

The Housing Needs of Migrant Workers in Devon

April 2008

by

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Contents

	Page number
Abstract	2
Introduction	4
Methods	7
Results	17
Conclusions	87
Key findings	90
Tables	92
Figures	97
Appendices	99
References	111

Abstract

This research explores the accommodation issues of migrant workers in Devon, the vast majority of which are Polish. It focuses on the housing needs (needs, aspirations and demands) of migrant workers in Devon and considers the issues that may have caused situations of housing need.

The housing experiences of migrant workers are most often determined by their immigration status and the restrictions surrounding their initial entry into the U.K., migrant workers from Eastern Europe have restricted entry that impacts on their ability to apply for benefits in the first twelve months that they are here. The result is that they seek out places to live through the private rented sector or move into temporary accommodation with friends or family until they find suitable employment to allow them to afford rented accommodation of their own.

Accommodation tied to employment was often found to be rife with problems, including poor living conditions, overcrowding, insecurity and lack of privacy. Racial harassment in all housing sectors was found to be common. Language barriers seriously limit the ability to get the information they need for help and support.

Conversely, many migrant workers are well educated, hard-working and exhibit great amounts of resourcefulness. Some of those who have been here the longest are now in a better position economically, their level of English has improved and they are more settled. Their housing issues have shifted from

what was once a very bad situation three or four years ago when the A8 first joined the EU in 2004 to that now of looking to buy property in Devon and settle down with their partners and have, or looking to have, children of their own.

The field research and authorship of this report was sub-contracted by Involve: the Voluntary Action for Mid-Devon, to two members of the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton. The researchers are migrant workers themselves under the definition for 'migrant worker' used in this report. As such, they were able to bring to this research a valuable 'insider's view' of the housing needs of the migrant worker community, a depth of cultural awareness, relevant language skills and experience to liaise with the diverse and hard to reach migrant worker population in Devon.

The Housing Needs of Migrant Workers in Devon

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This report presents the findings from research conducted to obtain information about the housing needs of migrant workers in Devon (excluding Plymouth and Torquay). The research was funded by Supporting People and commissioned by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group. Tiverton's Involve was contracted to oversee the research that was sub-contracted to The Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton.

There is little in-depth literature on the subject housing needs for migrant workers in Devon. Historically, surveys of the housing needs of any specific BME group are unusual as the sampling of BME households is normally too small to warrant funded research (Cambridge City Council *Housing Strategy 2007-2012*, p. 21). Recent research of a more general nature for the South West region has touched upon housing issues (Scoping the Issues, Observatory publication). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has recently provided an in-depth study of the housing pathways of new immigrants and their settlement in the U.K., which was complemented by a more specific study relating to the housing pathways of Polish new immigrants in Sheffield. But information of the housing needs of migrant workers in Devon has been lacking. With the large numbers of migrant workers now living in Devon this

research is vital and it is hoped that the evidence provided will assist in gaining a better understanding of how best to address the key issues.

Devon has long been a place of cultural richness and diversity. Generally speaking, the process of infusion of new blood has in the past been gradual and dominated by a narrower range of ethnicity. After the Second World War, for example, Devon became home to thousands of Polish people in exile, who, under Churchill's Resettlement Act of 1947, came to live in resettlement camps that remained quite isolated from the rest of the Devon community. The Polish resettlement camp outside Newton Abbot was home to many hundreds of Poles until its closure in 1991, at which time they were moved just a stone's throw away to what is now the Ilford Park Polish Veteran's Home. In the fifties and sixties immigration to the UK was dominated by people from the New Commonwealth, from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, places that were historically familiar to the British. Resettlement camps for Ugandan refugees were also established in Devon in the early seventies, and migrants from China form one of the largest ethnic minorities now living in Devon.

The last fifteen years, however, has seen growing numbers of people migrating to Britain from a much wider array of places around the globe. Devon County Council reports that there are over 60 different languages currently spoken in Devon.

(http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/pupil_support/english_as_additional_language.htm).

The need to address these current changes is reflected by government legislation. Since 1993 there have been six Acts of Parliament that directly relate to issues surrounding immigration and asylum. The policy of dispersing asylum seekers during 2002-2004 has led many asylum seekers who have been dispersed to Devon (principally Plymouth and Exeter) to settle here after they gained refugee status. Many refugees in Devon are Afghan and Turkish Kurdish, but there are also many others coming from Africa and South East Asia as well. Whilst asylum seekers are not allowed rights to benefits and housing, refugees are.

Ten new countries joined the EU in 2004. These are: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Those regarded as the so-called Accession 8, or A8, are the eight former Eastern European countries, and which do not obviously include Cyprus or Malta. In 2007, Romania and Bulgaria also joined the EU. The Home Office allows the residents of all EU countries the right to live and work in this country, although restrictions apply to those from what is known as the Accession 8 countries and Bulgarian and Romanian Nationals (See Appendix 2 : Home Office Worker Registration Scheme). East Anglia, London and the South West are the top three destinations in the U.K. for these groups.¹The largest influx of people coming to live and work in the U.K. has been among Polish nationals, a phenomenon that has not escaped rural Devon. Although exact numbers are not known, Poles are now considered the largest single ethnic minority in the region although total figures are unreliable because

¹ According to Cambridge City Council *Housing Strategy 2007-2012*, p. 19.

there is no system in place to calculate numbers of immigrants who are returning home.

The reasons for these numbers of people coming to Devon are as varied as the cultures they represent. Many, like those from Eastern Europe, are young and single, looking for a better way of life (See questionnaire Q.7, Q14); they may be educated to degree level in their own country but speak little or no English (see questionnaire Q11). Others come as refugees fleeing violence, civil war and political oppression; many in this group belong to an older age group, and some are with large families or who are seeking to bring their families over. There are those who entered the U.K under the highly skilled migrant worker programme.² Others from North America or countries in the Commonwealth may speak English as their first language, but just as any other foreign national, lack knowledge about where to get basic information or how to navigate through the complexities of the British system of benefits and social housing support (see case study 'Jill').

Methods

Sampling

The target population were migrant workers mainly, but not exclusively, from Eastern Europe, although the Devon Scoping report showed that the majority of migrant workers were likely to be from Poland.

² As of 29 February 2008 the HSMW Programme is now a points based system. For more information about the new eligibility requirements go to the Home Office website:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/pointsbasedsystem/>

Design

The research included a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, the former, to obtain a representative sample, and the latter, for in-depth information.

A questionnaire was used as a quantitative method, distributed to migrant workers through informal networks and meetings and was also made available on-line. The questionnaire incorporated both open and closed questions and could be completed with total anonymity to allow migrant workers to express their true feelings without concerns that they might be identified. There was space at the end of the questionnaire, however, that allowed respondents to leave their contact details if they wished to receive information about further practical support and also to have a copy of the completed report.

Focus groups were held to obtain more detailed information of the housing issues of migrant workers. These were facilitated by a community development worker and APL researchers and used the survey questions to explore this area.

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted in order to follow up on specific cases and obtain more detailed information regarding the experiences and needs of migrant workers who agreed to be included in this research as case studies.

Additional information was also gathered from consultations with a variety of sources including, landlords, letting agents, diversity officers, town councillors, housing associations, and homelessness managers. Researchers also met with Devon Racial Equality Officers, the National Rural Development Officer and regional Managers for Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Heads of Equality and Employment Rights of the TUC.

For the purpose of this research the following operational definitions were used for 'immigrant', 'migrant workers' and 'housing needs':

There is no legal definition for the term 'immigrant' and no single accepted definition for 'migrant worker'. The term 'migrant worker' is often taken to mean a low-paid, agricultural labourer who is not from the U.K. It was decided that clarification of the term as it was to be used in this report was needed and in order to maintain a degree of consistency with other migrant worker research conducted in the region the authors of this report decided to use the same definition of the term 'migrant worker' that was employed by the Local Intelligence Network Cornwall in research they published in 2006. Their definition, which is based upon that used by the Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University, is as follows:

"Migrant workers are defined as those people, born outside the U.K., who have come to the U.K., within the last five years, specifically to find or take up employment (including both manual and professional), whether intending to remain permanently or temporarily and regardless of whether documented or undocumented." (Local Intelligence Network Cornwall 2006, p. 4)

This definition captures much of the complexity of the meaning of the term 'migrant worker'. It encompasses the range of people now coming to Devon from a variety of countries including, but not limited to, those from the Accession 8 countries. Poles are now arguably the largest ethnic minority in Devon, but as this research shows, there are also representative numbers of others coming to live and work in Devon from ethnic backgrounds from around the globe.

The term 'housing need' in this report refers to the commonly accepted definition used by Devon District Councils.³ People in housing need are those:

- Living in overcrowded or in unsanitary and unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- With a particular need for settled accommodation due to medical or welfare grounds;
- Whose social/economic circumstances are such that they have a particular difficulty in finding settled accommodation;
- Need to move to a particular location within the local authority's district where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others;
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness to whom the Council owe a duty.

People with housing needs, therefore, are those "households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, and who

³ For example, Teignbridge District Council, *Register of Housing Need*, updated document, October 2007, p. 3.

are unlikely to be able to meet their needs in the housing market without some assistance” (Bramley and Pawson 2000, p. 116).

The questionnaire solicited information from migrant workers for gaining an understanding of issues related to their accommodation and relevant to addressing their housing needs. Housing related questions were contextualised by questions within the survey that gathered generic information on the respondent’s profile, personal and working situations and their intentions of remaining in Devon.

A framework of questions to be included in the survey was provided by the commissioning body in order to cover issues of specific interest, such as housing condition, experience of evictions, and housing in multiple occupancy homes (HMOs). (See appendix 3 for key questions).

All questions were addressed in the survey, with the exception of that which asked about eviction. This was thought too culturally sensitive for some groups of migrant workers, perhaps leading to misunderstandings regarding the motives behind the information gathering of the research. Information regarding any evictions was gathered instead by more discrete means, either through focus groups or face-to-face interviews where migrant workers would be more willing to provide the background to the reasons of any eviction issue.

The questionnaire consisted of 52 questions. The first 14 questions asked for background information from the respondent, including country of origin, the location where they live now (including postcode), language spoken at home, age, marital status and number of dependent children, and their plans to remain in the U.K.

Questions 15-to 21 asked for general information about their accommodation, including the type of housing they live in, whether or not they pay council tax and utilities, their tenancy agreement, and where they would go to find a place to live.

Questions 22—to 28 asked more specific questions about their housing conditions, such as number of bedrooms and living areas, number of lavatories, the availability of parking, how their accommodation was heated and were smoke alarms fitted.

Questions 29-to 33 served to discover more sensitive information about racial harassment, discrimination, multiple occupancy, etc.

Questions 34—to 44 aimed to gather information about how well migrant workers understood their housing rights, housing legislation, issues regarding homelessness and what difficulties they have had that have involved the rules and agreements between tenants, landlords, and housing tied to employment.

Questions 45 to 49 addressed issues regarding the cost of housing, if migrant workers have moved and the reasons why, and what difficulties they might have accessing services on account of the accommodation where they live now.

Questions 50 to 52 allowed space for further comment and asked whether the respondents wanted further help and support.

Procedure

The Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton (APL) was in a position of advantage to do this work as prior links had already been made between APL and the large Polish community throughout Devon. APL had also established community trust on account of their regular provision of practical support and a well-attended Thursday drop-in centre, the provision of community based English language tuition, their foundation of an Anglo-Polish Saturday School which has a current enrolment of 1 English, 6 Anglo-Polish, and 37 Polish pupils who come from all corners of Devon, and the setting up of a regular monthly Polish mass in Tiverton. The existing contact APL had with the Polish community provided a vital starting point to make links to migrant workers of other mixed nationalities.

The research covered Devon and Exeter with a focus on rural areas. The places where clusters of migrant workers lived were successfully identified in order to conduct interviews, distribute questionnaires and arrange focus group meetings for the purpose of gathering relevant information about the housing

issues and needs of migrant workers. The names of the migrant workers who were interviewed for the purpose of providing case studies have been changed to protect their anonymity, actual addresses or street names are not referred to. The town or district where they live, however, has remained the same.

It was considered that one important factor in determining where they might live was where they were employed. Many migrant workers are employed through recruitment agencies licensed by the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority (GLA). To a certain degree, research relied on the location of GLA licensed recruitment agencies across Devon to offer some indication not only of the places where migrant workers are employed, but also where they were likely to live, especially with regard to accommodation tied to their employment. At the same time, the research recognised that where migrant workers are employed through GLA licensed recruitment agencies it is not always a positive indicator of where they live.

The style and content of the questionnaire was adapted to the target audience which was primarily Eastern European, principally Polish, but also partly Slovakian. In so doing, the questionnaire was first written in Polish then subsequently translated into Slovakian and finally English. Assistance was given to those needing help with the questionnaire in English. Surveys were distributed to individuals coming in to APL for drop-in support, at community meetings, focus groups, at Abacus Recruitment in Tiverton, after Polish masses held around Devon, and to individuals members of the Polish

community living elsewhere in Devon who are in contact with other migrant worker communities. Distribution of the questionnaires took place between December 2007 and March 2008. The majority of questionnaires were completed by hand and the results later put into Survey Monkey, an online survey generator for tabulation.

Migrant workers are regarded as a hard to reach group separated by cultural experiences and lesser-known languages unfamiliar to established Devon communities, who themselves often speak in an English dialect equally unfamiliar to those foreign nationals who have studied English in school.

Gathering migrant workers together to discuss their housing issues and needs, however, was facilitated through scheduled meetings arranged through APL and Magda Koscielak, an NHS community development worker in Exeter. Eight focus groups were held; one in Okehampton, two in Exeter, one in Newton Abbot, and four in Tiverton. As many migrant workers do not have access to the Internet or telephone landlines at home they were often contacted by means of text messaging through their mobiles. Polish shops that are willing to display posters were also relied upon as a means of communicating announcements of meetings. Additional announcements were also posted on the regional Polish portal www.exeter.pl for those who do have access to the Internet.

The focus groups used the questions in the housing survey as a basis for gathering information about the participants, but there was also discussion in far greater detail of more sensitive issues about their housing experiences,

their needs and aspirations. Two of the four meetings held in Tiverton focussed on the specific issue of renting accommodation in Devon. The other focus groups were more informally structured and covered a wide range of housing issues, problems and questions about housing needs including benefits, homelessness, conditions, tenants rights, problems with landlords and applying to get on the housing register

Some of these discussions included migrant workers from Albania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and the United States, as well as Polish migrant workers. The focus groups, however, were conducted either in Polish or English, and those who spoke other languages were able to join in the discussions either through friends or partners who acted as their interpreters or they knew enough of one or the other language to be able participate independently.

