

# The New Communities in Waveney: A Profile from Lowestoft International Support Group

## Final Report



June 2007

Written by

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### **Websites:**

[www.auditcommission.gov.uk](http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk)

[www.keystonetrust.org.uk/common/pdfs/profileofmigrantworkersinbreckland.pdf](http://www.keystonetrust.org.uk/common/pdfs/profileofmigrantworkersinbreckland.pdf)

[www.migrantworkers.co.uk/docs/Migrant%20workers%20final%20report%204aug2005.pdf](http://www.migrantworkers.co.uk/docs/Migrant%20workers%20final%20report%204aug2005.pdf)

[www.workingintheuk.gov.uk](http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk)

## **1. Background**

The Lowestoft International Support Group (LISG) is an independent voluntary organization that was set up in 2003 as a self-help and support group for the new communities within Waveney. Since 2004 LISG has run a twice weekly drop-in service from the attic of the Waveney Community Forum building in 12 Grove Road.

This service has been run largely by volunteers, and occasionally seconded staff. It is now used regularly by members of Lowestoft's new communities and currently sees around 30, people a week. Here information, language support and advocacy are offered to clients. If we are unable to help directly, we refer the client on to the appropriate agency.

Through this work and other projects, we have built up good links with Waveney's migrant worker and refugee communities. Indeed many of our committee members, volunteers, and now workers, come from these backgrounds, so we have a unique perspective on issues facing various communities and the needs that arise from these.

At the beginning of 2007 L.I.S.G received some funding from Lowestoft Together to enable us to continue and develop the work we have been doing. Part of that money has been used to write this short report about Waveney's new and ethnic minority communities, drawing on both our own knowledge base and further research.

## **2. Overview**

Migration is not new but has been a feature of all modern societies the world over for centuries. People from different communities migrate to the UK for a number of reasons. Some seeking employment, others because they are fleeing persecution and torture, some come to Britain to study and some for personal or family reasons. In Waveney there are people from many different nationalities who have come here for all of these reasons and more.

The recent acceleration in migration has had a positive effect on the economy nationally, both in the public and private sector (**Ref.1**) but the way in which local communities respond varies according to the specific circumstances of the communities involved. The main aim of this report is to try to raise some of the

issues specific to Waveney, and make some recommendations about how we might address some of the issues that this report has raised.

### **3. Methodology**

There is very little data regarding precise numbers of overseas nationals resident in Waveney. For this report we have used data from the foreign national insurance registrations (NINos), and data from the Home Office Workers Registration Scheme (WRS), the latter of which was accessed via the Freedom of Information Act.

NINo data includes people from all nationalities, whereas WRS data includes only workers from the new accession countries, and not the newest members from Romania and Bulgaria, who joined in January 2007.

New National Insurance Numbers are not always applied for in the first year of arrival, and do not always mean the applicant takes up employment but they give a good indication of the speed and scale of change.

Both sets of data are problematic for a number of reasons. Both data include only working adults, not children and other dependents. People who are self-employed do not need to apply for WRS and are therefore not included. People who initially register to live and work in Waveney do not necessarily stay here. Similarly, people who register elsewhere in the UK might later move to the Waveney area.

Nationals of the A8 countries who wish to take up employment in the UK are generally required to register with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). The data provided contains only those that have submitted applications to register with the Home Office, to work in the UK. Workers who are self-employed do not need to register and are therefore generally not included in these figures: there may also be other workers from the accession countries who for one reason or another do not register and are thus not included in these figures.

We have not included the national census statistics, as this data was collected in 2001, and as this report is concerned with more recent and rapid changes to Waveney's population. This data is also widely available from many sources.

There was little organized local data, with the exception of Lowestoft College who have kept comprehensive records of Black and Minority Ethnic student intake and achievement.

We have also included data from our own drop-in service. For the past four years we have kept regular records about who is using our service and the issues people have been coming to see us about.

The majority of data for this report is qualitative, gathered through informal interviews with individuals from different international communities. Some of this data is more comprehensive. Our understanding of the Polish and Kurdish communities is richer because two of them are staff members, including the co-author of this report are from those communities. One of our volunteers, a member of the Chinese community, carried out her own informal survey of the experiences of the Chinese population, involving fifteen participants (*see Appendix 1*).

#### **4. Limitations**

This research was carried out by two part-time workers, who are also involved in running our drop in service, and within a time scale of three months. What was possible was therefore limited and it was felt that, whilst the findings were both useful and revealing, we have only been able to scratch the surface, and more in depth research in this area is needed.

Although the focus of this research is on Waveney, and our secondary data covers the whole of the district, time and resources has meant that all of the primary research (e.g. the interviews with community members) took place within Lowestoft.

Whilst we are aware of EU migrants from many different countries living in Waveney (*see table 1 and figure 8.1*) we have concentrated mainly on Portuguese and Polish migrants. This is partly for practical reasons. We have a lot of contact with Polish people as at present most of our drop-in clients are Polish. As the Portuguese migrants are an established community with two cafés' known to us, it was easier to make contact with people from this community. This is also because Portuguese and Polish people constitute the largest number of migrants entering the area over recent years. (*see tables 1 and figure 6.2.1*).

However, we are aware of a number of other migrant communities living in this area. There is a large and largely hidden Chinese population in Lowestoft, who, thanks to the help of a member of that community, we were able to include in this report. We have also included the Zimbabwean, Russian, Kurdish and Turkish, again thanks to the kind help of members of those communities.

We were able to learn a little about the issues faced by the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students at Lowestoft college by the data collected and provided by the college, by talking to staff members of the college familiar with the issues faced by them, and by members of the police force, who are familiar with the students because of a number of racist attacks directed against them.

## **5. Glossary**

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

NINO – National Insurance Number

WRS – Workers Registration Scheme

EU – European Union

EEA – European Economic Area

A8 – Workers from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovak Republic.

