



**SSAMIS**  
Social Support and  
Migration in Scotland

## SECOND INTERIM REPORT NOVEMBER 2016

Living and Working in Scotland:  
Employment, Housing, Family and Community





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SSAMIS project (2013-2017) explores experiences of migration and settlement amongst migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) living in Scotland. As part of the project we have carried out extensive ethnographic fieldwork in four locations across Scotland, two urban (Aberdeen and Glasgow) and two rural (Aberdeenshire and Angus) which included interviews with migrants and experts as well as observations of key sites. This second interim report is based on an analysis of our findings and focuses on the key areas of: Employment; Housing; Family Issues and Community Initiatives. It will be of interest to a range of stakeholders and service providers including local authorities, community planning partners, ESOL practitioners, migrant associations etc.

### Key themes

- **Employment.** The vast majority of people we spoke with were employed, and occupied positions in a wide range of sectors including farm and factory work; hospitality and catering, care work, beauty and hairdressing, office work and the retail industry, the third sector and the oil industry. The majority were in lower skilled occupations, and most people aspired to permanent forms of employment. The type of employment was dependent upon and influenced by place of residence. The key themes emerged in relation to a number of broader issues. Working relations, with both co-workers and employers, were seen as crucial to job satisfaction and feelings of security at work. Positive relations with both co-workers (often other migrants) and employers were in evidence; however, tensions arose due to perceptions of discrimination and differential treatment, both from employers and between co-workers. Improving skills and achieving occupational mobility was a particularly salient issue, especially as many people had experienced deskilling due to their move to Scotland and the inability to get a job which matched their qualifications and previous experience gained in their country of origin. Many barriers to occupational mobility were identified, which often centred on language. Difficulties in improving English language skills (often related to working conditions and environment) were identified as a key factor impeding occupational mobility. Conversely improved English language skills were often central to achieving occupational mobility. Many people spoke of the vulnerabilities and exploitation that they felt they faced in the work place. These centred on a feeling that they lacked the knowledge and information relating to employment and contractual rights, with language exacerbating this problem.

- **Housing.** Patterns of housing varied across the locations where our research was carried out with private rentals and council housing being the most common forms of accommodation. The key themes which emerged around housing focussed on practices and strategies for accessing accommodation and then issues specific to housing sector. In terms of how people accessed accommodation, much of this was done via family and friendship networks, or via websites. Some people did receive accommodation via their place of employment, and this had both advantages and disadvantages, but could be particularly problematic if the employment ceased. Difficulties in the private rental sector related particularly to the relationship tenants had with their landlord. Social housing was seen as the most desirable form of accommodation in terms of providing permanence and security. However, problems which were identified related to waiting times for accommodation; the quality of the housing provided; the area where the housing was located and lack of knowledge of the system. Nonetheless, social housing was also seen as providing a place which people could make their own. Although some people spoke of having bought their own property, this was rare. Homelessness was also an issue which emerged in our data, where people had experienced temporary homelessness due to unscrupulous landlords or family breakdown. However, generally the issue had been resolved quickly by the relevant authorities and social housing was provided.

- **Family Issues.** Family emerged as a key factor in the lives of the people we interviewed. Family was often central to the process of migration and to the experience of settlement in Scotland. Having family members already in Scotland encouraged migration and made the processes of finding accommodation and employment, and negotiating the system easier. Once the family became settled in Scotland, this allowed a future to be imagined and the likelihood of going back to the country of origin receded. Having children was a key factor influencing future settlement, for example, once children entered the education system, parents were unwilling to uproot them and take them away from a system they had got used to. Family relationships were constantly under negotiation both in Scotland, and also transnationally. Contact with family members in the country of origin was seen as crucial, particularly in negotiating issues around childcare and eldercare. This was significant in relation to family members coming to Scotland, either temporarily or more permanently, to help with childcare responsibilities, but also, in terms of eldercare, where elder relatives in the country of origin became a source of concern and worry. This led on occasions to attempts to bring these elderly relatives to Scotland to live. Financial insecurities within the family in the country of origin often influenced the original decision to migrate and to an extent these insecurities were resolved in Scotland, both through paid employment and through accessing in-work benefits. However, financial insecurity persisted for some people, although others spoke of how they were able to build up some savings in Scotland which allowed a more 'normal' life to be enjoyed. Schooling and education was a very common theme for discussion,

in relation to long-term settlement as outlined above, and also how parents negotiated the Scottish education system. It was viewed both positively and negatively, but consistently seen as differing from the education system in countries of origin. However, over time parents spoke of how they got used to it and came to value what it offered.

- **Community Initiatives.** The SSAMIS project was designed to incorporate the development of practical initiatives to improve migrants' lives at both local and national levels. As part of this 'Participatory Action Research' approach, the SSAMIS team are working in partnership with local people and relevant stakeholders to develop community initiatives, which address key themes, including: difficulties in accessing support for language learning, loneliness and isolation, and lack of community spaces especially in smaller and more rural settings. In both Aberdeenshire and Angus the SSAMIS team has been working with local partners towards the development of sustainable community cafés which could create friendly spaces where people from all parts of the local community could meet, get to know each other, improve language skills and take part in cultural exchanges, as well as gaining information on and advice from existing services. SSAMIS 'Make It Happen' initiatives in both Peterhead and Arbroath have trialled a range of activities and provided insight into the viability of a model for establishing permanent community cafés. Building on these experiences, SSAMIS is working in partnership with local ESOL providers to offer new, flexible and family-friendly approaches to language learning as well as doing some further research into successful existing programmes with the aim of sharing good practice. A pilot language café has been supported by and developed in collaboration with the WEA in Peterhead for a 3 month period. Challenging perceptions and representations of 'migrants' and 'migration' which do not reflect migrants own experiences and stories has also been an important strand of SSAMIS activities and exhibition materials have been co-produced with participants in both the original research study and through the 'Make It Happen' initiatives and are showcased through local museum exhibitions ('Journeys' at the Arbruthnot museum Peterhead (14 October 2016 – 9 January 2017)) and other dissemination events and community engagement opportunities.

## INTRODUCTION

SSAMIS is a four-year project (November 2013 – November 2017) funded by the Economic and Social Research Council to explore experiences of migration and settlement amongst Central and East European (CEE) Migrants living and working in small towns and villages in Aberdeenshire and Angus and in the cities of Aberdeen and Glasgow.

The SSAMIS team completed the project's main phase of fieldwork in December 2015 involving over 200 migrants as well as approximately 60 representatives of local authorities, service providers and migrant associations. This second report focusses on the key themes of employment, housing and family issues which have emerged from in-depth, qualitative interviews with migrants, 'expert' interviews with other stakeholders, and researchers' fieldnotes and observations recorded during the 18 month period of fieldwork. In addition we discuss the development of community initiatives in Angus and Aberdeenshire, which have emerged as part of the participatory action research (PAR) stage of the research. Reflecting our methodological approach, data reflects the location and context within which the research was conducted and is shaped by the particular clusters of migrants that we have spoken to (see table below). See also our first interim report, from January 2016, for more information specific to each location, available at: [www.glasgow.ac.uk/media/media\\_481930\\_en.pdf](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/media/media_481930_en.pdf).

This report is designed to be of use to a range of stakeholders and service providers including local authorities, community planning partners, ESOL practitioners, migrant associations etc. Further detailed reports will become available in due course. We welcome any feedback on this report, particularly with regard to its value for your work and practice. We are also very willing to answer any questions which may arise.