Migrant workers who attended the focus groups were generally happy to have the opportunity to learn more about housing pathways in Devon. A range of leaflets about safety in the home, tenants rights and housing, including the many helpful brochures published by Communities and Local Government, were made available to migrant workers in a variety of languages. They appreciated the information that was shared with them and grateful for the opportunity to be able to express any concerns they had and have their questions answered. Most expressed interest in further meetings about how to receive additional information and practical support.

Several interviews were conducted in the home of migrant workers, including that of “Andrzej”, “Jill”, and “Kasia and Janusz”.

Results

121 detailed questionnaires in English, Polish and Slovakian were distributed, collected and the results tabulated. In-depth qualitative face-to-face interviews were undertaken, some of whose stories form the content of the case studies. Focus groups and community meetings allowed the researchers to gather more sensitive information that might not otherwise be gained from questionnaires alone.

Not all questions were answered by the respondents; these gaps will be reflected in the final percentages of the research analysis.

Information about the housing needs of migrant workers was gathered from focus groups, face-to-face interviews and questionnaires. Information gathered from the groups and the interviews was combined together and is reported here in italics after each response to the questionnaire.

Q1. Where are you from?

Of the 121 responses collected, 96 of the respondents were Polish. The significant number is a reflection of very large influx of Poles that are now living in Devon. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was translated into

Slovakian, the number of Slovakian respondents was only 6. Questionnaires in English were completed by respondents of the following nationalities, some of whom required assistance in answering questions on account of their lack of ability to read or understand English. Afghanistan (3), Canada (2), China (4), Egypt (1), Iraqi/Kurdish (1), Libya (1), Portugal (1), Romania (2), Thailand (1), Turkey (1), United States (2). (See Table 1)

The vast majority of migrant workers who participated in housing focus groups or who were available for face-to-face interviews, arranged through APL or through Exeter CVS were Polish. A larger number of Slovaks than that which what is represented in the survey results participated in the research, as they are able to understand Polish in varying degrees (the languages are not unrelated). Also attending focus groups or who were available for face-to-face interviews, but who are not represented in the survey results included an Albanian, several members of the Turkish/Kurdish community, a Bengali, people from the Czech Republic, a Hungarian and some Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians.

Q2. What is the region you come from?

The researchers felt that it was important to learn where the Polish migrant worker majority was coming from. Was it one particular region in Poland or was it a more general phenomenon?. There are sixteen provinces or regions in Poland; Dolnoslaskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lodzkie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Malopolskie, Mazowieckie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Pomorskie,

Slaskie, Swietokrzyskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie, Wielkopolskie, Zachodniopomorskie. (See figure 1)

61 Polish migrant workers responded to this question and although the range of answers covers nearly all the regions of Poland, the majority of Polish responses indicated that they came from the north of Poland, whose major capitals include Warsaw, Torun and Gdansk.

Understanding the fundamental reasons behind migration can be useful for gaining an understanding the housing need of migrant workers in Devon both in the long and short term. Knowing where people come from often provide clues to the reasons for leaving their country of origin and relocating elsewhere. Although this research does not go into the details of these findings it was felt that the information provided here might offer a useful starting point for further study.

Q3. What language do you speak at home?

Out of 121 respondents, only two people, who were of Polish origin, omitted to answer this question. One cannot assume that these two continue to speak Polish at home whilst living in Britain because they may live with English speakers or have an English speaking partner.

A total of 13 different languages are represented in this survey. They include: 97 Polish speakers, 2 speakers of American English, 1 bilingual Canadian English/French, 3 Chinese, 1 Libyan Arabic, 3 Afghan speakers of Farsi, 1

Iraqi-Kurdish speaker of Bardini, 1 Turkish, 1 Thai, 2 Romanian, 1 Portuguese, 6 Slovak.

In discussions with North American migrant workers who spoke English as their first language it should be emphasised that they felt that language per se did not always mean that they understood English as it is spoken in Britain. Although it helped them access information more easily, housing terminology, housing legislation, and the structure of the social housing system was something completely unfamiliar to them.

Language is not just a matter of syntax and grammar, but also is expressive of cultural expectations and understanding, which is not often understood by those who come from outside a specific cultural context.

During focus groups and face-to-face interviews it was clear that the majority of migrant workers have less than a lower intermediate level of English. This was certainly true of most of the Polish migrant workers who have come here in large numbers, who work with other migrant workers who also speak Polish, and therefore have little opportunity, motivation or incentive to learn English. Migrant workers of other nationalities who come here in smaller numbers have less opportunity to speak their own language and therefore have had to learn English in order to survive.

The principal languages presently taught in schools in most Eastern European countries, represented by migrant workers living in Devon, are English and Russian; English language learning in schools in these Eastern European

countries, however, is still a relatively recent phenomenon. Those over the age of 21 are likely to have studied Russian, or another Slavonic language, in schools and so have little fundamental knowledge of English outside of what they know from the television or the internet.

Whilst younger people are able to learn languages more easily than those who are middle-aged and older, neither group it was observed have the exposure they need to facilitate access to services and information which would enable them to engage more fully in finding suitable accommodation whilst living in Devon.

Q4. What is your gender?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	55.1%	65
Female	44.9%	53
Answered question		118
Skipped question		3

Of the 121 respondents, 3 people omitted to answer this question. The response was 55.1% male and 44.9% female, reflecting national trends regarding the dominance of males among migrant workers coming to Britain.

From the information we have gathered from focus groups, however, the gap in this trend seems to be closing as the partners and spouses of male migrant workers are now coming to Devon to live with them.

Q5. Where do you live and what is your postcode if you know it?

	Response Percent	Response Count
City	25.4%	30
Town	64.4%	76
Village	10.2%	12
Postcode		101
Answered question		118
Skipped question		3

Of the total number of respondents to this questionnaire, 118 indicated whether they lived in a city 25.4%, town 64.4% or village 10.2%. 101 also provided either the name of the place where they lived or the postcode, or both. (See table 2).

Eight focus groups were held; one in Okehampton, two in Exeter, one in Newton Abbot, and four in Tiverton. There is a paucity of places where migrant workers are able to meet outside of their employment. Places of employment were considered to be inappropriate for focus groups that might involve discussions concerning issues or problems that concerned accommodation tied to employment.

One focus group was held at the home of two key members of the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton who live in a workers cottage (tied accommodation) on a large estate outside Okehampton. Another focus group was held at the home of a migrant worker living in Newton Abbot. Two focus groups were held in Exeter, one of which involved an informational meeting at Exeter CVS. Four focus groups were held at APL in Tiverton. APL, together with the formative Migrant Worker Network that meets in Exeter, are at

present the only places in Devon where migrant workers from Poland and elsewhere recognise as place where they can meet and share information.

As well as questionnaires that were completed at these meetings, much in-depth and sensitive information was shared, and gaps in knowledge were filled.

(See figure 2 for places, postcodes, or places with postcodes, where they were given)

Q6. What is your age?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 21	4.1%	5
21-30	55.4%	67
31-40	19.0%	23
41-50	14.9%	18
Over 50	6.6%	8
Answered question		121
Skipped question		0

The table illustrates the relative youth of migrant workers who completed this survey, the largest percentage of which were aged between 21 and 30 (55.4%) and who are represented by 67 out of the 121 respondents. The smallest percentage (4.1%) represented by 5 respondents, is less than 21 years of age. The second lowest percentage finds itself at the opposite end of the age range with 8 respondents, 6.6% of the migrant workers in the survey indicating that they are over 50. 19.0% indicated that they are between the ages of 31 and 40, and 14.9% indicated that they are between the ages of 41 and 50.

The reasons for the disproportionate number of migrant workers over the age of 50 are unclear. One reason may be that unmarried, but partnered younger migrant workers answered the questionnaires individually, whilst older migrant workers living as married couples or as partners answered only one questionnaire between the two of them. Although younger migrant workers predominate, APL is aware that there is a proportionally larger population of older (above 50) migrant workers than is generally recognised and the numbers are growing as the parents and older relatives of young migrant workers are coming to join them.

Q7. What is your marital status?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Single	53.0%	62
Married	36.8%	43
Living with partner	3.4%	4
Divorced	5.1%	6
Widowed	1.7%	2
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

62 migrant workers who completed this survey (53%) said they were single, 43 respondents (36.8%) said they were married. Only four respondents said they were living with their partner, because the question was understood as meaning 'in a civil partnership'. 6 respondents (5.1%) indicated that they were divorced, and 2 (1.7%) said they were widowed. 4 respondents omitted to answer this question.

Q8. What is the number in your family?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I am single	38.5%	45
1	2.6%	3
2	13.7%	16
3	17.9%	21
4	13.7%	16
5	8.5%	10
More than 5	5.1%	6
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

117 out of 121 respondents gave an answer to this question. 45 respondents (38.5%) said that they were the only one in their family. 3 respondents (2.6%) said that there was one other in their family besides than themselves. 16 respondents (13.7%) said that there were two others in their family. 21 respondents said that there were 3 others besides themselves in their family. Another 16 (13.7%) said that there were four others beside themselves in their family. 10 respondents (8.5%) said that there were 5 others beside themselves, and 6 respondents said that there were more than 5 others in their family beside themselves.

This question was liable to be ambiguous to migrant workers as meaning several different things: either it meant to ask them the number in their family living with them, or the number in their family altogether whether or not their partners, spouses or children were living with them at present or if they remained living in their country of origin. The answers that were received

therefore were a cause for confusion in the interpretation of the results of this questionnaire.

Q9. Who do you live with?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Live alone	7.6%	9
Live with your partner or spouse	33.1%	39
Live with your family	38.1%	45
Live with other individuals	31.4%	37
How many other individuals live with you?		38
Answered question		118
Skipped question		3

Of the 121 respondents to this questionnaire, 118 answers to this question were received. 38.1% (45 respondents) said they lived with their family. 33.1% (39 respondents) said that they lived with their partner or spouse. 31.4% (37 respondents) said they lived with other individuals, and only 7.6% (9 respondents) said that they lived alone.

38 comments were received with regard to how many other individuals lived with the respondent. 1 respondent said they lived with 20 other individuals; 1 respondent said they lived with 6 other individuals; 2 said they lived with 5 other individuals; 12 respondents said that they lived with 4 other individuals; 5 respondents live with 3 other individuals; 9 respondents said they live with 2 others; 3 said one other individual; 1 respondent replied he was homeless; and 1 said she was pregnant.

Q10. How many children do you have?

	Response Percent	Response Count
1	15.0%	18
2	16.7%	20
3	10.0%	12
4	0.8%	1
5	3.3%	4
6 or more	0.0%	0
None	54.2%	65
Answered question		120
Skipped question		1

54.2% of the migrant workers who responded to this questionnaire said they did not have children, leaving a considerable 45.8% who said that they did. 15% of the migrant workers (18 respondents) in this survey said they had 1 child, 16.7% (20 respondents) said they had 2, and 10% (12 respondents) said they had 3 children. One respondent (0.8%) said they had 4 children, and 4 respondents (3.3%) said they had a family of five children. None of the respondents indicated they had more than 6 children and only one out of the total number of 121 respondents to this questionnaire did not answer the question.

From focus groups and interviews it would appear that an increasing number of younger migrant workers are deciding to have families. Several young women we interviewed are pregnant and have been coming to APL for practical support wanting to find out more about maternity leave from work and benefits they are eligible to receive. Not all are married but are living here with their partners. Numbers of young couples are getting married or are planning to get married and of this number there will be many who will go on

to have children, and should they decide to remain in Devon there will be a need for them to find accommodation suitable for a young family.

*Some young female migrant workers who are pregnant for the first time are finding themselves in difficult housing situations because they are having to take substantial steps to change their present living situation in order to move into accommodation more suitable for the needs of a family (see **Case Study: Kasia and Janusz**).*

Q11. What is your level of education?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Primary	6.8%	8
Secondary	25.6%	30
High school	42.7%	50
University	23.9%	28
Professional qualification	0.9%	1
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

The survey indicates that migrant workers living in Devon are well educated. A majority (42.7%) have indicated that they have finished High School, but a considerable number (25.6%) have university degrees and one respondent said that they had a professional qualification. 25.6% of the respondents had completed Secondary School; only a few migrant workers had not gone on to secondary school (6.8%). Four respondents left this question blank.

Focus groups bear out the fact that many migrant workers coming to Devon are highly educated but are only able to take on unskilled work in factories

because their level of English is just elementary. Migrant workers who participated in focus groups included chemists, legal professionals, teachers, mechanical and electrical engineers, speech therapists, mechanics, business students, nurses and other medical professionals, computer technicians and several with university degrees in the humanities.

Q12. How long have you been in the UK?

	Response Percent	Response Count
9-12 months	10.4%	10
6-9 months	7.3%	7
3-6 months	3.1%	3
Less than 3 months	8.3%	8
1-2 years	28.1%	27
3-4 years	34.4%	33
4-9 years	7.3%	7
More than 10 years	2.1%	2
Other		27
Answered question		96
Skipped question		25

A majority (34.4%) of the respondents to this questionnaire answered that they have been in the U.K between 3 and 4 years. 28.1% have been here between 1 and 2 years, and just a little over that amount (28.3%) have been here under one year. 9.4% of the respondents answered that they have been in the U.K. more than 4 years, with 2 respondents (2.1%) who said that they had been here 10 years or more. 25 respondents left this question blank.

(See Table 3)

Q13. Are you planning to stay in the UK?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.4%	43
No	22.6%	26
I don't know	40.0%	46
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

40% of the respondents did not know if they would remain here or not.

37.4% of the respondents said “Yes”. 22.6% of the respondents said “No”.

6 respondents did not give an answer to this question.

From an analysis of the questionnaire results and from discussions with migrant workers themselves, the longer the length of their stay the more likely a migrant worker will decide to remain. Those from Eastern European countries who are here less than one year are still registered under the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) and are often not settled either at work or in more permanent accommodation and are more likely to respond ‘No’ or ‘Don’t Know.’ Those who have been here for more than two years are more settled in better accommodation and are beginning to acquire a level of English that allows them to move on in their employment. Some have met English partners, whilst others have children who have started school here making it difficult to decide to move back to their country of origin where the children would have to get reacquainted to another system. A great many said that they are simply ‘fed up’ with the present economic or political situation where they come from but might consider returning home if the situation improved or if there was a means for them to earn a decent living.

