A8 nationals in London homelessness services
Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who helped Homeless Link in the compilation of this research. It has been an extensive piece of work, which has only been possible because of the willing participation of partner agencies within the homelessness sector. The extension of the European Union has afforded great opportunities to many people but there are some migrants, as detailed in this report, for whom things have not worked out as they would have planned. We hope this research will help highlight the exact issues and lead to constructive solutions. I am sure you will find it both stimulating and thought provoking.

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Homeless Link 2006

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# Table of contents

Executive Summary...................................................... 3  
Key findings......................................................................... 4  
  Prevalence of A8 nationals in services................................. 4  
  A8 client profiles.......................................................... 4  
  Support needs................................................................... 5  
  Services used by A8 nationals............................................. 6  
  Barriers to working with A8 nationals................................. 6

Conclusions ......................................................................... 7

Recommendations ................................................................ 7  
  A national action plan..................................................... 7  
  Improved services.......................................................... 8  
  Better information.......................................................... 8  
  European Union............................................................ 9  
  Embassies........................................................................ 9

Introduction ........................................................................ 10

Research design .................................................................. 12  
  Methodology................................................................. 12  
  Sample........................................................................... 13  
  Response rate............................................................... 13  
  European context.......................................................... 15  
  Bulgarian and Romanian accession................................... 15  
  The Worker Registration Scheme and limitations on benefit entitlements............................................. 16  
  Numbers of A8 nationals in the UK................................. 17  
  Geographical distribution of A8 nationals........................... 19

A migration success story.................................................... 19  

Vulnerability in employment............................................... 21

Housing vulnerability of A8 workers.................................... 22

Services with A8 clients..................................................... 23

Client numbers................................................................... 23  

Client profiles..................................................................... 24  
  Gender and age............................................................. 25  
  Country of origin.......................................................... 26  
  Employment status....................................................... 27  
  Accommodation status.................................................. 28  
  Support needs............................................................... 28
Executive Summary

The story of recent migration from the new EU countries is widely regarded as having been a great success. Since May 2004 almost 400,000 accession state (A8) nationals have come to the UK\(^1\), contributing an estimated £240 million to the economy in the first eight months alone\(^2\). The vast majority have found work, accommodation and a place in the community.

However, for others the picture is bleaker. Through misfortune or circumstance a small but significant number of A8 migrants have found themselves destitute and homeless; some are now living on our streets. As well as the human cost, their plight now threatens the Government’s achievements in reducing rough sleeping, in tackling homelessness and social exclusion. With nowhere else to go a growing number of A8 nationals are turning to homelessness services for help.

In response to concerns raised by our members Homeless Link carried out research to establish the numbers and needs of A8 nationals using London’s homelessness services, and agencies’ experiences of working with them.

Our research found that a significant proportion of people accessing services such as night shelters, day centres and outreach teams in London are now from Central and Eastern Europe. Services told us that most people had problems limited to a lack of work and accommodation, possibly combined with a language barrier. They need straightforward advice and short-term help to get a job and a place to live. Our research shows that there are some people, however, who have more serious problems often associated with longer-term homelessness. They need the type of specialist support provided by homelessness agencies. However, their lack of recourse to public funds restricts what homelessness agencies can do.

This current situation is placing homelessness agencies’ limited resources under strain and risks creating an increase in rough sleeping. Unless the Government recognises and takes urgent action we believe these problems will become more widespread and more difficult to tackle. With the further expansion of the European Union to include Romania and Bulgaria, this situation could become far more serious.


Key findings

In March 2006 we surveyed 43 frontline London homeless agencies including day centres, outreach teams and free nightshelters. Hostels, where a bed space is generally dependent on eligibility for Housing Benefit, were not included. During the week of the survey a total of 4356 people were counted by the services and of these 638 were A8 nationals.

Prevalence of A8 nationals in services

Service providers were asked to record the number of clients seen in a given week and the numbers of those clients who were A8 nationals.3

- Over three quarters of the services in the survey saw A8 nationals.
- 15% of people who used the services surveyed were A8 nationals.
- The proportion of A8 nationals in services varied greatly. In some agencies they represented less than 5% of clients, in others over 50%.

A8 client profiles

Providers were asked to give details of their clients in terms of nationality, gender, where they were living and their employment status.4

- A8 nationals were more likely to be male and were older than the average A8 migrant (when compared with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) statistics5). All A8 countries were represented in the sample but the majority of people (68%) were Polish.
- 40% of A8 nationals had been in the UK for over a year, 22% for less than a month.
- The vast majority were unemployed (63%) or working irregularly (32%). Most services did not know if A8 clients were registered on the WRS or not, but where this detail was known only 1 in 8 were registered.
- The majority of clients were sleeping rough (50%) or living in squats (27%).

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3 The survey aimed to collect data on the number of A8 nationals using the agencies that participated in the research. However, the results cannot be extrapolated to identify the exact number of homeless A8 nationals in London. The ‘open door’ nature of many of the participating services made it impossible to collect data on specific individuals. It is therefore likely that there is a measure of double counting of those individuals that access more than one service in a week. However, as this applied as much to other people the proportions are considered valid.

4 Not all respondents were able to provide details on the profiles of A8 nationals accessing their service, hence percentages reflect the proportion of users where details were given.

Support needs

Services were asked about support needs among their A8 clients. As shown by the graph below a majority of services found that A8 nationals faced problems of accommodation, employment, language difficulties and lack of knowledge of the UK system. Much fewer saw A8 nationals with support needs normally associated with rough sleeping such as drug or alcohol misuse or mental and physical health problems.

However, two distinct groups of A8 nationals emerge from our research. On the one hand are those relatively new to the street who have minimal support needs. This group need short term help to find a job and a place to live.

A second, smaller group of A8 nationals have more serious support needs or multiple needs often associated with longer term rough sleeping. This group would benefit from the range of services offered by homelessness agencies, but their lack of recourse to public funds makes accessing this support virtually impossible. Over time and without effective interventions their problems are likely to get worse.

Establishing the extent of particular support needs among A8 nationals was beyond the scope of our research and should be the focus of more comprehensive research into the issue.
Impact on other homeless clients

Over a third of services in the survey stated that the influx of A8 clients to their service has impacted negatively on their usual homeless client group. Some cited competition for limited resources, displacement of regular service users and increased tensions between the different groups.

Services used by A8 nationals

The majority of agencies responding to our survey said that A8 nationals tended to use basic facilities and services such as showers, laundry, food, phones and clothing. More complex support services on offer (such as housing/employment advice, mental health/drug and alcohol support) were used to a lesser extent.6

Barriers to working with A8 nationals

Respondents were asked whether they faced any particular barriers to working with A8 nationals.

Barriers reported by respondents - percentage of total responses

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6 The provision of more complex support and advice services varies between agencies and thus the reported use of these can also reflect the availability of provision.
As a short term measure, Homeless Link is publishing a guide to help its members respond to these barriers.  

Conclusions

When there is migration on the level seen over recent years it is perhaps inevitable that some of those coming will encounter difficulty, often through no fault of their own. Our research shows that a small but significant proportion of migrants from the A8 countries are ending up homeless and destitute in London. Our members in other parts of the country tell us that this is not confined to the capital. Homelessness agencies like day centres are loathed to turned people away when they are clearly in need, but they are not best placed to provide the sort of help that is needed. When they do try to help they tell us they are hindered by a lack of clear information about entitlements for migrants. With no government department with overall responsibility to coordinate help, people do not know where to turn. Often embassies seem ill-prepared to help their own nationals.

Our fear is that, without rapid and coordinated action, more A8 nationals will become homeless and, especially if they end up sleeping rough, may develop complex needs. With the further expansion to Romania and Bulgaria this could become even worse. Action now will prevent a more costly solution at a later stage. With the right advice and assistance at the right time people will find work and the success enjoyed by so many others who are making the most of the new Europe.

Recommendations

In our survey respondents were given the opportunity to suggest policy changes that would facilitate their work with A8 nationals, through the survey and focus groups. On this basis and following discussion with a range of stakeholders we recommend:

A national action plan

The Government should:

1. Recognise that there are A8 nationals who are homeless and in need of support.

2. Give responsibility to the Cabinet Office (or another central unit) to take the lead in responding to issues relevant to A8 nationals and to coordinate activity across government departments.

3. Undertake further research as a matter of urgency to identify the needs of homeless A8 nationals in London and elsewhere.

Sharing Solutions: working with A8 nationals can be ordered from our publications team via the Homeless Link website http://www.homeless.org.uk/publications
4. Formulate a clear national action plan that addresses the small but significant number of A8 nationals who need support to avoid homelessness.

5. Work with the European Union and the new EU members to ensure that people considering migration have access to accurate information on which to base their decision and to prepare for a successful move. This should raise awareness of the risks that people might face and how they might avoid them.