A2 – Workers from Romanian and Bulgaria

TCM – Traditional Chinese Medicine

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

## 6. EU Migrant workers.

Over the past five years there has been an increase in the number of foreign nationals who have applied for National Insurance Numbers in the Waveney area (*see figure 6.1*). Much of the increase in migration to the UK is accounted for by the rapid rise in people coming to work in Britain from the new A8 accession countries since the expansion of the EU in May 2004 (*see figure 6.2*), which has allowed EEA citizens to move and work freely within the EEA. A8 workers, unlike non EU members, do not require work permits. Many A8 workers living in rural areas are employed in the farming, food, construction and health care sectors alongside the more established Portuguese and other workers from the EU old states.

Figure 6.1 National Insurance Number statistical data for Waveney (2002-2006)

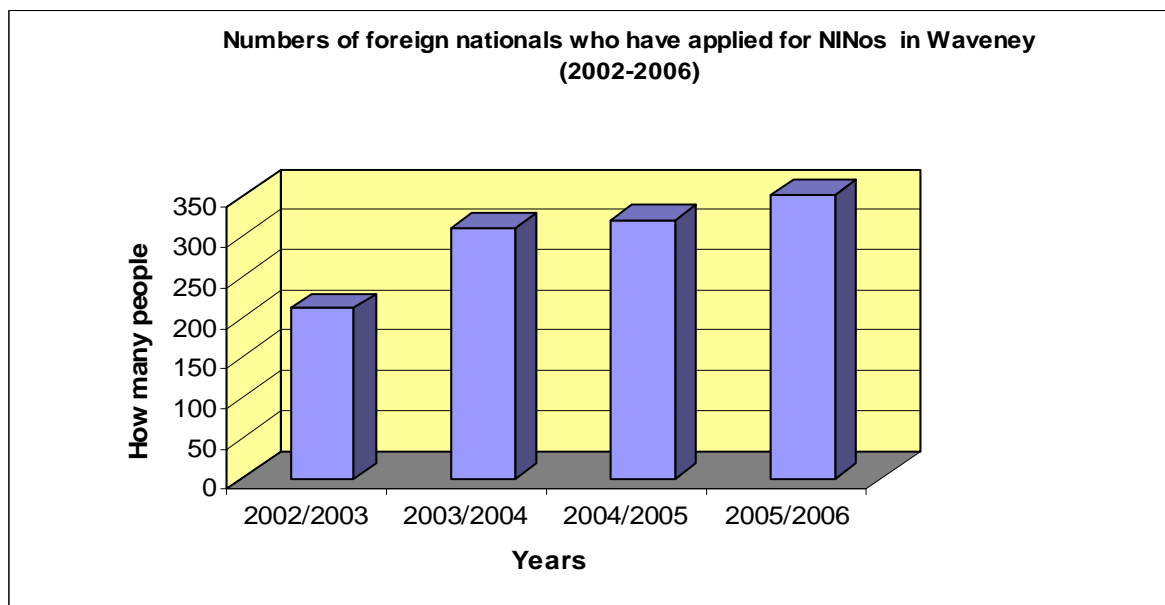
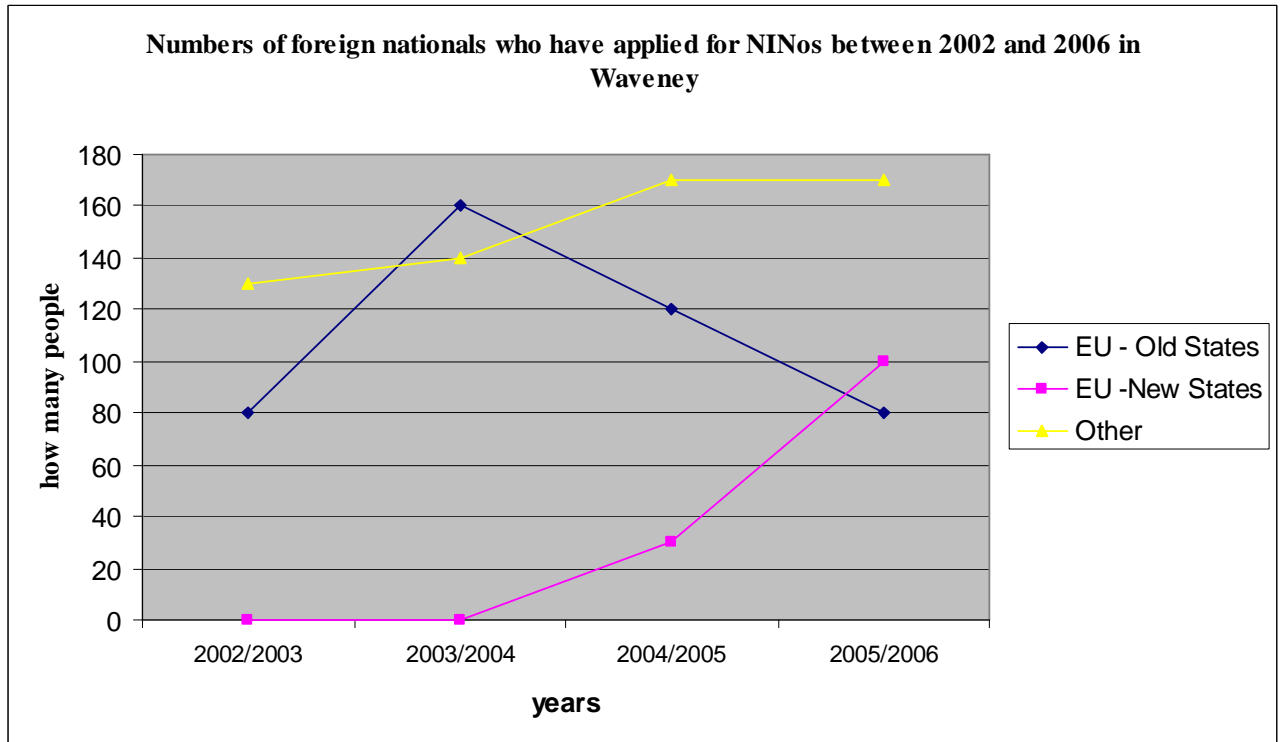


Figure 6.2 NINo statistical data showing rise in EU applications



### 6.1 Portuguese Migrant Workers

The largest numbers of old state workers in Waveney have come from Portugal (*see table 1.*).

