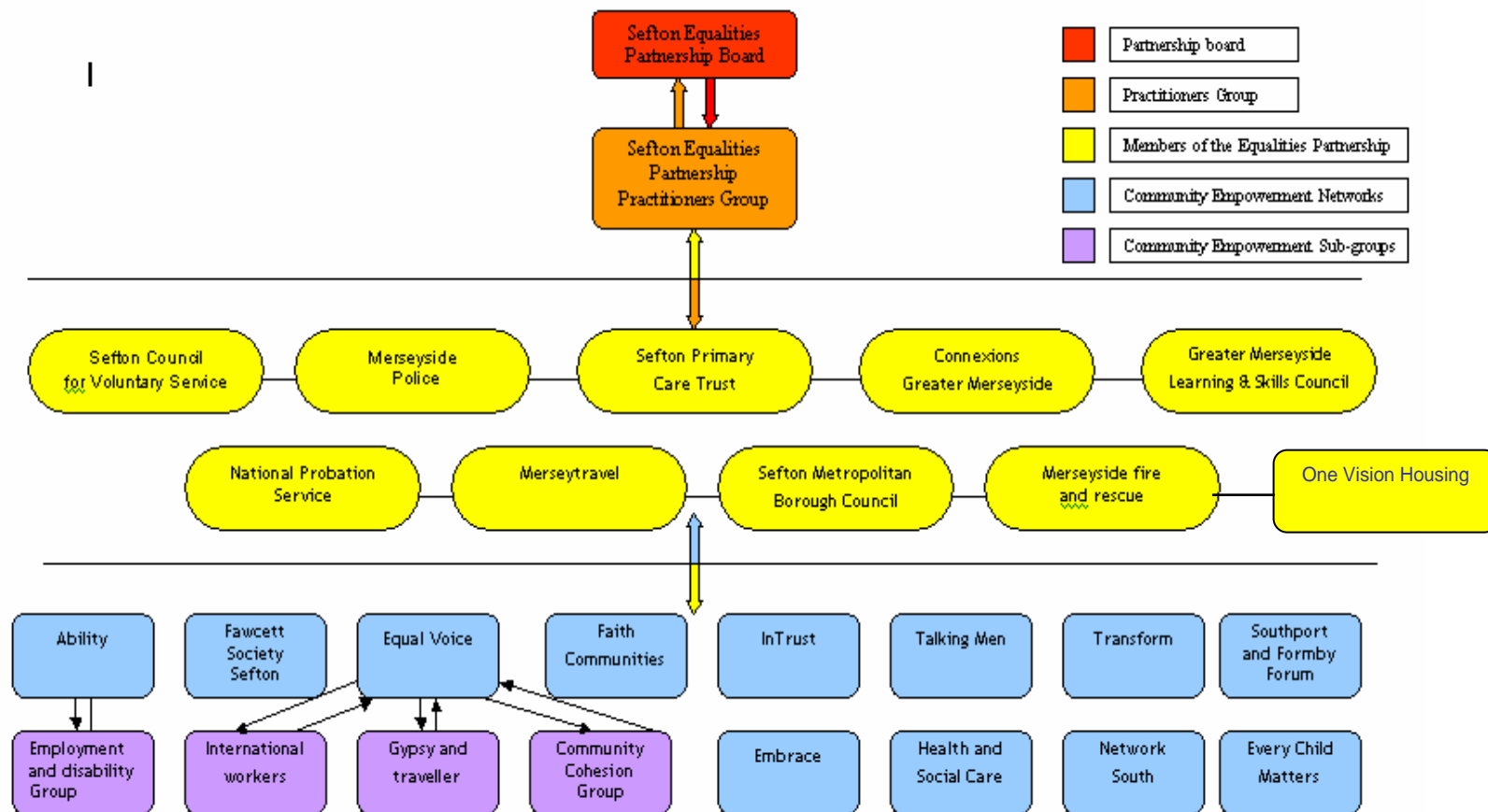
2 Institutional setting and relevant actors

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council is a unitary authority. This means that as a single tier authority, Sefton can be described as an “all purpose council” that is responsible for all local authority functions. Sefton Council is responsible for the following areas: education, housing, planning and regulatory applications, strategic planning, highways, fire (joint with other boroughs in Merseyside), social services, libraries, leisure & recreation, waste collection, waste disposal, environmental health, revenue collection, Tourism, Economic Regeneration, and Emergency Planning.