**Improved services**

6. The national action plan should establish local ‘integration hubs’ that can support A8 migrants to:
   - find employment
   - access accommodation
   - open a bank account
   - get their qualifications converted
   - access language training
   - get a National Insurance number, understand employment rights and responsibilities and the Worker Registration Scheme
   - access health care and education.

7. The national action plan should also set out how mainstream public services will meet the needs of A8 nationals. All statutory services, including Jobcentre Plus, health and education services should take steps to meet the needs of A8 nationals.

8. In the short term, while the above is being addressed, existing services working with A8 nationals should be supported to maintain basic provision for A8 nationals. Services should not be withdrawn without a viable alternative service where clients can be referred.

**Better information**

9. The government should publish and promote clear information on entitlement to statutory services for A8 nationals. Orientation packs in community languages - with information on issues such as entitlements, accommodation options, finding work, medical care - should be available through the integration hubs and other service providers.

10. For those people who have developed more complex and multiple support needs, Homeless Link would welcome the opportunity to work with the DCLG, DH, NTA, DWP and Home Office to ensure appropriate services to meet their needs are available.
European Union

The European Union should:

11. Work with the A8 countries to help their nationals who need to return to support networks in their home countries. A directory of services should be developed at a European level so that appropriate services in home countries can be easily identified.

Embassies

Embassies of the A8 countries should:

12. Have a named, clearly publicised contact to deal with queries from agencies working with homeless A8 clients.

13. Develop the capacity to deal with the queries from their nationals who find themselves without the means to support themselves, including offering support for individuals to return to their home country if this is needed.
Introduction

In May 2004 the European Union expanded to include 10 new countries. At the time there were concerns from the existing member states that the accession of the poorer Central and Eastern European countries would affect European labour markets and, in response, existing member states were allowed to put in place transitional measures. Limitations on the freedom of movement and entitlements of citizens from 8 out of 10 of the accession countries were put in place i.e. Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. No such limitations were placed on nationals from Malta and Cyprus, who joined at the same time. As a result the eight countries are referred to as A8 countries.

Since May 2004 a number of Homeless Link member agencies have raised concerns over the increase in people from A8 countries accessing homelessness services. Many reported coming into contact with A8 nationals who had come to the UK with high hopes of employment and a better life, but who found it difficult to establish themselves. Stories of hardship are common, such as that of Carolina, below, who accessed a central London day centre for support in March 2006.

Carolina is a 43 year old woman from the Czech Republic. She has been in the UK for 7 months and has been working sporadically. When she first got in touch with the day centre she had been working illegally for £2 an hour. She is currently living in a squat and together with her friend, who is also Czech, where they are sharing a room with two other women. 25 to 30 people live in the squat and it is very cold. Carolina was recently involved in a road accident, had to spend nine days in hospital and have surgery on her leg. She is now walking with crutches. She speaks limited English and is looking for basic manual work, although back in the Czech republic she worked in a job service assisting others in finding work. Her injury, which her doctors say will take two months to heal, makes it harder for her to do manual labour. When she had the accident she also had her purse stolen and she lost her passport. One of the day centres she accessed did have a facility to safely store her passport but she was carrying it with her because she was actively looking for work and employers would ask her to prove her nationality. She had not reported the theft to the police as she was not aware of the procedure. Her lack of documents will further impede her job search, but she is not sure whether she can afford to get new documents at the embassy.8

The issue of A8 nationals in homelessness services was also raised by Broadway’s October 2004 research looking at the refugees and asylum seekers in London homelessness services. A majority of both outreach teams

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8 Carolina is not the client’s real name, her name has been changed for confidentiality purposes.
and day centres participating in Broadway’s study stated that they had noticed an increase in clients from the new EU countries only a few months after accession. The report also stated that ‘the impact of EU accession is an issue of huge importance to day centres’ and that ‘homelessness agencies needed to work together to develop a strong information base’ and ‘a collective response’. In response Homeless Link developed a research project to establish the prevalence of this client group in London’s homelessness services and to look at the experience of agencies working with this client group.

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Research design

Methodology

The majority of this client group does not, and cannot, access accommodation services such as homelessness hostels due to their limited entitlements to housing benefits. The focus of the research was therefore on services that work directly with rough sleepers and that offer direct access services not generally limited by housing benefit - i.e. day centres, night shelters and outreach teams. However, this distinction is not clear cut as some emergency accommodation providers, which appear to offer the same type of service, such as night shelters, may have different limitations on who they can offer services to.

The survey aimed to collect accurate data on the number of A8 nationals accessing the agencies that participated in the research. However, the results cannot be extrapolated to identify the exact number of homeless A8 nationals in London. The ‘open door’ nature of many of the participating services made it impossible to collect data on specific individuals. It is therefore likely that there is a measure of double counting of those individuals that access more than one service in a week. This is, however, also true for the traditional client group of homelessness services. Thus the number of contacts made by day centres outreach teams and night shelters with A8 nationals in relation to other clients should still give us a reliable indication of the proportion of clients accessing services that are A8 nationals.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the difficulties agencies encounter in working with this client group and it gave agencies the opportunity to highlight their concerns for the future. These were exploratory questions to identify the provider’s perception of the impact of expansion on homelessness services. Although it does not measure the actual impact of A8 nationals, it provides an important measure of the concerns of agencies affected by an increase in this client group.

The data gathering was divided three separate phases. An initial meeting was held with service providers to discuss the most useful format of the research e.g. getting initial ideas about relevant questions and what data services would be able to provide. A snap shot-survey covering the week 27 February to 5 March 2006 was developed on the basis of this initial discussion. Three separate questionnaires were used to reflect the differences in provision by day centres, night shelters and outreach teams. All respondents were asked to provide information on the numbers and profiles of A8 nationals accessing their services. In addition, respondents were asked to comment on their experience of working with A8 nationals and expand on changes and improvements that would facilitate work with this group, as well as provide their predictions of the impact of this client on services in the future.
In one day centre in west London A8 clients themselves filled in the client profile section of the questionnaire i.e. information on gender, age, country of origin, time in the UK, accommodation and employment status, and support needs.

Following the initial data collation focus groups were held with day centres, night shelters and local authorities to allow agencies to expand on any issues that they felt were important and to discuss the recommendations that had been highlighted in the survey.

As a separate part of the project a number of interviews were conducted with agencies that had adapted their services following an increase in A8 nationals. The information from these interviews was collated in a separate guide aimed at giving practitioners practical solutions to how they can work with this emerging client group.

Questionnaire respondents were asked several open qualitative questions about their experience of working with A8 nationals. To allow analysis of these questions the responses were coded into categories by three individual coders. Results were then compared and any disagreements were reviewed and where coders disagreed the majority view prevailed.

**Sample**

A total of 67 services were included in the survey. 42 day centres working with homeless people were identified through RIS’s Homeless London website and Homeless Link’s database. Services that worked specifically with families or that focussed on particular nationalities (e.g. Scottish, Irish) that would not cater to A8 nationals were excluded. Nine night shelters from the RIS winter night shelters list plus the Simon Community shelter were included in the survey. The outreach questionnaire was sent to 15 outreach teams, identified through CHAIN and Homeless Link’s database. In the centre where clients filled in their own profiling data, the 40 A8 clients that accessed the centre in the given week participated.

An opportunistic sample was used for the focus groups. Existing meetings were used where available, given the difficulties in freeing up staff especially for organisations run by volunteers, and where these were not available separate meetings were organised, inviting agencies involved in the research project. Three separate meetings were held focussing on night shelters, day centres and local authorities. Outreach teams were given the opportunity to feed back via e-mail as there was not enough interest to hold a separate meeting.

**Response rate**

We had an overall survey response rate of 64 % with a total of 43 responses out of the 67 sent the questionnaire. The highest response rate was
recorded among night shelters where the response rate was 80%. 69% of day centres responded, whilst only 40% of outreach teams responded to the survey. Around three quarters of services that responded were located in inner London boroughs. This distribution is unsurprising given the concentration of homelessness services in general in inner London boroughs.
**Context**

**European context**

European legislation guarantees freedom of movement of workers for all its citizens. However, when the Accession countries joined the European Union in May 2004 the existing member states were given the option of implementing transitional arrangements restricting the freedom of movement of workers from these countries for up to 7 years. The measures were reviewed after 2 years (in 2006) and will be reviewed again after an additional 3 years (in 2009). In exceptional circumstances old member states are allowed to continue transitional measures for a further 2 years (until 2011), but after this accession country nationals should have the same access to European labour markets as other EEA nationals.

In May 2004 only three of the old European countries - Sweden, Ireland and the UK - allowed full access to their labour markets to A8 nationals. Other European countries applied work permit regimes, sometimes combined with quotas. All new member states allowed access to their labour markets to nationals from the other new member states. After the two year review period member states had to inform the European Commission of whether they intended to continue or amend their regulations as regards to free movement. The initial 2 year period ended in April 2006 and Greece, Finland, Portugal and Spain have decided to lift their restrictions. France intends to lift restrictions gradually.