For more information about any aspect of the project or to contact the team, please visit our website: [www.glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis) and follow us on facebook: [www.facebook.com/SSAMISproject](https://www.facebook.com/SSAMISproject) and on Twitter @ssamisproject



## OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION

<b>Locations</b>	Aberdeen (n27*); Glasgow (n37); Peterhead (n41), Fraserburgh (n9), other rural locations in Aberdeenshire (n25); Arbroath (n39), Montrose (n12), Brechin (n9), other rural locations in Angus (n8)
<b>Employment sectors</b>	Beauty and hairdressing; care industry; cleaning services; hospitality & catering; construction; farm work; food processing; interpreting/translation; IT; office work; oil industry; retail; third sector
<b>Employment status</b>	Agency workers; employees; professionals; self-employed; stay-at-home parents; students; unemployed
<b>Gender</b>	Women (n129); men (n78)
<b>Age group</b>	18-24 (n13); 25-34 (n66); 35-49 (n91); 50+ (n36); unknown (n1)
<b>Country of origin</b>	Azerbaijan (n2); Bulgaria (n8); Czech Republic (n6); Estonia (n1); Hungary (n18); Kazakhstan (n1); Kyrgyzstan (n1); Latvia (n42); Lithuania (n28); Poland (n83); Romania (n5); Russia (n5); Slovakia (n4); Ukraine (n3)

\* n = number of migrant interviewees (total 207).

## EMPLOYMENT

The vast majority of the people we spoke with were employed, and occupied positions in a wide range of sectors. Key sectors included: farm work; factory work; hospitality and catering; the care industry; construction; food processing; beauty and hairdressing; interpreting/translation; IT; office work; oil industry; retail; third sector. The majority were located in less skilled occupations, with a minority in white-collar, highly skilled professions. Type of employment was also influenced by location, i.e. farm work and work in food processing factories was more prevalent in Angus and Aberdeenshire; catering, hospitality and cleaning were more prevalent in the cities of Glasgow and Aberdeen. The majority of the people we spoke with aspired to permanent, full-time forms of employment. This section is organised around the key themes which emerged from our data relating to the overarching theme of employment. As is apparent below, language is a theme which runs throughout.

### Working Relations

#### Co-workers

- Interesting insights into the composition of co-workers emerged across the different sites. People said that they predominantly worked with other migrants (either co-ethnics or CEE nationals). It appeared to be less common to have co-workers who were Scottish.
- Tensions arose with co-workers due to a number of issues, for example: being managed by other migrants from a different country and perceptions existing about being treated differently due to their nationality; discontent about migrants 'undercutting' other migrants, e.g. agreeing to work for less money.
- Positive relations with co-workers were also very apparent, particularly in farm environments where strong bonds had emerged and connections extended beyond the work place. This fed directly into experiences of greater job satisfaction.

- Communication and interaction with co-workers was a highly significant theme when people spoke about employment experiences. A key focus of this was the language spoken in communication, both how language hindered communication, and how knowledge of English, or knowledge of a common language (Russian, Polish) facilitated communication.
- Some people spoke of their enjoyment of being able to use other languages at work, for example, a language that they are already familiar with or knew, or that are easy for them to pick up, due to the language being another Slavonic language (e.g. Bulgarian/Polish/Russian). There were instances where Polish people were able to understand Russian, but would reply in Polish.
- In a number of cases problems were highlighted with the Scottish accent and the use of particular phrases. However, there was also discussion of 'learning English on the job': i.e. having to speak English at work, and learning that way.
- It was suggested that being able to speak Polish is an advantage in getting a job, particularly if lots of other Polish people already work in, for example, a hotel, so that then the workers can communicate in Polish amongst themselves. This was sometimes seen as beneficial by the employer.

It's a small farm, everybody knows everybody [else]. We're close with our boss. It's a very friendly environment here. I like it – there are a lot of nice people and I enjoy it. So that's the main reason I come back to this farm. Of course, we save some proper money...Everybody's friendly. We exchange some languages: some Polish, some Lithuanian, some Russian. Last year I learnt Russian.  
**Paskal, Bulgarian, Angus, seasonal farm worker**

Actually when I started I was only one Latvian between all Scottish. Yeah, that is why I am saying, big, big massive help from Scottish guys for my English. For Scottish (laughs)...But on our breaks I was feeling like, 'What they are talking about?' Possibly they are bullying me, saying something stupid or bad about me. And what I started to do every morning, because I working at night shifts, every morning I just open a dictionary, checked some words, what I remembered. I think, 'No! They are talking only nice

**Lauris, Latvian, Angus, factory worker**

It's a very good job, it is stated in the contract that you get a 5% pay rise per hour on an annual basis. All's good. I have good co-workers, Polish and Scottish. And everything is good...There are Hungarians there, the guys from Russia, Lithuanians, Latvians... There was this guy from Costa Rica, I think he has a visa. There's a lot of Poles there. I won't tell you how many percent, I don't know. There are some Scots, there were some Irish guys, Slovaks... those countries...I stand by this table with this guy from Poland, Tomek, and we cut the fish heads off. And we have a chat and a laugh... You know, it's pleasant work, it's a good job, you know, and we have two breaks, simply for me it's ideal. I'm working as I've always been used to working.

**Boleslav, Slovakian, Glasgow, factory worker**

**The example below provides a positive example of an employer working to improve conditions for his workers and to be flexible, and how the employee recognises this and is also willing to be accommodating and flexible.**

**EMPLOYER:** "It's all these little things if you, as an employer, are showing to be caring and looking after them and providing a better environment for them you'll get better work out of them. They appreciate it more...We make a reasonable environment for them to work in. A pleasant and safe place which it has to be by law [laughs] by law it has to be of course, but it's just our ethics, we want to have that... You know still picking flowers or packing potatoes, it's not the best of jobs but we try and make it a pleasure. And then you get the results coming back. And that's the way I do my management in this. I need a flexible work force, and so I negotiated this with a core group of migrants, where the arrangements suits both side. The migrants have 4-6 weeks off each year to go back home. I make up any additional labour I need from agency workers."

**(Agricultural Employer, Angus)**

**EMPLOYEE:** "And if sometimes something comes up, I can take unpaid leave later on. Because, for example, I've already used my leave for the whole year this year. And there are never any problems with that. There are meetings every three months and sometimes the manager asks us, could you please try not to take time off during this and this period as we're going to be very busy. And as I say, we've been there for a few years now, we know how things work. For example, the lifting time that's now approaching is going to be very busy so everyone's aware that... well, unless something happens, my child falls ill or I fall ill, then there's no problem [with taking time off]."

**(Iza, Polish, Angus, farm worker)**

## Employers

- In some cases, people spoke of feeling insecure in their employment due to being a migrant, or 'not-Scottish' and indicated differences in terms of treatment from their employers in comparison to local workers, for example with regard to employment rights, holiday rights and other entitlements.
- The power which employers have with regards to the migrant labour force was highlighted, i.e. due to the large pool of migrant labour being available, employers could treat them as they liked and 'pick and choose'.
- The power of employers was also seen when people spoke of having to take leave when convenient for employers; and being concerned about having to take time off to visit the dentist, the GP, etc.
- There were many instances of positive experiences of employers, where employers used their position to improve the situation of employees. I.e. flexibility and encouragement for language learning; warm and close relations with employers which had developed which encouraged people to stay; help with bureaucratic procedures (e.g. NINO); provision of accommodation, transport and a genuine desire by the employer to improve working conditions.
- There was a clear sense of how mutual respect, compromise and willingness to accommodate on both sides emerged over time.