In discussion with some migrant workers, Germany, which is soon to change its immigration policies, is looking like an attractive alternative to working in the U.K. Migrant workers, especially those from Eastern Europe, have indicated that they might decide to leave Devon and go to Germany instead; it is closer to 'home' and the wages are considered to be higher.

Q14. Why did you come to Devon?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Education/experience	5.2%	5
Employment	51.5%	50
Available place to live	7.2%	7
Countryside/environment	18.6%	18
Other	33.0%	32
Other (please specify)		48
Answered question		97
Skipped question		24

The majority of the migrant workers responding to this questionnaire (51.5%) answered that they had come to Devon to work. Some indicated that they came for the education or experience (5.2%) or because they had an available place to live (7.2%). 18.6% indicated that they came because of the countryside and the environment. 33% indicated other reasons for coming to Devon and 16 respondents included other reasons in addition to the reasons the questionnaire offered as answers. 24 respondents to the questionnaire did not offer any answer to the question.

Of those who indicated they had 'other' reasons for coming to Devon, the most common answer was on account of family or relatives (19 answers), of which 2 came with their parents and 1 came to follow their children who already lived here. 8 respondents indicated that they came because they had friends here. 4 came as refugees. 2 respondents came because they were placed here by an employment agency in Poland.

Several respondents mentioned that the Devon environment was a factor in coming here. Their comments include:

"beautiful place"

"quiet area"

"[Tiverton] is a really nice town."

"good climate"

"no big city"

"Weather condition"

3 respondents did not know why they came here, whilst 3 others attached the reason for being here to "fortune," "God", and "destiny". Other reasons included:

"Comenius Programme"

“low unemployment”

“better future for my children”

“came for partner / Dulverton twinning”

Q15. Do you know where to go to get advice and information about finding housing and accommodation in Devon?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes (if yes, please indicate where you would go)	58.1%	68
No	41.9%	49
If yes, where		50
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

58.1% respondents said ‘yes’; 41.9% said ‘No’. 4 respondents did not answer this question.

Of those who answered, “Yes”, to this question, most indicated that they would go to a letting agent for further advice and information (27 respondents). A further 5 indicated that they would go to either a letting agency and/or somewhere else such as the council, banks, internet, or estate agent. One indicated the local council and another indicated an estate agent.

4 answered that they would turn to newspapers, an indication perhaps that these respondents had found accommodation through this medium but did not

know about where to get advice. Only 2 said that they would turn to the Internet. 10 respondents answered that they would turn to specific supportive agencies or community groups for information and advice about finding accommodation: 4 said the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton, 1 mentioned Shelter, 3 indicated Devon Racial Equality/Devon Inclusive Housing Project and 2 said the Refugee Support Group.

Information from focus groups and interviews indicate that many migrant workers rely on a network of friends and family already living here to help them find accommodation. Finding accommodation is problematic for many who do not speak English because housing terminology and the abbreviations used in adverts is poorly understood and inaccessible to them.

It was clear from discussions with migrant workers, that many had come here not knowing where to they would find accommodation of their own, and so relied on friends or family to accommodate them in the first instance. Some who had been accommodated by employers when they came here found themselves in serious difficulties when they lost their job, several of whom had been unfairly evicted. Finding affordable accommodation at short notice on their own, then became a matter of urgency.

Although the many migrant workers who answered the questionnaire said they knew where to get information and advice about finding accommodation, it was clear from discussions with them that few in fact knew much about their rights or what questions to ask during their search for accommodation in order

to avoid being taken advantage of by landlords or letting agents. See also Q31 below.

Q16. How have you arranged your accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I rent through a Letting Agency	33.9%	39
I rent from a private Landlord	42.6%	49
I own my home	6.1%	7
I rent from my employer (is your rent deducted from your payslip)?	7.8%	9
I rent from the Local Council/Housing Authority	0.9%	1
I'm living with Friends/Family	3.5%	4
Other, please explain why you chose this means	5.2%	6
Other (please specify)		12
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

In keeping with national trends, most migrant workers who answered this survey (42.6%) said that they rent their accommodation from a private landlord. A large proportion (33.9%) said that they rent their accommodation through a letting agency. 9 respondents (7.8%) indicated that that they lived in tied accommodation provided by their employer and whose rent is deducted from their payslip. 3.5% of the respondents said that they were living with friends or family, although an additional 4 respondents who explained their circumstances in comment box labelled 'Other' also said that they were living with friends, one of whom said they were paying rent for a room in their friend's flat. (See Table 4)

Indicative of a growing trend, however, is the small but significant number of migrant workers (6.1%) who say they own their own home. Only 1 respondent (0.9%) was accommodated through the Local Council, a percentage completely in keeping with a recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see Appendix 4 and 5). 6 respondents left this question blank. One respondent commented that he was homeless. The remaining 7 respondents indicated that their accommodation was arranged through the following means:

“I live with English family, school where I work provides me with this accommodation.”

“Assists with pension.”

“My partner buys houses and renovates them, after that we sell the houses we live in houses which we renovate. When we sell a house we move to another house; we do not have a proper accommodation.”

“Flat is my own.”

“Room in a hotel.”

“I am looking for a flat now.”

“I do not pay for a flat.”

An unexpected result from in-depth discussions and focus groups is the knowledge that a handful of younger migrant workers, primarily from Poland, have bought or are in the process of buying their own property in Devon (see case study 'Karol and Ania').

The properties that they seem to be most interested in at present are one or two bedroom flats on new-build housing estates.

It is likely that a higher percentage of migrant workers live in tied accommodation provided by their employers, than is represented in the answers to this questionnaire. For example, it was through discussions with Polish migrant workers employed at a Mid-Devon meat packing company living in tied accommodation in Tiverton, that knowledge was gained regarding the bussing of large numbers of Afghan employees working at the same meat factory living in tied accommodation in Exeter. Other migrant workers employed in Devon are bussed to work in Somerset. A TUC representative we interviewed informed us of one example of a Devon factory that bussed migrant workers from their accommodation in Birmingham to their workplace.⁴ The researchers were denied access to some of the larger factories where migrant workers are employed in order to conduct focus group meetings and interviews.

⁴ This is not such uncommon practice. For other examples, see: McKay, Dr. Sonia, Marc Craw and Deepta Chopra, 2006, p. 118.

Q17. Do you live in an association or sheltered housing?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	3.6%	4
No	96.4%	107
Answered question		111
Skipped question		10

Out of the total number of 121 respondents to this survey there were 111 who answered this question. Of those who gave a response, 3.6% answered “Yes”, but the overwhelming majority (96.4%) answered “No”.

Q18. With whom did you sign a tenancy agreement?

	Response Percent	Response Count
With my landlord	41.7%	45
With a letting agency	34.3%	37
I don't know	0.9%	1
I didn't sign a tenancy agreement	23.1%	25
Answered question		108
Skipped question		13

108 of the 121 respondents to this survey answered this question. 45 respondents (41.7%) said that they signed a tenancy agreement with their landlord.

37 respondents (34.3%) said that they signed a tenancy agreement with a letting agency. 25 respondents (23.1%) answered that they did not sign a tenancy agreement, and 1 respondent (0.9%) did not know if a tenancy agreement had been signed or not.

Q19. What type of accommodation do you live in?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Multiple occupancy home	17.4%	20
House	32.2%	37
Flat	20.9%	24
Caravan	2.6%	3
bungalow / bungalow	5.2%	6
Room/bedsit	21.7%	25
Other (please specify)		6
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

115 survey participants replied to this question, of which 32.2% answered that they live in a house, whilst 21.7% said that they lived in either a room or bedsit. 20.9% answered that they live in a flat, and 17.4% indicated that they live in a multiple occupancy home. 6 respondents (5.2%) said that they live in a bungalow, and 3 respondents (2.6%) said that they live in a caravan. Of those who described the place where they lived as something other than the above, 1 said he lived in a hostel, 1 said he lived in a room in a hotel, 1 said he lived in the living room.

Contrary to the results from the questionnaire, information from focus groups and interviews with migrant workers indicate that more migrant workers actually live in a room or bedsit in a multiple occupancy home (HMO), than in a house on their own. The discrepancy may be on account of misunderstanding housing terminology – a ‘bedsit’ for example is a peculiarly British phenomenon. HMO (Housing of Multiple Occupancy) may be understood in very general terms, but the legislation regarding the size of the

room where they sleep, the number of people sharing the same room, and number of people in the HMO sharing the same facilities will not be familiar to most migrant workers. Migrant workers, therefore, frequently said that they lived in a house, but it was only after some discussion that the migrant workers divulged that what their accommodation actually consisted of was that of a room/bedsit in a house with shared use of bathroom and kitchen facilities.

Q20. Do you pay Council Tax?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	73.4%	80
No	22.0%	24
I don't know	4.6%	5
if no, please explain		8
Answered question		109
Skipped question		12

73.4% of the respondents pay Council Tax, 22% do not, and 4.6% do not know if they pay Council Tax or not. 12 respondents left this question blank.

Of those who replied that they did not pay Council Tax, 8 gave the following explanations: it is included in the cost of rent (2 respondents); one respondents receives Council Tax credit; one respondent thought that the owner of the hotel where he rents a room probably pays the Council Tax; one respondent believed that his employer pays; one said the landlord pays; one doesn't pay because the place where he lives is not his own; and another respondent says that the Council Tax payment is shared between flatmates.

Q21. Do you pay utilities?

	Response Percent	Response Count
It's included in the cost of my rent	35.1%	39
I pay for it myself	63.1%	70
Other	1.8%	2
Other means, please explain		5
Answered question		111
Skipped question		10

The majority (63.1%) of the respondents say they pay for the cost of utilities themselves. 35.1% said that utilities were included in the rent. 2 respondents (1.8%) indicated that their utility costs were paid by other means. 5 respondents to the questionnaire left this question blank. 5 respondents gave the following explanations regarding their utility payments:

"No, I don't pay."

"Parents pay."

"Through my account at the bank."

"I share the cost of utilities with my roommates."

"Every month we share all cost and pay for it together."

Q22. How would you describe the condition of your accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very good	16.5%	19
Good	44.3%	51
Fair	27.8%	32
Poor	7.8%	9
Very poor	3.5%	4
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

115 of the survey participants replied to this question, of which 44.3% answered: "Good." 16.5% said that their accommodation was "Very good." 27.8% of the respondents described the condition of their property as "Fair," and 11.3% described their conditions as either "Poor" (7.8%) or "Very poor" (3.5%).

Whilst most respondents to the questionnaire responded that the condition of their property as either 'Good" or "Very Good", it appeared from information that was gathered either through interviews of discussions during focus groups with migrant workers that living in poor conditions was a much greater issue than what the questionnaire results show.

The discrepancy may be on account of their expectations or possibly even due to their own habits that are deemed unacceptable in British culture; some migrant workers are also less critical of the conditions in which they live and more willing to accept that living in poor conditions just comes with the experience of being a young migrant.

Of the poor conditions that were observed or reported during discussions and focus groups, damp and mould was a major issue, and in some cases was exacerbating the cause of asthma and poor health as well a depression (see the case study of Adam). Ceilings that leaked, but which were painted over at the time the property was let to disguise the fault, was another common problem. Many houses that were visited are poorly ventilated or draughty; in some houses or flats windows were either not able to shut fully or to close at all. Those who owned their own home are not aware of schemes to help improve their housing conditions.

Q23. Is your accommodation centrally heated?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.8%	84
No	27.4%	32
I don't know	0.9%	1
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

71.8% of the respondents to this questionnaire replied 'Yes.' 27.4% replied that their accommodation was not centrally heated, and 0.9% (1 respondent) did not know. 4 respondents to this questionnaire left this question blank.

Of those migrant workers who lived in places without central heating it was learned through discussion and focus groups that heating was provided by portable electric radiators.

Q24. Is your accommodation fitted with smoke alarms?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	79.5%	93
No	13.7%	16
I don't know	6.8%	8
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

117 of the 121 respondents answered this question. 79.5% of the respondents answered “Yes” there were smoke alarms fitted in their homes. 13.7% said there were no smoke alarms fitted in their homes, and the remainder (6.8%) did not know if smoke alarms were fitted or not. Positive answers to this question are no indication of whether or not the smoke alarms that are fitted are installed properly and in working order.

Q25. How many separate bedrooms does your accommodation have?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	4.3%	5
No separate bedroom	11.1%	13
1 bedroom	18.8%	22
2 bedrooms	35.9%	42
3 bedrooms	25.6%	30
4 bedrooms	2.6%	3
More than four bedrooms	1.7%	2
Answered question		117
Skipped question		4

36.2% of the respondents to this question answered that there were two separate bedrooms in the place where they live. 25.9% said that there were 3 separate bedrooms where they lived. 19% responded that there was only one

separate bedroom in their accommodation, and 11.2% said that there was no separate bedroom in their accommodation. 4 respondents did not provide a number of separate bedrooms and simply answered, " Yes," there were separate bedroom(s). 4.3% (3 respondents) of the respondents said that there were 4 separate bedrooms (2.6%) or 2 respondents (1.7%) said there was more than 4.

The number of separate bedrooms an accommodation has is a moot point for many Eastern European migrant workers. In Poland, as elsewhere in other parts of Eastern Europe, every room in a house, with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom, can be both a living and sleeping area. In Poland the usual arrangement is that the living area is also the main bedroom. Beds are commonly pull-out sofas that are pushed in like a futon and then covered with a spread and cushions during the day. At night the cover and cushions are taken off and the sofa/bed is pulled out. This is the usual practice for all rooms in a house, including the rooms where children sleep. In Poland at least, main living areas that serve as the main bedroom of a house also serve as the family dining area.

Q26. How many lavatories/bathrooms are there for your use only?

	Response Percent	Response Count
The lavatory/bathroom is shared with other tenants	28.7%	33
1 lavatory/bathroom	56.5%	65
2 lavatories/bathrooms	13.0%	15
More than two lavatories/bathrooms	1.7%	2
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

115 out of 121 participants in this survey answered this question, of which 56.5% answered that there is 1 lavatory/bathroom in their accommodation. 28.7% said that they shared their bathroom or lavatory with other tenants in the place where they live. 14.7% replied that there were 2 bathrooms/lavatories (13%) or more (1.7%).

Q27. How many living areas are there?

	Response Percent	Response Count
No separate living area	30.6%	33
1	60.2%	65
2	6.5%	7
3	2.8%	3
4 or more	0.0%	0
Answered question		108
Skipped question		13

108 participants in this survey answered this question of which 60.2% replied that there was one other living area in their accommodation. 30.6% said that there was no other living area in the place where they lived. 9.3% said that there were 2 (6.5%) or more (2.8%) living areas in the place where they lived.