The only European country not to impose restrictions on access to social assistance was Sweden. Both the UK and Ireland placed special restrictions on A8 migrants’ access to public funds.

**Bulgarian and Romanian accession**

At the time of writing Bulgaria and Romania are moving towards accession in 2007. It is likely that the there will be a further increase in the number of new EU nationals entering the country once labour markets are opened to nationals of these two countries. In terms of numbers the IPPR estimates that assuming similar patterns as existing A8 migration, 50,000 Romanians

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and 18,000 Bulgarian applicants could be registered to work in the UK in the first year of accession.\textsuperscript{12}

Although unemployment rates in these countries have been falling and are lower than most A8 countries, the GDP per capita of these countries is still far lower than in the UK and in the A8 countries.\textsuperscript{13} Accession of Bulgaria and Romania will add almost 30 million people to the European Union’s population.\textsuperscript{14} Research suggests that only a small proportion of Bulgarians and Romanians plan to emigrate for an indefinite period. However, larger numbers are considering shorter term migration. The IPPR underlines that the UK is not the preferred destination for the majority of Bulgarians and Romanians considering emigrating, rather they have their sights set on Southern European countries.

There have also been some concerns that the history of discrimination against Roma in Bulgaria and Romania may lead to larger numbers of this group migrating to the UK. The IPPR stresses that the impact of this is likely to be minimal as they would not be able to claim asylum or be entitled to benefits if they do not work and because discrimination in their home countries is finally being addressed.\textsuperscript{15} However, monitoring from the European Union of conditions in Bulgaria and Romania found that both needed to improve the social inclusion of Roma minority as well as tackling trafficking and improving the conditions for people with mental health problems.\textsuperscript{16}

**The Worker Registration Scheme and limitations on benefit entitlements**

Nationals from A8 countries can come to the UK to work but following concerns over ‘welfare tourism’, the UK government limited their entitlements to social provisions and benefits. At the same time it also introduced the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) for A8 nationals employed in the UK.

The majority of A8 workers are required to register on the WRS within one month of taking up employment. There are certain notable exceptions to this rule such as self-employed people and those who were already working legally in the UK prior to May 2004. A8 nationals can be entitled to certain benefits as soon as they are in work and registered (e.g. tax credits, child benefit and - if they are on a low income - housing and council tax benefit). A8 nationals have to remain in continuous work for a period of 12 months to

\textsuperscript{12} Institute for public policy research (2006) *EU Enlargement: Bulgaria and Romania - migration implications for the UK*, IPPR FactFile, April 2006
\textsuperscript{13} Institute for public policy research (2006) *EU Enlargement: Bulgaria and Romania - migration implications for the UK*, IPPR FactFile, April 2006
\textsuperscript{14} Eurostat [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu)
be entitled to income related benefits such as job seekers allowance. The accession regulations meant that whilst individuals are seeking work, their ‘right to reside’ in the UK is conditional on them being self-sufficient and not placing an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system. The WRS not only allowed the government to restrict access to certain welfare benefits and services but was also intended to encourage participation in the formal economy, and to facilitate monitoring of the numbers entering the UK to work.

It costs £70 to register on the WRS and it has been suggested by some stakeholders that this may serve as a disincentive for some workers to register.\(^{17}\) Sanctions applied to workers who do not register are limited and difficult to enforce. Moreover, the level of prosecutions for employers violating immigration laws is very low, so employers may perceive little risk in employing unregistered A8 workers.\(^{18}\) It is difficult to evaluate the extent to which individuals who should register fail to do so. However, in an in depth study of the conditions for A8 nationals following accession, the Changing Status, Changing Lives Project found that 64% of their 217 respondents had not registered. Out of those who failed to register at least half did not need to do so as they were self-employed. A further 19 individuals were potentially self-employed, whereas about a third were unlikely to be self-employed and probably needed to register. At least 6 individuals were required to register but had failed to do so. Further, almost 20% of respondents reported that they had never heard of the WRS, including almost 30% of those who failed to or potentially failed to register.

The research indicated that even among those who know about the WRS there is confusion about what it means. Confusion between registration and immigration status means that registration can be perceived as unimportant for EU citizens.\(^{19}\)

**Numbers of A8 nationals in the UK**

The numbers of A8 nationals coming to the UK has greatly exceeded Home Office estimates prior to accession. In 2003 the Home Office estimated that the net number of immigrants from A8 countries would be between 5,000 and 13,000 a year.\(^{20}\) However, between May 2004 and March 2006 392,000 people applied to be registered on the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS).


Moreover, this does not take account of the numbers who are not required to, or chose not to register with the scheme.

It is worth noting that there is no requirement to de-register from the scheme when you leave the UK. It is possible that many of the applicants registered came over to work for a limited period of time and then returned to their home countries. It has also been suggested that a large proportion of the initial registrations came from migrants already living and working in the UK who took this opportunity to regularise their status. As an alternative measure, analysis of the Labour Force Service indicate that the number of A8 migrants living in the UK doubled in the two years leading up to the summer 2005.

Looking at the proportion of A8 nationals in the total working population also puts these figures into context. Each year from 2003 the proportion of nationals from the new EU states in the UK’s resident working age population increased by only 0.1 percentage point and stood at 0.4 % in 2005. This is a lower than the proportion of new EU nationals in the populations of Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland. Hence, although numbers appear great they are generally easily absorbed by the UK labour market.

A majority of the applicants to the WRS are Polish nationals. As Poland is the largest accession country, with one of the weakest labour markets in the EU, this is perhaps unsurprising. In March 2006 it had an unemployment rate of 16.8 %, as opposed to the 5.0 % unemployment in the UK. Poland also had the highest percentage of people between 18-59 living in jobless households of the A8 countries at 15.3 %. Analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions showed that in relation to the size of their population nationals of countries with the lowest GDP were more likely to register on the WRS than nationals of countries with a higher GDP.

It is possible that the issue of large numbers of A8 nationals entering the UK is affected by the limitations imposed by other European countries on the freedom of movement of workers. It has also been suggested that the large migration may be a temporary feature of the European system. According to the IPPR economic growth in Central and Eastern Europe, improved employment prospects and the money and skills that migrants can bring

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23 Eurostat http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu

back to their home countries is likely to reduce the incentives for migration.25

Geographical distribution of A8 nationals

Prior to accession A8 migrants were concentrated in London and the South East. Although London has remained a popular destination the most recent figures from the WRS shows that the Anglia region has overtaken London as the most popular destination for A8 nationals. In the second quarter of 2004, 25 % of applicants to the WRS were based in London, whereas the first in the first quarter of 2006 only 11 % of applicants were London based.26 Further a 2004 TUC report found that ‘these new arrivals are to be found less in big cities of Britain than in smaller towns and rural areas’ since more jobs are concentrated in hospitality, agriculture and food processing.27 The trends of homelessness identified in this report could therefore potentially spread to other areas or may already be developing elsewhere.

A migration success story

The government’s decision to welcome A8 nationals to fill gaps in the UK labour market has largely paid off. During the first 8 months after accession an estimated economic contribution of £240 million were made by A8 workers.28 EU expansion and increased free movement of workers has had an overall positive impact on the European Economy. According to the European Commission, ‘the process of convergence and wealth creation which had been under way for a decade continued and accelerated’ following May 2004.29

Since Accession, the employment rates among migrants from A8 countries has risen sharply, reflecting the fact that A8 migrants are coming to the UK to work and not to claim benefits. Between the summer of 2003 and the summer of 2005 employment rates rose from 57.3 % to 80.6 % among A8 nationals.30 This suggests that they positively contribute to labour market performance, economic growth and public finances.

The European Commission’s report into the functioning of the transitional measures suggests that restrictions on labour market access may lead larger numbers to resort to undeclared work. Hence opening up of labour markets helps formalise the underground economy, which improves labour standards and increases state income from tax and national insurance contributions.31

The skill levels of A8 nationals accessing the labour markets of the old members states (EU15) are also generally higher than that of EU15 nationals. The proportion of people with low level qualifications is ten percentage points lower among new EU nationals. A8 nationals have had a positive effect on labour markets by relieving labour shortages in industries such as catering and domestic services. Long term growth and business creation in the UK may also be supported by the human capital accumulation supported by highly skilled workers from new member states.32

Only 4,385 applications for Income Support and Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) were processed between May 2004 and March 2006 and out of these only 400 were allowed to proceed for further consideration.33 This represents less than 20 cases per month. A8 migrants are filling low skilled vacancies but do not appear to be pushing UK nationals out of the labour market. A 2006 report for the Department for Work and Pensions found no evidence that the increase in workers from A8 countries had contributed to a rise in claimant unemployment in the UK.34

Between May 2004 and December 2005, 94 local authority lettings were made to A8 nationals. In a typical 20 month period this is just 0.04 % of the average number of lettings made to all new tenants. Further in the same period 1048 decisions on applications for homelessness assistance from A8 nationals were made and only 386 applicants were found to be owed a main duty. These acceptances represent only 0.2 % of all acceptances made over a typical 20 month period.35

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The impact on many A8 nationals position in the UK has also been positive. A study looking at the impact of accession on workers from Central and Eastern Europe in employment in the UK, found that the impact on the individuals from A8 countries they surveyed had generally been positive. 28 % of A8 nationals said that their conditions at work had improved. Their ability to access education had greatly improved but accession was also perceived to have improved access to public health services and welfare benefits. 26 % reported that it was easier to retain their employment after accession and 59 % of A8 nationals surveyed post enlargement felt that it was easier to find work.

