

**CHALLENGING THE 'LOCAL TURN' IN MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN THE SOUTH
EAST OF ENGLAND UNDER THE COALITION AND CONSERVATIVE
GOVERNMENTS 2010-2018. A WHOLE POLICY APPROACH**

by

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Abstract

In recent years increasing bodies of research have supported the idea that integration takes place on the local level (Jimenez 2009, Penninx & Martiniello 2007, Rutter 2015, Jensen 2011). Consequently, when the Coalition government claimed to be ushering in a radical new form of Localism and designated integration as a 'local issue', there was an apparent consensus between policy and academia alike that this localist turn was to be 'welcomed' (Ali & Gidley, 2014, p. 23). Nevertheless, this apparent consensus makes two assumptions. The first is that Localism is always a positive thing for the local level and the second is that greater autonomy at the local level will materialise in greater migrant integration activities. Consequently, research in this area spans two bodies of academic literature, Localism, and that of the 'local turn' in integration policies, and is the first time these two related fields have been combined.

The primary research question of this thesis is "Did the designation of migrant integration as a 'local issue' under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 help or hinder the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities?". The research uses as its case study the South East (SE) of England as the region is home to the highest number of migrants in the UK second only to London, and has also not been covered in academic research on this area to date. It is also a predominantly rural area and as such adds to much needed research on migrant integration outside of urban or peri-urban settings.

The principal research question is broken down into the following sub questions designed to unpack the aforementioned assumptions.

Did a local turn in migrant integration policy take place under the Localism of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010 to 2018?

How can a whole policy approach help us to map the aggregate demand on local authorities when it comes to migrant integration?"

Both these questions are analysed using a trio of qualitative research methods, policy analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, in order to highlight the danger of relying on policy frame analysis alone. This mixed method approach is also used to map the effects of a policy at regional and at local level in order to best address the primary question about what impact was had on the local level for migrant integration as a result of Coalition and Conservative government Localism policies. The policy analysis undertaken uses a modified version of Emilsson's (2015) power lens approach

mapping the impacts of normative, legislative and economic power levers in order to assess the cumulative effects of a policy rather than relying on policy frame alone.

The findings demonstrate that rather than providing enabling conditions for migrant integration, Coalition and Conservative Localism reduced the activities local authorities could undertake to their core statutory duties, of which migrant integration is not one. Furthermore, this research also highlighted how, once all policies impacting on migrant integration are taken into account, (such as immigration, housing or employment), these governments made it significantly harder for local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. In particular, the role of the hostile environment and the increasing neo-liberalisation of government policies are seen to have negatively impacted upon every aspect of the integration process.

The research also saw that running parallel to these detrimental policies was the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VRPS). This scheme was voluntary for local authorities to opt into but fully funded and coordinated by central government. Contrary to the scaling back of all non-statutory services which Localism and its accompanying austerity had necessitated, the VPRS led to an expansion in services for migrants including cohorts which were not refugees. The scheme also meant that local authority officers working on the VPRS were forced to navigate the hostile policies migrants face when accessing accommodation, bank accounts, registering with GPs, obtaining driving licences and other such aspects.

This research shows that there are many types of Localism and that it is essential to examine the policy levers accompanying them in order to assess the impact there may be on migrant integration. It also demonstrates that a whole policy approach must be taken when considering migrant integration and that as such, it is dangerous to designate integration as a purely 'local issue'.

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Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Canterbury Christ Church University or any other institution.

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List of Abbreviations

AEB - Adult Education Budget

APPG - All Party Parliamentary Group

ARE - Appeals Rights Exhausted

BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

BC - Benefit Cap

CCI - Creating the Conditions for Integration

CHAIN - Combined Homelessness and Information Network

CMF - Controlling Migration Fund

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

DHP - Discretionary Housing Payments

DSG - Direct Schools Grant

DWP - Department of Work and Pensions

EAL - English as an Additional Language

ECHR - European Convention of Human Rights

EEA - European Economic Area

EIA - Equality Impact Assessments

EMA - Ethnic Minority Achievement

EMAG - Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant

EMSMP - East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

ESA - Employment Support Allowance

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

FE - Further Education

FOI - Freedom of Information

FSM - Free School Meals

GFC - Global Financial Crisis

GHV - ‘Go Home’ Vans

GMCA - Greater Manchester Combined Authority

GPC – General Power of Competence

HRT - Habitual Residency Test

IFS - Institute for Fiscal Studies

JCP - Job Centre Plus

JCWI - Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

JSA - Job Seekers Allowance

LAC - Looked After Child

LASPO - Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

LEA - Local Education Authority

LGA - Local Government Association

LGiU - Local Government Information Unit

LGL - Local Government Lawyer

LHA - Local Housing Allowance

LIST - Language and Industrial Skills Programme

LSP - Local Strategic Partnerships

MATBAP - Inter-Ministerial Group on Migrants' Access to Benefits and Public Services