See comments for Q25.

Q28. Do you have private parking/garage?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	18.4%	21
No	81.6%	93
Answered question		114
Skipped question		7

Out of 121 respondents to this questionnaire, 114 replied to this answer. 81.6% said that they do not have private parking or garage; 18.4% said that they did.

Q29. How long have you lived in your present accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 3 months	7.1%	8
3-6 months	17.7%	20
6 months - 1 year	25.7%	29
1-2 years	22.1%	25
2-3 years	17.7%	20
More than 3 years	9.7%	11
Answered question		113
Skipped question		8

Just over half (50.5%) of the respondents to this question have lived in their for less than a year. 7.1% have lived in the place where they live for less than 3 months; 17.7% from 3 to 6 months, and 25.7% from 6 months to one year.

22.1% of the respondents have lived in their present accommodation between 1 and 2 years, and 17.7% have lived in their present accommodation between 2 and 3 years. Not surprisingly, the smallest, but no less significant, number of migrant workers (9.7%) have remained in their present accommodation for 3 years or more. 8 respondents left this question blank. (See Table 5)

Q30. Do you share the room where you sleep with anyone else?

	Response Percent	Response Count
No	40.5%	47
My partner/spouse	49.1%	57
1 child	3.4%	4
2 children	0.9%	1
3 children or more	1.7%	2
1 other individual	12.1%	14
2 other individuals	0.0%	0
3 other individuals	0.0%	0
Answered question		116
Skipped question		5

When asked if they shared a room with anyone else, most migrant workers (49.1%) in this survey said with, “My partner or spouse.” 40.5% replied that they slept alone. 12.1% of the respondents said that they shared their room with another individual who was not a member of their family. 6% shared their bedroom with one child or more, of which 2 respondents (1.7%), replied that they shared the room where they slept with their three children. 5 respondents to this questionnaire left this question blank.

From discussions with migrant workers during focus groups, overcrowded accommodation cropped up more frequently as a serious issue amongst

families. In some cases parents were sharing their own sleeping arrangements with one or more children, in other cases three or more older brothers and sisters were sharing a bedroom together.

In speaking with migrant workers about their housing circumstances, those who had experienced living in overcrowded accommodation had said that it was more an issue three or four years ago (at the time countries of the A8 first joined the EU). According to one couple living in Cullompton:

“When we came to live here we stayed with Polish people who help us. Other Polish people like us also came there. We sleep on the sofa, we sleep on the floor. Lots of people stay there. But we find a flat now and it is much better. Things settle down now and it is not so bad. We want to buy house here. Can you help us to know where to get advices about buying a house?”

Did this couple know anyone living in overcrowded accommodation now?

“No,” they said.

That overcrowding remains an issue is made quite plain from the story of Kasia and Janusz (see their Case Study).

Q31. Have you ever had difficulties finding or renting accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	31.0%	36
No	69.0%	80
If yes, please explain		33
Answered question		116
Skipped question		5

Of the 116 migrant workers who completed this questionnaire, 80 (69%) replied that they had no difficulty finding accommodation. 31% (36 respondents) said that finding accommodation was a difficulty for them. 5 respondents to this questionnaire skipped this question.

33 migrant workers made additional comments explaining the reasons they felt were the cause of their difficulties. Language barriers were the chief cause of their difficulties (11 mentions). Cost of housing or personal financial constraints was also high on the list of issues that limited the ability of migrant workers to access housing (9 mentions). There were 8 mentions regarding children as a cause that made it difficult for migrant workers to find accommodation. Several mentioned that racial or religious prejudice and discrimination was accountable for their difficulties (7 mentions). Property shortage was mentioned 3 times and poor housing condition was also a factor (3 mentions). A lack of information or understanding about housing was included in the reasons for making it difficult migrant workers to access housing (3 mentions), and one said that difficulties arose because the letting agency required them to present evidence of two years of employment history.

It was clear from discussions with migrant workers that finding places to rent on arrival in the U.K. is exceptionally difficult. This is on account of letting agents and landlords who normally require evidence of two or more years of employment history in the U.K., evidence of a bank account, and/or references who have known the applicant for at least two years. Some letting agents may require guarantors with evidence of an income over £18,000. Migrant workers therefore must seek out less reliable or trustworthy landlords or letting agents in order to find a place to rent, or else they turn to the type of employment that provides accommodation also.

Finding a place to rent on arrival is a problem also because of the need to come up with enough money to pay for a holding deposit or security deposit or both. Migrant workers, especially from Eastern Europe, are unlikely to come to the U.K with anything like enough money to pay for a security deposit on a rental property. Until a migrant worker has been employed here long enough to save for such an expense, he or she is likely to rely on friends or family to provide them with a place to live. Or they must find guarantors, willing to take on this onerous responsibility, who reside in the U.K. and can give evidence of long-term employment.⁵

⁵ A similar problem exists for migrant workers who would like to find employment in the U.K. as drivers. They cannot do so because they must have the signature on their application form to the DVLA of a U.K. resident who has known them in this country for a minimum of two years, therefore limiting their chances of finding employment for which they are well suited.

The researchers of this report also had informal discussions with landlords to learn more about why migrant workers might find it difficult to rent a property. It was discovered that letting property to migrant workers who speak only a little English or not at all is a problem for some landlords as well. One landlord expressed concerns regarding migrant worker ability to understand fire and safety regulations in the properties she lets out, and although she would like to rent her properties to more migrants, she was reluctant to do so. “How can I explain things like the instructions on how to use the boiler or be sure they understand the use of the immersion heater?” Another landlord expressed concerns about whether or not her tenants could understand the terms of the tenancy agreement, and making provision for a translation was expensive and not practicable. Several other landlords we spoke with assumed that their properties would become overcrowded if they rented to migrant workers and had misunderstood the norms of sleeping arrangements for Polish migrant workers as an indication of overcrowding (see comments to Q25 above).

Q32. Have you experienced being discriminated against by a landlord or letting agent?

	Response Percent	Response Count
If yes, please explain	9.0%	10
Yes	23.4%	26
No	67.6%	75
If yes, please explain		27
Answered question		111
Skipped question		10

23.4% (26 respondents) to this questionnaire replied, "Yes," that they felt that they had been discriminated against by either their landlord or letting agent. 75 respondents (67.6%) replied, "No," they had not experienced discrimination. 10 respondents to this survey left this question blank.

Of the 25 comments received explaining the reasons the migrant workers felt discriminated against, 5 simply remarked that it was on account of their nationality and 3 mentioned that they experienced discrimination because of language issues or that they did not speak English. One respondent regarded that they were discriminated against because of their number of children, another said it was because s/he was a landlord as well. 4 perceived that they were being discriminated against by letting agents, who were either unhelpful or who had said that no properties were available to them. 5 felt that that they were being discriminated against by their landlord who had taken advantage of them or who had evicted them unfairly.

4 respondents also included neighbours as a source of racial discrimination.

Their remarks are as follows:

"But I have one neighbour who regularly shouts at me because I am an American and who complained to the council about me so I reported the abuse to CAB."

"Both landlord and neighbours have been unkind, they complain about us and our cooking, they have shaken their fists at us and slam doors."

"I've been physically threatened and abused, also the landlord racially discriminates against us because we are Chinese and he harasses us. Neighbours are also shouting at us because we are Chinese."

"But have from neighbours."

From discussions with migrant workers in focus groups and in interviews it is quite clear that racial discrimination and prejudice abounds and affects all aspects of their lives including that of finding accommodation, living with neighbours, and obtaining practical support from agencies other than those specific to their ethnic or need based group (such as Devon Racial Equality, the Refugee Support Network, The Anglo-Polish Organisation, Shelter, etc). A neighbour of a migrant couple, used Google translator in order to send racially abusive and harassing letters in their own language (of a sort) accusing them of making too much noise. The same neighbour complained to the landlord and also to the council. As a result, the couple have moved to other premises because they were afraid that his complaints would result in their eviction.

Those who experienced racial and religious discrimination were able to share their experiences in greater detail during focus groups and interviews. Incidents of racial prejudice included complaints from neighbours regarding cooking smells, verbal abuse in passing along stairwells and corridors, ethnic

slurs from landlords, and a hampered ability find and acquire suitable accommodation based on ethnicity or religious customs.

Q33. Do you know where to go for help and advice if you have problems with your neighbours, your landlord or your accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	44.9%	48
No	55.1%	59
If yes, please indicate		37
Answered question		107
Skipped question		14

Out of the total number of 121 respondents to this questionnaire, 107 answered this question. Of those who gave a response, the majority (55.1%) of the migrant workers said, “No,” that they did not know where to get help and advice if they had problems with their neighbours, their landlord or their accommodation. The remaining 44.9% said, “Yes,” that they did know where to go.

Of those who answered, “Yes”, seven said they would go to the police, although one respondent said: “I guess the police but it's not worth it because we will just get evicted. Three respondents said they would go to the council, but one responded: “council, but they didn't help us.”

Five of the survey respondents answered that they would go to the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB), and one indicated CAB as well as their letting agency, and landlord. One respondent only found out about the help they could get

from CAB about housing problems after they went there to ask about benefits. The respondent said: "I only found out after I went to CAB for advice about benefits. Village neighbours have been unwelcoming and I feel unwanted because I do not belong".

Four respondents said they would go to their letting agency, and one said they would go to their landlord. Ten respondents indicated that they would turn to community support agencies or organisations such as Devon Racial Equality/Diversity in Housing Project (5 respondents), the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton (5 respondents), Shelter (1 respondent), Exeter CVS (2 respondents).

From speaking with migrant workers it is clear that they feel that there is a dearth of information available to them regarding where to go to access help and support. APL, which is unfunded and wholly voluntary, offers informal practical support and runs an afternoon drop-in centre on Thursdays. A formative Migrant Worker Network support group in Exeter schedules informative meetings about migrant worker related issues, including housing that are held on occasion at Exeter CVS. Both APL and the Migrant Worker Network are assisting with setting up a drop-in centre in Newton Abbot that has yet to be formally arranged. Those who go to the police do so because they know of no other alternative. One such instance involved a Romanian migrant worker who went to the police regarding an issue with her landlord. She had refused to pay rent because the landlord failed to respond to her requests to make urgent repairs to the place where she lived. In response, the

landlord entered her flat when she was not at home and stole her passport and other documents.

Q34. Do you understand the rules/terms of your tenancy agreement?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	61.0%	64
No	37.1%	39
Don't know	1.9%	2
Answered question		105
Skipped question		16

61% answered, “Yes” to this question; 37.1% answered, “No”, and only two respondents who answered this question (1.9%) felt that they did not understand the rules or terms of their tenancy agreement.

The level of English among the majority of migrant workers who attended focus groups and who were interviewed for this research was generally that of a basic user, i.e. between a beginner and lower intermediate level. The researchers are confident in their assessment of the language ability of migrant workers, as they are both language teachers, one of whom is TEFL certified.

Unless tenancy agreements were professionally translated into the language spoken by the migrant worker, either through trained interpreters or actual translation of the written document, the researchers felt that it was highly unlikely that the rules or terms of the agreement could be fully understood

either by those who completed the questionnaires or those who attended focus groups.⁶

Q35. Is there a mortgage on the place where you live?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	6.3%	6
No	22.9%	22
Don't know	70.8%	68
Answered question		96
Skipped question		25

Most migrant workers (70.8%) who responded to this question did not know if the property where they lived had a mortgage on it or not. Some (6.3%) said “Yes” that their property did have a mortgage, and 22.9% said “No”. 25 respondents to the questionnaire did not provide an answer to this question.

Q36. Have you read your tenancy agreement?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	63.0%	63
No	33.0%	33
I didn't have to, I know the rules	4.0%	4
Answered question		100
Skipped question		21

⁶ The researchers are aware, however, of at least one known letting agent who has hired a bilingual member of staff, and who has had a standard tenancy agreement roughly translated for them to assist migrant workers who are looking for rental accommodation.

63% of the respondents to this answer said that they had read their tenancy agreement; 33% said that they hadn't; 4% said that they didn't have to because they felt they already were familiar with the rules of their tenancy. 21 of the respondents to this survey did not answer this question.

See comments to Q34.

Q37. Did you pay a holding deposit?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	44.7%	42
No	47.9%	45
Don't know	7.4%	7
Answered question		94
Skipped question		27

94 respondents to this survey answered this question, of which 47.9% said that they had paid a holding deposit, 44.7% said that they had not paid a holding deposit, and 7.4% did not know the answer.

Q38. Did you pay a security deposit?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	64.6%	64
No	35.4%	35
Don't know	0.0%	0
Answered question		99
Skipped question		22

64.6% of the respondents indicated that they had paid a security deposit on the place where they live. 35.4% responded that they did not pay a security deposit on the place where they live. 22 respondents left this answer blank.

Q39. If you have rented before, was your deposit returned?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	77.6%	59
No	22.4%	17
If no, why not?		14
Answered question		76
Skipped question		45

77.6% of the respondents who had rented a property before said that their deposits had been returned. 22.4% (17 respondents) said that their deposits had not been returned.

Q40. Have you ever had any difficulty getting your deposit back?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	16.3%	13
No	83.8%	67
If yes, please explain		12
Answered question		80
Skipped question		41

31 respondents to this questionnaire left this question blank. Of those who answered, the majority (83.8%) said that they did not have any difficulty getting back their deposit. 16.3% replied that they did have difficulties getting back their deposit.

The reasons respondents gave for not getting back their deposits included: the place where they live now is their first flat; unfair landlord; landlord used it for repairs; respondent was owing rent in arrears; didn't know why the deposit wasn't returned; landlord lied; landlord said the place was in disrepair when it was not.

Q41. Have you ever broken or has your landlord ever broken the rules of your tenancy agreement?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	32.0%	33
No	68.0%	70
If yes, please explain		26
Answered question		103
Skipped question		18

103 respondents to this questionnaire offered to answer this question. Of those who responded, 68% said, "No", that neither they nor the landlord had broken the rules of the tenancy agreement.

32.0% of the respondents said that the rules of their tenancy agreement had been broken, reiterating problems previously stated in Q39 and Q40 regarding landlords who do not return tenancy deposits.

In addition to problems with their deposits, the respondents also describe other incidents involving their landlords concerning racial discrimination, verbal abuse, being taken advantage of on account of their language deficiencies, entering property without permission, evictions without notice,

threats, aggressive behaviour, and harassment. (see case study ‘Kasia and Janusz)

Besides their remarks aimed clearly at landlords, several respondents also remarked that they were aware of tenants, other than themselves, who were to blame, describing alcohol problems and loud parties late at night, and tenants who left their flat without informing the landlord.