**Vulnerability in employment**

Opening up the UK labour market has improved the conditions of many A8 nationals in employment. However, it should be noted that the Citizens Advice Bureau expressed concern that the lack of access to income related benefits could ‘leave A8 workers in an unequal and indeed more vulnerable position in the labour market to their colleagues. Whilst all workers face less employment protection in the first twelve months of employment, the position of A8 workers will be more vulnerable since the loss of their job could threaten their right of residence.’

It is also possible that although they would be protected against discrimination on the basis of sex, race, disability and religion it would be difficult to make any claims against discriminatory employers through legal process without access to financial support.36

Some migrant workers are more likely to have intermittent employment. Construction work for example is generally carried out on a project basis, and contractors bring together workers for a period of time, that then disperse. Many workers in the construction industry are also self-employed. Analysis by the Office of National Statistics in late 2003 found that around 37 % of the construction workforce were self-employed.37 Self employed workers are not required to register on the Worker Registration Scheme, which can lead to confusion around benefit entitlements for this group.

Research from the Changing Status, Changing Lives Project looking at migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (A8 and others) found that in April 2004 a large proportion of respondents in their study described themselves as self-employed, although this self-reported employment status did not necessarily correspond to the immigration status of ‘self-employed’.

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The authors highlight that generic term ‘self-employment’ can describe three different types of status - immigration status, employment status and taxation status.\(^{38}\)

In the construction industry a Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) card allows those who contract the services of the card holders to deduct tax and national insurance at source. As highlighted by the researches of the *Changing Status, Changing Lives* Project a CIS card does not prove that the holder’s employment or immigration status is self-employed, it merely means that they pay tax and insurance as if they were. Yet the study found that several construction employers used the CIS card as the primary indicator of legal status.

**Housing vulnerability of A8 workers**

The limitations on access to state support can place A8 workers at a disadvantage in the housing as well as in the labour market. As highlighted by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), accommodation is often offered as part of the employment package for migrant workers. Although this support can be welcome to those unfamiliar with the UK housing market, and with limited resources, it also has its disadvantages. Tied housing means that loss of employment will also lead to loss in accommodation and homelessness. Moreover, CAB points out that tied housing is often of a poor quality and overcrowded, yet rent levels are often well above those in the private rented sector. Security of tenure is also often undermined by the lack of tenancy agreements.

Low income groups in general have difficulties in accessing the private rented sector and these difficulties are often shared by migrant workers. For some A8 nationals this is exacerbated by the limits placed on their access to housing benefits and social housing, which otherwise could ameliorate for housing inequalities. Migrants often find it difficult to find the resources to pay private sector rents, deposits and advance rent payments. Like in tied housing there are also sometimes issues with the quality and standard of accommodation offered to migrants.\(^{39}\)

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Findings

Services with A8 clients

Over three quarters of homelessness services (31 services) surveyed were accessed by A8 nationals over the course of a week. Only 10 respondents did not see any A8 national clients. A higher proportion of the services in inner London boroughs had seen A8 nationals (81 % as opposed to 64 % in outer London). The proportion of A8 clients seen in services was also higher in inner London (15 % versus 11 % of total contacts respectively). This is likely to be related to the overall concentration of homelessness services in inner London boroughs. However, the statistics for outer London was further skewed by one service where 53 out of 115 clients were A8 nationals. If this service is excluded the overall proportion of A8 clients in outer London services drops to 3 %.

Day centres and outreach teams were more likely to see A8 clients than night shelters. This appears to be related to the restrictions placed on several night shelters to only house people entitled to housing benefit. Half of the night shelters (4 respondents) reported not being able to take people ineligible for housing benefit and 3 of those saw no A8 nationals, while the other had one A8 national.

Client numbers

In total 4356 estimated or known contacts were reported by the survey respondents out of which 638 were known or estimated to be A8 nationals40. This represents 15 % of all contacts reported. The majority of these contacts (89 %) were made in day centres. Services who did not collect exact data on service users were asked to provide estimates of client numbers. In the majority of cases the figures were known figures but in 28 % of cases the figures provided were estimates.

The proportion of A8 in relation to total number of clients varied greatly between services. For some services they made up less than 5 % of the total number of clients, whilst in other services over half of all clients came from A8 countries in the given week.

40 The project aimed to establish the proportion of clients accessing homelessness services rather than total figures. The results cannot be extrapolated to identify the exact number of homeless A8 nationals in London. It is also likely that there is a measure of double counting of those individuals that access more than one service in a week. This is, however, also true for the traditional client group of homelessness services. A measure of the proportion of clients accessing services still gives us a reliable indication of the extent to which homelessness services are seeing this client group.
Table 1: Proportion of service users from A8 countries in homelessness services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of clients that are A8 nationals</th>
<th>Number of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1% &gt; 10%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% &gt; 25%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% &gt; 50%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% +</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even for services where a small proportion of clients are A8 nationals they can take up a disproportionate amount of staff time and money. One outreach team saw 6 A8 clients, which represented less than 4% of the total clients contacted. However, as they reported ‘*more resources (worker time & money) is spent on this group (A8) and because most cannot access mainstream services (due to lack of recourse to public funds), finding alternatives can be time/money costly*’

Respondents were asked to indicate how the figures this year compared to the year before. There did not appear to be a consistent pattern across services. Many respondents were unable to compare the numbers to the previous year. Some commented that they had not been with the service at the time, nationality data had not been collected in the past, or that the service had not been available which made a comparison difficult. There is no comparative data for the period before May 2004. However, what this evidence may suggest is that the issue of A8 clients is enduring, although for some services the numbers fluctuate.

Figure 1: Change in numbers of A8 clients over last year - number of respondents reporting in each category

![Pie chart showing change in A8 clients](chart.png)

**Client profiles**

Not all respondents were able to provide details on the profiles of A8 nationals accessing their service. Respondents were asked to estimate where possible if exact numbers were not available. Some clients may access several services in a week and so responses do not reflect total
numbers. The figures should however give a general idea of the profiles of clients that are accessing homelessness services in London. Further one agency had the clients accessing their service self-report on their personal profile, which gives us a useful snapshot of the self-identification of the population of one London homelessness service.

Respondents were more likely to give information about gender and age, than information on employment and accommodation status. This information may have been easier to estimate or may have been among the basic data gathered on clients when they first access the service. Information such as employment and accommodation status were not provided to same extent, perhaps because this information is harder to estimate and would only be likely to be known if the client themselves has made this known to the service provider.

**Gender and age**

A majority of A8 clients accessing services were male, with only one in ten being female.

Where the age of clients was known or estimated the majority of clients were between 25 and 45.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>number of contacts</th>
<th>percentage of contacts</th>
<th>Percentage excluding not known category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Under 25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-35</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 36-45</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 46-55</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 55 or over</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Not known</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to compare these figures to the age profiles of the clients who registered on the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), which is the most reliable data of the overall profile of A8 nationals entering the UK to work. The male:female ratio on the WRS was 57:43 between May 2004 and March 2006, as opposed to a ratio of 9:1 among contacts made in homelessness services. There is also a higher proportion of older A8 nationals accessing homelessness services compared to the individuals registered on the workers’ registration scheme.
Country of origin

A majority of clients whose nationality was known were from Poland (68%). Followed by Lithuania (8%) and the Czech Republic (7%). However in relation to the size of the population of the countries there were actually a higher proportion of Lithuanians and Latvians than Poles. The proportions of A8 nationals in homelessness services appear to mirror those registered on the Workers Registration Scheme although there is a slightly higher proportion of Poles accessing homelessness services.

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Figure 4: Country of origin of A8 contacts compared to country of origin of applicants to the Worker Registration Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of A8 contacts in homelessness services</th>
<th>Percentage of individuals registered on the WRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Not known</td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time in the UK**

In almost half of the cases of contacts, the time A8 nationals had spent in the UK was not known (49%). Where the contacts’ time in the UK was known 40 % had been here for over a year, 13 % for between 7-12 months, 25 % between 1-6 months and 22 % had been here for less than a month.