NINo data over the past five years suggests a Portuguese population of around 250, but members of the Portuguese community have put the figure between seven hundred and one thousand. This may be because NINo data only records figures for working adults and the majority of Portuguese live in families with children, and points up one of the problems in gathering relevant data from sources such as this and WRS, the two main official data sources this report has had to rely on.

There are two Portuguese cafes in Lowestoft that we are aware of, and this is where it seems a big part of the Portuguese community meet one another and socialize. It is also the case that members within this community have been pro-

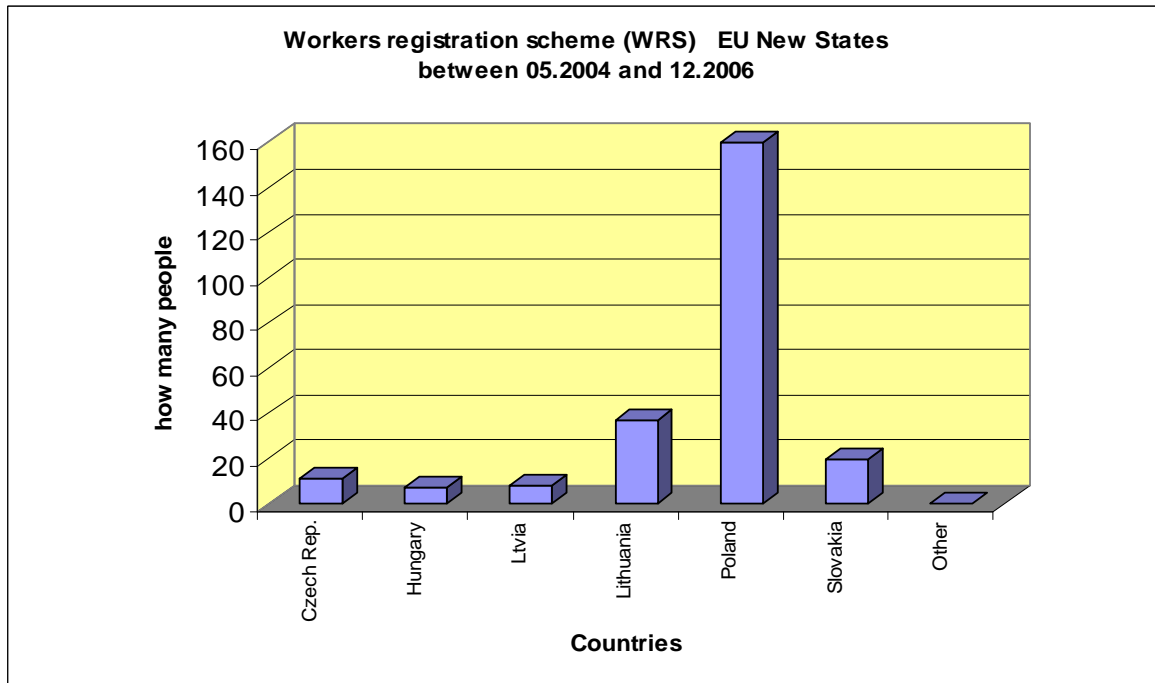
active in supporting one another, particularly where local services have failed to provide adequate support. One Portuguese man we spoke to, who has taught himself English whilst living in Lowestoft, regularly supports members of the Portuguese community where language barriers are the main issue.

## **6.2 Polish Migrant Workers**

Polish migrant workers constitute the largest number of workers from the accession states who have come to work in Waveney over the past three years (*see table 1. and figure 6.2.1*). Members of the community have estimated between five and six hundred.

The overwhelming majority of clients we see at our drop-in service are from Poland, so we have developed a practical understanding of the main issues, and this has been backed up by personal experiences we have gathered from talking to people (*see Appendix 2.5*). The majority of Polish migrant workers are young people between 18 and 34 years, some are single and some have families. It is common for people to bring their children to England once they have become more settled, and there is a growing number of Polish children attending the local schools. There is a small minority of professional Polish migrant workers, whose jobs enable them to use the skills they have brought with them, but many, regardless of qualifications and skills, work in factories and the caring and cleaning industries. Many work for agencies before being employed directly by their place of work, and it is common practice for agencies or workplaces to employ people directly from Poland.

Figure 6.2.1 WRS data – EU New States between 05.2004 and 12.2006



### 6.3 Other EU workers

The greater proportion of people coming from the New States are coming from Poland, the majority from the Old States are coming from Portugal, but there are many other nationalities both from the old and new states living in Waveney (*see table 1*).

#### 6.3.1 Romanian Migrant Workers

Romania and Bulgaria (A2) joined the EU in January 2007 but are considered only partial members, and do not have the same privileges as the A8 workers.

A2 workers can apply for three different types of work permit depending on how long they have lived in the UK previous to 2007 and why they have come. Blue permit holders must have lived and worked in the UK for twelve months previous to December 2006, and have all the entitlements to employment and benefits as A8 workers. New applicants must apply for a purple work permit, and are considered as having partial member status. They can only work in a job at NVQ

level 3 or above, and are not entitled to any benefits. The final category can apply for a yellow permit, and must be self-employed or a student in this country. Because of these restrictions it seems unlikely that as many people from the A2 countries will come to the UK looking for work as from the A8 countries (**Ref.2.**)

There is already a significant community of Romanian people living in Lowestoft, the participant we spoke to for this report estimated there were around forty to fifty people. NINO data tells us that between 2003 and 2006 thirty people from Romania applied for National Insurance Numbers.