Two respondents mentioned that information about deposits and lettings was not made clear to them. One respondent described overcrowding as an issue.

Q42. Do you know someone who has had difficulty finding accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	52.6%	60
No	47.4%	54
If yes, what problem was it?		38
Answered question		114
Skipped question		7

This question was included to get a broader scope of accommodation issues and needs in the migrant worker community. 114 out of total number of respondents to this questionnaire gave an answer to this question. Among those who responded, 52.6% said ‘Yes’ they knew someone who has had difficulties finding accommodation in Devon, and the remaining 47.4% replied “No”.

Of the 60 respondents who replied, “Yes”, to this question, 38 left comments describing the reasons for the problems people they knew had finding a place to live.

Language difficulties and lack of English was considered the principal difficulty among those they knew looking for accommodation (10 respondents). Families with children and racial prejudice were factors also high on the list of issues that caused difficulties for people they knew (each of these problems were mentioned 6 times in the responses given by the respondents). Limited housing supply and cost of housing both received 3 mentions each. Three people mentioned that they knew people who had difficulties finding a property that suited their needs, specifically finding properties with enough bedrooms or having available parking.

Many attributed the problems people had finding accommodation as being linked to being new arrivals in the U.K. or employment. The problems that were mentioned included those mentioned in the following responses:

“[They] didn’t have a reference because they just came from Poland.”

“Too short time in UK, no bills.”

“No permanent employment.”

“No contract at work.”

"Unemployment."

"Financial problem. No job as well."

"They do not have a contract at work."

Other responses associated to difficulties with finding accommodation,
included the following:

"Lots of homeless people."

"Landlord has sold house , people have a short time to move ."

"Legal problem."(X2)

*"Landlords do not want to give deposit back since they find a new
people for renting property."*

"The deposit is 3 times bigger than the rent."

"We are trying to find help, but council "washed their hands of it."

“Letting agency can rent us an expensive accommodation, and [we have difficulties] from newspapers because we have children and they do not want to know.”

“My family.”

“They just said 'Polish!' - No way.”

“Offered accommodation that was in very bad condition; they had to decide to find an alternative place to live.”

Q43. Do you know someone who is homeless or someone without settled accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	13.0%	15
No	87.0%	100
If yes, what is the cause?		10
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

Out of the total number of 121 respondents to this questionnaire 115 responses were collected to this answer. A large majority of migrant workers responding to this question said that they did not know anyone who was homeless or without settled accommodation (87%). However, a significant percentage (13%) of respondents were aware of cases of homelessness among the migrant worker community.

Of those who know someone who is homeless or without settled accommodation, the following reasons were given: unemployment (6 mentions) of which one mentioned that loss of employment was linked to eviction; financial difficulties (3 mentions); not registered anywhere (2 mentions); staying with friends to save money or until they can find affordable housing (2 mentions); addictions to drugs, alcohol or gambling (2 mentions).

Several cases of homelessness (which included those at risk of homelessness) were encountered either in focus groups or more generally through those coming to APL to ask for practical support unrelated to this housing research. One such case of homelessness is included in this report as a case study (see the Case Study of 'Pawel').

Two cases involved a loss of home due to unfair eviction from accommodation tied to employment. One female migrant who had been working at a luxury hotel in the Teignbridge district was laid off and given three days to vacate the place where she lived and which was provided by her employer. Not knowing what to do or where to turn for help, she has been camping on the sofas of friends.

Another migrant worker has been living in a hotel room but because he has lost his job he fears he will be unable to afford to remain. His level of English is that of a beginner and he does not drive, therefore his employment options are limited. He receives practical support and signposting from APL, and must

rely on friends to drive him to recruitment agencies where he can register to work because he cannot afford to pay the travel costs by bus.

Q44. Have you ever been homeless in Britain?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	7.8%	9
No	92.2%	106
If yes, why?		9
Answered question		115
Skipped question		6

Out of the total number of 121 respondents to this questionnaire 115 responses were collected to this answer. Most migrant workers answering this survey (92.2%) replied that they had never been homeless in Britain. A few had responded positively (7.8%). Those who answered, “Yes”, to this question gave the following responses:

“When I first come I stay with many people until I find a job”

“Lost job; lost accommodation with job“

“No money or friends to stay with”

“No job and no money”

"I have really big problem: I do not have a money for paying rent because I do not have a job. I became a homeless person. Can you help me please".

"Financial problem, no money"

"I didn't have place where to live"

"Though for a few years I really struggled to come up with the mortgage payments"

Q45. What amount of rent do you pay?

An indication of the amounts migrant workers pay for their accommodation is shown in the table below:

Answer Options	less than £50	£50-£100	£100-£200	£200-£300	£300-£400	£400-£500	£500-£600	£600-£700	more than £700
Per night	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Per week	1	24	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Per month	0	1	6	6	10	17	23	8	7

Q46. Are you thinking about moving from your present accommodation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	47.8%	54
No	52.2%	59
Answered question		113
Skipped question		8

A small majority (52.2%) of respondents to this replied that they were not thinking of moving from their present accommodation. 47.8% of the respondents replied, "Yes." 8 respondents left this question blank.

Of those who replied, "Yes," the principal reason they gave was because of poor housing conditions. Their comments are as follows:

"It's a dirty place and very noisy on main street."

"I would like to have better condition of flat."

"Bad condition."

"Really bad condition of my room."

"Bad condition."

"Very poor condition, cold, not centrally heated, noisy place."

"My home is a dump and mouldy."

"I would like to have a better condition in my accommodation."

"No basic facilities for four members of a family, too small a place without hot water, central heating, washing machine."

“My house is a dump and I do not have a enough room for my family and I am pregnant.”

Migrant workers also responded that the size of their accommodation (which included a lack of a garage or place to park) was either unsuitable for their own needs or those of their family (11 respondents). Some just indicated that they wanted to move into more sizeable housing without giving a specific reason (2 respondents).

10 respondents want to buy a place of their own, 3 just want to live on their own or in another sort of accommodation (one wanted to move into a bungalow). 3 indicated that the cost of accommodation was either problematic or too expensive. One respondent indicated that they were thinking of moving because there was no reception for satellite television where they lived at present - satellite television is an important means to watch news, sports, and other programs from the migrant worker's country of origin and in the migrant worker's native language.

Three migrants responded that they could not remain in their property any longer, either because the place where they were living was up for sale or their tenancy with their letting agency was up. The remaining respondents indicated that they were planning to move in future for the following reasons:

“I feel discriminated against.”

“Applying for social housing.”

“Problem with letting agency, this is my fault.”

“Problem with neighbours.”

“Roommate problems.”

Q47. How many times have you moved since you came to the UK?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I live in the same place I moved to when I came to the UK	27.3%	30
1	30.9%	34
2	18.2%	20
3	14.5%	16
4	5.5%	6
5	0.9%	1
6 or more	2.7%	3
Answered question		110
Skipped question		11

The majority of migrant workers who responded to this question either live in the same place they moved to when they arrived (27.3%), or they have moved just once (30.9%). 18.2% said that they have moved twice, 14.5% of the respondents have moved 3 times, and 5.5% have moved 4 times. One respondent has moved 5 times since arriving in the U.K. and 3 respondents have said that they have moved 6 times or more. 11 Respondents to this questionnaire omitted to answer this question.

Q48. If you have moved, why did you move?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Poor condition	51.5%	34
Change of work/location	25.8%	17
Cost of accommodation	22.7%	15
Other (please explain)		31
Answered question		66
Skipped question		55

As a fair proportion of the migrant workers who completed this survey are still living in the place where they first moved to when they arrived here, it is understandable why only 66 of the 121 respondents to this questionnaire provided a response to this question.

Of those who gave an answer to why they moved, an overwhelming number (51.5%) attributed the reason to the poor condition of the place where they lived. 25.8% stated that it was because they changed their work or location, and 22.7% said that the cost of their accommodation was the reason for moving.

Other reasons for moving included such circumstances as their family coming to join them here, wanting to be independent, needing a better place to bring up a family/growing family, issues with neighbours and discrimination, wanting to move in with a partner, termination of the tenancy agreement, and deciding to buy property.

Q49. Do you have any difficulty accessing services (internet, doctor, shops, etc.?)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, why	21.4%	22
No	78.6%	81
If yes, why		18
Answered question		103
Skipped question		18

18 respondents to this survey did not provide an answer to this question. The majority (78.6%) of migrant workers that did respond to this question said that they do not have difficulties accessing services. Of those who said that access to services was a source of difficulty (21.4%) the principal reason given was a lack of access to the internet (12 respondents gave this as a reason), one of whom stated: "I live in a remote spot so internet and mobile reception is pretty poor." Another also indicated that mobile reception was a problem for them. Four other s said they had difficulty accessing shops, one had difficulties accessing the NHS and medical care, one said they had no money and two said that language was a barrier for them in accessing the services they needed.

During this research it was discovered that a surprising number of migrant workers either are not on the Internet at home or have trouble accessing the internet. Having internet access at the place where they live of course means paying for a BT telephone line and an internet provider which can be too costly for some. Whilst public libraries have computers that are available for

public use, library hours are often not convenient for migrant workers who work shifts and overtime, and towns in rural Devon are not equipped with Internet cafes.

Some migrant workers are able to link on to the internet from their mobile phones, which they use for texting as one of their main means to communicate with each other across Devon and with their family and relatives still living in their country of origin. Where mobile reception is poor, migrant workers can find themselves very isolated indeed.

Q50. Please use the space provided to make any additional comments regarding finding accommodation and your housing situation in Devon.

The following additional comments were given regarding the housing experiences and issues of the migrant workers who responded to this survey:

Beautiful to live, don't like living in big city.

Devon is a beautiful place to live even if one is destitute!

The place where I live is good, beautiful, neat but expensive.

Housing in Devon is ok because there are lots of letting agents in Exeter city centre and we can select and look from Express Echo on every Tuesday. (See appendix 6 for further responses to this questionnaire)

Q51. Would you like to receive further information about your housing rights?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	85.7%	54
No	14.3%	9
Answered question		63
Skipped question		58

A little over half of the migrant workers who completed this questionnaire answered this question, out of which an overwhelming 85.7% (54 respondents) replied “Yes” that they would like to receive further information about their housing rights. 14.3% answered “No” and 58 respondents left this question blank.

Q52. Would you like to know about meetings to share information and discuss housing issues in more detail?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.5%	54
No	11.5%	7
Answered question		61
Skipped question		60

Out of the 60 responses to this question that were received, 88.5% replied positively to receiving further information about future meetings where they could share information and discuss housing issues in more detail. 11.5% responded ‘No’, and 60 respondents left this question blank.

Case Studies

Adam

Adam is a 55 year-old man who originates from the northern region of Poland called Kasubia, and his mother-tongue is Kasubian, a lesser-known Slavic language spoken by fewer than 60,000 people presently living in Poland according to the last Polish census of 2002. He speaks Polish, a little German and some Russian, but he has found learning English very difficult because he is severely dyslexic. In spite of this he perseveres with individual language tuition and plans to live permanently in the UK

Adam came to Devon four years ago in order to earn more money to support his wife who has had cancer, but who has remained behind in Poland. He works as a meatpacker in Mid-Devon, and his accommodation is tied to his employment. He lives in a room in a three-bedroom flat he shares with four other Polish work mates and he has been relatively satisfied with the accommodation in which he lives.

Recently, however, the factory where he works has been sold to another company, and the flat where he lives is now up for sale. He and his flat mates received no written or verbal warning regarding the sale of the property and they have been given no reassurances from their new employer whether or not they will continue to be housed. Prospective buyers are being shown the

flat by an agent, who has a key, yet neither Adam nor his flat mates have ever been informed of these viewings.

All five of the men are anxious about the security of their present housing situation. Adam is looking to find an affordable alternate to his present accommodation, but he feels vulnerable and frightened of becoming homeless if his employer sells the property and he is turned out.

At the same time, Adam's wife's cancer has returned and she is coming to Devon to live with Adam who will be able to look after her. She also has problems with her sight and is receiving medical assessments in Poland to test her degree of blindness.

Adam recently came to the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton (APL) where he could speak to someone in Polish and to ask for assistance; he did not know where else he should go to seek help regarding his present situation or how to go about finding a place to live when his wife arrives.

Adam is seeking to apply for council housing and will need a place that will be suitably adapted for the medical needs of his wife. As his wife's carer he will no longer be able to work overtime and he will need to apply for all appropriate benefits for which he is eligible and to have help from an interpreter and translator who can ensure he has filled all the necessary forms correctly and understands his rights and responsibilities.

Kasia and Janusz

Kasia and Janusz are a Polish couple in their early twenties who came to Devon a little over a year ago to find better paid employment. They would like to save enough money to return to Poland one day and buy their own house there.

Janusz has a job as a painter and Kasia works full-time as a quality checker in a dress factory. Kasia is also eight months pregnant and has had some medical difficulties with her pregnancy, which have caused her to take time off work.

Kasia and Janusz are living in very poor and overcrowded conditions in Tiverton. They rent a bedsit in a house they share with a constantly changing number of people; they share a single bathroom with at least twelve people, sometimes more. The kitchen is unsanitary due to the numbers of people using the same facilities. There is a problem with damp due to condensation and a lack of suitable ventilation; a rime of mould covers walls and ceilings, household furnishings, kitchen worktops, bath and shower.

Kasia has spoken about people in the house selling drugs: 'It's like Tesco's – there are so many people walking in and out of the place all day and all night.' Although not at the receiving end herself, Kasia has described multiple accounts of physical violence in the house inflicted upon other Poles living

there. One incident that involved the police included an attack with a half broken bottle on a young Polish man, and another incident that also involved the police included another young Polish man receiving bites on his leg from the attacker. Both incidents required medical treatment.

Kasia and Janusz have not wanted to get involved in reporting further incidents to their landlady because they are afraid they would be evicted. Their landlady is not sympathetic to their circumstances and has on at least one occasion been verbally abusive and physically threatening towards them. One evening before 11 p.m. and after watching a football match, Kasia cheered and celebrated with her friends that Poland had won. Neighbours who knew they were Polish complained and called the landlady who came into her bedsit unannounced and without knocking accompanied by her large and menacing dog. The landlady shouted abuse and the neighbours clapped and cheered whilst shouting abusive language at the girls.