MHCLG - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

MIPEX - Migrant Integration Policy Index

MLG - Multi-level Governance

NALDIC - National Association for Language within the Curriculum

NAO - National Audit Office

NATECLA - National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults

NEET - Not in Employment, Education or Training

NELMA - North East London Migrant Action

NINO - National Insurance Number

NQT - Newly Qualified Teachers

NRPF - No Recourse to Public Funds

NTS - National Transfer Scheme

OISC - Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner

PIP - Personal Independence Payments

PSED - Public Sector Equality Duty

QTS - Qualified Teacher Status

RIES - Refugee Integration and Employment Services

RLA - Residential's Landlord Association

SE - South East

SESPM - South East Strategic Partnership for Migration

SMP - Strategic Migration Partnership

SPOC – Single Point of Contact

SSAHE - Social Scientists Against Hostile Environment

UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

UC - Universal Credit

VCOs - Voluntary and Community Organisations

VCRS - Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

VPRS – Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

The renewed interest in integration and what level integration policies are best devised, can be said to have emerged out of the ashes of multiculturalism (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010) which was famously declared to have ‘utterly failed’ by Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2010 (Merkel, 2010, cited in Weaver, 2010). The British Prime Minister David Cameron similarly used his first speech on radicalisation to attribute blame to the ‘doctrine of multiculturalism’ (BBC, 2011). Both leaders began using the term integration seemingly as the antidote to these multiculturalist failures, albeit a particularly assimilatory form of integration (more on this is covered in the Socio-cultural Chapter 7). In addition to the shift in multiculturalism was a shift in locus of where integration policies should be formulated.

Due to their situation as the form of administration, arbitration, welfare and housing provision in closest proximity to their constituents, local authorities, municipalities and cities are key players in managing migrant integration. Local governments are at the coal face of the daily challenges that integration brings, as Rinnus Penninx (2009, p.4) describes

“There are those who argue that the very logic of integration policies should lead primarily to local and decentralised policymaking and implementation since most individual and group interactions take place at local level”.

The pejorative expression ‘national gain, local pain’ was coined in recognition of the tensions which can arise on the local level due to immigrant migration, whilst the nation state benefits from the boost to the economy that immigration has been shown to bring (Gordon et al., 2007). Nevertheless, being faced with challenges has meant that local government becomes the place where new means of overcoming barriers to integration are “invented, tested and refined” (Papademetriou, 2014, p.1).

On the face of it, the Coalition government were seemingly in agreement with this research when they stated that integration was the purview of communities who were “better equipped to resolve their own problems” (DCLG, 2012, p.6), Central government was to intervene only ‘exceptionally’ as integration was a ‘local issue’ (ibid). The Coalition were very clear that “Government must not, as happens too often, stand in the way by dictating general solutions” (Ibid, p.4).

This last quote was intended to differentiate the Coalition from the Blair/Brown Labour Governments which had been criticised for being too controlling (Hildreth 2011 & 2016, Evans et al. 2013, Jones & Ormston 2014, Davies 2008).