## Skills and Occupational Mobility

### Deskilling and Barriers to Occupational Mobility

- There was a tendency amongst people who have moved to Scotland to 'accept deskilling', that is to see it as being a compromise they had to accept to work in an unskilled job, due to the wider economic and material benefits this brought.
- Clear psychological impacts of 'deskilling' were apparent, where people felt that it was demeaning for them to be working in a cleaning job, if they were professionally qualified.
- People spoke about preparing their CVs and trying not to be seen as too skilled or educated. Therefore some of the people we spoke with 'toned down' their skills set and previous experience in order to get a job.
- Difficulties emerged around transferring or getting recognition of qualifications gained in their country of origin or getting recognition of previous experience in their country of origin.
- It is important to stress that for some of the people we spoke with the job market in Scotland opened up possibilities of work that were increasingly difficult in their country of origin, due to for example, their age, health and gender. This was spoken about in particular by women in their 50s. They saw opportunities in Scotland for securing work without discrimination and had hopes that this would last until they reached pensionable age.

- There were a number of reasons which dominated in our findings in relation to deskilling and in terms of barriers to occupational mobility, and language was key.
- People are 'trapped' in particular jobs due to the difficulty in improving their language, for example, those working in cleaning work, farm work, or factory work, where English is not necessary in order to fulfil requirements of the job.
- Related closely to this is the difficulty in finding the time or energy necessary for improving language if migrants are working in particular sectors where long hours are demanded and work is tiring, or if they are doing multiple jobs.
- People have to cope with the demands of family life and try to balance this with their desire or wish to attend English classes. Even if they do manage to attend English classes, a two hour a week class is seen as 'just not enough' to make any significant progress.
- Not being able to speak English can have an impact on personal confidence: even if the person has professional qualifications, they can lose confidence due to their limitations in terms of language.
- For some people who are working in certain environments, the English they do have can be lost. This may lead to the decision to stop doing a job, e.g. farm work, so that they can get time to improve English.

### CASE STUDY

#### The impact of deskilling and the desire to bring about some change in employment status:

Anna worked as a cleaner, but she was extremely ashamed of it. However, she felt she had to see that it was a way to move forward. The only thing she knew for certain was that she was not going back home. She chose to come here because her husband's two younger sisters were already in Scotland, so her and her husband were certain that they would be able to make a living here, even with the most basic work. With the cleaning job she was able to keep up the same family life that a middle class family could have in her country of origin. However, longer term she did not see a future in cleaning, and she wanted to make a change so she decided to resign from her cleaning job. She had a degree and she knew English a little and her aim was to develop and improve her English more. She felt then she would be able to look for a different job, and work somewhere else rather than being a cleaner. She felt that if she carried on working as a cleaner she would forget the English that she had as she ended up speaking her own language to the other cleaners. She used to work with children in a kindergarten in her country of origin, so that is what she would like to do in Scotland in the future.

What I saw is that most people stay where they start. Because they don't speak the language...No, no, because life is already difficult without it. They have to sustain themselves. They are working both during the day and during the evenings. And it's already quite determined, if they work in two jobs, they can't go for studies.

**Maria, Hungarian, Aberdeen city, owner of small cleaning business or cleaner, self-employed**

### Prospects for occupational mobility

- Related closely to the role of language in deskilling and barriers to occupational mobility, is the widespread desire which exists amongst migrants to improve their English so that they can work according to their profession/professional level. Acquiring better English is seen as a way of moving up the career ladder.
- There were indications of progression amongst the people we spoke with, for example, within local councils and in schools; where migrants fill a specific niche dealing with migrant specific issues but then move either sideways or upwards into another role; also within farm work where on occasions people could move from manual jobs to office jobs; or within a factory moving from cleaning work to operating machines after having gained experience on the job; or move from being a cleaner to becoming a supervisor of a team of cleaners.
- Evidence of individual pathways to occupational mobility emerged around starting up their own business, for example: cleaning; internet shops; hairdressing; restaurants; car washing. Often these cases involved people continuing to work in their paid job elsewhere whilst starting up their own business due to concerns about financial security and risk.
- Occupational mobility and getting another job was seen to depend on many factors, for example: having the right contacts and networks (talked about specifically with reference to the oil industry); having a driving license; doing short specific courses to expand personal skills set; gaining relevant, local experience, which some people managed to do through volunteering for a period of time.
- There was evidence that people move from seasonal work (on farms) to gaining permanent contracts, particularly if they are returning to the same place year after year and are known by and appreciated by the employer.
- Insights emerged from a number of people's experiences which provide examples of good practice in terms of assistance for occupational mobility:
- Colleges providing wider support to enable progression, e.g. helping with CVs; providing references; providing opportunities beyond formal courses to gain skills.
- Starting to do an ESOL course at a further education college, and then moving to do more specialised skills courses, e.g. computer design; graphic design; bookkeeping, beauty therapy, animal care, etc.
- The Job Centre providing a range of grants to enable training – short vocational courses, e.g. Health and Safety card for construction work; fork lift driver qualification; for more expensive courses support provided alongside input from employer; also 'Academies' that provide training in various sectors (hospitality; customer care).
- Financial support was seen as essential in terms of training; people felt that some sort of bursary was needed as otherwise they would struggle financially and were unwilling or unable to lose money from their wages.
- Schemes (e.g. Project Scotland, for young people, involving doing a 3 month voluntary role) which are openly available to anyone, used by migrants to expand experience, learn new skills, get advice on CV writing from mentor.

## CASE STUDY

### Pathways for occupational mobility:

After the bank, Reni did more training courses, and then she applied for a job at the council. She said she was getting promoted quickly because she spoke good English and she was a dedicated and hard worker. She worked for the council for several years. However, she always wanted to get into the oil business, but she found it to be a closed environment. She felt that if you were not part of these networks, or you weren't being transferred from another branch, it was virtually impossible to get into it from outside. She tried several times, by submitting applications or going to recruitment events, but she always failed. Eventually, at a council organised event, she heard about an opportunity, and tried again to submit her application. Finally she got a job a year ago in one of the large oil companies. She is not working in her own professional field, but she has learnt to work in this sector and is constantly taking every opportunity to develop further. She feels she is making good progress.

Since we moved abroad, I was always insecure about my job. I never raised my voice for anything, because I would not have dared to open my mouth. Even though there were many unjust things, but I didn't say anything. I am thinking that I am a migrant. They are the ones who give me the job, they give me the money...for example, in Glasgow my boss was Polish, and you know there were many Poles in the hotel too. And they were almost always given fewer rooms to clean than me or my sister. Sometimes we had to work overtime, and we were the ones who were always asked if there were extra rooms to clean too.

**Viki, Hungarian, Aberdeen city, maid in hotel**

This year in January, we were working there through an agency, almost 200 people... there was a meeting and they thanked us for our work. Just like that, from one day to another, they thanked us for our work and asked us to leave the factory. They hadn't terminated our employment. We were still registered as factory workers with the agency. And then work started again in April. It started full steam, there was lots of work...they weren't paying us [between January and April]. They weren't paying, it would happen that they would ask us to come in one day per week. They would call and say there's work for one day per week. And we'd work this way. So during this time I registered as unemployed. Because you can then work up to 16 hours... In April things started moving again and there was so much work that we were working 7 days per week, 10 hours per day. But that lasted about two months. As things are now, the factory is hardly operating, from what I know there are still a few people working there but those who have stayed are currently doing the job of four people. So it's not good.