The main ways of financing the council’s work are council tax (about 25% of the total local authority revenue), Non Domestic Rate – a charge to businesses set by national government (about 25% of local authority revenue), charges for services and reserves (about 2 % of total local authority revenue) and with around 48% central government grants stand for the majority of local authority revenue. (Local Government Association 2003).

Table 4: Equalities Partnership



Sefton Strategic Partnership and Equalities Partnership

Linked to the provision of neighbourhood renewal funds for some areas in Sefton, is the condition that a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has to be established. The LSP in Sefton is Sefton Strategic Partnership. Within the Sefton Strategic Partnership, an Equalities Partnership (EP) has been initiated to improve equality and diversity across the borough of Sefton. Table 4 outlines the members and work structures of the EP. The aim of the EP is to develop a Human Rights Strategy that: Promotes Equality; Delivers Economic Inclusion for All; Reduces Hate Crime and Promotes Community Cohesion and Establishes Diversity as an economic, social and cultural asset. Within the Equalities Partnership organisation, the International Workers Steering Group (IWSG) is listed as a 'Community Empowerment Subgroup'. The Equalities Partnership has only been established in 2006 and work is still in its early stages.

Southport Partnership

As an expression of the growing economic upward movement in the north of the borough, Southport established a partnership to bring together different stakeholders in addressing Southport specific issues.

NGOs and voluntary organisations

A small number of migrant and community groups are active in the Sefton area. As community involvement takes time to develop and requires appropriate funding, the most recent groups of migrant workers have not developed a community organisation infrastructure.

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Housing Advice Centre are not for profit organisations active in the housing area. However, the Housing Advice Centre does not advertise any services to migrant workers because they do not have the necessary resources. If migrant workers would present themselves as homeless, the advice services might not be able to help them, as migrant workers from the new EU countries only are eligible to homelessness support after one year as a registered and employed worker in the UK (See Section 3.4).

The Council for Voluntary Services is a partner in the Sefton Strategic Partnership. The CVS has taken an active interest in enhancing the cooperation with and among BME groups. As part of the Sefton Community Empowerment Network (CEN), CVS has established a forum called "Equal Voice" that "aims to highlight issues affecting people from black and racial



minority communities in Sefton and feed this information into relevant decision-making bodies such as the Sefton Borough partnership. It will also act as a staff support mechanism for workers within Sefton”¹⁰. At present a cultural strategy is developed for Sefton to address these issues in a more systematic way. Both the CEN and the LSP include a representative from an ethnic minority background and a migrant worker community. The CVS produces a directory with about 1300 organisations some of which are highlighted as actively working with the BME Community. Not for profit organisations working with migrants include an Anglo-Polish organisation and a café run on Christian principles. However there is no systematic cooperation and exchange among these organisations with regard to housing for migrant workers.

Working relations between local and national authorities such as for example with the Immigration and Nationality Department (IND) are described as limited. It is felt by Sefton Council that many of the local issues differ from the national focus and agenda. The situation in Sefton is very specific and it is felt by the council that it requires a local response. National policy influences the initiatives in Sefton only indirectly. Among the exceptions are the Gangmasters’ Licensing Act, Housing in Multiple Occupation licensing, and discrimination and human rights legislation.

3 Discourse, concepts and policy concerning housing (C1) (2 p)

5.1 Vision, concepts and policy of administration and Local Council on the issue of access to affordable and decent housing, segregation and integration of migrants

Sefton is actively working towards narrowing the gap between the most deprived areas of the Borough and the rest in terms of housing conditions, employment, educational achievement and environmental quality. Sefton receives Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) resources to support this agenda and nine deprived areas within the borough are classed as NRF areas. Neighbourhood renewal has a series of floor targets issued by Central Government which are a set of minimum standards for the areas of Crime, Education, Employment, Health, Housing and Environment. Sefton Partnership has applied these locally to 9 NRF areas and the Community Strategy states that in 2004 / 05 considerable progress was made in meeting these targets. All partners are committed to applying the concept of Neighbourhood Renewal within the core or ‘mainstream’ services and the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is integrated within the council’s Community Strategy highlighting priority outcomes and targets to improve the quality of life of those living in the most deprived areas.

¹⁰ http://www.seftoncv.org.uk/cen/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=46, URL accessed 31 May 2007.