Table 1. Applications for National Insurance numbers by foreign nationals in Waveney (2002 – 2006)

2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005		2005/2006	
Portugal	60	Portugal	110	Portugal	110	Poland	70
Pakistan	20	Pakistan	20	Pakistan	30	Portugal	50
South Africa	20	South Africa	20	Poland	20	Pakistan	30
Iraq	20	France	20	India	20	South Africa	20
Australia	10	Spain	20	Bangladesh	20	Bangladesh	20
Canada	10	Australia	10	New Zealand	10	Australia	10
Bangladesh	10	New Zealand	10	South Africa	10	India	10
France	10	India	10	Lithuania	10	Lithuania	10
Spain	10	Bangladesh	10	Netherlands	10	Slovakia	10
China	10	Germany	10	Romania	10	Latvia	10
USA	10	Romania	10	Spain	10	Germany	10
		Turkey	10			Spain	10
		Phillipines	10			Phillipines	10
		Thailand	10			Netherlands	10
						Thailand	10
						Romania	10

OTHER
  Old states
  New EU states

Source: Department for Work and Pensions National Insurance Recording System

### **6.3.2 Other Old State EU Workers**

As table 1 shows there are also people coming to work in Waveney from other of the old state countries, there are 50 from Spain, 30 from France, and 20 people from Germany. From these countries we know of people working as teaching assistants and au-pairs. Some work in the tourism and entertainment industry.

## **7. Living and working in Waveney – Issues for EU workers**

### **7.1 Employment**

As the majority of EU migrants come here specifically to work, employment related issues are central. Some individuals come to Britain in the hope of finding a better life but instead find themselves working long hours for relatively low pay. National statistics show that the majority of accession state workers are at the lower end of the pay scale. In 2005/06 eighty percent of registered accession state workers were earning between £4.50 and £6.00 an hour (**Ref.3**).

Most people who have migrated to the rural east have come to work in food processing, manufacturing, agriculture, health and social care. Sometimes the conditions are exploitative. One Portuguese man we spoke to told us that it was common practice in the factory he worked in for migrant workers to work in one position for long hours, rather than changing position to avoid repetitive strain injuries as is standard practice for British workers.

It is common for migrant workers to leave their employment because of injuries caused through work and then find themselves unable to find suitable work because of language barriers. Some give up and go home, some stay in the hope of finding suitable work or claim benefits.

Fears over unemployment, with limited recourse to public funds, and language barriers make migrant workers an especially vulnerable group within the workplace. Many will not complain about injustice because of the threat of unemployment and this situation can be exploited by employers. Some local companies have been known to make already vulnerable migrant workers pay a penalty if they leave their job before a specified period of time.

Many migrant workers have qualifications and skills above those required for their current employment, and this can increase the feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration. There are a number of qualified nurses who work as private care staff

because they are unable to use their skills. Many are university educated, a study in Breckland, Norfolk, put the figure at around 20 per cent (**Ref.4**), and whilst employers need skilled workers, language difficulties and lack of understanding about conversion procedures and the relevance of foreign qualifications, means that employers often cannot utilize the available skills. Employment training is often necessary when migrant workers lose the work that they initially came into the country to do, but difficult and sometimes impossible as training is only given in the English language.

## **7.2 Language**

Many of the Polish migrant workers we have spoken to and encountered in our work in the drop-in have spoken of the desire to increase their knowledge of the English language. The majority (we estimate at least 80%), are attending ESOL classes at present.

This is consistent with the findings from previous research that migrant workers, regardless of country of origin, generally possess high levels of soft skills (e.g. enthusiasm for learning, thinking ahead, team working and flexibility), all of which are considered as important for successful integration into the labour market (**Ref.5**).

There is a lot of shyness around not being able to speak English well, or even at all, which can make it harder for individuals to approach services, even when some translation provision is made in the form of language line. Often members of the community rely on community interpreters in order to access services or communicate a point of view or need. Language barriers create vulnerabilities as individuals are forced to rely on others' goodwill. Sometimes this is exploited, when, for example, people are charged extortionate rates for translation or interpretation services provided by other community members.

The ESOL provision that exists at present is not always adequate, although experiences do vary from very good to poor. In the examples given to us during our research for this report we were told of lessons in which the staff, learner ratio was much too high and individuals felt left behind in the lessons. Some eventually gave up entirely, and some, although passing the final exams, left without being confident in their knowledge of English.

### **7.3 Education**

Many EU migrant workers have come here with children, or have children who have joined them later in this country. There are a growing number of migrant children in our local schools, and the individuals that we have spoken to, find the schools very supportive of their children, and their children generally very happy there. The schools report a willingness to help migrant children integrate but struggle with few resources to overcome language barriers, when communicating with the pupils and the parents. The picture varies, with some schools accessing funding specifically aimed at ethnic minority pupils to help support second language speakers within the education system.

### **7.4 Racism**

Racism is a complex issue and one which runs through all of the issues touched on this report. Time and space precludes a fuller, justified discussion of this issue.

Many EU migrants we have asked directly about their experience of racism have told us that they found the Lowestoft community friendly and accepting. Anecdotal data tells us that overt racism is problematic but mostly confined to the nightlife (e.g. pubs and clubs) and gangs of youths on the streets. In this context the police are often perceived negatively, as being less likely to help if you are not British. One example was given in which the police were called when a group of local youths attacked the home of some migrant workers, on arriving at the scene the police were greeted by the youths.

Racism is often hidden, in the perceived reactions of others, when applying for work, in the workplace or opening a bank account for example. A common response to our research was that people feel they are treated differently, but often choose not to mention it because they do not want to make trouble or feel it is not important.

In the work place, workers have told us of being treated with less respect than their British counterparts, having to do the most difficult jobs and being made to work in one position for unreasonably long periods of time (see above). Sometimes other workers take advantage of international workers, who are more vulnerable because of communication difficulties and fears over losing

employment, but there are also examples of migrant workers being given support and friendship from British colleagues.

In one of the comments made following a migrant workers information day, one person spoke of being made to feel, by police and employers, as less important than local people, and said that racism, although carefully hidden, is felt painfully within the workplace.