**Bozena, Polish, Angus, farmworker**

One day the HR manager decided that we need to speak English only all the time, and we could only hire people who could speak English. Then I got into trouble because she caught me speaking Polish with some people... It's not a problem for me, I can speak English, but we probably looked like two idiots because if I spoke English they would say 'I don't understand'... I had to [pretend] it wasn't my native language.

**Oliwia, Polish, Aberdeenshire, Food processing factory**

### Exploitation and vulnerabilities:

- Vulnerabilities were heightened amongst migrants due to a general lack of knowledge and information in different areas relating to employment.
- Many people spoke of not having a written contract or of not fully understanding their contracts (often due to language issues); not being aware of the 'small print' when first signing a contract; of information being kept from them; of not understanding their rights and entitlements (e.g. with respect to holidays). Difficulties with language exacerbated these issues.
- In some cases, working conditions detailed in people's accounts were very difficult and caused significant concern and also had impacts upon health.
- People felt open to exploitation due to the large number of migrants being available for work so that employers can pick and choose (as seen in the co-workers sub section above).
- There was a sense amongst some people that putting up with possible exploitation, difficult working conditions, not having a contract, working a zero hours contract, and not being sure of rights with regards to holidays, etc., was worth it due to at least 'having a job' and a regular wage coming in.
- Particular vulnerabilities were revealed which were associated with agency working, and the threat of suddenly losing a job and having no come back, or losing a job due to illness or pregnancy. Generally agency work did not provide any certainty in the long-term.
- There was a sense amongst some of the people we spoke with that other migrants needed to improve their language with regards specifically to their employment, e.g. bus drivers, so they will not face comments/negative attitudes from local people; someone working in a chemical factory where they need to be very precise in terms of giving instructions for health and safety reasons.
- Evidence emerged of cases where people were dissuaded or told not to speak their own language in the work place; and were sometimes separated from other co-ethnics in the work place.



## HOUSING

Patterns of housing varied across the research locations. Private rentals were common across all areas, especially in the early period after arrival. Employer provided accommodation was much more common in rural areas and usually tied to farm work and food processing. Council housing was much more available in Aberdeenshire and Angus but social housing through housing associations was also accessed in Glasgow. In Aberdeen some people who had arrived in the earliest period of post-EU accession migration had been able to access social housing but this was now virtually unattainable and demand was very high in the private sector also. This section is organised in subsections as follows: practices and strategies for accessing accommodation; housing sectors; homelessness.

### Practices and Strategies for Accessing Accommodation

- Many of the people involved in our research talked about the stress of trying to find (suitable/acceptable) accommodation, especially in the first period after arrival in Scotland. This often resulted in frequent moves especially in this early period as people sought cheaper, better accommodation, got to know different (and more desirable) areas, moved between temporary stays with friends, relatives etc.
- For the vast majority of people accommodation was accessed initially through relatives, acquaintances and migrant networks, who provided both temporary accommodation in the first period after arrival, and information about how to access independent accommodation.

- This pattern of staying with friends or relatives on first arrival, can be helpful in providing other support and information, as well as easing financial burden and stress in the early period. However, it may also mean accommodation is overcrowded and can lead to tensions and/or unsatisfactory accommodation if these arrangements become longer term, which they sometimes do (several years in some cases) due to difficulties of finding separate and affordable accommodation.
- Many people have experience of living in houses in very poor condition, especially in the early period after arrival – issues of damp, poor heating, often combined with high rents, were commented on most frequently. For quite a number this is a catalyst to applying for social housing.
- Websites were a common source of information about and means of accessing accommodation in the private rentals sector. Both migrant focused (e.g. emito) and more general sites (e.g. gumtree) were regularly mentioned and seemed to be more common and often more 'trusted' options than rental agencies etc.
- Formal channels for accessing accommodation can be closed to migrants due to demands for references, UK bank accounts, evidence of previous UK addresses etc. There is also a vicious circle as people cannot open a bank account without evidence of a permanent address.
- Both migrants and 'experts' recognise the potential drawbacks of migrants being 'clustered' in particular (social) housing schemes, neighbourhoods and areas, as barriers to wider integration, language learning, feelings of ghettoization etc. However this does seem still to be a common experience and one which some migrants also resent.

For the first few years my husband and my son were living four guys in a flat which had two bedrooms so there were two of them in each bedroom so that they could live cheaply and economise, because of course it was about money. And the second time my husband came over they stayed with this married couple they knew, he was renting a room from them. In the beginning he and our son were living there together, but the conditions, the room was really tiny and there weren't conditions for both of them living there. So our son moved to a friend's and my husband continued to live there. When I came here I also stayed with those friends in the beginning. The plan was that when I find something, and our son was willing to rent something together with us, because this would be easier in terms of finances and more familial as well.

**Boguslawa, Polish, Angus, Private Tenant**

## Housing Sectors

This subsection explores experiences and issues specific to different housing sectors: employer-provided, private rentals, social housing and private ownership. These are ordered to reflect the most common trajectories we found from early arrival to longer-term stays.

### Employer provided accommodation

- Experiences of employer provided accommodation were most common in rural areas and particularly amongst those employed on farms or food processing factories.
- For some this was a very positive experience characterised by a sense of security and stability – stable rent, utilities (heating, electricity etc) paid for by employer etc. This was most often the case with more permanent workers where employers were providing houses for rent (see also Employment section for more information on relationships with employers)
- However, for others, most often seasonal/temporary workers, employer provided accommodation was very basic (mainly caravans linked to farms or food processing factories), often overcrowded, with potential health and safety issues, as well as high rents and utility charges.
- Here issues of control and vulnerability to exploitation were clear: seasonal/temporary workers often had less knowledge of rights or routes to redress; tied housing can mean exposure to risks of exploitation and indebtedness as well as threat of homelessness if workers lose/leave employment.

He was taking the accommodation off our wages. He was taking hundreds of pounds a month, so it is not a lot. But we lived in a massive [building]. Everyone was in the same place, so it wasn't really nice.

**Nadia, Polish, Aberdeenshire, Council Tenant (previously in Employer Provided Accommodation)**

### Private rental sector

- Migrants tend to be clustered in areas with cheap, and often poor standard, accommodation and experiences of private sector tenancies depended heavily on the relationship with the landlord.
- Language barriers and a lack of clear understanding of tenants' rights and responsibilities (on both sides) can exacerbate and underpin problems relating to the condition of housing and undermine communication between landlord and tenant. People in our study were more likely to express a feeling of being 'discriminated against' in relation to the private sector than with regard to social housing.
- Informal rentals and subletting (often from other migrants) can lead to insecurities and potential exploitation for both parties. Our study revealed examples of those who sublet leaving without paying rent or their share of a deposit; damaging property that the 'official' tenant is ultimately responsible for; but also experiences of sublet tenants being charged extortionate rent, conditions and charges changing without proper notice or explanation etc.
- Very negative (and sometimes prolonged) experiences in private rentals were often a precursor to a move to social housing. However, difficulties in accessing suitable/affordable housing for large(r) and/or growing families can lead to families (and young children) staying long term in substandard accommodation in the private sector.

We rent a private house. So we paid a lot of money 500 pounds for rent, plus energy, plus, plus... everything what people must to pay. So for start, for me, it was very expensive, the house was very cold, and we lived there maybe one year. After that I said: "No, enough." We filled in the documents, application for a council house and we are waiting about one year for a council house.

