

Migrant Workers

What is a Migrant Worker?

A migrant worker is someone who comes here from outside of the UK to live and to work. Migrant workers take a wide range of jobs, and can be carers, factory workers, IT consultants, doctors, and strawberry pickers, although the majority work in manual jobs. Many migrant workers only stay here for a short time before returning to their home countries.

Where do they come from?

Migrant workers can come to Britain from all over the world, including Australia, India, South Africa, and more recently the so called 'A8' countries that joined the European Union in 2004, which includes Poland and Lithuania as well as others.

Whilst migrant workers from most countries must return home when their visas expire, those who come from the European Union can stay here for as long as they like, just as British citizens are allowed to stay in other EU countries for as long as they want.

Why do they come here?

Many British people are moving away from the manual labour market towards more service-based jobs like working in shops and offices. This has caused big shortages in the number of people working in industries such as food processing, manufacturing, and manual labour that still need to be filled. The British economy has benefited from the contribution of migrant workers over many decades.

THE FACTS . . .

- During 2006/07 4,980 foreign nationals applied for national insurance numbers in Suffolk, that's less than 1% of the total local population of over 700,000 people.
- **Migrant workers applying for social housing do not get any preferential treatment**, and are allocated housing according to their need just like any other resident. For example, of the 405 properties let by Havebury Housing Partnership in St. Edmundsbury in 2006/07, 396 (or 98%) went to UK nationals.
- **Migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers are not a burden on the tax payer.** In fact, the East of England Development Agency found in 2007 that migrant workers contributed over £360m to the economy of East Anglia. 25% of Migrant Workers are educated to degree level or higher.
- **Migrants are more likely to be victims of crime than to commit it.** There is growing evidence that they are subjected to racial harassment in the community and discrimination in the work place. Migrants committing crime also risk being deported if caught.
- **Migrants living in Suffolk have the right to health care here, just like UK residents do when they are staying in other European Union countries.** Migrants use relatively few health services, but contribute a huge amount to the NHS through the roles they undertake in it.



How do migrant workers affect me?

Migrant workers contribute millions of pounds to the British economy. The Bank of England has suggested that migration helps to control inflation and reduce the cost of borrowing for all of us.

They also add to the culture and diversity of Suffolk, and enrich life in Britain for everyone. Migrant workers should be welcomed into local communities, making their stay here as positive an experience as possible.

Information in this leaflet taken from a range of national and local sources