Sefton's Community strategy outlines a number of areas for further action targeting affordable housing, the local economy, regeneration, housing market renewal and achieving the national Decent Homes Standard. Sefton's community strategy 2006-2011 lists the following criteria on housing as part of the British government Audit Commission's Quality of Life Indicators:

- Total number of new housing completions (Sefton 491),
- Affordable dwellings completed as a % of all new housing completion (Sefton 36.25%)
- Household accommodations without central heating (Sefton 12.8%)
- The percentage of residents who think that people sleeping rough on the streets or in other public places a very big or fairly big problem in their local area (Sefton 28.9%)
- House price to income ratio (Sefton 3.56)

Due to the policy approach of mainstreaming needs of migrant workers into a general approach that focuses on equal opportunity for all, a word search in any of the official council documents would not turn out any results for the term 'migrant worker'. However because of the awareness of issues concerning migrant workers in particular housing, these questions are included in future strategic policy development. It is the role of the IWSG to align all strategies in Sefton and make sure that needs of migrant workers are recognised alongside those of other parts of the population. One of the first tests for this approach will be the new housing strategy that Sefton will have to develop during the next 12 months.

Recent changes due to actual events such as 9/11, Van Gogh etc. are not reported to have had an impact on the local situation in Sefton. An increase in the activity of the far right party has been reported for an area in which a mosque has opened in Southport. The Council has tried to engage with representatives from the mosque but the interaction has so far been limited to a request for funding from the mosque to improve security. There is no information as to the characteristics of the Muslims in the area. A branch of the interfaith network exists in Sefton but it is predominantly Christian.

There is an understanding among local authority officials that the regulatory framework could support better housing and working conditions indirectly through health and safety, fire regulations, the Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing and the Gangmasters' Licensing Act. Since April 2006 licensing of housing in multiple occupation is mandatory for all landlords. However early indicators show that legislation alone cannot solve the problem and that sharing of data and intelligence across sectors is key to changing the hearts and minds of unscrupulous landlords. The High Level Action Plan of the International Workers Steering Group seeks to establish a multi-agency task force that challenges and prevents issues of exploitation experienced by migrant workers.

Where regulations cannot be enforced, the council is hoping to bring about change by informing tenants about their rights. A part of the population including many migrants is living in substandard accommodations with landlords making a considerable sum of money out of it. Many people who find themselves in this situation are unaware that they have a choice. There are of course also situations where people are scared and do not want to have to leave their accommodations.

5.2 Public discourse on housing, segregation and integration of migrants

The Council undertakes a public satisfaction survey every 3 years (most recent 2006) to capture the perceptions of the population into how well people from different backgrounds are accepted within the community. In 2006, 62% felt that people from different backgrounds were welcome in the borough. The Council of Voluntary Services has initiated a similar study, which shows a slightly different picture.

Migrant workers, often overqualified and generally hardworking have been welcomed into Sefton especially in the North where they provide much needed labour. And until now even in the more deprived south there have only been a limited amount of incidents related to police and neighbourhood. On the contrary, because of a rise in the number of migrant children there now is a lever to lobby against the closure of a children's Accident and Emergency Unit at a Southport hospital. However, there is concern regarding the rise of a far right party in the area.

The newly established hate crime reporting through the Equalities partnership is only just starting to show migrant related hate crime. The Police are seeing an increase in verbal abuse and complaints against migrant workers who are waking up their neighbours in the middle of the night when they have to get up to catch busses that take them to their work places. There have also been complaints about migrant workers putting their rubbish bags out for collection every day instead of once a week.

Still in its early stages, it is not easy to determine from the hate crime reporting whether hate crime incidents are motivated by ethnic differences. But it is thought by local government officials that tensions over housing and other issues are reflected in the hate crime reporting.

As some of the anecdotal examples show, incidents might also be based on a lack of cultural understanding and knowledge. To this end, the Communications Sub-Group of the International Workers Steering Group is producing a strategy that will develop a positive media campaign and myth-busting programme to facilitate understanding between migrant workers and the local population.