**Aleksandra, Polish, Angus, Council Tenant**

I rented a room from some guy, just a mattress on the floor, and it was freezing. The heating was broken or something. For three months I lived like that. When I got work finally, I discovered that every time when I went to work he'd come and check my suitcase. A Polish guy! In that flat there were 12-14 people.

**Dawid, Polish, Aberdeenshire, Private Tenant**

### Social housing

- Social housing was definitely seen as desirable and a source of permanence and security if accessed. Low rents and secure tenancies were highly appreciated. Many people commented positively on the availability of social housing and the security it provides as a specific contrast to the situation in their countries of origin.
- Waiting times varied greatly depending on locality, date of arrival and family circumstances. Some people had been able to access social housing relatively quickly (within 1-2 years), but others had waited much longer (4 years and more), and others were still on the list hoping against hope that something would become available.
- Many migrants compared social housing favourably to private rentals in terms of it being 'a place of our own' or 'almost like our own'. This was linked particularly to the right for these houses to be inherited by children, but also to the security of the tenancy and the possibility of renovating homes to their own taste, whilst also relying on the council or housing association for major works.
- Some complained about the poor condition of housing, especially with regard to heating and damp, but others saw taking a house in poorer condition and doing it up as a positive opportunity to access social housing more quickly and save money. This was also linked to comments about East Europeans as 'good tenants' who look after properties and do them up.
- People were aware of potential negative opinions about migrants 'taking our council housing' and whilst some argued against these, asserting their shared right to such housing, others were reluctant to apply as a result.
- Information about social housing was accessed mainly through informal channels, but this can cause difficulties due to changing regulations and differences between locations. Some people were very aware that their own experiences differ from those who came later, or moved to other areas.
- People often lack detailed or full knowledge of the system relating to social housing. They may have partial knowledge based on their own experience or that of others (usually other migrants) but they do not always understand fully the ways in which points are allocated or the rules regarding acceptance/refusal of accommodation offered. Some people were very knowledgeable and well able to navigate the system, others much less so.
- There was considerable evidence of strategies around social housing involving wider family members: grandparents sharing with grandchildren or adult siblings making joint applications, for example. This was also linked to the 'passing on' both of information and of actual flats/houses to people who arrive later.
- A number of people in our study had experienced moving to more distant (rural) places because of available social housing. These houses were often viewed very positively, but in some cases the move meant long commutes to work in towns/cities, and potentially increased social isolation.
- Those housed in areas with lots of other migrants had mixed views on this. Some were very positive about the potential for social support and interaction, others saw it much more negatively as claustrophobic and compounding a sense of isolation from local communities.
- Those who accept housing in 'low demand' areas also sometimes experience tension with local tenants who they may view quite negatively, but also feel they are viewed negatively by locals. This finding highlights the need for structured initiatives to bring people together (cf. Community initiatives section)

It is not a very good area to live, or flat but when we got it we were very happy. I know that Scottish people from Dundee they don't want to go and live in some sort of small houses if Council says that you could, they say no, we'll wait until something better comes up. So we were very surprised because it has three rooms, two bedrooms, but three rooms. In Lithuania, in the last year we were living in one room with a child. So it was wow!

**Ruta, Lithuanian, Angus, Council tenant**

he flat was in bad condition but that was my decision [to take it] because there was a flat in much better condition right next to it but with electric heaters. And I wanted gas heating because, naturally, it's cheaper from what I've heard at least. So I thought that this will be better, take this flat and renovate it. The costs of renovating will later be made up by the cost of heating and I'll have everything done up and cheaper in the longer term.

**Iza, Polish, Angus, Council Tenant**

We registered and got it. But when we went there [to the flat], frankly, I didn't want to get out of the car. There was a group of some kind of addicts standing outside the building. The neighbours didn't look very friendly, so we didn't even leave the car. We refused the flat and I have never asked for a council housing again.

**Tadas, Lithuanian, Glasgow, Private Tenant**

### Private ownership

- We found some evidence of a growing trend towards private ownership of housing, but many barriers to this.
- People mentioned owning their own house both as an aspiration and as an investment, as both evidence of and a means to ensuring longer term settlement.
- There was considerable uncertainty about the legal and financial processes involved and in Aberdeen, for example, the Polish Association was running seminars on how to buy a property.
- For many, saving enough for a deposit and taking on a mortgage were quite distant prospects in terms of their financial stability and security. Especially for those in self-employment or on temporary contracts this was seen as quite difficult to achieve.

We are settled here at least a bit... We are thinking about getting a property, but... we will see. If you buy anything, you can always sell it, you know. Maybe you won't get the same money back, but... in order to try to settle here...

**Viktoras, Lithuanian, Glasgow, Private Tenant**

## Homelessness

- We heard several cases, where people had experienced (temporary) homelessness. Unscrupulous landlords 'turning people out' with no notice, including in a number of cases with very young children/babies were a cause of homelessness, as was family breakdown often resulting in homelessness for women with young children. For some in such circumstances lack of local networks of family/friends can mean they literally have nowhere to go.
- Where people are recognised as homeless and the authorities are involved they do appear to get placed in temporary accommodation quite quickly and where families are involved this usually leads to more permanent social housing, although sometimes after several weeks/months in temporary/hostel accommodation. Single people were more likely to experience long-term stays in hostel accommodation.
- Being formally recognised as 'homeless' could be problematic because of language barriers, not knowing which authorities to contact, not understanding the regulations, becoming confused in an already traumatic situation. In a number of cases the police had been particularly helpful in accessing emergency accommodation for people who had initially been turned away by local housing services.

### CASE STUDY

#### One woman's experience of homelessness:

Magrieta, originally from Latvia, had been living in a caravan park and working on a farm in Angus when her employment was very abruptly terminated. After an unsuccessful search for other employment she was told by the owner of the caravan park that she had to leave. With nothing but a small suitcase and three pounds in her pocket she went to the local access office, but was told they could not help her. After wandering for some time she went to the local police station and after a wait of several hours was taken to emergency homeless accommodation in a neighbouring town. From there she was moved to further temporary, but more long term accommodation in another town where she was eventually allocated permanent council housing.



## FAMILY ISSUES

Family emerged throughout the study as a key factor in people's lives. For many people family connections prompted migration and played a central role in decisions about where to migrate to and how long to stay for. Negotiating relationships with other family members, both those who had also migrated to Scotland and those still living in the country of origin (or elsewhere) took considerable time and energy and brought both material and emotional costs and benefits. Families played a central role in negotiating questions of care, both for children and for elderly family members and in managing financial issues. For those with children, issues relating to schooling and educational opportunities were also very important.

### Patterns of family migration and settlement

- Family emerged throughout the study as a key factor in motivations for migration. A significant number of people explained that they had decided to move on the advice of other family members already in Scotland (e.g. parents telling children to move because they see better future prospects for them in Scotland, siblings suggesting that a 'better life' in terms of secure employment/higher wages is available here).
- Emotional issues linked to missing those who had moved away previously and a wish for family reunion were also often described as key reasons for migration. This is reflected in a general and very common pattern of one member of the family coming and then others following, although this happened in a variety of configurations e.g. male partner then female partner; husband then wife and children; wife then husband and children, family with children then grandparents.
- It was also quite common that initial plans for a particular family member to work in Scotland for a very specific and short period turned into much longer term plans involving other family members.