### **7.5 Housing.**

Lack of adequate and safe housing is a common issue for all migrant workers, regardless of country of origin, in all parts of the country (**Ref. 6**). Often migrant workers in Lowestoft struggle to find adequate accommodation. The perception of one individual we spoke to for this report was that migrant communities are being charged higher rents than English tenants, and that it is harder to find accommodation if you are not British. High rents are an issue for local people as well, but it is likely that, as with employment, language issues and fears over homelessness make migrant communities a particularly vulnerable group. This is especially true when people first come into this country.

Often agencies or workplaces provide accommodation that is poor and over-priced for new migrant workers. The link between accommodation and work can make people especially vulnerable. For example, if a worker complains about working conditions they could face the threat of eviction, and vice versa, if a worker complains about accommodation they could fear losing their work. This is a situation we have encountered at the drop-in. In one example, a worker was compelled to pay a bill they were not responsible for because they were afraid that if they complained they would lose their job.

### **7.6 Community Groups**

Whilst the Portuguese community has already established their own support networks, mainly evolving around the two Portuguese cafes in the town, nothing like this exists at the present time for the Polish community.

L.I.S.G was recently involved in organizing a migrant worker information day for the Polish community, a surprising number attended (between fifty and sixty), comments were made about how good it was for the Polish community to come

together like this, and the desire was expressed for the establishment of a regular community meeting place.

In 2006 L.I.S.G members initiated The World Art Club for young people, aimed at encouraging integration between Lowestoft's local and international children. At present it is attended by on average two English and ten Polish children.

### **7.7. Information about Living in the UK**

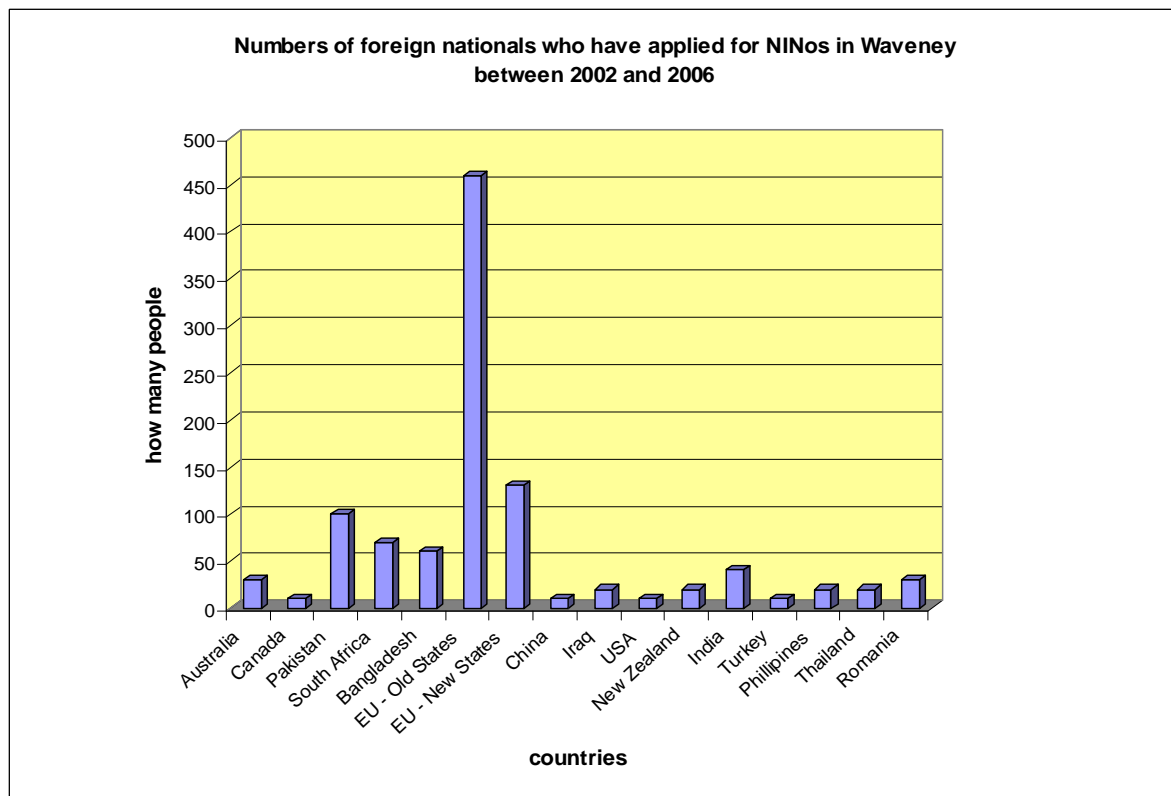
Whilst there have been big changes to European law to accompany the expansion of the EEA, it has been our experience that the information in many important practical areas, to assist people in the complex transition involved in moving to a new country is difficult to access. The most frequent example we have encountered is how to access and understand benefit and tax entitlements. It is not always clear which country has the responsibility to pay benefits when a person first arrives in a country, or how to access, for example, disability living allowance, for new workers or, as is more frequently the case as people settle here, the children of migrant workers.

The thirst for information regarding living in the UK was demonstrated in the high turn out for the migrant workers information day (see above), which was aimed at providing practical advice on many important matters. Much of the work we do in the drop-in involves trying to enable people to access information about their rights and entitlements as well as their obligations as workers in the UK.

## 8. Other international communities within Waveney

As figure 8.1 shows, there are many other new communities living in Waveney.

Figure 8.1 NINo data - Other communities living in Waveney (2002 – 2006)



### 8.1 Zimbabwean

It is difficult to establish exactly how many Zimbabwean nationals are currently living in Waveney. We spoke to one participant from Zimbabwe who has estimated about 10 families within Lowestoft and four or more couples. Whilst some Zimbabweans have come to Britain seeking asylum, many, including himself, had come as professional workers.

One of the key issues for professional Zimbabweans working within Britain is that whilst they are paying taxes, they are not entitled to any of the benefits British citizens and other EU members are entitled to, such as working tax credits and child benefit, or maternity and sickness pay.

Another issue prominent in our discussion was racism. We were told that racism is a big problem for Zimbabweans living in Lowestoft.