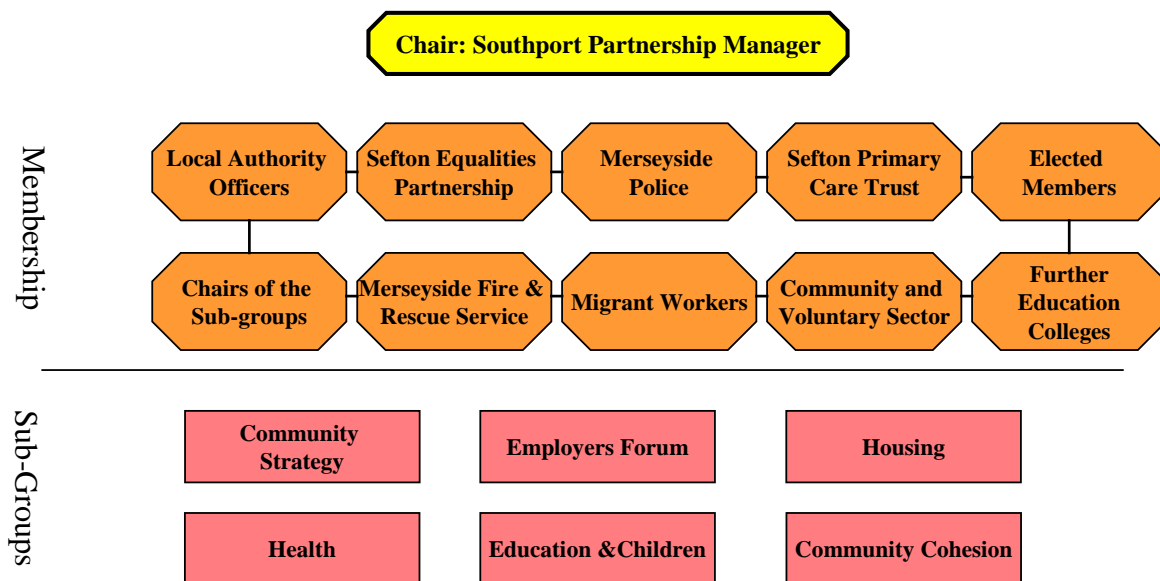
4 Interventions on housing and integration: measures and projects

6.1 Interventions to improve access to affordable and decent housing for migrants

Sefton Council is developing a new edition of the handbook for migrant workers. It is planned to be published towards the end of 2007. The handbook will cover an overview of the national context as well as Sefton specific information. It will also include information on housing and employment regulations for migrants.

Under the subgroup of community cohesion, migrant workers are also part of the Equalities Partnership (EP) agenda. One initiative that has been developed is that of hate crime reporting. More than 50 reporting centres and also online facilities have been opened. In their definition of hate crime the EP has gone beyond traditional criteria to also include disability and bullying.

Table 5: International Workers Steering Group



International Workers Steering Group

With the initiation of the International Workers Steering Group (IWSG), Sefton has created a multi agency mechanism to address crosscutting issues for migrant workers. Table 4 outlines the members of the Steering group. The IWSG works with a structure of six subgroups, which are considering the following:

1. **Communication Strategy:** looking at ‘myth busting’ and overcoming public resistance to migrants as well as informing new migrants about the support services available to them
2. **Employers Forum:** talking to employers about good and bad practice, how to take advantage of the opportunities the new pool of talent brings as well as addressing any exploitation.
3. **Housing:** developing the affordable Housing Strategy in partnership with Sefton MBC Housing, RSLs and the community. This, typically, is for all the community with no specific housing targeted at migrants.
4. **Health:** working with all the agencies including the Primary Care Trust to improve health in the migrant community, to track changes in health profiles and to look into the impact on health services.
5. **Education and Children:** as with the Health sub group but focused on English language teaching (ESOL) issues, language as a barrier to health and safety at work, and integration of partners and children into the school system and the broader community
6. **Community Cohesion:** looking at socially divisive issues, hate crimes and community cohesion issues, this sub-group has a substantial police engagement.

Table 6: Members of Sefton’s International Workers Steering Group (IWSG)

Member agencies
Local Authority officers
Elected Members
Sefton Equalities Partnership
Chairs of Sub-Groups
Merseyside Police
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
Sefton Primary Care Trust
Community and Voluntary Sector
Head Teacher, and Principals of further education colleges
Migrant Workers and/or representatives
The Steering Group can co-opt other members if needed

The purpose of the International Workers Steering Group is to provide an effective policy and planning framework; give strategic direction; establish appropriate structural arrangements to achieve the objectives of the High Level Action Plan. All six sub groups of the IWSG are



currently working to develop an Action Plan, which will be formally adopted by Sefton MBC in mid 2007. The Action Plan outlines 12 priorities:

