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Submission to the APPG on Social Integration call for evidence – inquiry into immigration and integration

This submission comes from a team of researchers working on the Social Support and Migration in Scotland project team (SSAMIS, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis/>): Prof. Rebecca Kay, Dr. Moya Flynn, and Dr. Paulina Trevena from the University of Glasgow, and Dr. Sergei Shubin, Dr. Holly Porteous, and Ms. Claire Needler from Swansea University). Our 4-year ESRC-funded study (2013-2017) focuses on migrants from Central and Eastern Europe living in both urban (Glasgow and Aberdeen) and rural (Angus and Aberdeenshire) areas of Scotland and covers a broad variety of issues impacting on their everyday lives, including access to ESOL courses and integration. In the course of the research we have spoken to over 200 migrants and 60 experts and conducted observations at workplaces, sites of service provision and places where people meet socially. Based on our research results, we would like to share some recommendations applicable to this call.

Moreover, one of the researchers on the SSAMIS project, Dr Paulina Trevena, will be carrying out a project with the Scottish Parliament exploring the rationale behind and opportunities for introducing a Scotland-wide inclusive integration policy for migrants arriving/living in the country. This project will run September 2017-July 2018, and Dr Trevena will be happy to share the results with the APPG on Social Integration upon its completion.

Ad. 1. ESOL provision

- a) Improvements to provision. In order to increase effectiveness of provision, ESOL programmes should ideally be:
 - led by trained professionals with sound knowledge and experience of teaching ESOL (volunteers included);
 - made as practical as possible with focus on language learners' needs and on communication in action, e.g. through applying the social practice model of learning;
 - sites of gaining local knowledge, e.g. through use of real-life materials in teaching (such as leaflets about recycling in the area, housing opportunities etc.);
 - complemented by informal learning and mixing with native speakers.
- b) Businesses employing a large percentage of migrant workers with no English or low levels of English should support their language learning by co-operating with local language providers (such as Workers Educational Association, WEA). Language provision is often available to business yet providers encounter a number of problems in offering such delivery, for example:
 - many businesses do not wish to engage with language providers at all (even if courses are offered to them for free or at a low cost and over a short period of time);
 - businesses typically agree to the language courses on their premises only taking place directly before or after a shift. This often puts additional pressure on learners as shift work typically starts very early and/or finishes late and involves 8-10 hours of work. This does not support successful learning as the course attendants are

simply too tired to learn. The overwhelming majority of businesses are not willing to allocate any of the non-English speaking staff's work time to language learning, which would be the best solution for both providers and learners;

- many businesses struggle to provide suitable premises for course delivery: courses often take place e.g. in meeting rooms which are not always available during agreed course time (business meetings take precedence).
- c) College-based ESOL usually provides high-quality teaching but is not available to many learners due to affordability, working patterns, childcare issues and limited availability (demand is constantly higher than supply). Moreover, it rarely provides learners with the opportunity to mix and establish meaningful links with the local community as part of the educational experience. Community-based learning is often run by untrained volunteers who may not have the right skills and/or experience to teach but usually provides more opportunities for becoming part of the community.

Ad. 2. Barriers to participation in language provision

Most common barriers to participation in language courses:

- timing and lack of flexibility of classroom-based courses (especially for shift workers whose shifts change regularly hence making it impossible to attend courses at the same time every week);
- childcare issues (lack of childcare provision and scarce opportunities for family learning);
- transport (especially in rural areas) – links, access, affordability;
- affordability, especially of full-time College courses (learners often need to move from full-time to part-time working arrangements when taking up a course at College and many learners cannot afford to do this);
- accessing information about available courses (including the language barrier!).

Possible solutions to the above barriers are:

- provide opportunities for more flexible learning (e.g. courses running at different times of the day, e.g. morning and evening or classroom-based courses complemented by online courses);
- provide more family-learning or (affordable) childcare options for adult learners;
- provide more free/low-cost courses;
- incentivise employers to provide more opportunities for workplace learning (formal or informal);
- improved marketing of available courses, including producing information material in other languages;
- improving the registration process for language courses, especially in big cities, which would enable different providers to share information on available spaces and allocate these more effectively.