The individual we spoke to for this report told us that he has regularly experienced racism from members of the public, as well as members of the police force. In one instance he was stopped and searched in his car ten times in one week. In another he was verbally abused, first by a member of the public who had hit his car, and again by the policeman who attended the incident. He also told us that his children were regularly subjected to racist taunts within school, being called names such as 'chocolate drop,'

The participant spoke of a willingness to integrate and to make a difference in the community. He would like to see more cultural events that bring people together. Unfortunately many members of his community have become withdrawn and disinterested because of negative experiences. He said he was pleased that the Library was now providing literature in two of the African languages, but pointed out that there are many languages in Africa, and research needs to be carried out into this.

## **8.2 Russian**

For this report we spoke to one Russian woman who told us of a largely hidden Russian community of women who have come to this country because they have married British men. Some come from the harsher countries of Russia such as Siberia, and marry because they are desperate to escape the conditions of their lives. Once here it is common for women to find themselves isolated and unhappy, often suffering emotional abuse within the home, then unwilling or unable to find help. This is supported by our experience of Russian clients in the drop-in. We have seen only two Russian nationals at the drop in, and these were women seeking help for emotional and physical abuse in the home.

The Russian woman we spoke to for this report told us that many of the Russian women will not try to get help, partly because of pride, they feel it should not be happening to them, and cultural emphasis on the sanctity of marriage, but also because of language barriers and not knowing where to go to get help. There are also women who come from the richer countries in Russia, who feel less vulnerable and less dependent on the men who have brought them here.

### **8.3 Chinese Community**

According to the survey carried out by a LISG volunteer, estimates as to the amount of Chinese people living in Lowestoft vary between one and five hundred. Many are employed in fast food shops and restaurants in the area. There are both single people and families, with Chinese children and young people attending local schools and colleges.

The lack of a community focal point was cited as a key issue for the community, as well as language provisions and racism at both the local college and schools. Schools were not viewed very positively, being seen as between average and poor, and anti-social pupils were seen as a problem. Independent schools were seen as a realistic option and local authority schools as inferior by some respondents.

English language skills are a key determinant in the accessing of local services, those with poor language skills being less likely to approach services. Often the community is self-supporting, with Chinese people preferring to sort it out for themselves if the issue is social, for example work and housing, alcohol and drugs, domestic violence and care and supervision of the mentally ill. .

For all respondents, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is used as well as GP prescribed and brought medicines. For older respondents TCM is seen as the automatic option for minor conditions.

All respondents, regardless of level of language proficiency, said that they had no contact with other local community groups. Dual text (e.g. Chinese Mandarin English) on promotional material for community events was seen as desirable, and would encourage integration. There is also a need for a Chinese community centre as a base for cultural and educational activities, and good English classes, particular for children and for women, as language difficulties are seen as a key barrier both in terms of integration and accessing services.

Interestingly: one participant thought that the Citizens Advice Bureau was discriminatory by name (understanding the word 'Citizen' to denote British citizenship) and therefore in its provision of advice. The need for good advice, both financial and about living in the UK more generally was raised.

#### **8.4 The Indian and Pakistani students at Lowestoft college**

There is a constant flow of students, mainly from Indian, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who come to study at the Marine Studies department of Lowestoft College.

Partly because of the small amount of time spent in the country by the students, and the demands on their time because of studying and, as is often the case, working to finance studying, the community remains relatively isolated and self-supporting. Support networks work via the senior students passing on information about life in Lowestoft to the new students, who in turn will pass information on when new students arrive. However, a growing number of these students settle locally, sometimes marrying local residents.

Racism is a serious and ongoing issue for the students, and another reason why they remain relatively isolated and avoid going out into the community. Much of this racism seems to be coming from groups of young people, sometimes as young as eight, who taunt and abuse the students publicly, and who have attacked their homes and stolen possessions (**Ref.7**). Racism against the students has a longer history than this recent spate of attacks (which the police have attributed to a group of about twenty youths), in 2003 a demonstration was held in the town centre to draw public attention to the situation.

#### **8.5 Kurdish Iraqi**

There is a community of between thirty and forty Kurdish Iraqis living in Lowestoft, who are mostly young single men aged between 18 and 30 (there are only 3 Kurdish women). All were single when they came to this country, but some have married locally, and there are now 7 families with children.

All of the Kurdish community that are known to us have come to this country seeking asylum in the late 90's / early 2000's. The main issues for this community are about immigration status, travel documentation and housing. When we see Kurdish clients at L.I.S.G, it is usually for these reasons (see Appendix 2.3.) and we refer many of them on for specialist advice from IAS. However as people become more settled here, issues relating to employment and obtaining a driving license are common.

Racism (as has been the case throughout this report) most often seems to come from groups of young people, but it is also the perception of the participants we

spoke to for this report, that local services and business view them in a more negative light. For example, not give good advice, or in the case of banks will be less likely to trust them.

## **8.6 Turkish**

The participant we spoke to for this report estimated that there are around eighty Turkish people who live in Lowestoft, around twenty of whom live in families and thirty who are single.

All of the Turkish community that we know of are working in the take-away food industry and have cafés and restaurants in the town.

They are mainly self-supporting, turning to one another to resolve issues rather than approaching local services and have little contact with the wider community generally, although the young people attend the local schools and colleges.

One key issue for the community is racism from groups of young people who come to the take-away shops late at night and start trouble.

## **9. Findings and Recommendations**

### **9.1 Issues of race and racism, particularly among the young.**

Many of the international communities we have spoken to experience a significant problem with racism, notably from the young, both in schools and on the streets. This is especially the case for those samples we learned about from the Chinese and Zimbabwean communities, and the Asian students from the college. Lowestoft is a deprived area with many social problems, and which, unlike many towns and cities, does not have a long history of cultural diversity and integration. In this context any outsider with racial differences that are visible can become an easy target for young people with a limited understanding and little personal experience of different racial groups.

It was suggested by a group of the Asian students at Lowestoft College, after being attacked by a group of very young children, that they go around to the local schools and talk to the children about why they have come to Britain, as a way of overcoming this. This particular group of students has since left without ever

finding the time to carry this out, but the idea is quite striking as a way of addressing the racism within the young, and could be taken up by local authorities with the help of relevant local community groups.