Kasia and Janusz hope to move out into privately rented accommodation, which they will be able to do more easily now that they have lived and worked in the UK for just over a year. Their financial circumstances, however, are a limiting factor and they are applying to get on the housing register and will be seeking to apply for housing and council tax benefit as well as other tax credits that will enable them to pay rent for more suitable family accommodation.

Jill

Jill is originally from Florida. She came to Devon to find work after she separated from her British husband who remains in the US. Although she is educated to university degree level she has only been able to find work as a cleaner receiving pay cash in hand. She lives with her three school-age children, a son and two daughters aged 10, 11 and 13, and resides in a very small two bedroom bungalow which is where the family had previously stayed during their short summer holiday visits. Jill owns the bungalow jointly with her ex-husband (who pays the mortgage), but ownership of the house is part of the divorce dispute.

The bungalow where she and her children live is located in a rural North Devon village. The nearest shop is three miles away, and there is no internet access. Mobile phone reception is also poor. Jill relies on her car to drive her children to the bus station where they can take the school bus.

Extension work was begun on the house but has had to be stopped because of the divorce proceedings. On account of this the children share one bedroom whilst Jill sleeps in the other. The start of the home extension work involved taking out the bathroom and old kitchen. Without a kitchen the family cooks on an electric hotplate. They have a fridge but there is no kitchen sink. There is also no bathroom and no hot water tank, although there is a small lavatory (converted from the old coal shed formerly attached to the house). Washing up is done in the lavatory sink with water heated by an electric kettle.

Jill bathes twice a week at her neighbour's house whilst the children shower after PE at school. There is no central heating and no fireplace and so heating is provided using portable electric oil-filled radiators.

Jill's living conditions are very poor and although she speaks English she is unfamiliar with the British system of benefits, tax credits and grants to help her with additional financial support and home repairs. She only recently learned about her eligibility for child benefits, and although she has been made aware of the Warm Front grant scheme, which would help towards the installation of central heating, she is unable to afford the difference she would have to pay.

Although she loves the village where she lives and does not want to move, she is frequently verbally abused by a neighbour, who calls her 'that damn Yankee', and who regards her as the encapsulation everything that is bad about America.

Jill wants to remain in her home and continue to make improvements, but needs to find more suitable employment in order to earn a decent wage and be made aware of her rights to benefits to improve her quality of life.

Andrzej

Andrzej is 35 years old and came to Devon from Poland to work three years ago. He lives in Newton Abbot with his Polish wife who is employed as a driver and they have a three-year old son.

Before he came to the UK, Andrzej had already received two hip replacements on account of bone degradation due to years of taking prescription steroids for asthma. He was fit for work on arrival in the UK. However, on account of an industrial accident at his place of work outside Newton Abbot, he fell and is waiting to receive surgery for a second right hip replacement. At present he is unable to take on any employment and is receiving disability benefits. He receives medications for the chronic pain that he is in and he is unable to walk without the support of crutches. He currently stays home to look after his son whilst his wife works.

Andrzej and his family live in a “two up, two down’ house in a location that is close to shops, public transport and other amenities. Through disability benefits, Andrzej has received a grant that has enabled him to buy a car that he can get in and out of more easily.

The condition of his home, however, is very poor as well as unsuitable as place to live with a physical disability such as his. The rooms are cramped and the small bathroom has only a shower stall and no bathtub. The stairs leading up to the two bedrooms are very narrow, very steep and have no railing;

Andrzej normally crawls up the stairs on all fours and comes down in a sitting position in order to avoid falling, which he has done on several occasions. There is not enough room to install a stair gate to keep his young son safe and allow Andrzej as well to manipulate himself around such a contraption in his present condition.

The house also suffers from severe dampness, which was not in evidence when Andrzej first moved in (the place had been freshly painted and covered up the damp marks from showing). Mould is everywhere and covering almost every surface in the house from floor to ceiling and he must keep both the front and back doors open to increase air circulation. The severe dampness has caused his asthma to get worse and has affected the health of his young son who also suffers from asthma. Despite several letters to his landlord, nothing has been done to address the problem of damp in his home.

The state of his home and that of his living conditions have affected Andrzej's mental health. He wishes to remain in the UK, but he has become depressed and dispirited. He has been designated a place in the Silver Band on the Register for Housing Need but is making an appeal.

Andrzej's case and the practical support given to him and others like him by the Anglo-Polish Organisation was highlighted by Emma Ruminski on BBC Spotlight in March 2008.

Karol and Ania

Karol and Ania are partners and they came to Devon from Poland over three years ago. They are university educated and they work in a hotel in Cullompton. When they first arrived they experienced living in overcrowded accommodation, sharing bedrooms with other people, helping new arrivals by letting them sleep on their floor or sofa, but when asked about how conditions are for them now they say: "Things have changed, we speak better English, and we have got out of that situation. Things aren't so bad now because we have work. It was bad for people three or four years ago but people have settled down more. We didn't like how we used to live so we got out and we live on our own now and we find a rented flat."

Karol and Ania live in private rented accommodation. Their work situation is stable and they are now looking to buy property here where they can live in a house they can call their own and probably raise a family.

However, they are not familiar with the process of buying property over here and though their level of English is intermediate it would be a hardship for them to understand the complexities of how to apply for a mortgage, the paperwork involved and the responsibilities they would ultimately have as homeowners. They do not in fact know where they ought to go to get information about available properties other than newspapers, and the jargon and abbreviations used in newspaper adverts is confusing.

Karol and Ania are eager to learn more about buying property over here and want more information sharing in a language they can understand and have requested that there be meetings where this information can be disseminated to them in Polish.

Pawel

Pawel is a 45 year-old man from Poland and came to Devon in 2005. He found work in a meat-packing factory, he speaks very little English and has little opportunity to learn the language as most of his workmates are also Polish. He has two children and a wife that have remained in Poland.

When he arrived in Devon he found a place to live through a private landlord, then two and a half years ago he found a two bedroom flat that he initially shared with three other men through a letting agency with whom he signed the tenancy agreement. During that time other people stayed with him and came and went, but for the past year he has lived with the same three individuals.

Pawel earns approximately £220/wk (without overtime) of which he had been sending about £100 back to his wife each week. His troubles began, however, when he started gambling. He also took out an £8,000 loan to buy a 2004 Audi. He took out another loan from the bank in the amount of £1,000. His gambling addiction has caused him to become bankrupt, he can no longer send money to his family and he cannot pay back his loans, which are

accruing interest. He is also unable to pay rent on his accommodation and owes three months back rent.

Pawel came to APL who accompanied him to CAB, both of whom wrote letters to his employer asking if they could assist with his payment toward rent; the letting agency, however, no longer wants to rent him a place nor are they willing to provide a reference. Other letting agencies will not let accommodation to him and as his English is poor he is unable to find any alternative accommodation. From the 8th of April 2008, Pawel was asked by his letting agent to vacate the property causing him to become homeless and his flatmates to have to find alternative accommodation for themselves.

CAB has tried to contact him since then but he is no longer able to be reached on his mobile and he has not returned to APL for further support. No one knows where he is.

Conclusion

The housing needs of migrant workers in Devon is a complex matter that is inextricably linked to other issues such as employment, language barriers, and access to information and benefits. The research also indicates that restrictions placed on them by landlords and letting agencies can greatly hamper a migrant worker's ability to finding suitable accommodation, sometimes even contributing to problems of overcrowding or homelessness because of the inability of immigrants to obtain the necessary documents or financial amounts needed to secure a rental property upon their initial arrival to the U.K.. Improvements to, or the provision of schemes of support to assist migrant workers in this area would no doubt improve their ability to access to suitable places to live in the first instance and help them to avoid relying upon unethical landlords or putting themselves at risk of homelessness.

The research also suggests that a greater provision of HMOs could provide much needed affordable accommodation to migrant workers who are mostly young and single or living with a partner. Because of the lack of HMOs migrant workers, who initially want just an affordable room of their own where they can sleep, resort instead to sleeping on the sofas in the living rooms of their friend's places, leading to overcrowding and lack of privacy and issues involving health and safety.

While care was taken to ensure that the methodology was appropriate to meet the research aims and reflected the nature of the research, certain limitations

were faced during the research process, which need to be highlighted and built into any future research:

- Because this research was sub-contracted out to the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton there has inevitably been a bias in the number of questionnaire responses from the Polish migrant worker population from the Tiverton area. Efforts were made to reach migrant workers of other nationalities, for example, the questionnaire was translated into Polish as well as Slovakian and English , but there was not suitable provision of time for translations of the questionnaire into other languages.
- Focus groups and face-to-face interviews were also primarily conducted in Polish for the same reason as above, also biasing the collection of results towards the Polish migrant worker population.
- Housing terminology used in Britain is not easily translated or understood by migrant workers from other countries. And while care was taken to translate the relevant housing terms for the questionnaires and during focus groups, the researchers felt there could be some degree of misinterpretation or loss of information with regard to the meaning of certain terms, such as bedsit and multiple occupancy homes and the complex legislation that surrounds these living arrangements.
- Many migrant workers live and work in the Barnstaple area and in response to the settled community of Eastern Europeans there, arrangements are being made for a Polish priest from Newton

Abbot or Taunton to conduct a monthly Polish mass that will be held at the Catholic Church in Barnstaple. The researchers made contact with and interviewed a Polish woman living in Barnstaple known to provide informal help to the many new immigrants to the area, and 15 questionnaires were given to her in order to distribute to migrant workers with whom she was in contact. These questionnaires were not filled out because the migrant workers said that they had already been paid £5 each to fill out a similar questionnaire being distributed by someone else. Survey numbers from the Barnstaple area, therefore, are comparatively low and so the lack of information from this area which is known to have many numbers of migrant workers will be reflected in the final analysis.

- The two migrant workers who conducted this research and who authored this report are both highly educated and generally knowledgeable about migrant worker issues; they are, however, not housing experts in their own right, although every effort has been made to produce results to the highest standards possible within the time constraints of the project.

Key Findings

- Migrant workers tend to move into temporary accommodation with friends or family when they first arrive in the U.K. generally, but also more specifically when they first arrive in Devon.
- Finding places to rent for new immigrants is exceptionally difficult on account of letting agents and landlords who normally require evidence of two or more years of employment history in the U.K., evidence of a bank account, and/or references who have known the applicant for at least two years, and, as in at least one case with a well known letting agency in Newton Abbot, guarantors with evidence of an income over £18,000.
- Most migrant workers in Devon live in housing in the private rented sector. Now that many migrant workers have lived here three or more years, some are looking to buy property, establish families and settle more permanently.
- There is a general sense that 'things are settling down now', with a shift away from the very dire and overcrowded circumstances experienced by migrant workers three or four years ago, especially those migrant workers emigrating to the U.K. from the so-called A8 countries when these places entered the EU in 2004.
- Whilst migrant workers living in Devon are increasing in confidence in some areas of their lives, there is still a considerable lack of information regarding their rights as tenants and other aspects of housing legislation. Most migrant workers still rely on friends, family and

community organisations, where they exist, for help and support regarding their housing needs.

- A lack of practical language support as well as suitable means to improve levels of English remains a considerable barrier for migrant workers who require access to critical information about housing.
- Some migrant workers report poor or very poor conditions when they move into more permanent accommodation, which is not often addressed by landlords whom migrant workers feel take advantage of them because their lack of knowledge of the lettings system or because of their inability to speak English. Evidence from this research shows that poor housing conditions are closely linked to their physical and mental well-being.
- Some migrant workers in Devon experience a lack of secure housing when they lose their job as well as their place to live, which is tied to their employment. In some cases this creates homelessness leading to despair and mental health issues.
- Many migrant workers experience racial discrimination and harassment, some of which is exacerbated by a lack of language ability.

Table 1

Question 1 'Where are you from?'

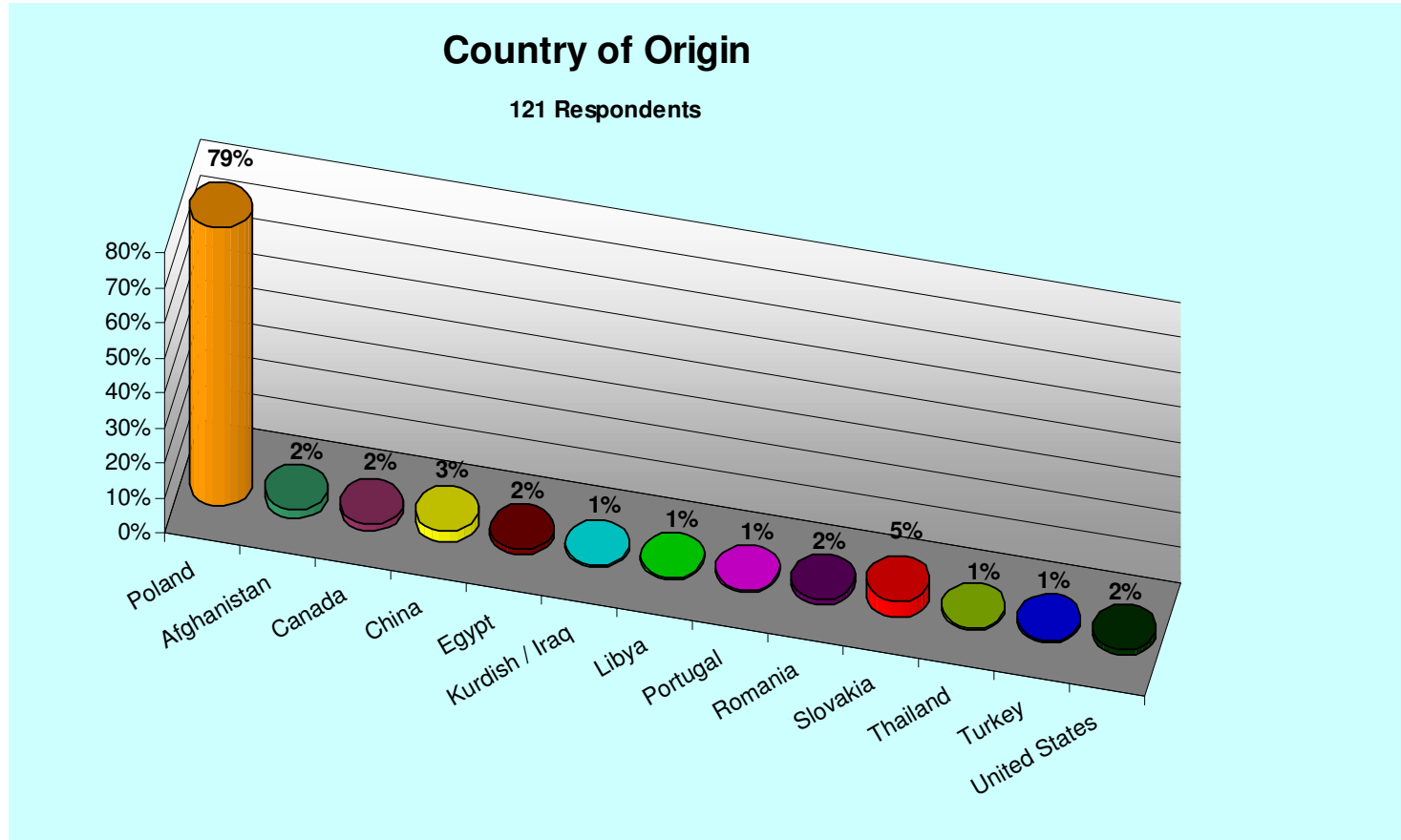


Table 2

Question 5 'Where do you live and what is your postcode if you know it?'