Local authorities' ability to facilitate migrant integration under New Labour

New Localism introduced under Tony Blair's 1997 Government began with the creation of 'Frameworks for Partnerships' but the collaboration between local and central government contained several elements of performance management. New powers granted to local authorities were contingent upon local authorities delivering the 'policies for which this government was elected' and were warned that if they failed to do so the government would 'have to look to other partners to take on your role' (Blair, 1998, p.22). There were strong lines of accountability with Local Area Agreements (LAAs) created with set indicators to monitor progress. The monitoring frameworks were implemented and overseen by new structures such as regional government and new Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The LSPs were made up of statutory bodies like local government, police, health, fire and rescue etc. but also involved the voluntary sector, local NGOs and also the private sector. Outside of local government, similar national indicators were set in education and in health and increasing monitoring of equalities culminated in the 2010 Equalities Act. The overall aim of these indicators was to reduce inequality and the first LSPs were set up in areas ranking highest on the index of multiple deprivation. Whilst the Blair/Brown governments have been heavily criticised for this prescriptive approach, others have lauded the fact that New Labour invested more into the public sector than any post-war government (Jordan, 2011). The LSPs have been praised for introducing a collaborative approach with clear accountability (Jones & Ormston 2014, Williams et al. 2014) and entrenching values of "equality and community" within workstreams (Driver & Martell, 2000, p.159-160). Others have commented on how Labour's 'third way' saw the furthering of neo-liberal values (Jessop, 2004 & 2007). The role of the private sector was increased, with all services being forced to demonstrate 'Best Value' by conducting external tenders. This government also introduced the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which saw the opening up of public sector projects to private sector organisations. When it comes to migrant integration, Labour's normative messaging in this area was not homogenous and tended to distinguish between refugees and asylum seekers versus economic migrants and was 'managed' to attract the latter (Consterdine, 2015). This is consistent with migration policy across Europe in the 2000s onwards which has increasingly favoured the integration of labour migrants regardless of skills level over refugees and asylum seekers (De Haas et al., 2016). Nonetheless, Labour nailed their colours to the mast on immigration, presenting economic arguments that immigration was good for the economy (Coleman & Rowthorn, 2004). For immigration as well as all

other areas under Labour, the emphasis was on evidence-based policy (Wells, 2007). In terms of policies in this area, Labour can be seen to have been a mainstreaming approach (Ali & Gidley, 2014) as part of wider efforts to reduce inequalities. Nevertheless, examples of targeted provision towards migrants under Labour can be found in areas such as; the Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES), funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the creation of Strategic Migration Partnerships in 1999 in to help the introduction of the national asylum dispersal system (WMSMP, 2021), and a £70 Migration Impact Fund (MIF) created in 2009 to help local authorities with aspects relating to local migration. Additionally, examples will be given throughout this thesis on ways in which the indicators introduced helped to monitor inequalities within migrant communities (educational attainment, health inequalities, employment).

Nonetheless, the situation remains that in 2010 the Labour government was heavily criticised for being too top down and for having stymied innovation, greater power being granted to the local level was contained within both the 2010 Labour and Conservative parties' manifestos.

The research question

This thesis sets out to answer the question “Did the designation of migrant integration as a ‘local issue’ under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 help or hinder the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities?”.

Upon first examination, the research question appears self-evident as it has been seen that both policy and academia alike share the consensus that integration is best left to the local level (Jimenez 2009, Penninx & Martinello 2006, Rutter 2015) and that the local is increasingly an ‘independent level of policy development’ (Van Breugel, 2020, p.1) In the UK, the Localism introduced by the UK Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 designated migrant integration a ‘local issue’ (DCLG, 2012, p.7) and claimed to have provided “the biggest transfer of power from central to local government in recent history” (Osbourne, cited in Watt, 2015). In principle, UK local authorities were provided with both the means and the mandate to facilitate migrant integration. The implication of this designation was that if migrant integration outcomes fail to improve then it was the fault of local authorities for failing to capitalise upon this unprecedented opportunity. This thesis strongly counters this implication and uses a power lens approach to trace and return the focus of accountability for migrant integration to the relevant level(s) of government.

In contrast to the enabling rhetoric of the Coalition/Conservatives, this thesis demonstrates that the Localism they introduced actually meant a reduction in the ability of local authorities to provide anything other than their core statutory duties, with discretionary services such as those facilitating integration hit the hardest. Furthermore, when a 'whole policy' approach is taken, examining the impact of all policies affecting migrant integration, we find evidence of a strong increase in control by central government in this area. In this way, this thesis uses migrant integration as an example of how the aggregate demand of all policies upon local authorities must be considered before designating additional responsibilities. This consideration of the aggregate demand on local authorities should be borne in mind by governments wishing to develop Localism if it is not to be conflated with notions of cost and/or responsibility shunting.

This thesis gives an overview of the type of Localism introduced under the Coalition and Conservative government's 2010-2018 and examines the effect that it had upon the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. It then expands the remit to look at the effect of all government policies outside of official integration policy which impact on migrant integration (such as education, health, employment, housing) and examine what the aggregate effect of these policies were upon local authorities.