- To establish effective reporting and accountability structures for the IWSG
- To develop process to engage International Workers in the work of the Steering Group
- To align International Workers Action Plan to key agencies' strategies
- To establish effective internal and external communications
- To ensure equality of access to services for EU and Non EU International Workers in the Borough
- Implement key recommendations from CLES Report relating to Employers, Employment and Training
- To Fully participate in the European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies of Migrants CLIP Network to influence UK and European policies relating to International Workers
- To Promote, Enhance and Protect Community Cohesion across Sefton
- To Pilot a Multi Agency Task Force that challenges and prevents issues of exploitation experienced by International Workers
- To work with North and South Sefton Housing Forums to ensure that issues relating to the housing needs of International Workers and the impact on the available housing stock are addressed effectively
- To ensure that International Workers and their children have access to appropriate learning opportunities that enable them to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities
- To ensure equality of access to all health related services for International Workers and their families in Sefton

The IWSG works in partnership to facilitate the integration of migrant workers, and their families, into the local community and enable equality of opportunity and access to all services. As a multi agency body, the IWSG will look at several key areas in which the impact of migration is being felt.

Strategic Housing Forum



The Housing subgroup of the IWSG brings together the Housing Advice Centre, Housing Associations, the Council and Southport Partnership in the Strategic Housing Forum. The role of the Strategic Housing Forum is to develop a housing strategy for the borough while taking into account the needs and characteristics of migrant workers with regards to housing.

6.2 Local policies related to spatial segregation

Spatial Segregation is not thought to exist in Sefton. As a result there are no policies to reduce spatial segregation in Sefton.

Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMR)

Although the projects of the HMR do not target migrants in particular, some of the areas chosen for regeneration are thought to be areas in which migrants live. 123,000 properties in some of Merseyside's most disadvantaged communities have been chosen within the national government Housing Market Renewal Initiative¹¹, including 22,500 in South Sefton (Bootle and Litherland). At ward level this includes in Sefton: Linacre, Derby, Orrell and Church. Officials are aware that the scale of the work required can only be achieved over a long-term period. The problems that need to be addressed are complex and it is important that the solutions that are developed are sustainable and make a real and lasting difference. The national government has recognised that Housing Market Renewal will need to be a 10–15 year programme.

Anecdotal evidence illustrates the complexity of the issue. In an area in Bootle where people have been moved out of their homes marked for regeneration, resettlement payments were offered and when word got around, the programme was exploited by property speculations. In the end the costs exceeded all expectations and it is anticipated that some of the current residents may not return upon completion of the programme.

Apart from providing a “lessons learned” for future regeneration programmes, this situation also emphasises the tensions between north and south in the borough. In the north the demand for affordable housing cannot be met and there is almost no land available for new developments. At the same time there is a housing restraint mechanism in place and presently all resources within Sefton are going into projects in the South as part of the HMRI.

¹¹ In 2003, the British government announced the Housing Market Renewal Fund. This programme aims at tackling poor quality housing across parts of the North and Midlands of England. The chosen areas in Merseyside, part of Sefton, Wirral and Liverpool are called “New Heartlands”. A combined investment of approx £123 million is planned to be made in the area until 2008. HMRI is aiming to revitalise the housing market across the designated areas “to ensure a more sustainable balance between housing supply and demand and alongside this address social and economic regeneration issues that need to be tackled as part of returning these areas to sustainable communities”. <http://www.newheartlands.co.uk/>



5 Highlights and Failures: Learning for CLIP

Sefton can better be described as a 'mini region' instead of as one city. The borough is polarised between the more affluent but land-poor north and the deprived inner city areas of the south. This has resulted in two distinct housing markets with very different requirements. There are five challenges and experiences from Sefton, which might provide useful for other cities in a similar situation:

▶ **Migrant workers are needed for the local labour market**

Even before recent migrant workers arrived in Sefton, a general shortage of affordable and decent housing especially in the north of the borough had been identified. With migrant workers accessing some of the same rent properties in Southport, local residents are complaining that it is increasingly difficult to find affordable housing because of competing for places with migrants. As this happens mainly in the north of Sefton, and around Southport, there is concern not only about tensions in community relations between migrant workers and local residents but also that a lack of affordable housing might result in migrant workers moving on to other areas depriving Southport of its much needed workforce.

▶ **Migrant workers access housing in the private rented sector largely outside the control of local authorities**

Due to legal restrictions on access to public housing, recent migrant workers from EU accession states cannot access social housing. As a result, new migrants in Sefton rely almost exclusively on the private sector for the supply of housing. The public sector in turn, has only limited powers and resources to regulate the private housing market. And the quality of the private housing stock in Sefton needs to be improved. Nearly a third of all private rented accommodations within Sefton borough falls below the national decent housing standard. With the transfer of the public housing stock to an independent agency, the role of the Council in housing has changed from being a landlord towards strategic planning and development of new housing and regeneration. In Southport, however, development of new housing relies heavily on factors outside the control of the local authority. Consequently, the council is limited in its options to influence the housing situation of migrant workers in the private rented market.

