

Policy Brief

Migration and Settlement in Glasgow: Factors Influencing Migrant Choice

Background

In 2009 Glasgow City Council (GCC) produced a Single Outcome Agreement that had several key aims, one of which was to grow the population of Glasgow. This population growth target relates to Local Outcome 11 which is to **“Improve the attractiveness of Glasgow as a place to live, invest, work and visit”**, this links in with National Outcome 1: **“We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe”**. The aims of these outcomes include stabilising City Region population levels at 2003 levels to 2013 and increasing Glasgow’s population from 11% to 12% of the Scottish population by 2016. As identified in the COSLA report to GCC, migration can be a key tool in achieving population growth.

A further aim of GCC is to increase the proportion of the population that is economically active. Again, this is a target that can be aided by immigration. This briefing will highlight, based on the collaborative masters dissertation: ‘Migration and Settlement in Glasgow: Factors Influencing Migrant Choice’, that attracting migrants to a particular location is an extremely difficult and complex task as the motivations for people to relocate are extremely diverse, intricate and often rely on chance. The possible role of chance in determining migration destinations was raised by Alison Phipps (Glasgow University) at the 1 April 2011 COSLA session and this was then again brought forward in the COSLA report following those meetings. This idea matches the findings of the study and, therefore, it would be more productive to look at ways to improve and encourage long-term settlement within the city of migrants who are already living within it as well as native residents rather than exploring ways to encourage further immigration into the city.

Situation Brief

Glasgow’s population suffered from decades of decline but has now stabilised, with an estimated population of 584,246 in 2008. A strong factor in facilitating this stabilisation was inward migration from the A8 accession states of the European Union¹. Forecasts predict that the population will begin short-term decline in 2013 and then again begin to grow. To address such issues it is important that Glasgow continues to attract migrants and also improves its retention of migrants already within the city.

Migrant Destination Choice

In the study on which this briefing is based, four identifiable factors brought people to Glasgow: Chance, employment, study and moving with a partner. Of these factors

¹ Countries that joined the European Union in 2004 (excluding Malta and Cyprus): Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.

there was never one reason for migration. For example, seeking employment might drive a migrant to leave a particular place but it does not necessarily decide their new location for them. Chance played a massive role in determining the location of migrations, as did family connections and historical trends. None of these factors can particularly be considered separately from each other, except from possibly study. Migrants coming to university in Glasgow did have much clearer motivations than the others. The university sector in Glasgow has a good reputation world-wide and free university education for EU students² is a strong motivator in encouraging migration – these were the two primary reasons for migrants selecting Glasgow for study.

Long-Term Settlement

Long-term settlement is impacted upon by multiple factors, including: first impressions, ideas of home, family, education, employment and standard of living. Of these factors three came across as the most likely to directly affect whether or not people would remain within the city: education, employment and standard of living. In terms of encouraging long-term settlement, standard of living appeared the most influential. It was generally believed by the participants that a higher standard of living was possible in Glasgow than it was in their countries of origin; this primarily related to an increase in potential earning allowing the participants to own cars, live on their own and enjoy an overall better quality of life. Free healthcare was also identified as an important motivator in this regard.

Future education of potential children was most likely to drive migrants to leave the city. Of the participants who had considered having children there was a general feeling that the Scottish education system was weaker than in their home countries. This related to two key areas. Firstly, there was concern that where the migrants live would determine which school their children went to and as such could hinder their education if the school in that particular area was of a lower standard than others. Secondly, it was believed that too much time is devoted (in primary schools) to non-traditional forms of education like art and drama and that children were therefore not receiving a 'proper' education.

Employment could affect long-term settlement in either regard. Generally, it was reported that if stable and promising employment would continue in Glasgow then there was no reason for the migrants to leave and they were content to remain working and living in the city. Conversely, if they were offered a superior job elsewhere it is likely that they would relocate. Importantly, none of the participants were actively seeking employment anywhere else and the possibility of relocating was purely a hypothetical question. Further, participants spoke of the difficulty in understanding employment markets elsewhere and so it was unlikely they would actively seek employment abroad.