It should be noted that the majority of literature on migrant integration at the local level has focused on global gateway cities or at the very least on urban conurbations (Turner 2012, Papademetriou 2014, Benton-Short et al. 2015, Gebhardt 2014). Within the UK, the majority of studies on this area have focused on Scotland which has been praised as the 'cause celebre' (Scott, 2017, p.7) for its comprehensive 'New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy' (2014 & 2018). London also features heavily in research projects as does super-diverse cities like Birmingham or Manchester (Boccagni 2012, Ambrosini & Boccagni 2015, Craig 2015). As has been noted elsewhere in the literature (Van Breugel, 2020), the experience of migrant integration in rural or coastal areas tends to be overlooked. This thesis not only challenges the implication that local authorities are responsible for migrant integration in the UK but also shines the light on an underrepresented area in the local migrant integration literature – that of the South East of England. This is relevant as

- a) the SE is home to the second highest number of migrants in the UK, second only to London and
- b) the area is largely rural thus contributing to the scarcity of literature on migrant integration in rural, less ethnically diverse settings.

In order to set the scene a profile of the South East migrant population local authorities usually come into contact with shall now be given.

A portrait of the South East

Migrants come to the UK for a variety of reasons. Research undertaken by the University of Oxford using the Long Term International Migration (LTIM) Survey states that of the 9.4 million foreign born population of the UK in 2017, 44 per cent (4,136,000) originally came to be reunited with their families, 29 per cent (2,756,000) came for employment, 12 per cent (1,157,000) came to study, 9 per cent (888,000) stated 'other' as their original reason for coming, and only 4 per cent (374,000) had originally arrived as asylum seekers (Kone et al., 2019). In addition to these categories of migrants, there are of course many migrants this data does not include such as undocumented migrants and short term migrants such as tourists. Local authorities in one way or another may have duties to support all of these categories, as part of their duties to facilitate the well-being of their constituents, under Human Rights legislation or as part of targeted duties to particular cadres of migrants/individuals. In particular, local authorities are the primary duty bearers for ensuring the wellbeing of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) or migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Not every local authority will come into contact with migrants needing their assistance, equally, the type of migrants which settle in any one area can vary greatly between regions.

As stated earlier, much of the existing literature on local authorities and migrant integration has focused on Scotland or super diverse cities such as London, Birmingham or Manchester. These cities have all been home to disproportionately large numbers of asylum seekers, with Yorkshire and Humberside having more asylum seekers in a handful of wards than the entirety of the South East, South West and East of England combined (Barratt, 2018). This disparity is all the more stark when it is considered that the SE has traditionally been home to the second highest numbers of migrants outside of London. In 2017, there were 1,211,000, foreign born in the SE in comparison to Yorkshire and Humberside's 535,000 (Migration Observatory, 2018b). The reasons for this regional disparity are historic and explained in the Asylum section below but help to add a flavour as to the variance in regional experience local authorities face when it comes to migration.

Participant observation and semi structured interviews with 20 local authorities in the South East undertaken as part of this thesis found very few authorities who had much experience working with migrants prior to the introduction of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). Whilst the SE may home approximately 13% of the UK's

foreign born population, roughly 42% of these are European (ibid), a migrant sub-set which prior to the 2010 had not generally been a focus of integration activities due to their largely comparable rights protected under EU treaty legislation and ethnic and religious similarity to UK native populations (more on this is covered in the Socio-cultural Chapter 7). Nevertheless, for these very reasons the SE makes an interesting case study as for many local authorities, migrant integration was a new consideration and efforts in this area meant starting from scratch. More on this is covered within Chapter 7 which considers the impact of the VPRS on local authorities in the South East of England.

Due to the complexity in legal entitlements between cadres of migrants in the UK, a more in depth exploration will be given into the key categories of migrants local authorities in the SE may encounter. The relationship between local authorities and undocumented migrants is not addressed here due to the nature of their status meaning that they are less likely to come into contact with local authorities unless they are destitute. Local authority assistance to destitute undocumented migrants is covered within the section on NRPF migrants. Likewise, migrants on Tier 1 (Investor) visas, are unlikely to have any more interactions with local authorities than would a regular UK citizen due to their greater affluence and are therefore not covered in this chapter.