## **9.2 Employment**

For EU nationals racism is reported to be problematic in the workplace, perhaps because of negative publicity surrounding migration, specifically the impact on overstretched services, and also because language difficulties and fears of job security make EU nationals easy targets for bullying in stressful workplaces with little job satisfaction.

An emphasis on the positive aspects of migration, e.g. economic benefits to public and private sector and economy as a whole and the educational benefits of cultural diversity rather than the negative aspects often cited in sections of the media, could alleviate antagonisms between indigenous populations and migrant communities.

Work training inclusive of, or specifically orientated towards second language speakers would help to overcome barriers to work, for those migrant workers who have lost the work they came here for because of injury or communication issues. Free and accessible qualification conversion services would enable migrant workers to use the skills and qualifications they bring with them from their countries of origins and increase their status and income.

## **9.3 Language is a central issue**

That language barriers cause exclusion from society is a recurrent finding in this report. Some provision is made in the form of ESOL classes, but the adequacy varies and these are not necessarily accessible to all members of the international community at the times in which they are needed.

The provision of suitable, accessible and affordable English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a really important issue (often the most important) for many new arrivals. Unfortunately it was not something we had time to address fully in this report, but a mapping exercise could be carried out the future to identify the gaps in ESOL provision in Waveney.

## **9.4 The services and migrant communities**

Although interpretation services in the public sector do exist they are not always felt to be accessible to the individuals we spoke to for this report. The attitude of individual public sector workers can make a big difference to accessibility as many second language speakers feel unconfident about attempting to communicate in the English language and can be put off if the atmosphere is unfriendly and avoid using the services. This can increase people's vulnerability, particularly when situations of high need, such as unemployment, sickness or homelessness, arise.

Where translated literature in the library exists this is appreciated, but more translated literature, including a much wider range of languages needs to be provided.

The schools report a willingness to help migrant children to integrate, but some lack the funding and resources to bring this about adequately. Further research is needed to assess how well recently arrived children are integrating and succeeding within our local schools and colleges.

Sections of the police have been pro-active in trying to facilitate education for migrant communities and tackle racism for all communities, but the perception of many of the people we have spoken to is still that the police will do less to help migrant and international communities.

Negative perceptions of migrant and international communities, based on myths and rumors, inevitably penetrate to all levels of the local community, and could be relieved by providing those working on the front-line of our services and volunteers, with accurate, up to date information.

## **9.5 Community groups.**

A recurring theme throughout this report has been the need for space for communities to meet together. This might be to celebrate their own cultural differences, to develop cultural interests, or to socialize with members of their own communities. A café, restaurant, or even church with a large hall might fulfill this role.

As well as enabling individuals from the same language speaking communities to come together, community groups and events can serve an important function in bringing different communities together and overcoming racial divides. This is especially pertinent in the case of young people, who as this report has found, are often the perpetrators of racism in this locality. One way of addressing racism amongst the young might be through facilitating more clubs and activities, to bring young people from all nationalities together, and making already established groups and clubs accessible.

## **10. Recommendations for LISGs Future Activity**

- 1.** Carry out further community based research into different areas raised during the report, such as languages spoken, numbers of different populations, mapping of local ESOL provision and identifying new issues that arise.
- 2.** Continue and expand the drop in service, opening more days and including unsocial hours, as many of our clients are working. Our Drop-in service is well used but only has the capacity currently to cater for a slim section of the migrant and international populations. To provide a good quality service for wider sections of the different communities we need paid, core staff to co-ordinate our services, alongside sessional bi-lingual workers or interpreters to increase the flexibility and relevance of our service to the diverse groups we cater for.
- 3.** Develop our outreach work in order to reach larger sections of the community, currently under-represented in our Drop-in statistics, such as Portuguese, Chinese, Turkish and Zimbabwean residents.
- 4.** Move from Grove Road into more accessible and larger premises offering greater privacy for services users and ground floor access for clients with a disability or young children in pushchairs.
- 5.** Initiate new projects, particularly aimed at young people, with the aim of tackling racial tension and prejudice. The report suggests that racism is particularly marked amongst the young, especially towards those whose racial differences are visible. The report raises the possibility that this is because of limited understanding and little direct experience of different ethnic groups. We would like to carry out educational work within local schools in partnership with other organisations – such as the Ipswich and Suffolk Racial Equality Council who have the relevant knowledge and experience.

6. Explore ways to make the translated and other information we have gathered at LISG accessible, both to our client group and other community and voluntary groups. This could be achieved through a continuously updated website. LISG is at present working on setting up our own website which will be online in June.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.

**Lowestoft International Support Group**  
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#### **Social survey : Chinese population in Lowestoft March 2007**

surveying by informal interview between Friday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 total sample 15

main language Mandarin 4 Cantonese 8 English 3

male 5 female 10

age range 18 - 25 = 5 26 - 35 = 3 36 - 45 = 5 46 - 55 = 2

married 7 married with children 5 single 8 single with children 0

f/t employed 12 p/t employed 3 self-employed 6 unemployed 0

live in Lowestoft area 13 work in Lowestoft area 15

live & work in Lowestoft area **13**

#### **Summary of results**

##### **Question 1 *How many people do you think there are in Lowestoft from your community?***

Majority of responses around 100 –150, highest estimate 500

##### **Question 2 *Are you mainly refugees and asylum seekers?***

Majority response = no, some unsure, least response was yes

##### **Question 3 *Are there many families with children?***

Majority response = yes, one believed the Chinese population in Lowestoft was predominantly single people in employment in restaurants and fast food shops.

##### **Question 4 *What are the main issues for your community?***

Responses were varied – the importance of money making through business ownership, obtaining work permits, the lack of a community focal point (examples mentioned were clubs, community centre, Chinese literacy schooling), racist ridicule at Lowestoft College towards Chinese students taking basic English courses.