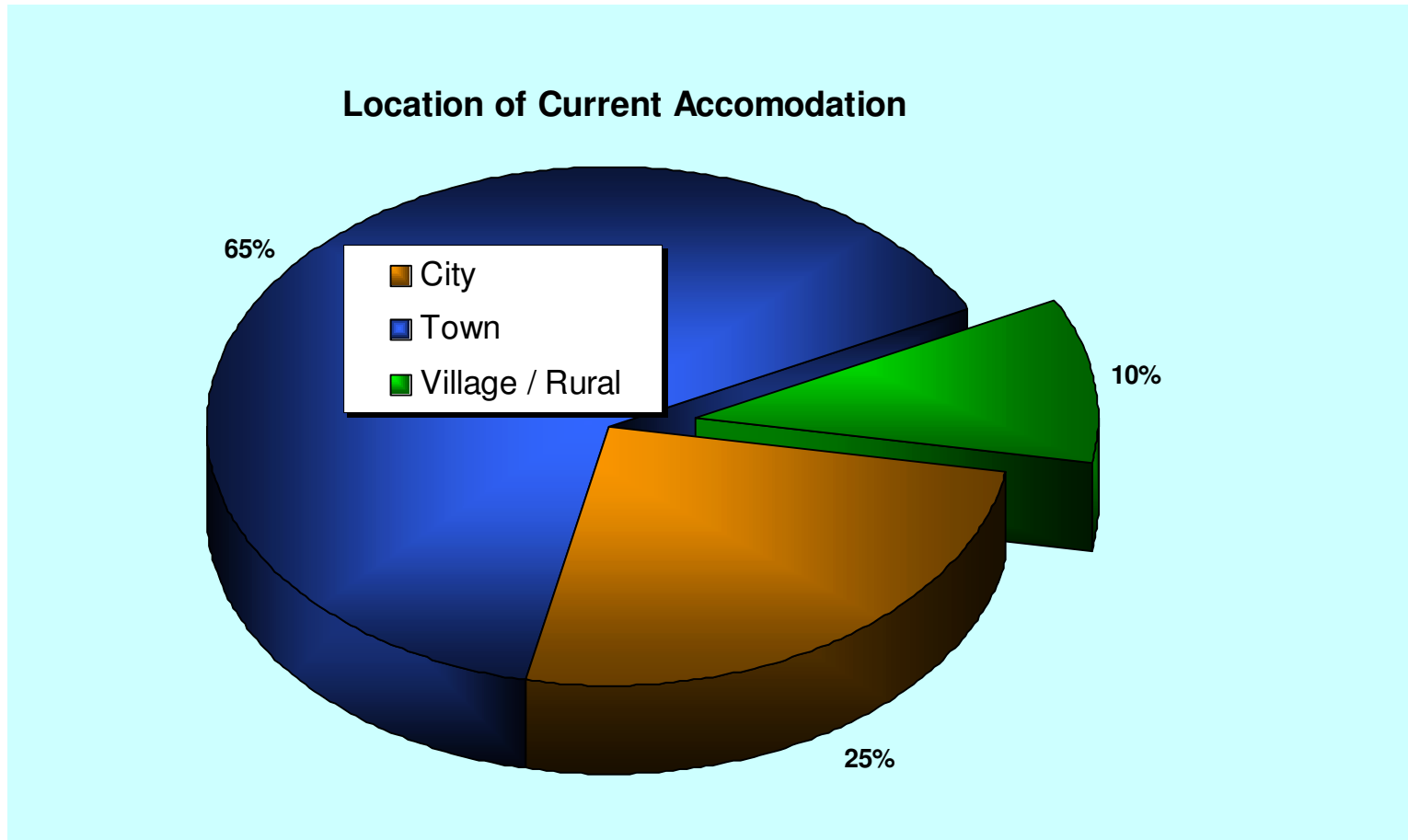


Table 3

Question 12 'How long have you been in the U.K.?'

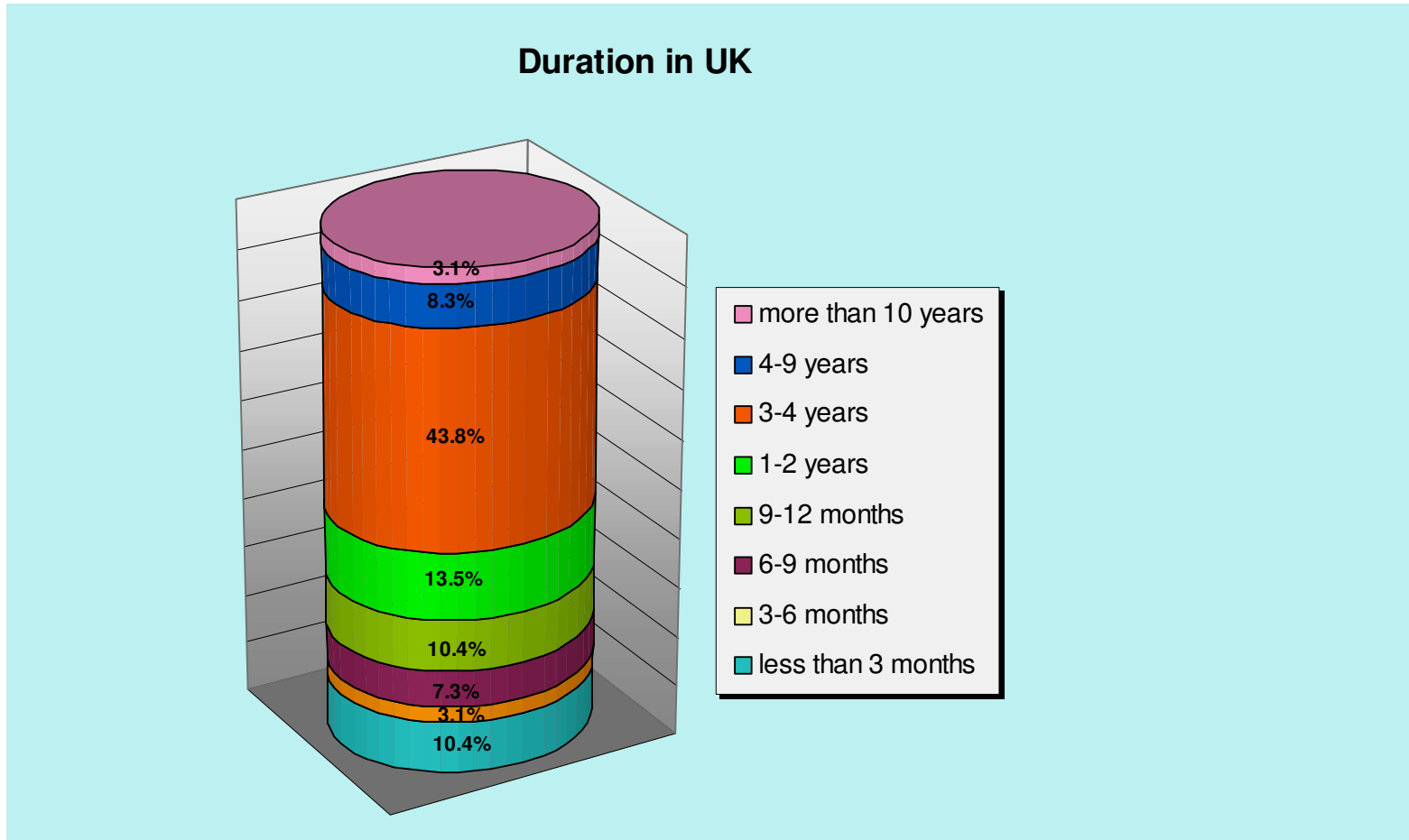


Table 4

Question 16 'How have you arranged your accommodation?'

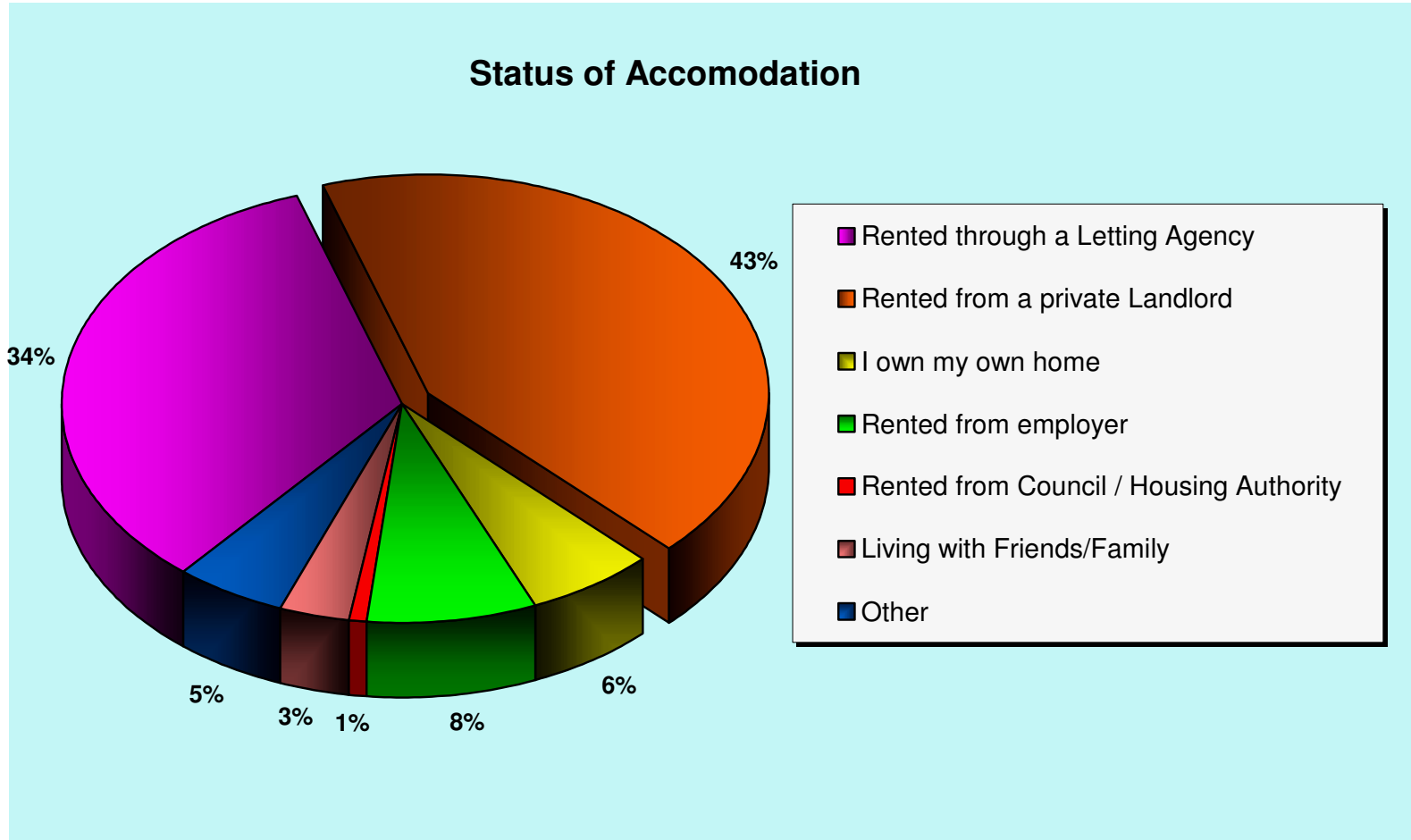


Table 5

Question 29 'How long have you lived in your present accommodation?'