- As a result of these trends, many of our interviewees had 'come to' family members already in the particular locality or nearby in Scotland, and these relatives usually provided significant assistance in relation to housing, finding employment, managing local bureaucracies, documents and dealing with authorities in the early stages following arrival.
- There was also a tendency for family members, including extended family, to live together, especially in the initial period following arrival, but sometimes also much longer term, due to financial considerations, however this could also be a cause of stress and tension (see also Housing section above).
- Finally, family concerns emerged in a slightly different way as a motivating factor for a particular subset of single parents (mainly women) identified through the study. These people described Scotland as a place where they could better and more easily manage their family situation, with better opportunities for work and to support themselves and their children through a combination of earnings, social housing, tax credits etc.
- For many people longer-term plans for settlement were both a precursor to and a result of family reunion in Scotland. Other family members especially dependents (both children and in some cases elderly relatives) were only brought over once a certain level of security and stability was reached, but then their arrival helped to produce a sense of permanence and settlement.
- Plans for long-term settlement were often very connected with plans of other family members. For example, if adult children were settled in Scotland and having children of their own, parents often also decided to stay long term.
- Relationships with partners from the local area, or with other migrants where relationships were formed when both were already in Scotland, often made long-term settlement seem inevitable.

- Similarly, where children were born in Scotland, or where young children were felt to have adapted well (often after initial difficulties) to life in Scotland, this was a very strong motivation for long-term settlement.
- In contrast to the above, for those people whose close family members (parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren) had stayed in the country of origin this could make decisions to stay long term problematic. A number of people described feeling 'torn' between aspects of their personal lives which they might find 'better' or 'easier' in Scotland and emotional connections and a sense of obligation to provide care for those left behind (see also negotiating family relationships and elderly care in the following sections).

We're definitely staying here longer term because, first of all I have nothing to go back to in Poland. I haven't got a flat there and my parents wouldn't be able to help... And let's not fool ourselves, here I have the comfort... I work and can earn my keep by myself. I can afford a flat, a car, I can live normally and earn my keep. I can maintain my child as well and don't have to wonder how I'm going to pay my bills the next day. And I'm afraid that's what I was experiencing in Poland, in Warsaw, for five years. And I suspect it would be difficult for me to adjust.

**Iza, Polish, Angus, single mother, 1 child**

As far as Scotland is concerned, my whole family lives here. They all came one after the other. I was the last to join. All my siblings... My parents... But they all live in Aberdeen. Actually we also wanted to live there but... We are five so we needed a bigger flat and you know how hard it is at the beginning. So we were looking for a cheaper flat and my sister found one here. My sister has been here for eight years now. All my siblings, my whole family are here... We were on our own there so we wanted to come here... And also... because of the future of our kids. Why shouldn't you take advantage of the opportunity to be together? We didn't have any prospects there. We used to live month by month... Everything is expensive in Poland... more and more expensive.

**Ewa, Polish, Angus, married, 3 children**

We have a normal, nice life here, financial security. All these. And my family, we are all here, so now it's all good how it is.

**Maria, Hungarian, Aberdeen, married, 2 children**

### Negotiating Family Relationships

- Migration and settlement in Scotland requires a renegotiation of relationships with family who have remained in the country of origin. This includes both keeping up contact whilst in Scotland through phone calls; Skype, text, etc. and also visits (once or twice a year) to parents, grandparents and other relations.
- The importance of keeping up traditions from the country of origin within the family became apparent, in particular, in relation to holidays such as Christmas, New Year and Easter, and especially if the family had young children.
- There was evidence of people sending a variety of things back to help their family in their country of origin, including: money, clothes packages. This also occurred with respect to people being sent things from their family in their country of origin, which they were unable to purchase in Scotland, e.g. food products.
- Migrant status impacted upon the maintenance of family relations. For people who were EU citizens, although the cost may be prohibitive, visa free travel made journeys back home possible. People who were non-EU citizens, e.g. from Russia, talked of how difficult it was for them or their children to travel back to Russia for a visit (due to visa issues etc.) and were concerned about how this might impact upon, particularly, their children's sense of being Russian and the likelihood they would ever go back there to live.
- People spoke of 'remaking' family here due to the absence of close family members, i.e. with close friends who they had made, who were often other migrants.

### Childcare

- People spoke of the way in which close family members (for example, mothers, aunts) would come over to help out with childcare of younger children for specific periods of time, for example after a baby had been born.
- Management of childcare frequently occurred through the use of family networks and through reciprocal arrangements where migrants would share childcare responsibilities.
- Women in particular mentioned the difficulties they faced in managing childcare alongside their employment. Childcare was often shared with male partners, and managed through both partners doing shift work. This could lead to the family having very little time together as a family, or to parents regretting the lack of time they had to spend with their children.
- Costs of childcare outside of the family were experienced as very high by comparison to many people's potential earnings and meant that one parent (usually the mother) needed to stay at home, because it was 'not viable' to work (see also financial issues opposite).

It is my second year there. When I started to work there (in 2013), I would come to clean two rooms (one hour or so), and that was it. Later, one vacancy became available (of back-shift manager), and they offered it to me. They saw how I work. So I started to work in March, and they promoted me at the end of June. It was quite difficult in terms of family. Well, it was hard to find a person to look after kids. My husband comes back from work few minutes after five, and I have to be at work at five. So because of those few minutes we had to hire somebody. Eventually we asked friends to help us out with this issue. Later, my manager offered me to start work at 5.30 PM and finish at 10.30 PM. I agreed, of course...And there is more flexibility with working hours, I can coordinate with family, because kids go to school, and then I go to work in the evening. Of course, psychologically it is not easy – I can't provide such quality time for kids, because it used to be our bed time story time in the evenings. So it is quite hard psychologically

**Vilma, Lithuanian, Glasgow, married, 2 children**

### Eldercare

- Some people spoke about travelling back to their country of origin for periods of time to look after family members who were unwell or elderly.
- Concern was expressed about older parents and relatives in migrants' country of origin who might require care at some point in the future. Some people suggested that this would influence their decision to go back there to live.
- Other people sought to bring their elderly relatives to live in Scotland. However, this is dependent upon migrant status and for non-EU citizens in particular this was seen as more problematic.
- For older people, who did not have immediate family members around them, there was a sense that they may go back to their country of origin at some point, particularly if grandchildren had been born. However, in the short term they appeared intent on looking after themselves and enjoying the benefits of living in Scotland in terms of a secure job and housing.
- Older people who did have immediate family members in Scotland, e.g. adult children, spoke of staying long term in Scotland, as they envisaged they might need their children's assistance in the future when they became old or if they were to suffer from illness.

Obviously I use Skype, phone, to keep in contact with my brother and my mother. So from time to time I speak to him, but it is my mum I speak to most of the time. Especially taking into account her illness and everything, because she's not very good at the moment. So at some point I thought maybe I could bring her over here, but it's not the same as, for example... if Lena (from Estonia) decided to bring her mum over one day it would be very easy. For Russian people, you need to arrange a visa: you need to do a lot of application forms. And I know that there are a lot of restrictions as well, and I'm not sure whether it would work for my mum. The diagnosis she's got at the moment, I'm not sure whether she will actually be allowed to come over. For example with Parkinson's, and dementia, and the hip replacement – other things as well. So I really don't know. Obviously I will probably try to do my best, and try to bring her over here, but there's no guarantee I will be successful.