Not all clients were new to the UK, but some have spent some considerable time in the UK. If they had been employed and registered on the Worker Registration Scheme a large number would now qualify for benefits even when out of work. However, as we shall see a majority of clients appear to have insecure working situations and rarely register on the WRS which would allow them to build up towards full benefit entitlements and rights to homelessness assistance.

**Employment status**

For a large proportion (42 %) of clients the employment status was not known. Out of those where the status was known, the vast majority were unemployed (63%) or working irregularly (32%). Only 5% were working regularly either full or part time. Respondents were generally unaware of whether or not clients had registered on the Worker Registration Scheme. However, where information was given only one A8 national in eight (13%) was registered.
It was suggested in the follow up focus groups that many A8 nationals had registered as self-employed and would therefore be exempt from registering on the Worker Registration Scheme. Participants suggested a high incidence of clients applying for Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) registration cards. Participants reported that many clients that had registered as self-employed were unfamiliar with the regulations surrounding self-employment. Several services reported receiving tax returns for A8 clients, which they failed to pick up and complete. This could potentially lead to fines and debt problems for certain clients.

**Accommodation status**

Night shelters were not asked to specify the accommodation status of their A8 clients, as they provide accommodation. The number of contacts made by night shelters has been included in the table below as this gives their accommodation status.

Out of the responses provided by outreach teams and day centres, the accommodation status was not known in 19% of cases. The majority of clients where the accommodation status was known or estimated were sleeping rough (50%) or living in squats (27%).

It is possible that there is some overlap between the numbers identified by outreach teams and day centres as those living in hostels or in other accommodation and those staying in night shelters, depending on how respondents defined these categories. Moreover, it is possible that those who sleep rough and live in squats are more likely to come into contact with a range of homelessness services, further influencing the data.

**Table 4: Accommodation status of A8 contacts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation status</th>
<th>Number of contacts</th>
<th>Percentage of contacts</th>
<th>Percentage of contacts where status known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rough sleeping</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying with friends</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in squat</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other accommodation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation not known</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night shelter</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support needs**

In relation to support needs, respondents were not asked to give details of the number of clients presenting with a support need but rather to give a general indication of what support needs A8 clients who accessed their service presented with.
Almost three quarters of providers cited housing as a support need, with almost as many specifying employment as an issue. English language difficulties (65% of respondents) and lack of knowledge about the UK system (53% of respondents) were also frequently cited.

Between 40% and 45% highlighted the need for emotional support, alcohol misuse and mental health issues among A8 clients. Physical health was an issue mentioned by a third of respondents whereas 28% cited drug misuse. When excluding those who had not seen A8 nationals in the week covered by the survey the percentages of respondents reporting these support needs amongst their A8 clients rose even more. Among the ‘other’ support needs reported were: ‘aggression, mistrust from other clients’; ‘Training and converting qualifications’ and ‘extortion for money, violent attacks, murder, lots of victims of crime’.

Outreach teams were more likely to report certain support needs, however, this data may be skewed by the fact that only 6 outreach teams out of the 15 contacted responded to the survey and thus represent a smaller sample than the other two categories.

Figure 5: reported support needs among A8 clients

Other issues for concern

In addition to indicating the prevalence of support needs, agency respondents were asked an open question about other issues for concern specifically in relation to A8 clients e.g. issues that were less prevalent among other clients or that the respondents felt should be highlighted. The responses given were coded into 13 different groups. It is possible that more respondents have come across particular issues but not mentioned them in their response. The response rates therefore do not necessarily indicate the
prevalence of a particular issue but highlight specific areas of concern for respondents.

The most commonly cited issue was exploitation in employment, such as being unpaid or underpaid and not being informed about rights. Eleven respondents reported exploitation at work as an issue. As a related issue four respondents highlighted poor living conditions.

_A8 clients are being exploited in work, in that they are being paid less than the minimum wage, they are not being told to apply for an NI numbers, they do not get holiday or sick pay. They are having tax taken from their wages but don't know where that money is going. They aren't insured when working e.g. on building sites, they don't get paid overtime and in some instances have worked for a day, week or more and not received any wages. Employers take money from their wages for transport to & from work even on days they don't work e.g. weekends. They also have to pay for accommodation from their wages that can be up to 15 people crammed into a room. Accommodation is poor quality and overcharged._ (Day Centre)

This is in line with the issues reported by the Citizens Advice Bureau in its reports on the new Social Security regulations introduced in 2004 and on the problems of migrants in rural area. Both the potential for vulnerability in employment and poor living conditions of many migrants were highlighted in these reports. 42

Four respondents highlighted the lack of services that can be accessed by A8 nationals or that cater to their needs and three respondents mentioned exclusion from the welfare state, i.e. ‘no recourse to public funds’, as an issue.

_We have a woman from Estonia who was sectioned under the Mental Health Act and is in danger of being discharged without any support as she is not entitled to benefits._ (Outreach team)

Four respondents highlighted incidents of violence or crime against A8 nationals. One respondent stated that there was ‘evidence of violence between each other. Some of them show signs of being in a fight’, another mentioned ‘extortion of money from women by men, violent attacks, beatings on rough sleepers, dog attacks, rape, murder, repeatedly’. Further a mistrust of authority was mentioned by two respondents.

_History of communism means that men in particular seem to be very passive, but also suspicious of Government authorities. They are happy to_
access shelters such as ours, but don’t necessarily want to come to the notice of the Government. (Night Shelter)

Other issues highlighted included inadequate food, insecure employment, lack of recognition of qualifications gained in the home country, difficulties in accessing bank accounts, prejudice against A8 nationals and lack of ID and official records e.g. ID may have been lost or stolen. One respondent stated that it was sometimes difficult to determine whether all people were actually A8 nationals or from other countries in Eastern Europe.

Issues around language were also again highlighted by five respondents. The lack of English classes available in the evenings for clients who worked during the day was mentioned by one respondent. Another respondent highlighted the impact of language barriers on the ability of services to assess support, which was an issue brought up in the focus groups that followed the survey.

Clients lack of knowledge of the English language makes communication with this client group difficult - it is more difficult to find out what issues they may be struggling with and misunderstanding can contribute to situations which lead to conflict with myself, shelter volunteers or other guests. Sometimes it’s difficult to assess whether someone may have mental health issues or an anger management problem for example. If client has reasonably good knowledge of the English language - it is easier to assist these clients. (Night Shelter)

Self-identification

It was not within the scope of this research project to interview individual A8 clients to gain a greater understanding of client profiles. However, in one day centre the 40 A8 clients attending the centre were asked to, or supported to, fill in their own profiling information. Volunteers at the service translated the questions in the questionnaire into Polish to facilitate the completion of the information. The proximity of the Centre to the Polish cultural centre and a large Polish community in the area may have contributed to the popularity of the centre for A8 nationals. The centre has also been proactive in developing links with the Polish community to recruit volunteers and elicit other support, such as providing help with finding employment.

In the week surveyed around a quarter of contacts made at the centre were with A8 nationals, which represented 40 individuals. It is worth noting that although the sample in this service can give us a snap-shot of clients accessing the service and more accurate data on their background, housing and employment status and perceived support needs, the same client profiles may not necessarily prevail across London’s homelessness services.

The gender distribution among the 40 individual respondents largely mirrored the one found in the full survey with 87% men and 13% female. The oldest and youngest age groups were represented in similar numbers to the
full study with 5% of clients falling in each group. There was a higher preponderance of people between 46 and 55 in the self-reporting group - 38% as opposed to 23% of known contacts in the full survey. The numbers between 25 and 35 were lower in the self-reporting group.

An even larger proportion of clients in the centre reported being Polish (95%). Only two clients were non-poles and came from Lithuania and Latvia. Over half of the clients at the centre had been in the UK for more than 13 months. In fact some clients indicated in the margins that they had been in the UK for years, up to seven or eight years for some. The second largest group in this sample had been in the UK for one to six months and represented a quarter of service users.

No clients using the centre reported working regularly. 43% stated that they worked irregularly and 58% that they did not work at all. Only one client reported being registered on the WRS. As in the overall survey a majority of clients reported sleeping rough (48%) or living in squats (18%). Further, almost a quarter of clients reported staying with friends. Only three clients reported living in hostel accommodation and none reported living in local authority housing.

Figure 6: Support needs self-reported by clients in one west London day centre

No clients mention drug misuse and only two clients report mental health support needs. These figures cannot be directly compared to the numbers in the full study. Agencies responding to the questionnaire were not asked to indicate the prevalence of for example mental health needs among their A8 clients, but merely indicate whether they had come across them.
However, it is interesting that only 35% of clients reported housing as a support need despite the fact that the majority lacked permanent accommodation and would be considered homeless. It is possible, however, that the support needs reported by clients related to the services they felt could help them in the day centre. Clients may have been aware that the day centre had limited ability to support them with housing, whereas it does offer support with finding work, primary health care, mental health support and alcohol misuse support.