Adult Asylum Seekers

Whilst asylum seekers are often the focus of attention when it comes to migration in the UK during the 2010-2018 timeframe of this thesis, the South East of England was home to only a tiny fraction of the national total, accommodating just 1.39 per cent in 2018 (BBC 2001, ONS 2018). Prior to the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, local authorities had a duty to provide accommodation and 'in kind' support (in the form of food vouchers), to asylum seekers claiming asylum in their area. As most asylum seekers had entered the UK via ports in the South (including Gatwick and Heathrow), the cost of housing and supporting asylum seekers predominantly fell to a few local authorities in London and the SE (Robinson et al., 2003). Unsurprisingly, this led to resentment from local authorities and a depletion of local housing stock (Hynes & Sales, 2010), which in turn fuelled local community hostility. By point of example, at the height of these tensions, Dover in Kent was accommodating 700 asylum seekers in a town where the total population was 30,000. As a result, local council tax increased by £3 per person to cover the costs of housing the refugees (Dodd, 2000). Local resistance emerged in the form of petitions to the council and incidents of fighting between asylum seekers and local populations. Asylum dispersal was introduced in 2000 to ease the burden away from London and the SE and distribute asylum seekers more evenly across the regions. As a consequence, whereas in 2000 there were 700 asylum seekers in Dover alone (approximately 9.2 per cent of whole of UK), in 2018 there were only 619 in the whole of

the SE (BBC 2001, ONS 2018). The Home Office also agreed to assume the cost of asylum accommodation, thereby alleviating the burden from local authorities. Nevertheless, in practice, rather than an equitable share across all authorities, dispersal meant asylum seekers were sent to those parts of the UK where accommodation was cheapest and in greatest supply (Gov.uk., 2018). Agreeing to be a dispersal area is voluntary for local authorities, but not well remunerated which has made sourcing accommodation in affluent areas cost prohibitive. On the other hand, in areas where accommodation is cheaper, becoming a dispersal area has also proved for some to be a means of buoying the social and private rental market, filling 'hard to let' and void properties with asylum seekers (Casey, 2004). Initially, local authorities provided much of the housing paid for by the Home Office, often sub-contracting out the accommodation provision to the private rental market in order to avoid using social housing stock. However, as dispersal has continued, central government has increasingly sought to bypass local authorities, believing that "the private sector is better placed" to cope with fluctuations in demand (McNulty, in Burnett, 2011). Local authorities also chose not to renew their dispersal contracts in light of increasing demands on their housing stock.

This meant that by 2010 local authorities were not for the most part, responsible for housing or providing subsistence support to asylum seekers, though they had to approve asylum accommodation being sought in their area. However, this is not to say that local authorities no longer had contact with asylum seekers. Evidence submitted to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Asylum in 2008 found that the cost of care for asylum seekers (mental health issues, age, disability) often fell on local authorities under Section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948, which places a duty on local authorities to protect the welfare of its local inhabitants (House of Lords, 2008).

"We received evidence from local authorities and other witnesses that there are often disputes between IND (Immigration and Nationality Directorate) and Social Services about who is responsible for accommodating asylum seekers with care needs. The lack of clear guidance or Government funding has been an issue in a series of court cases, most of which have resulted in the local authority having to provide accommodation under Section 21 National Assistance Act 1948."

(ibid.)

Research by the University of Oxford over the period 2010–2017 found that asylum migrants are four percentage points more likely to suffer from a long-term health condition than UK born people. Of those long-lasting health conditions, mental health problems are most prevalent within asylum migrants who are three percentage points more likely to suffer than UK born. By contrast, all other migrant groups are 11

percentage points less likely to suffer long term health conditions, and seven percent less likely to suffer from mental health problems than people born in the UK (Kone et al., 2019).

Child Asylum Seekers

In contrast to adult asylum seekers who are dispersed across the UK, child asylum seekers remain in the care of the local authority that they first present in. In some cases (approximately 28 per cent in 2005) this will happen immediately at the port the child arrives into (such as Dover or Heathrow) (Wade et al., 2005, p.5). For others (72 per cent in 2005), the child will have been in the UK for longer, and come into contact with Social Services as they become destitute or if they are discovered in trafficking raids etc. In the early 2000s, approximately 70 per cent of UASC were in the care of local authorities in London with another 16-17 per cent in the SE (Wade et al., 2005, p.5). As clandestine routes of entry into the UK have changed and lorry drops become more prevalent, UASC numbers have now increased to the East of England and in authorities along other major road networks. However, the majority still present in London and the SE (ADCS, 2016).