**Alisa, Russian, Aberdeenshire, divorced, 2 children**

### Financial issues

- Financial insecurities (lack of secure employment, fluctuating macro-economic situation) in their countries of origin often formed the backdrop to families' decisions to migrate and as a result ensuring financial security for the family in Scotland was seen as very important.
- Families generally combined income from a range of sources to ensure their collective financial security (paid employment; child tax credits; working tax credits; child benefit; bursaries for studying) and a change in access to any of these could create financial difficulties.
- People had experienced a range of difficulties in applying for and receiving benefits, sometimes being initially refused benefits that they were eventually found to be eligible for, e.g. Child Benefit; housing benefit; Job Seekers Allowance, and this could create considerable levels of stress and financial insecurity for the whole family.
- Many families found that their income was only sufficient to cover essential regular expenditures on accommodation; food; travel and this conflicted with a desire to have some money saved as a buffer in case anything unplanned or untoward should happen.
- As a result additional and unplanned expenditures (e.g. needing to take family back home for a wedding or funeral; legal fees linked to family breakdown or housing issues) were often a cause of considerable stress.
- In other cases where families were able to build up savings or achieve a level of disposable income which they would not have had in their country of origin (often due to having been a longer time in Scotland) this was highly valued and people mentioned the positive impact for family relations through allowing them, for example, to go on holiday, or do things at the weekend together.
- Where families were able to achieve a degree of financial security, this was often accompanied by an expectation that it would continue in the future and provided a motivation for long-term settlement.

As yet I haven't been able to save anything. At the moment I'm having some difficulties with money because we moved from one flat to the other and we had to pay for that. We got a council flat so we had to do some work on it, then buy everything – so at the moment our pay is going on our accommodation, on food, on travel, and on making a home for ourselves. So at the moment, it would be absolutely impossible to save any money – I need to pay for the car. I'm glad I have work, touch wood they'll keep me on, and so we'll get by. It's just that the current period is a bit more difficult, but overall ... considering living standards, and money for my family, I want to stay here. It's easier here for me. It's just that I feel myself putting down roots, I feel calm here.

**Svetlana, Latvian, Aberdeenshire, divorced, 2 children**

When I brought my daughter over here ten years ago, obviously that was a cultural, educational shock for us. (...) I was at the school door basically every week, complaining about everything. Where is the homework, why isn't my daughter doing any homework, why's she drawing constantly! Posters, why... it should be proper homework! And they said that's how the system works here. I wasn't happy at all.

**Alisa, Russia, Aberdeenshire, divorced, 2 children**

She's really happy with her school, she goes to school with a smile on her face and comes back with a smile. (...) I'd heard a lot of opinions that the level of teaching is much lower than in Poland. I'm aware of that. But sometimes also... for me, personally, it is important that she likes going to school. I know from my own experience in Poland that sometimes they'd teach us such things that I don't remember them now anyway, or memorising poems by heart or small children carrying huge schoolbags, so heavy they can hardly carry them. So I am happy.

**Iza, Polish, Angus, single mother, 1 child**

### Schooling and Education

- For those who had children, education played a key role in their plans for settlement. For example, parents talked about their children's experiences of entering the education system here, the process of starting nursery and primary school, and how that would encourage settlement as they would not wish to uproot their children once they were settled in a school.
- Children's education was very important and parents wanted them to achieve but they often struggled with language issues and time and felt unable to support their children well in their learning.
- A frequent topic of discussion was the difference in terms of educational practices, methods and expectations in Scotland in comparison to people's countries of origin. Parents spoke of not understanding the system here. However, in the longer-term parents frequently recognised the benefits of the system which exists in Scotland, e.g. due to it being more relaxed, friendlier, and less focussed on rote learning, etc.
- Generally, parents we spoke with were not greatly involved in the life of their children's school, language barriers and difficulties in communication exacerbated this.
- Some stories emerged of the difficulties of children adapting when they started school, for example, difficulties with communication; getting 'bullied' for being from another country.
- People spoke of how their children could have 'a normal life' here. There was also a fear that it would be difficult for children to return to their country of origin due to differences in language, culture and the education system, and that children already spoke better English than the language of their parents' country of origin.
- People also spoke of possible plans for further internal migration within Scotland as their children grew up and went to college/university, e.g. from smaller rural place to bigger city.
- It was acknowledged that in Scotland older children were able to be more independent than they would in their country of origin, for example, being able to afford their own accommodation; being able to help to maintain themselves if they went to university due to free university education.



## OUR COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The SSAMIS project was specifically designed to incorporate a phase of Participatory Action Research, coming after the end of the main fieldwork and focused on exploring practical ways to improve migrants' lives at both local and national levels. As part of this approach, the SSAMIS team are working together with local people and relevant stakeholders in several of our study locations to develop community initiatives, which aim to address key themes that emerged from our research, including: difficulties in accessing support for language learning, loneliness and isolation, and lack of community spaces especially in smaller and more rural settings. Collaboration and partnership working with a range of actors (migrants, policy makers, service providers), to develop improvements to policy and forms of service provision in order better to accommodate migrants' needs, lie at the heart of this phase of the project.

### Partnership Working

A key element of the Participatory Action Research approach is to build capacity within the migrant community, and to seek additional funding and support to make our community engagement activities sustainable beyond the scope of the SSAMIS project. Our experience has shown the vital importance of dedicated time to build relationships with participants and other agencies. It has also been really valuable to the process that our research and activities cross Local Authority borders, facilitating knowledge exchange and sharing of good practice at regional and national levels.

Our 'Make It Happen' Community Café Initiatives, which are outlined in more detail below, are an excellent example of this process. In May 2016, SSAMIS collaborated with Dundee and Angus College to organise and facilitate a community consultation event at which ESOL students from the College met with local stakeholders to learn about the results of the SSAMIS research, to discuss some of the challenges they face and to look for solutions to these. In the course

of the consultation the idea of a community café, which was already emerging as a possible outcome from the research findings, was discussed. This was met with great enthusiasm by all, and participants shared ideas for what they would like to have in such a space. As a result of this consultation, a steering group, convened by SSAMIS and consisting of local stakeholders (such as Angus Council, Dundee and Angus College, and Police Scotland) was established to work towards a common goal of opening a permanent community café. The Make It Happen Community Café initiatives in both Peterhead and Arbroath have taken some of the ideas shared at this consultation on board and trialled a range of events and activities to see how these might work in practice.

The start of the Participatory Action Research phase in Peterhead coincided with a town planning initiative 'Choose Peterhead', which aims to rejuvenate the town centre and make it a more attractive place to live, work and shop. A four-day consultation workshop was part of Choose Peterhead. This gave us the opportunity to share key findings from the in-depth interviews with migrants, including the desire for a place to go, that was not a pub, to socialise and get to know the established community. One of the 4 main recommendations from Choose Peterhead was the creation of an inclusive community café in the heart of the town, where different groups could meet. Modo, a youth circus organisation based in Peterhead, provided the venue for the consultation. We built on our relationship with Modo, leading to a partnership and the creation of our pop up community café in their youth café venue (see next section). The WEA (Workers' Educational Association) are an established ESOL provider in the area, known for their social practice model, and participant-led approach to teaching, so they were an obvious partner to lead our informal language café. We intend to continue this partnership, with the longer term aim of creating a more sustainable community café and new approaches to language learning in Peterhead.



Portraits taken as part of our 'Make It Happen' Community Café initiatives in Peterhead and Arbroath, also feature in local exhibitions and at community engagement and dissemination events.