**Development of support needs over time**

Anecdotal evidence suggested that over time A8 nationals who remain on the streets develop greater support needs. Therefore, respondents were asked whether, if they had seen an increase in A8 nationals, they felt that A8 nationals accessing their service now have greater support needs than those who accessed it a year ago. If support needs had changed they were asked to specify in what way their support needs had changed.

A quarter of respondents indicated that support needs had increased among the clients they worked with e.g. ‘many have gone downhill because of alcohol and irregular food, homelessness, increased vulnerability.’ (Day centre) An additional five respondents indicated that support needs amongst A8 nationals had remained constant.

The difficulty with this question is that it asks respondents to evaluate the support needs of A8 clients overall and so it may not be able to gauge whether individual clients developed greater support needs by staying on the streets. Some clients move on quickly, need support for short period of time and then find work. The support needs of that type of client are likely to remain constant. However, if they are unable to move on and support themselves, spend considerable time on the streets without being able to access the exit routes (hostels, move-on etc.) they may develop more support needs.

Indeed five of the respondents who indicated that support needs increase over time highlighted the existence of two distinct groups among A8 nationals. This was also an issue discussed in the focus groups and it was generally agreed that there was a distinction to be made between A8 nationals with low and high support needs.

*There are now two distinct groups. The A8 who have recently arrived in the country tend to have problems of disorientation and confusion - for whom signposting is our best course of action. The A8s who have spent considerable amount of time in the UK have problems of language barriers exploitation and the attendant problems associated with entrenched rough sleeping, such as drink use, drug use, mental health problems - for whom emotional support is our course of action. (Outreach Team)*

Many of the services that reported that support needs remained constant were often services who have seen large numbers of A8 nationals and have
developed ways of working with or services for A8 nationals. These services therefore, have had systems in place for working with A8 nationals for some time and may have already seen clients with high support needs a year ago.

In the focus groups, it was indicated that the group with low support needs was much larger than the small group that had already become entrenched rough sleepers with associated support needs. It may therefore be the case that those services that see a high number of clients see more of the majority group with low support needs. This is supported by the comments from two day centres who saw large numbers.

[we have seen] no change in support needs. A8 clients come to work. They need non-skilled, low skill jobs, shelter, decent clothing and health services.[Also needed are] 1. English lessons, 2. construction industry, health and safety training, 3. access to free detox and rehab services.(Day centre)

...the support needs have remained steady. Overwhelmingly they seek employment related services. We know how many are seeking employment but they do not inform us of successes and not all stop using us because of success, so it is difficult to know who is working. Few join the Worker Registration Scheme or register as tax resident, despite our encouragement. (Day centre)

Among the support needs highlighted by respondents as being developed by A8 nationals, increased alcohol abuse was the most commonly reported (64% of respondents who reported an increase in support needs). Although not a support need in itself lack of access to funds was highlighted by just over a quarter of respondents who had seen an increase in support needs. Deterioration of mental and physical health was highlighted by two respondents each, as was increased drug use.

Alcohol problems are now universally visible amongst these clients, amongst male clients who have been here 6 months [or more] crack use is encountered. Some experimental heroin use. (Day Centre)

Impact on traditional client group

Respondents were asked an open question about whether the influx of A8 nationals had impacted on their traditional client group and if so to specify in what way it had impacted. There is no consistent picture of the impact on services’ traditional client group. Fifteen respondents (35 % of total) reported that the increase in A8 nationals had impacted on their traditional client group. However, it would be more useful to look at the number of respondents who had seen A8 nationals in the given week. 14 out of the 33 services that had seen A8 nationals in the week surveyed reported an impact.
While some respondents gave no further details on this question others specifically stated that it had no or limited impact on their traditional client group, e.g. ‘a few remarks, but no serious issues’ (Day centre); our traditional client group have responded well to this change, there is no visible aggression or friction. (Night shelter); we don’t see many A8s in our patch and they generally move on quickly, so it hasn’t really had a huge impact on our service. (Outreach teams)

Out of those respondents who specified that there had been an impact on their traditional client group:

Six reported cases of resentment, racism and/or prejudice against A8 clients.

There is resentment and mistrust from traditional clients some who work resent being undercut in the market by Polish labourers. (Day Centre)

A8 clients are sometimes scape-gotated as the reason our traditional client group cannot get into work, but on the whole they mix pretty well - at the moment. (Day Centre)

Five reported that there was an actual or perceived competition for limited resources between A8 nationals and traditional clients

Arguments, rows, rivalry for the limited resources, i.e. space in day centres, staff time, food, clothing and other primary facilities. This is mainly due to the fact that this client group is being unfunded in any significant way by government agencies. (Day centre)

Five reported that traditional clients had been displaced by A8 clients

We were temporarily overrun. This dissuaded other clients for a while. Higher demand for ESOL classes. (Day centre)

Five reported that the increase in A8 had impacted on the nature of services provided

More resources (worker time and money) is spent on this group (A8) and because most cannot access mainstream services (due to lack of recourse to public funds) finding alternatives can be time/money costly) (Outreach team)

Two reported that the presence of A8 nationals was intimidating for traditional clients.

Some of our very regular clients do not come in as frequently. I think they can feel intimidated by them. I feel that it has changed the atmosphere within our centres. It has put an extra strain on staff and volunteers. (Day centre)
Some tensions - A8 nationals tend to be younger, more able bodied and at the front of the queue than our older customers. (Day centre)

Working with A8 nationals

Services accessed by A8 nationals

Outreach teams and day centres were asked to indicate what services clients are linked into or access in day centres. This question was excluded from the night shelter questionnaire as they do not offer the same services.

In a majority of services, A8 nationals accessed practical services such as showers, laundry, food, phones and clothing. This is unsurprising since these services are offered in most centres and are likely to be of use to most clients.

Different advice and support services are available in the different services and thus the reported use of these services is likely to be lower. 51% of respondents reported use of housing advice services and over 30% the use of employment advice, mental health support, drug/alcohol support and primary health care. Use of English language training and other education or training was reported by just over a quarter of services.

Figure 7: Services accessed by A8 nationals in day centres and referred into by outreach teams.
The services accessed were compared to the support needs agencies reported among A8 clients. A statistically significant association was found between employment support needs and employment services and between English language difficulties and English language training. A marginally significant association was found between reported physical health support needs and clients accessing primary health care services, and reported drug support needs and clients accessing drug misuse support. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between reported housing support needs and housing advice accessed, reported alcohol support needs and alcohol support, and mental health support needs and clients accessing mental health services.

This could be interpreted in various ways. It is interesting that the two relationships where the association was significant relate to employment and English language. Together with housing, these were the most commonly recorded support needs by respondents. It is possible that given the limited housing advice many agencies are able to give (due to housing benefit restrictions) the association between housing support needs and housing advice services accessed was not significant. However, where a statistically significant relationship existed this could be because agencies were able to respond to the support needs of the client group by offering services to address those needs. It could also imply that clients with certain support needs accessed services because they offered services that related to their needs, i.e. clients looking for employment would access services that offered employment advice. However, it is also possible that services that did offer services such as primary health care and employment advice identified the support needs they reported in the questionnaire on the basis of the services that clients accessed. Moreover, it is interesting that in the services where clients self-reported on their support needs English language and employment were the

Still, this would not account for the lack of an association between for example identified alcohol support needs and alcohol support services accessed. Potentially, where there is a lack of correlation between support needs and services accessed this indicates the existence of unmet need and would suggest the need to develop more support for alcohol misuse, mental health and housing need for A8 clients. These issues were also reported by more agencies than physical health needs and drug misuse issues, where a marginal significance was found.

**Services deterring or attracting A8 nationals**

Services were asked to highlight whether any aspects of their service might deter A8 nationals from, or attract them to, accessing the service. We also sought to identify any specialist provision that had been developed in response to this client group. Questions were open allowing respondents to

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43 Statistical significance was assessed using a two tailed Fisher Exact Test.
respond freely. Responses therefore indicate what respondents perceived to attract A8 nationals.

20 respondents indicated that an aspect of their service may deter or make it difficult for A8 clients to access them. By far the most common of these were limits imposed on the support agencies could offer by their general lack of entitlement to public funds (70% of affirmative responses), followed by a related issue of funding constraints imposed on the service itself (40%). Also related to this was the issue around move-on i.e. that clients were not able to access the routes out of homelessness offered by the services responding (10%). Limitations on the support available because of restrictions to entitlements to public funds were especially prevalent for night shelters and outreach teams. Similarly funding constraints were more likely to be sited by night shelters and day centres.