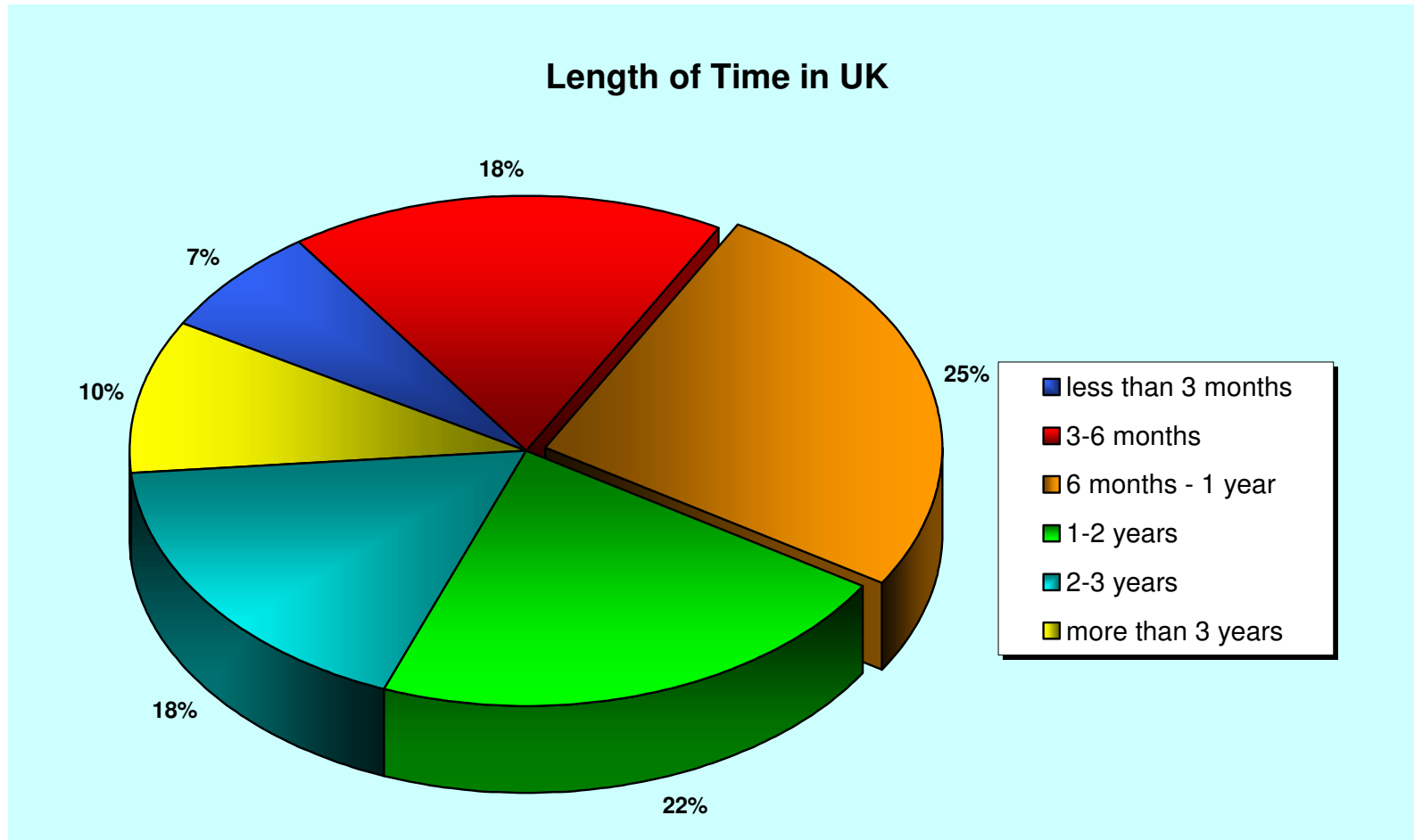


Figure 1

Map of Poland, regions (voivodeship), and regional capitals

**Voivodeship**

Wielkopolskie
 Kujawsko-Pomorskie
 Małopolskie
 Łódź Łódzkie
 Dolnośląskie
 Lubelskie
 Lubuskie
 Mazowieckie
 Opolskie
 Podlaskie
 Pomorskie
 Śląskie
 Podkarpackie
 Świętokrzyskie
 Warmińsko-Mazurskie
 Zachodniopomorskie

Capital city or cities

Poznan
 Bydgoszcz / Torun
 Kraków
 Łódź
 Wrocław
 Lublin
 Gorzów Wielkopolski / Zielona Góra
 Warsaw
 Opole
 Białystok
 Gdansk
 Katowice
 Rzeszów
 Kielce
 Olsztyn
 Szczecin

Figure 2

Q5. Where do you live and what is your postcode if you know it?

Responses:

EX	EX15	EX20
EX	EX15	EX20
Exeter	Cullompton	Okehampton
Exeter	Cullompton	EX20 3PP
EX1 3JG	Cullompton	Barnstaple
EX2	EX15 1JH	Barnstaple
EX2	EX15 1JT	South Molton
EX2 8AT	EX15 1LE	Ilfracombe EX39
EX2 8AT	EX15 1LE	Tavistock
EX2 8AT	EX15 1OH?/N?	Tavistock
EX2 8JW	EX15 1RP	
EX2 9AQ	Willand	
EX4	Willand EX15 2HQ	
EX4	EX15 2QM	
EX4	EX15 5LH	
EX4 2DY	EX16	TQ3
EX4 3BP	EX16	TQ3
EX4 3ET	EX16	TQ3
EX4 4EE	EX16	Newton Abbot
EX4 4JN	EX16	Newton Abbot
EX4 6LH	EX16	Newton Abbot
EX4 7BQ	EX16	TQ12
EX4 7EA	EX16	TQ12 6YQ
EX5 4QY	EX16	Witheridge
EX8	EX16	EX17
EX8	EX16	EX17
Exmouth	EX16	Shobroke EX17 1BT
Exmouth	EX16	EX16 9QX
EX8 1BA	EX16	Tiverton, Stoodleigh
EX8 1QA	EX16	EX16
Honiton	Tiverton	
Honiton	Tiverton	
EX15	Tiverton	
EX15	Tiverton	
EX15	Tiverton ex16 4FB	
EX15	Tiverton EX16 4FB	
	Tiverton EX16 6AB	
	Tiverton EX16 6NR	
	Tiverton EX16 6NZ	
	Tiverton, Washfield	

Appendices

Appendix 1	Questionnaire
Appendix 2	Worker Registration Scheme
Appendix 3	Key questions provided by the commissioning body
Appendix 4	'East Europe migrants take 1% of social housing'
Appendix 5	'Migrant housing myths exposed'
Appendix 6	Question 50 -Continuation of responses

Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

To be included in final report

Appendix 2: Worker Registration Scheme

The following is information about the Worker Registration Scheme found on the Home Office website:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/wrs/>

The Worker Registration Scheme was introduced in 2004 when new countries joined the European Union. It allows us to monitor where citizens of those countries (except Malta and Cyprus) are coming into our labour market, the type of work they are doing, and the impact this has on our economy.

You will normally have to register under the Worker Registration Scheme if you wish to work for an employer in the United Kingdom for more than one month and are a citizen of:

Czech Republic;

Estonia;

Hungary;

Latvia;

Lithuania;

Poland;

Slovakia;

Slovenia.

Who is exempt from registration?

You are not required to register if:

- you are self-employed;
- have been working legally in the United Kingdom for 12 months without a

- break in employment;
- are providing services in the United Kingdom on behalf of an employer who is not established in this country;
- have dual citizenship of the United Kingdom, another country within the European Economic Area (EEA) that is not listed above, or Switzerland;
- are the family member of a Swiss or EEA citizen (except the countries listed above) and that person is working in the United Kingdom; or
are the family member of a Swiss or EEA citizen who is living in the United Kingdom as a student, or a retired or self-sufficient person
- If you are self-employed, you do not need to register under the Worker Registration Scheme, but you must contact **HM Revenue & Customs** immediately to register for tax purposes. There is a £100 fine for late registration.

Once you have completed 12 months work with no more than 30 days break, you will no longer need to register on the Worker Registration Scheme. If you wish, you can then obtain a registration certificate confirming your right to live and work in the United Kingdom, although you are not obliged to do so.

If you are exempt from registration on the Worker Registration Scheme, you can obtain a registration certificate confirming your status, although you are not obliged to do so.

To obtain a registration certificate, you will need to complete application form EEA1. See **For European citizens** for more information.

If you are the family member of an EEA citizen, you can obtain a residence card that confirms this. You will need to complete application form EEA2. See **For European citizens** for more information.

You can contact us for more information on immigration issues. There is no dedicated enquiry helpline for the Worker Registration Scheme and you cannot make enquiries or applications in person at our public enquiry offices.

Latvian non-citizen (alien) passport holders

If you have a Latvian alien passport, you do not have the right to work in the United Kingdom under the Worker Registration Scheme and must apply for permission to enter the country before you come to the United Kingdom to work.

We call this permission 'entry clearance'. It will be in the form of a visa or entry clearance certificate. To obtain it, you should apply to the British diplomatic post in the country where you live. For information about visas, see the **UK Visa Services website**.

Appendix 3

Key questions provided by the commissioning body:

- How long has the respondent lived in the U.K.;
- How long has the respondent lived in their in current accommodation;
- How many times has the respondent moved since arriving in the U.K.;
- Has the respondent ever been evicted, if yes was notice given and how much notice;
- Has the respondent ever been subjected to intimidation or threats;
- Is the accommodation tied to employment;
- Do they have a written tenancy agreement;
- What type of housing does the respondent live in now;
- What type of housing does the respondent need or want;
- How many people live in their household (understood by the researchers as meaning the number in their family);
- Do they share any part of their accommodation with people who are not part of their household (understood by the researchers as meaning other individuals who are not part of their family), if yes, how many;
- How many kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms are there in the property;
- Have they had any problems with their current or previous accommodations since arriving in the U.K., if yes, please explain;
- Have they sought advice about a housing problem, if yes from whom (for example CAB, local authority housing department, Shelter, other).

Appendix 4

East Europe migrants take 1% of social housing, says report

by Alan Travis and Martin Wainwright
The Guardian,
Thursday January 17 2008

This article appeared in the Guardian on Thursday January 17 2008 on p9 of the UK news and analysis section. It was last updated at 09:29 on January 17 2008.

The hundreds of thousands of Poles and other east European migrants who have moved to Britain in the past two years have been allocated only 1% of council or housing association flats, contrary to popular perception, according to research.

A paper for yesterday's meeting of the government's migration impacts forum said that about 90% of those who have arrived in the last two years in the biggest wave of immigration in Britain's recent history are crowded into the bottom end of the private rented sector, often in poor and overcrowded conditions.

The report by Joanne Roney of Sheffield city council said that some migrant workers, especially those who have only come for a short period, often accept very poor housing conditions because they are on very low pay levels or need to send money home. She also highlighted the plight of the one-third of migrant workers who live in tied accommodation provided by their employers, saying that more than half described their conditions as "poor or very poor".

In agricultural areas many migrant workers were housed in poor quality caravan or mobile home sites.

Roney said that over 40% of those who worked more than 48 hours a week were living in employer-provided accommodation, and suggested that this meant it was extremely difficult for them to refuse extra hours or additional work. The report for the forum, which is chaired by the immigration minister, Liam Byrne, and the local government minister, Phil Woolas, stressed the need for local authorities to adopt positive programmes to cope with newly-arrived migrant communities.

The rules bar access to council or other social housing to overseas migrants from outside Europe, unless they are refugees granted permission to stay permanently in Britain. Roney said that only 5% of social housing lets go to foreign nationals and only 1% to recent east European arrivals.

One such case is that of Milan Horvat, who found himself in dispute with his landlord after moving to South Yorkshire from Slovakia. "I paid the rent regular, every two weeks, £220," said the 40-year-old. "But the landlord, he say I don't, and I don't have any paper to prove it."

The dispute, which led to Milan and his family losing the tenancy, is typical of problems which beset the Slovak community in Sheffield.

Barred from social housing for their first year in Britain, and faced with average rents of £110-a-week for a three-bed Victorian terrace, the Slovaks and other eastern European migrants can be tempted to cram in cousins and in-laws.

Cyril Dunka, a 37-year-old graduate from Bratislava university who is currently working as a cleaner, said of his home in Sheffield: "We have had troubles and I wish houses weren't so expensive. We will always rent, I think."

Appendix 5

Migrant housing myths exposed

Annie Kelly
The Guardian,
Wednesday November 28 2007

This article appeared in the Guardian on Wednesday November 28 2007 on p2 of the Society news & features section. It was last updated at 14:40 on January 16 2008.

Some of the enduring myths about immigration and social housing in the UK are debunked in a new report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The report on recently arrived Liberian, Pakistani, Polish and Somalian asylum seekers and migrant workers living in Sheffield reveals that instead of taking housing meant for British families, asylum seekers more often move into shoddy and unsafe social housing that nobody else wants. And while refugees and asylum seekers have the right of access to social housing, their ability to exercise choice over where they live is extremely limited.

Even compared to other disadvantaged groups, asylum seekers' ability to improve their housing situation is severely curtailed by limited legal rights and poor understanding of the housing system. They are "rarely skilled players of the welfare system", the report says.

In Sheffield, clusters of asylum seekers were housed in mainly white, British, working-class estates on the edge of the city, with little or no history of accommodating ethnic diversity, which led to a "corrosive effect of racial harassment, problems of insecurity . . . poor conditions and overcrowding".

Migrant workers, thanks to their right to work, often quickly found rented private accommodation, and in the long-term were able to exercise more choice over where they lived.

The Housing Pathways of New Immigrants: jrf.org.uk

Appendix 6

Question 50

Continuation of qualitative responses:

English family who I live with do not let me use a kitchen, internet so i feel discriminated [against].

Internet is the best place to get any information about anything.

I think that we need more info about housing, rent, buy a property We also need more single rooms for people who came here just for short time.

Some of the landlord don't accept that we have children and didn't give us the flat because of the children.

I've had problems with my neighbours who have shouted at me and verbally threatened me. The condition of my home is very poor and I cannot afford to maintain it. House prices are very expensive, and it is difficult to find the employment I need to afford the place where I live. I have received racial harassment and discrimination from neighbours.

Housing costs are high. I have lived in overcrowded accommodation. I am fairly satisfied with my accommodation.

If you are fair to landlord, he is a fair to you as well.

People sometimes do not know what they sign because they do not know English. In this case they should ask for time to translate documents before sign it.

Too many people for one bathroom, for example 12 people for one bathroom. The place where I live is a dump, there are parties, landlord doesn't take responsibility and does not provide us with good level of accommodation. There is drugs selling in home by English people, there is hole in a wall.

Some of agencies do not want to rent flats to Polish people; sometimes deposits are expensive and landlords don't return money.

Expensive deposits.

At a next meeting I would like to get information about how to buy a property, and learn the rules about it.

Good survey. In future I would like to get some information about rules about how to buy or rent a property.

I like my flat.

Prices for accommodation are too expensive.

I have applied for social house in June 2006. I have been put in the silver band, but I do not know the rules what else I can do to get a social house.

It is really difficult for us to rent a flat without a benefit and having only one earner nobody wants or can help. We are dispirited and we have nothing left to fight with and also we didn't sign a tenancy agreement with our landlord.

I have problem to get a social house. Many times I applied but there was no answer from them. I have three children and am expecting another child. My present accommodation has damp in every room.

I am disabled, I have problem with my landlord and letting agency. I am on disability benefits. I do not know where to find diversity in housing support.

Please, help me to find an accommodation. At this moment I am homeless, I have debts, mortgage debts, I need pay for a room for 2 months back.

My employer provides me with a house so I didn't have a problem to find a accommodation. I just want my accommodation to be in a better condition

Good idea

It was difficult for me to find accommodation here for me and my family because I do not speak English.

Very good initiative, lots of interesting questions, I hope that this project will help us to have a better life here.

For me was easier to buy a flat than to rent it.

Weak mobile reception.

My problem is that I don't speak/understand English very well.

Heating is electric and so it's really expensive. I can't afford to get oil because the grant doesn't cover the whole amount. Can't afford to move, can't afford to stay.

No internet access to village. Cost of living is very expensive and I can't afford to make home improvements.

No internet access.

I don't think that there is problem about finding accommodation - I didn't have any. My friends did because they needed a place to park and they have kids. My problem is my neighbour who is 40 years old and he is partly deaf. He thinks we make too much noise because he hears the vibrations of our feet. He sends offensive letters, has gone to the agency and the police. I am scared that the letting agency will throw us out.

The cost for my room is too expensive; people in the house are difficult to live with.

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