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children 'in need'. UASC are classified as 'in need' following an initial assessment which demonstrates that their health and well-being would be suffer without local authority assistance. Once a UASC has spent more than 24 hours in the care of a local authority they become a LAC. Local authorities duties to all LAC cover the following,

“Health, education and training (“the personal education plan”), emotional and behavioural development, Identity, with particular regard to religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background, family and social relationships, social presentation and self-care skills.”

(CORAM, 2017)

In addition to these, UASC have additional needs such as specialist support when it comes to age determination, trafficking and specialist legal advice on immigration matters.

Unlike adult asylum seekers, all the costs associated with looking after a UASC fall directly upon the local authority, with a flat per diem amount reimbursed by the Government. In 2016 and 2017 two pieces of research conducted by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), and the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (EMSMP), found that the per diem covered approximately 50 per cent (ADCS, 2016), and 55 per cent (EMSMP, 2017) of the actual costs incurred by local authorities respectively. The average annual cost to a local authority per UASC is

estimated to be between £55,194 to £67,364 (EMSMP 2017, ADCS 2016). A 2019 government spending review agreed that costs were not adequate and has increased funding to an annual estimate of £41,600 (Gov.uk., 2019).

After dropping from record numbers in the mid-2000s, the number of UASC in the care of local authorities rose again in 2015 due to the 'migrant crisis'. ONS stats show 3,253 UASC as having claimed asylum in 2015 (ONS, 2019). Many of these came into the UK came in via the ports along the Dover straights and consequently went into the care of Kent County Council (KCC). In December 2015 there were around 1,000 UASC in the care of KCC (Hammond, 2015). Whilst it is not known exactly how much the rise in UASC cost KCC, using an aggregate shortfall of the ADCS and EMSMP estimates (£29,107 pa. per UASC) it is easy to see how this shortfall can affect the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration.

Due to the uneven distribution of UASC across the UK due to the migrant crisis, in 2016 the government introduced the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) designed to encourage local authorities in areas with few or no UASC to take UASC from areas with elevated numbers like Kent. The NTS has so far not proved highly successful despite the per diem at the time being raised from £71 to £95 per day. The reasons for this are varied. As has been seen, a major impediment is the cost to a local authority of each UASC of approximately £30,000 per annum. In addition to this, local authorities are seeing a rise in the number of native children going into care, resulting in a shortfall in local authority foster families and an increasing reliance on expensive sub-contracting to private foster companies. Recruitment and retention of social workers is also a challenge, due in part to the increasing cuts to local authority finances at the same time as an increase in need. In addition, the NTS was introduced at the same time as the 2016 Immigration Act which sought to bring other categories of migrant children into the care of local authorities including the following:

- The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) sought to bring 3,000 children into the UK by 2020
- The 'Dubs' scheme sought to bring an unstipulated number of vulnerable children who had been in Calais prior to September 2015.
- Dublin children are an unstipulated number of children who have the right to be reunited with existing family in the UK if they have successfully claimed asylum in Europe.

Furthermore, while children leave the care of local authorities at age 18, local authorities still have duties to support care leavers until they reach 21 or 25 if they remain in education. These costs (whilst not as high as UASC support) are also not reimbursed by

central government. A report by the Office of National Statistics in 2015 estimated the cost of a care leaver up to the age of 21 as £6,250 to a local authority (NAO, 2015).

Refugees

Refugees differ from asylum seekers in that they have already been accepted as having demonstrated that they meet the necessary criteria to be a refugee as established under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This is namely that

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

(UN Refugee Convention Article 1A, 1951)

In the UK, you can also be granted Humanitarian Protection if you meet many of the same criteria as the UN Convention in terms of having a well-founded fear of persecution, but your reason for persecution is one of a number which do not fall within the convention’s criteria. For example, if you fear for your life because you are homosexual in a country where being homosexual is punishable by death, then you may be eligible to apply for humanitarian protection.

Whilst Refugee status and humanitarian protection are not the same, (there is not the space to discuss the difference here), they both give five years official leave to remain in the UK with recourse to public funds and the right to work with the option to apply for renewal of this protection at the end of the 5 years. In contrast, an asylum seeker is applying for recognition as a refugee or for humanitarian protection, but has not yet received an outcome.

In recent years, official programmes of support bringing refugees to the UK are generally spoken of as resettlement programmes. For ease of reference, refugees who have been brought to the UK on a programme of support will be referred to as resettled refugees, to distinguish them from former asylum seeker refugees, (also referred to as recently recognised refugees) who have arrived spontaneously.