The main work of our service is moving people into accommodation, therefore we don't tend to work with A8s because they are not entitled to benefits. We do verify A8s on the streets as homeless, mainly as a monitoring tool. (Outreach team)

Much of the drop-in work centres around accessing accommodation, which excludes A8 clients when they have regular, stable incomes. (Day centre)

We do prioritise and provide for people with local connections, who are eligible for housing benefits. The reason for this is our funding requires we claim housing benefit on behalf of the service users so ineligible service users would cost us in revenue to maintain the service operation. (Night shelter)

Four respondents highlighted issues around communication and language difficulties. Other aspects that may deter or make it difficult for A8 clients to access services highlighted by respondents included local connection requirements, exclusion of A8 clients from move-on, the service not being advertised and the dry nature of the service.

17 services reported possible aspects of the services they offered that may make greater numbers of A8 nationals access them. Out of these the most common example was having translators available or staff that spoke the languages of A8 countries. Eight respondents out of the 17 highlighted this feature.

We provide written information/materials in other languages. There is a worker able to communicate with the client group. (Day centre)

We have worked with the Polish Cultural Centre & the Federation of Poles who have assisted us in getting Polish speaking volunteers. The PCT have provided a Polish Interpreter to assist the visiting GP (Day centre)

The fact that services are delivered free of charge was also often considered a feature that might attract higher numbers of A8 nationals. Six
respondents highlighted this feature. The open door nature of services was also highlighted by two respondents. Other aspects mentioned by respondents included partnership initiatives with other organisations, employment advice services, immigration support, diversion to home countries, English language courses, the location of services and the existence of a banking scheme that allowed A8 nationals to establish their own bank account.

There was a statistically significant association between the presence of A8 nationals and at least one reported feature that could attract them. However, where respondents had suggested aspects of their service which may deter A8 nationals, no statistically significant relationship was found. Out of the seventeen services that indicated that an aspect of their service may attract higher numbers of A8 nationals only one saw no A8 clients in the given week. Further, 90% of services that did not see A8 nationals in a given week did not report that an aspect of their service might attract A8 nationals. Conversely, 51% of the respondents who had seen A8 nationals in a given week did specify an aspect of their service that may attract A8 nationals. 40% of services that did not see A8 nationals reported no deterrent factors and 42% of services that did report a deterrent factor did see A8 nationals.

Because of the small sample size and the even smaller numbers of organisations reporting aspects of their service that might attract or deter A8 nationals, these results should be interpreted with caution. The results show a correlation that can be read in several different ways. It is possible that agencies correctly identified aspects of their services that attracted A8 nationals, leading to higher numbers in those services that had such things as translators and open door policies. However, it is also possible that agencies are more likely to try and identify an aspect of their service that might attract A8 nationals, because this group is accessing them. Moreover, the measure used to compare was whether or not any A8 nationals had accessed a service. It did not account for whether only a few service users or a majority of users were from A8 countries. Hence it is possible that there could be a stronger relationship between reported deterrent factors and the proportion of A8 nationals in a service. Still, it appears that organisations that felt that some aspect of their service might attract A8 nationals were correct in this assessment and that any attraction factor was stronger than any possible deterrent factor.

**Barriers to working with A8 nationals**

Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate whether they faced any particular barriers to working with A8 nationals. Language barriers were the issue highlighted by most respondents. 82% of the services that had contacts with A8 nationals in the given week emphasised this issue. Two thirds of respondents that had seen A8 nationals stressed the lack of referral routes (67%) and limited or no access to translators (58%). Over a third of respondents highlighted constraints of existing funding (39%), lack of resources (39%) and unrealistic expectations from clients (33%).
30% highlighted lack of knowledge of entitlements as a barrier. However, this is not necessarily merely because services have not been able to access information about entitlements, but also because the quality of information available is problematic.

There is a lack of knowledge as to entitlements but that is not due to lack of effort or research. Government rules are often circular or contradictory in terms of A8 entitlements. So for instance a JSA claim can be made by an A8 national, but the outcome relies on them proving ‘self sufficiency’. Part of self-sufficiency refers to adequate income and if that were true then they would not qualify for JSA in the first place. In the future this may not be circular since providing A8’s can show that they have been self sufficient for a certain length of time then they will start to qualify for JSA. Until then though it is very frustrating. (Day centre)

Among the other barriers highlighted it was suggested that the lack of central service to turn to is an issue. ‘It would be so helpful if there was one central service to deal with accommodation. Shelter Line seems to always be engaged.’

Certain issues appear to be more important in certain services. Constraints of existing funding and lack of resources were reported by a higher proportion of outreach services. Outreach teams were also more likely to provide examples other than the options given. However, these statistics need to be treated cautiously, given the low number of respondents from outreach services.

Figure 8: Barriers to working with A8 nationals reported by survey respondents
Respondents took the opportunity to both highlight issues that were not mentioned among the barriers listed and to expand on the options selected. For some it was the lack of practical support like construction training programmes, help with opening bank accounts. One respondent also highlighted difficulties following changes to a previous service that had worked well.

We had a very successful scheme that enabled us to email NI number applications to Jobcentre Plus. This got scrapped in favour of a phone-based system, which introduced unnecessary delays and a language barrier. Jobcentre Plus are correcting this, but why cause the problem in the first place. (Day centre)

A couple of respondents questioned the sustainability of existing provision.

How long can we be providing this level of services without added resources and staff? (Day centre)

We have an interpreter and are generally well set up to work with them. However they are sharing a project that is funded for non-A8 clients. If they become the majority, our ability to obtain funding will suffer and then it will be a problem. (Day centre)

One respondent mentioned that it was difficult to convince some clients to return to their home countries. Another emphasised how the introduction of a new client group can affect service delivery.

Due to the nature of our organisation living and working alongside street sleepers service users are intrinsic in shaping of our services. This causes restraints to be put on our services due to the racist attitudes of British born service users. (Night shelter)

Respondents were also given the opportunity to highlight if they had any other issues with the presence of A8 nationals in their service, e.g. street drinking leading to anti-social behaviour. Less than a quarter of respondents reported other issues, out of which incidents of street drinking (6 respondents), drug use (4 respondents) and anti-social behaviour (4 respondents) were most common. Two respondents mentioned issues around clients not obeying house rules. Other individual issues highlighted were theft, cultural misunderstandings, disputes between A8 nationals, violence and pressures on other services.

Yes, some anti-social behaviour. Failure to observe house rules. Even when some of them do understand they sometimes pretend that they don't in order to be free to break the rules as they see them. We now have house rules translated in Polish. (Day centre)
However, some services also emphasised that there were fewer issues with A8 nationals, or no additional issues that were not displayed by traditional clients.

*By and large tend to be better behaved than regular users. We sometimes think that they understand more English than they pretend.* (Day centre)

*I have not come across anti-social behaviour in A8 nationals.* (Day centre)

**Ability to deal with A8 clients**

Services were asked to indicate how well equipped they felt their project was to meet the needs of A8 nationals. Most respondents (48%) indicated that they were neither well nor poorly equipped. Almost the same numbers indicated that they were well equipped as unequipped (six versus seven responses). A further four respondents felt that they could not say.

**Suggested changes**

The research sought to establish what changes and/or improvements, if any, would enable projects to work more effectively with A8 nationals, e.g. changes in government/local authority policies, development of new projects or specialised services, changes in services, lifting of funding constraints, or staff training. An open question was asked and the responses given were coded into 14 categories. These changes were also discussed in the three focus groups, attended by representatives from local authorities, night shelters and day centres.

Among the suggestions for changes or improvements that facilitate service delivery to A8 nationals, were the need for funding or lifting of funding restrictions and the development of specialised services for A8 nationals.

*We would like some funding from the government for dealing with a set of issues that they put into motion and yet fail to acknowledge. Not all the A8’s go straight into employment, and not all those who don’t, leave. We need funding to bring about one or the other of these outcomes for those that are left.* (Day centre)

*We would be able to work more effectively with people from the A8 nations if funding constraints were lifted to give us access to more funds to offer a wider ranging service to the people who need it.* (Day centre and night shelter)

Funding was emphasised by the largest number of respondents (12 respondents) whereas a specialised service was the second largest (7 respondents). However, when funding was discussed in the focus groups, it became clear that for many services funding or lifting of funding restrictions would only be a stop gap solution, albeit an important one. Many did not see homelessness services as best placed to support A8 nationals. They do not
currently hold the expertise to address their needs. Among the most commonly reported support needs by A8 clients themselves were English language difficulties and employment needs. Although many homelessness services do offer these services, and some have developed them specifically in response to an increase in A8 nationals, this is not their main field of expertise. Instead working with clients with complex needs, that may have a multiplicity of issues that need to be addressed holistically, is what homelessness providers do best.