Areas for Consideration

Attracting migrants is not a simple task and one that needs to be considered carefully. This research displayed just how much of the decision on location is based on chance and a combination of complex factors that means it is hard to find one motivation that would absolutely encourage migration into the city. Further,

² EU rules mean that EU students must be treated in the same way as native students and as such EU students have their fees paid by the Scottish Government when they study at Scottish universities.

considering Glasgow appears to have a relatively high intake of migrants at present it is possible the focus should be on retaining current migrants and the population of Glasgow rather than attempting to attract new migrants.

Higher and Further Education

Glasgow's strong higher and further education sector does appear to be a strong motivator in encouraging migration into the city particularly based on the prestige of the universities within the city as well as free education for EU nationals. This factor could be developed further to consider how students from Glasgow universities and colleges could be encouraged to remain in the city and seek employment once they graduate. This would require close collaboration with the universities. Work on this is being carried out to an extent by the Scottish Government lobbying the UK government to reinstate the Fresh Talent programme; however, this would only apply to non-EU migrants³.

Further, attempting to encourage migrants to remain in the city entirely depends on there being relevant graduate level jobs based on their skills. This strongly relates to the state of the economy within Glasgow – at present there are fewer graduate level jobs and as a result intense competition for them. It was suggested in the COSLA report that this sort of strategy would require identification of skill shortages within the city and then to work closely with universities and businesses to then encourage the appropriate graduates to take these jobs. The Glasgow Economic Commission identified a number of sectors that should be developed further in order to facilitate effective growth. These are: Low carbon industry; engineering, design and manufacturing; life sciences; financial and business services; tourism and events. Using these areas for a basic framework for collaboration between the council, universities/colleges and businesses could be a good way to encourage graduates with appropriate skills to work within the city.

Employment

In addition to this the Glasgow Economic Commission set out 10 recommendations that it believed would help Glasgow to achieve substantial economic growth. These could be linked with a retention strategy to encourage both migrants and Glaswegians alike to remain within the city, pursuing promising career paths that would stem from implementing the recommendations. Most of these recommendations focus on working with universities to both provide research and skilled graduates to advance the important sectors identified in the report.

The continuation of stable and promising employment is a difficult factor to address. This largely depends on Glasgow's economy as well as the Scottish and UK economies in general. This should be naturally addressed as Glasgow's economy improves based on the recommendations of the Economic Commission.

Education of Children

Education of children appeared likely to encourage migrants to leave the city; however, other studies have argued that migrants with children are more likely to settle long-term (as stated in the COSLA report and the report for the Scottish

³ As there are no restrictions on the movement of people or labour between states of the European Union (excluding Bulgaria and Romania).

Government). This would suggest that more study is possibly required on how migrants perceive education within the city and Scotland in general.

Given that the complaints centred on location of residence determining where a child attends school, it might be worth considering highlighting that this is not necessarily the case and parents can to an extent select which school their child attends as well as the fact that all school performance reports are available to the public through the local authority websites. The other major complaint regarding schools was to do with perceptions of what education should really be about: traditional subjects or others like art and drama. The schools curriculum is based on evidence of what works for children so there must be studies relating to this that could also be highlighted. Further, if there are statistics on how Scottish schools compare to other countries schools or how many pupils then go on to university: these could be drawn out to demonstrate the calibre of the education system.

There is a potential negative to widely publicising that parents can elect which school their child attends and that is that too many parents may attempt to move their children into higher standard schools creating demand that cannot be met and it is likely that schools deemed to be better already face extreme demand in this regard. This does highlight that the participants were possibly aware of Glasgow schools' lower levels of attainment when compared to schools in other areas, though overall the participants tended to focus on their problems with the Scottish education system rather than schools particularly in Glasgow.

Additional Comments from Participants

Outwith the interviews several participants stated that it would be good to know that GCC wants migrants in the city: both in terms of encouraging them to stay and to encourage native people in Glasgow to be more accepting of them. This was one of the suggestions made within the COSLA report, that, for example, local media could be utilised to portray the beneficial role that migrants play in Glasgow.

Select Bibliography

COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership, *Developing a Migration Strategy for the City of Glasgow: Final Report*, 2011.

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