▶ **Segregation is not the main issue, but housing conditions are: overcrowding, sub-standard and 'tied' accommodations**

Small scale concentration of migrant workers in some central areas of Southport is not perceived as 'problematic' neither by council officials nor the local population but the sub standard housing conditions are. There are a number of challenges with regards to housing and migrant workers in Sefton that have been identified both by the Council and migrant workers. One is that of overcrowding and migrants sharing accommodations in order to reduce high



rents. Migrant workers also raise the issue of poor quality housing and the fact that this could be 'tied' accommodations and either supplied by a labour intermediary or an employer. The situation in Sefton is characterised by the centrality of employers in the recruitment process but the disengagement of this group in the social consequences. Lack of information about rights, language difficulties, overcrowding, sub-standard and 'tied' accommodations make migrants vulnerable to exploitation.

► **In response, a multi-agency Steering Group has been created by Sefton Council**

In recognition of the emerging challenges, Sefton Council created an International Workers Steering Group (IWSG). The IWSG is a multi-agency mechanism to address crosscutting issues with partners from both public and voluntary organisations. With a considerable proportion of Sefton's population facing issues similar to those faced by migrant workers, a mainstream approach is being taken to create equal opportunities for all. To succeed in addressing the challenges in the housing market will require for all players to work in cooperation. This also includes migrant workers. Sefton is working towards the inclusion of migrant workers and their representatives in the work of the IWSG.

► **There is a need for better data and sharing of information**

There is an understanding among local authority officials in Sefton, that the regulatory framework could support better housing and working conditions. However early indicators show that legislation alone cannot solve the problem and that sharing of data and intelligence across sectors is key to preventing exploitation of migrant workers by unscrupulous landlords. The Steering Group is hoping to collect and share information among all players in the housing field in Sefton and to inform migrant workers about their rights.



References

- Anderson, B, Ruhs, M, Rogaly, B and Spencer, S (2006) *Fair Enough? Central and East European migrants in low-wage employment in the UK*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Audit Commission (2007a): *Crossing Borders: Responding to the local Challenges of Migrant Workers*, Public Services National Report, London.
- Audit Commission (2007b): *Corporate Assessment Sefton*, London.
- CLES Consulting (March 2006): *Sefton Migrant Study. Stage 1 Report – Project Initiation*
- CLES Consulting (May 2006): *Sefton Migrant Study. Stage 2 Draft Report*.
- CLES Consulting (August 2006): *Sefton Migrant Study. Stage 3 Final Report – Recommendations*.
- CURS- Centre for Urban and Regional Research (July 2006): *South Sefton, Supply & Demand Study*, Final report, Ref. 0515, Birmingham.
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2007) *Local Integration Policies for Migrants in Europe*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Fordham Research (December 2005): *Sefton Council 2005 Housing Needs Assessment Update 2005. Final Report*.
- Hills, John (February 2007): *Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England*, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), Report 34, London.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (October 2002): *Planning gain and affordable housing*, Ref 042, <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/042.asp>
- Local Government Association (2003): *Local Government Structure*, <http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Briefing/LG%20structure%202003.pdf>
- MBC - Metropolitan Borough Council of Sefton (2005/2006): *Corporate Housing Strategy 2005/2006*, <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/docs/housing%20strategyTo2005-FinalVersion.doc>.
- MSIO - Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory (October 2006): *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, MSIO Policy Report No.3, http://www.liv.ac.uk/civdes/msio/Research_and_Policy_Reports.htm
- MSIO - Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory (October 2004): *Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities 2001 census study: The development of a data platform for Merseyside in the context of the National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS)*, MSIO Research Report 1. <http://www.liv.ac.uk/civdes/msio/ResearchandPolicyReports.htm>
- SHUSU - Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (September 2005): *Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy for Southport*, University of Salford.



Sefton Borough Partnership: A Vision for Sefton. Community Strategy 2006-2011.

Spencer, S (2007 – forthcoming), 'Immigration' in Seldon, A *Blair's Britain 1994-2007*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

National Statistics Online (2006) <http://www.statistics.gov.uk//cci/nugget.asp?id=1312>

Navarro, Alison (February 2003): Less than 1% - So what's the Problem? Report on the Black and Racial Minority Mapping Development Project, Navarro Training and Consultancy.