Newly recognised former asylum seeker refugees

If an asylum seeker is granted refugee status, presuming they have been supported under Section 95 to date (accommodation and subsistence support), they are then given 28 days in which to find alternative means of supporting themselves. Several reports have highlighted the significant difficulty of this feat (Carnet et al. 2014, Doyle 2014, Basedow & Doyle 2016) and how destitute refugees may turn to local authorities, NGOs and voluntary and community organisations for help.

In order to have initially qualified for Section 95 support, the former asylum seeker will have demonstrated that they are destitute and have no savings from which to support themselves, this means that in order to find alternative accommodation they need to find employment. Asylum seekers are not allowed to access employment for the first 12 months of their arrival, consequently at the time of achieving refugee status they are starting from a standing start in their quest to find work. In order to work or open a bank account they need to have a biometric residency permit (BRP) to prove their identification and ability to reside and work in the UK. They also need a National Insurance Number (NINO). Unfortunately, for over ten years there have been regular delays in getting these documents to newly recognised refugees within the 28 day move on period (Carnet et al. 2014, Doyle 2014, Basedow & Doyle 2016). The situation has worsened since 2010 when the Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES), intended to assist refugees transitioning through this period was ceased by the Coalition Government (ibid.). A 2014 report by the Refugee Council found that of the 127 refugees who had used their services in 2013, 26 per cent of the advice sessions to these refugees related to problems in obtaining these documents. Likewise, in two longitudinal qualitative studies by Refugee Council and British Red Cross, two out of eleven and three out of eight of the refugees followed in the respective studies had not received their BRP within the 28 move on period (Doyle 2014, Basedow & Doyle 2016). Equally there were delays in accessing NINOs (ibid.). Even when a refugee does have a NINO, there are often delays in processing applications for benefits. In 2013, DWP research found it took an average of 32.3 days for a newly recognised refugee with a NINO, and 34.6 days for a newly recognised refugee without a NINO, to have their benefit claims processed (Basedow & Doyle, 2016). The introduction of Universal Credit's obligatory five week waiting period before receiving benefits has now standardised the length of this claim period. The incompatibility of the 28 day move on period with five working weeks to access Universal Credit means that newly recognised refugees face what has been termed 'inevitable destitution' (British Red Cross, 2018, p.2).

One of the most common ways in which a local authority might come into contact with a former asylum seeking refugee is if the refugee is in need of accommodation. A former asylum seeker can present at their local authority and seek accommodation if they are

homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. However, as social housing is limited, need outweighs supply and as such it is awarded to those who have priority usually using a points-based system. The 2013 Localism Act gave local authorities the autonomy to decide how they calculated priority need, but for many local authorities advanced priority is given to those who are homeless due to a threat of violence, have serious health issues or disabilities, are a member (or spouse of a member) of the armed forces or in accommodation which poses a health risk (Age UK, 2019). In addition to priority of need, there is a requirement to demonstrate having a local connection to the area. The amount of time someone needs to demonstrate having been connected to an area (having resided there), has increased from two to five years, often making it difficult for a refugee to qualify. A DCLG review of social housing allocation from 2008 to 2015 found that only 6-9 per cent of migrants qualify for access to social housing (DCLG, 2015). The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act places additional duties on local authorities to work to prevent and relieve homelessness. However, the Act requires the authority take reasonable steps to help find accommodation but does not actually require the authority to provide the accommodation themselves (Parliament, 2018b). The Act also places a duty on public sector organisations to flag people who are likely to become homeless to the local authority in advance. However, unfortunately for newly recognised refugees, this duty does not extend to providers of accommodation for asylum seekers (ibid.).

The difficulty in accessing accommodation for newly recognised refugees leaving the asylum system remains, and unfortunately within all of the refugees followed within the 2014 Doyle, 2016 Basedow and Doyle, and 2018 British Red Cross reports, every one found themselves homeless at the end of the 28 day move on period. More on the role of local authorities working with street homeless is covered under the chapter on Housing.

Official programmes of support bringing refugees to the UK are generally spoken of as resettlement programmes. Since the Second World War the UK has resettled 300,000 Polish ex-servicemen, 28,600 Ugandan Asians, 3,000 Chileans, 11,450 Vietnamese, 2,585 Bosnians and 4,346 Kosovans (Robinson, 2003). From 2015-2020, the UK set itself the target of resettling 23,000 refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. This is in addition to the Gateway programme, Mandate scheme and a few hundred child refugees eligible to enter the UK from Europe under the 'Dubs' scheme. These refugees have for the most part (excluding the Polish ex-servicemen), been pre-selected to come to the UK as part of a UK programme, and are given different degrees of assistance to resettle. As seen in this thesis, the support offered by the UK government to refugees coming under official UK

programmes, varies greatly from the support given to refugees who spontaneously arrive as asylum seekers and are later granted refugee status.