Ad. 3. Devolution of immigration policy.

a) To what extent could some of the responsibility for immigration be transferred to devolved governments, metro-regions, Local Enterprise Partnerships, or groups of local authorities?

Scotland, as opposed to most other parts of the UK, needs migrants to sustain its demographic and economic growth (Scottish Government 2013). There is great concern in the region about the impact

of Brexit and curbing migration to Scotland on its economy, particularly in certain areas and industry sectors which rely heavily on migrant labour. Local authorities across Scotland have noted the social, demographic and community diversity benefits of migration and therefore a UK-wide approach focused primarily (if not exclusively) on the economic impacts of migration and labour force needs may be less appropriate (COSLA 2016). Local authorities are already largely responsible for issues relating to community development, language provision, integration, but these responsibilities do not currently come with appropriate powers regarding a devolved model of migration policy. Therefore, a regional migration policy seems as the most sensible solution to Scotland.

b) How might the establishment of a regionally led immigration system impact, positively or negatively, on levels of integration?

There is a growing body of research pointing to the fact that integration takes place at local level (Penninx et. al 2004, Penninx 2009, Caponio and Borkert 2010). Therefore, the responsibility for supporting integration should lie above all with the local authorities, especially as the local context differs greatly between councils (and wards within councils) in terms of levels of migration, resident populations, their needs and locally available resources. Considering this, a local integration policy (or strategy) which would be able to take this specific context into account would positively support levels of integration. Nevertheless, these local policies (strategies) should be designed in line with a shared vision of integration and linked to national level mechanisms which would support sharing of good practice and systems for addressing local issues.

Indeed, the SSAMIS research has shown a need for greater support for integration at neighbourhood/local level both in large cities and small towns. Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe often work in highly segregated workplaces (with a predominantly migrant workforce) where they have little scope for learning English or meeting people from the local community. A number of our interviewees have mentioned the desire to make more Scottish/British 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. Thus, providing public, family-friendly and safe spaces where migrants could establish meaningful links with other people from the community as part of a local integration strategy would greatly improve the process of integration and fostering good community relations.

Since having strong links with others in the community are crucial to developing a sense of well-being and feelings of belonging in a new country, we are currently working towards creating opportunities for people to come together and establish such links (please see links to blog posts on the initiatives below). As follows from our research and community work, a social integration strategy including all categories of migrants (asylum seeker and refugees, economic migrants, students, those arriving as family members) and engaging directly with members of the long-settled community which would be implemented at a local level would be highly beneficial for the UK.

For further information on SSAMIS community initiatives:

<http://www.europenowjournal.org/2017/01/31/language-cafes-as-a-site-of-wider-cultural-integration/>

<https://gramnet.wordpress.com/2017/01/19/and-making-it-happen-in-angus/>

c) How might it impact on the political and public debate on immigration issues?

The SSAMIS research shows that people coming to live in the UK often come across negative portrayals of who they are which are supported by the overwhelmingly negative discourse on immigration dominant in the mainstream media. 'They come here and they go on benefits, they steal our jobs, they get housing' are the types of portrayals many migrants in the UK are faced with. Meanwhile, the experiences and perspectives of migrants themselves often remain little understood. Here again a local integration policy would be of benefit as it would provide scope for people to actually establish links with one another rather than make assumptions about one another and support mutual understanding rather than maintaining negative myths. Therefore, it supports a more informed political and public debate on migration.

One of the examples of a locally-led initiative which supports community building was the SSAMIS 'Journeys' exhibition. As mentioned earlier, our research found that there is little visibility of migrants in the public space in many areas where they have settled, and in areas of 'new migration' in particular. At the same time, several of our research 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 led SSAMIS to create a platform for migrants to represent themselves, their lives and their everyday experiences by developing an exhibition called 'Journeys' for the Arbuthnot Museum in Peterhead in partnership with a number of local organisations. 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', an exhibition containing artefacts loaned by study participants and other co-created materials included workshops and public events. It was an example of creating a space for reflection: 'Why do people move to Scotland? What does it feel like? How can we make newcomers Scotland?' The feedback from the Museum was very positive: visitor numbers were high, people found the exhibition interesting, and it drew in people from migrant communities as well. Therefore, this initiative is an example of how partnership working at local level can improve mutual understanding and support community building.