Focus group participants felt strongly that although they would and should work with A8 clients who do present with more complex needs often associated with entrenched rough sleepers, it was not appropriate to use their services to deal with homeless A8 nationals who would manage well in the UK, if they were only able to find suitable employment. Moreover, there was concern that once A8 nationals found themselves mixing with traditional homeless populations and developed a street lifestyle, it would be more difficult to support them off the streets.

Instead what service providers preferred was a service designed to cater to the needs of a majority of A8 nationals that they could refer into. In this context, agencies again emphasised the existence of two different groups among their A8 clients. One group have low support needs but have had difficulties finding employment and/or have lost their employment, become victims of crime or exploitative employers, which leaves them destitute.

The second group have often spent a longer time on the streets and present with greater support needs associated with street living such as mental and physical health problems and substance abuse. It was therefore stressed in both the day centre and night shelter focus groups that homelessness services should still be there to support the most vulnerable, i.e. those that display the same support needs as traditional clients, but where there are limited resources a separate provision for A8 nationals with low support needs was preferred.

*Development of a specialised service especially designed for A8 nationals so that we as a day centre have a referral reference point.* (Day centre)

*A specialised service in central London is what is needed for this group. They need access to job vacancies, cheap accommodation, health care, NI number etc.* (Day centre)

A preference for changes to benefit entitlements was stressed by five respondents. This may have been desired because it would allow services to use their traditional support services to help A8 clients out of homelessness.

*We cannot support these clients as much as we would like to due to limitations of government i.e. Housing and welfare benefits, without access to these, there is not much that can be done.* (Day centre)
Outreach teams also indicated a desire for the lifting of benefits restrictions. The small number of outreach teams that responded to the survey may however have skewed this.

The main sticking point for us being able to refer A8 into accommodation/hostels is entitlement to benefits and housing benefits, so any changes that allowed A8 people to claim would help. (Outreach team)

Several respondents also stressed a number of practical changes to the services that A8 nationals are allowed to access. Better access to Jobcentre Plus, health services, alcohol/drug support, as well as better access to national insurance numbers, and bank accounts were all stressed. Moreover, better information and training for homelessness service workers was highlighted, as was the need for better information for A8 nationals themselves. Staff training was especially important for outreach teams with a third of respondents mentioning this.

Our team would benefit from specialised training regarding A8 clients and also to have a better awareness of resources available. (Outreach team)

Greater clarity around rights to welfare benefits and staff training in this area. Directory of services/community groups for this client group. (Day centre)

Perhaps having information packs printed in different languages at present only available in English. Having a help line to call at the council with regards to A8 Nationals would also be a good idea, also a social security help line. (Day centre)

One thing that would really be helpful is if the UK government and government of the A8 countries worked on providing better information to those wishing to work in the UK before A8 nationals arrive here to live and work, for example information on the Workers Registration Scheme, the cost of living in the UK and so on. Perhaps there should also be more thorough checks at Immigration about why someone is here. (Night shelter)

In the focus groups, many agencies stressed that the main need was for both the UK and A8 governments to recognise that although migrants from accession countries generally find work and do well, there are certain individuals who encounter difficulties and need support. Participants stressed the need for Embassies to take a greater role in for example supporting repatriation for those who wish to return home.

Predictions for the future

Respondents were asked two open questions about the potential future impact of A8 nationals on their services. Their responses should therefore be treated as indicative only, as they are not based on evidence, but on respondents’ prediction of the future. The two questions focused on how an increase in A8 nationals would impact on their service in the future and one
about the impact of future EU expansion (e.g. potential accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007) on their services.

A large number of respondents highlighted that the number of clients from A8 and new potential accession countries would only increase. Just under half of all respondents predicted that they would be seeing greater numbers of A8 national clients. 

_We are noticing an increase in numbers for meals provision by about 10 to 15 people each day. This increase affects our expenditure and available funds for running the free service at the Day Centre. If the gradual increase is not monitored and curtailed it could cause an introduction of restricting who gains access to the service._ (Day centre)

There were concerns among just under a quarter of respondents that already limited resources would be further stretched and five respondents suggested that restrictions on access to services might have to be put in place. Three respondents also suggested that services might have to be amended as a result of an increase in A8 and the A2 countries’ (Bulgaria and Romania) nationals.

_With Romania and Bulgaria joining the EU next year it is only going to get busier, and our service that is already under strain will be even more stretched to meet the needs._ (Day centre)

_We may have to consider access to project i.e. introduce a time limit on period of stay for everyone._ (Night shelter)

Respondents also highlighted increased frustration for service providers who could not support this client group and the potential for language difficulties.

_If there was an increase we would feel hopeless and frustrated, as the system doesn't support us._ (Day centre)

_I feel we will struggle to help them because of the language barrier._ (Day centre)

There were concerns that A8 clients would develop greater support needs, not only related to rough sleeping but also issues such as debt problems. Two respondents thought that A8 nationals could potentially displace traditional client groups whilst four respondents suggested that tensions between the two groups might become more intense.
Conclusion

When there is migration on the level seen over recent years it is perhaps inevitable that some of those coming will encounter difficulty, often through no fault of their own. Our research shows that a small but significant proportion of migrants from the A8 countries are ending up homeless and destitute in London. Our members in other parts of the country tell us that this is not confined to the capital.

Homelessness agencies like day centres are loath to turn people away when they are clearly in need, but they are not best placed to provide the sort of help that is needed. When they do try to help they tell us they are hindered by a lack of clear information about entitlements for migrants. With no government department with overall responsibility to coordinate help, people do not know where to turn. Often embassies seem ill-prepared to help their own nationals. Our fear is that, without rapid and coordinated action, more A8 nationals will become homeless and, especially if they end up sleeping rough, may develop complex needs. With the further expansion to Romania and Bulgaria this could become even worse. Action now will prevent a more costly solution at a later stage. With the right advice and assistance at the right time people will find work and the success enjoyed by so many others who are making the most of the new Europe.

Recommendations

In our survey respondents were given the opportunity to suggest policy changes that would facilitate their work with A8 nationals, through the survey and focus groups. On this basis and following discussion with a range of stakeholders we recommend:

A national action plan

The Government should:

1. Recognise that there are A8 nationals who are homeless and in need of support.

2. Give responsibility to the Cabinet Office (or another central unit) to take the lead in responding to issues relevant to A8 nationals and to coordinate activity across government departments.

3. Undertake further research as a matter of urgency to identify the needs of homeless A8 nationals in London and elsewhere.

4. Formulate a clear national action plan that addresses the small but significant number of A8 nationals who need support to avoid homelessness.
5. Work with the European Union and the new EU members to ensure that people considering migration have access to accurate information on which to base their decision and to prepare for a successful move. This should raise awareness of the risks that people might face and how they might avoid them.

**Improved services**

6. The national action plan should establish local ‘integration hubs’ that can support A8 migrants to:
   - find employment
   - access accommodation
   - open a bank account
   - access language training
   - get a National Insurance number, understand employment rights and responsibilities and the Worker Registration Scheme
   - access health care and education.

7. The national action plan should also set out how mainstream public services will meet the needs of A8 nationals. All statutory services, including Jobcentre Plus, health and education services should take steps to meet the needs of A8 nationals.

8. In the short term, while the above is being addressed, existing services working with A8 nationals should be supported to maintain basic provision for A8 nationals. Services should not be withdrawn without a viable alternative service where clients can be referred.

**Better information**

9. The Government should publish and promote clear information on entitlement to statutory services for A8 nationals. Orientation packs in community languages - with information on issues such as entitlements, accommodation options, finding work, medical care - should be available through the integration hubs and other service providers.

10. For those people who have developed more complex and multiple support needs, Homeless Link would welcome the opportunity to work with the DCLG, DH, NTA, DWP and Home Office to ensure appropriate services to meet their needs are available.

**European Union**

The **European Union** should:

11. Work with the A8 countries to help their nationals who need to return to support networks in their home countries. A directory of services should be developed at a European level so that appropriate services in home countries can be easily identified.
Embassies

Embassies of the A8 countries should:

12. Have a named, clearly publicised contact to deal with queries from agencies working with homeless A8 clients.

13. Develop the capacity to deal with the queries from their nationals who find themselves without the means to support themselves; including offering support for individuals to return to their home country if this is needed.
References


European Commission (2006) Transitional measures for the free movement of the workers forming the subject of the accession treaty of 2003, Memo/06/176. Available at:


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Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England. Our mission is to be a catalyst that will help to bring an end to homelessness.

Our two goals are to:

- raise standards in the services that support homeless people and tackle homelessness
- influence the development of policy, strategy and investment at all levels of government.

Homeless Link's member organisations provide services through: hostels, day centres, outreach and resettlement agencies, housing advice centres, youth projects, health projects, welfare rights groups, regional and sub-regional homelessness networks, refuges, drug and alcohol services and church groups.