**Question 5 *If a member of the community needs help where do they go?***

Self-descriptive responses typically reflected the interviewee's level of English language speaking & understanding: the higher the level of language use the more likely it was that professional advice & services were sought.

The more integrated the interviewee the more relaxed the personal response. Those born, brought up, living and working in Lowestoft (British Born Chinese BBC) mentioned using public services as and when needed, specialised professionals (e.g. accountants), and talking to English friends & customers from their food shops.

All interviewees said Chinese with low level English language skills would ask a relative, friend, co-worker or employer for informal translating, with 'a solicitor in London Chinatown' being the only likely formal agency option.

London Chinatown was perceived by all interviewees as having a well developed and comprehensive range of advice centres, shops & services that they would be comfortable using – e.g. 'Chinese hairdressers would know how to cut Chinese hair' – alongside other major UK cities with a Chinatown.

All respondents believed the Chinese in Lowestoft generally preferred to 'sort it out amongst themselves' if the help issue was social. Examples mentioned were those in need of work & housing (from around the UK and those having relocated from abroad), alcohol & drug misuse, domestic violence, care & supervision of the mentally ill and elderly through housing.

For all respondents traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is dichotomized with GP prescribed/pharmacy brought medication. For older respondents and those with close ties with their country of origin TCM is seen as the automatic choice for minor conditions. GP medical clinics and hospitals are used out of necessity of expertise for children and more serious conditions.

The Citizens Advice Bureau was seen by one respondent as being discriminatory by name and therefore in its provision of advice. She believed only British citizen passport holders were officially entitled to seek advice at CAB offices nationwide and if those that did not fall into this category went to ask for help, non-Europeans in particular, the advice given would be ill-formed and inappropriate.

**Question 6. *How useful do you find local services in meeting your specific needs?***

Respondents generally understood this question as referring to local schools, hospitals and the conditions of roads. Those with school age children described local schools as being poor to average with the recurring concern of anti-social pupils.

Independent school for traveling age children was the realistic option and all local authority schools were automatically categorized as inferior by respondents who ran their own businesses.

English language proficiency was seen as the major determinant in accessing local services. Those with low level English language skills were described by their proficient peers as being least likely to directly ask for, complain or expect their particular needs to be met. Instead, they relied on informal help in translating if the issue was 'major enough'.

Two respondents who have approached the local council on several different occasions for different matters described the council staff's attitude as being sympathetic with good efforts made to deliver satisfactory results efficiently.

**Question 7 *Do you have contact with other local community groups?***

Overwhelming majority response was no. The level of language proficiency was an irrelevant factor.

**Question 8 *What is your experience of racism in this area?***

Young people and teenagers were repeatedly cited by different respondents as the chief culprits for anti-social behaviour.

A newly arrived business group reported no direct experience of racism but thought other, more established businesses, and other ethnic minority groups had probably been victimized.

**Question 9. *What do you think would be the best way that the needs of your community could be met?***

The following were suggested :

Local council-led recognition that Lowestoft is now multi-cultural with more facilities for all ethnic minorities.

The local council to ensure the Chinese population in Lowestoft understand their rights and entitlements in connection with local byelaws and statutory organizations.

Organised social and educational activities based in a Chinese community centre.

Tailored Cantonese/Mandarin to English classes; Chinese language & literacy for children; English language proficiency especially important for women's personal development.

Dual text on all promotional material for community events.

Easy-to-use translation service in connection with local public services.

Advice & financial support for relevant new enterprise eg. – a chinese supermarket.

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**Appendix 2** Issues dealt with at L.I.S.G. drop-in service between 2004 and March 2007.

Appendix 2.1 Issues for Arabic clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	2	1	1	0
Asylum & Immigration	0	1	0	0
Education	1	0	0	0
Employment	1	0	1	0

Appendix 2.2 Issues for French clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	1	0	0	0
Education	1	0	0	0

Appendix 2.3 Issues for Kurdish clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	35	72	92	48
Asylum & Immigration	7	17	12	8
Benefits, Working tax credit, taxes	2	6	16	8
Education	0	6	5	1
Employment	2	8	5	1
Finance	0	4	2	6
Health	1	2	1	3
Housing	7	7	6	4
Driving issues	0	3	18	7
Mobile phone & Line	0	0	2	2
Utilities	0	5	10	7
Signpost to ESOL	8	0	0	0
National Insurance	2	2	3	0

Number				
Legal	6	4	8	1
Advice	0	4	0	0
Other	0	4	4	0

#### Appendix 2.4 Issues for Lithuanian clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	3	0	1	0
Benefits, Working tax credit, taxes	0	0	1	0
Employment	2	0	0	0
Finance	1	0	0	0

#### Appendix 2.5 Issues for Polish clients

	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	12	82	250
Immigration	1	12	7
Benefits, Working tax credit, taxes	1	13	112
Education	1	8	19
Employment	0	15	18
Finance	0	4	4
Health	0	1	6
Housing	0	5	12
Driving issues	0	2	9
Mobile phone & Line	0	9	5
Utilities	0	4	18
Signpost to ESOL	0	1	1
National Insurance Number	8	2	26
Legal	1	0	0
Other	0	6	13

### Appendix 2.6 Issues for Portuguese clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	25	11	6	2
Asylum & Immigration	3	3	0	0
Benefits, Working tax credit, taxes	3	0	1	0
Education	3	4	0	0
Employment	11	0	0	0
Finance	0	0	0	0
Health	2	0	1	0
Housing	2	1	2	1
Social	0	0	2	1
Signpost to ESOL	5	2	0	0
Legal	2	0	0	0
Leisure, football team	1	0	0	0

### Appendix 2.7 Issues for Russian clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	4	1	0	0
Harassment, domestic violence	1	1	0	0
Education	2	0	0	0
Signposting, advice	1	0	0	0

### Appendix 2.8 Issues for Spanish clients

	2004	2005	2006	March 2007
Total	1	0	0	0
Employment	1	0	0	0

Appendix 3.

Work Permit applications in Waveney  
between 2001 and 2006