### 'Make it Happen!': Community Café Initiatives

SSAMIS research has shown that there is a lack of family-friendly, safe places where the migrant population and the established community could meet and establish meaningful relationships. People from Central and Eastern Europe often work in highly segregated workplaces where they have little scope for learning English or meeting people from the local community (see Employment section above). A number of our interviewees have mentioned the desire to make more Scottish friends but at the same time have talked about the barriers to doing so. The biggest are language and lack of opportunities for meeting local people in a communal space. This is felt especially strongly in our rural research locations, where many of our participants reported social isolation. Therefore, the SSAMIS team is working towards creating communal spaces in Aberdeenshire and in Angus through its 'Make It Happen!' initiatives.

The Make It Happen café started off in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, in the last week of July 2016. We delivered a week-long creative programme where language teaching, arts workshops, politics discussions and gardening came together to try and meet migrants' needs. 'Make It Happen, Peterhead!' was a creative experiment, and also market research into the longer term viability of a community café. A key goal of Participatory Action Research (PAR) is that the participants are at the heart of the action research, co-creating knowledge, and creating initiatives that meet their needs: the Politics Café; a post-Brexit current affairs discussion group that was part of the Make It Happen café, is an excellent example of such participant-led activity. The Politics Café was included in the 'Make it Happen' Peterhead week at the suggestion of one of our research participants, who also led and facilitated the discussion event. Following on from this first meeting, the group decided to continue to meet regularly, and now does so, without a need for further input from SSAMIS.

Our second Make It Happen café took place in Arbroath in early October 2016, again trialling a range of activities and providing insight into the viability of establishing a permanent community café in Angus. The aims of 'Make It Happen, Angus!' were largely the same as for 'Make It Happen, Peterhead!': to create a friendly space where people could meet and get to know each other, and to connect people with existing services. The programme included 30 events, geared towards the whole community and run by local volunteers, invited artists and local service providers. Workshops included painting, illustrating, cartooning, belly dancing, singing and crochet. Information and advice sessions involved the local Citizens' Advice Bureau, Angus Council services and DEAP, previously known as Dundee Employment and Aftercare. Additional language support in Polish and Russian was available from SSAMIS team members during these sessions. During the fortnight of 'Make It Happen, Angus!', English language cafes were linked to bookbug sessions at the local library as a way of encouraging and including Central and East European parents and their children to take part in both forms provision. 'Make It Happen, Angus!' further supported cultural exchange through language tasters in Polish, Russian and Czech and a ceilidh.

### Language Learning

Our research shows that learning English is highly valued by migrants, but that current ESOL provision does not always meet the learners' needs (see also section on Employment/Barriers to Occupational Mobility, above). In particular, people need practice speaking English, ideally with native speakers. In addition, the research has shown that family ESOL classes, to which parents could bring children, would greatly diminish barriers around access to provision and affordable childcare. SSAMIS is working in partnership with local ESOL providers to address this need and to do some further research into successful existing programmes with the ultimate aim of sharing examples of good practice.

Peterhead's Local Learning Community Partnership priorities include delivering ESOL learning opportunities for hard to reach parents with a focus on family learning and wider community integration. In response to this, and following the success of 'Make it Happen, Peterhead!', SSAMIS, in partnership with the WEA and Modo, piloted a series of weekly language cafés at the Modo café in Peterhead between September and December 2016. The pilot scheme offers alternating daytime and evening sessions with children welcome and combine language learning with arts and crafts activities for adults and children, information and advice sessions (e.g. first aid) and support for wider cultural exchange and community building. A facebook group set up to support and share information on the language café activities has attracted over 50 members and sessions are well attended by both language learners and native speakers. SSAMIS is working with the WEA to attract funding for the further development of this pilot programme of family learning ESOL and to extend it to Aberdeen City, in line with Scotland's ESOL Strategy, Welcoming Our Learners 2015-2020.

## Language Cafe



### Making Migrants' Lives Visible

Since the experiences and perspectives of migrants themselves often remain little understood, SSAMIS prioritises the often hidden migrant voice in both its theoretical and empirical approach. During our research several participants commented on perceptions of 'migration' and 'migrants' that did not reflect their own experiences and stories and felt that these were missing from both local and national discussions and media representations. This concern has fed into a final aspect of our PAR activities.

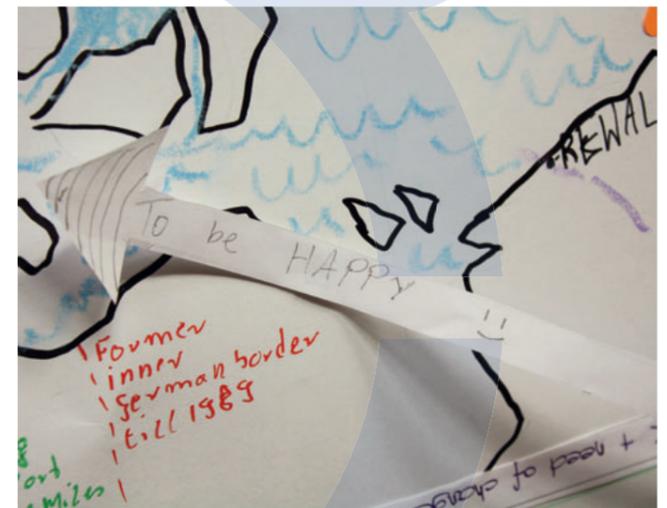
In Aberdeenshire, SSAMIS has created a platform for migrants to represent themselves, their lives and their everyday experiences by developing an exhibition, 'Journeys' for the Arbutnot Museum in Peterhead (14 October 2016 – 9 January 2017). The museum has a collection of artefacts reflecting Peterhead's whaling and fishing past, but nothing that shows the impact of recent migration to the town, nor the experiences of migrants themselves. The migrant community is also underrepresented in visitor numbers.

'Journeys' was created by SSAMIS, in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council Museums Service, and Caged Beastie, Creative Artists. The exhibition contains artefacts loaned by participants in the original research and other materials co-created by participants in the 'Make It Happen, Peterhead!' café. It includes portraits, a film, a 'living map' which is a visual representation of people's migratory journeys across Europe, and a collection of 'objects from home' on loan from project participants. Further materials will be developed through workshops and events linked to the exhibition which addresses key questions arising from our research: Why do people from other countries move to Scotland? What would you say to welcome new people to Scotland? What makes a place feel like home? How can we make newcomers feel more at home in Scotland? Visitors to the exhibition are invited to write a welcome message to migrants in the North East. The materials developed for 'Journeys' are being used widely in dissemination events and community engagement opportunities across Scotland, including Celebrating the Difference, Fraserburgh (17 September 2016); Explorathon '16 – 'Kelvingrove unlocked' at the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow (30 September 2016); Scottish Rural Parliament, Brechin (6-8 October 2016).

Materials co-produced during 'Make It Happen, Angus!' will also form the basis of an exhibition, to be held in a local museum in early 2017 after which the two exhibitions combined will tour other local, national and possibly international venues.



The 'Living map' became a central feature of our 'Make It Happen' initiatives.



Participants added photos, comments and feelings about their experiences of places and moving between places to the map.



**SSAMIS**  
Social Support and  
Migration in Scotland

For more information about any aspect of the project or to contact the team please visit our website: [www.glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis)

Follow us on facebook: [www.facebook.com/SSAMISproject](https://www.facebook.com/SSAMISproject) and Twitter @ssamisproject

Or contact our project administrator, [ssamisadmin@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:ssamisadmin@glasgow.ac.uk)

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