The Gateway Protection Programme

Gateway is the name of the UK's portion of the global UNHCR resettlement programme. Under this global programme each participating country chooses how many refugees they will take annually and which of the (currently) seven UNHCR categories of vulnerability they wish to support. The refugees, often from a small number of UNHCR operated refugee camps, have registered for resettlement with the UNHCR, but they have no idea when registering, which country they will be resettled in. However, they are given pre-departure cultural orientation briefings. The Gateway Protection Programme has been in existence since 2004 and is a pledge to receive a maximum of 750 refugees each year subject to satisfactory checks by UKVI and capacity within local authorities to receive them. All Gateway protection refugees are refugees under the Convention of Human Rights who face no possibility of long-term security in their home country. Moreover, in order to qualify for the programme, they need to have been living in a protracted status as a refugee for five years already. Consequently, they are granted Indefinite Leave to Remain, meaning there is no time limit on how long they are able to stay in the UK (ILPA, 2014). To date, Gateway refugees have included nationals of Somalia, Myanmar, Sudan, Palestine, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Refugee Council, 2019) and Iraq (Evans & Murray, 2009). All travel to the UK for Gateway refugees is both organised and accompanied by UNHCR staff.

Once in the UK Gateway protection refugees are and are supported by resettlement teams in local authorities who provide accommodation and partner with NGOs and voluntary and community organisations who provide them with 12 months intensive support to help them integrate (ibid.). A 2009 piece of research by the Home Office's Immigration Research and Statistics Services found that of the 129 refugees interviewed, it was generally felt that the Gateway scheme was effective in meeting the refugees needs. Both the 2009 research and an additional 2011 review of a further 146 Gateway refugees by Sheffield Hallam University found that the lead agency caseworkers were 'fundamental' to this success (ibid., p.1). Lead agency caseworkers play key roles in assisting in tasks such as registering for benefits, registering with GPs and helping refugees to understand basics such as how to operate the heating systems within their homes (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2011). From the scheme's inception to 2014 only a few local authorities had participated in the scheme, these include Sheffield, Manchester,

Brighton, Hull and Norwich (ILPA, 2014), Bromley, Colchester (op cit. Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2009).

Mandate Programme

The Mandate programme was launched in 1995 and is also facilitated by the UNHCR is not part of an established, large resettlement scheme (UNHCR, 2018). Applications are made on a case by case basis and the applicant must already have a close personal tie to the UK, such as having a close family relative residing there or having lived in the UK themselves for a considerable duration, i.e. as a student (Bianchini, 2019). Numbers of refugees coming through the Mandate programme are very low, for example for the year ending March 2019, only 17 people in the UK had been brought to the UK under Mandate (Refugee Council, 2019b). There is no annual minimum number for Mandate refugees. Mandate refugees are also granted Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Mandate Refugees and local authorities

Local authorities do not have responsibility to provide accommodation or integration support under the Mandate scheme as it is assumed the family member they are joining will assist with this (op cit. UNHCR, 2018), or that they already know the UK from time spent here previously. They will likely only come into contact with a local authority if they become homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, or if they access ESOL classes.

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)

The VPRS was launched in January 2014 under the name 'The Syrian Vulnerable persons Relocation Scheme' (Brokenshire, 2014). No official commitment of numbers was made at the time, but it was anticipated that the scheme would resettle a few hundred vulnerable Syrians over three years (op cit. UNHCR, 2018). The scheme was considerably stepped up in September 2015 when public sympathy for the plight of Syrian refugees groundswelled following the death of three-year-old Kurdish Syrian, Alan Kurdi in the Mediterranean Sea. The then Prime Minister, David Cameron pledged to expand the scheme to accept 20,000 Syrians over the next five years. The name and the scope of the scheme changed again in 2017 when it became the VPRS, reflecting the fact that it was now accessible to other nationalities fleeing the war in Syria, not only Syrians (Home Office, 2017).

When the scheme began refugees were granted five-year humanitarian protection to come to the UK. However, in 2017 this was changed to Refugee status with 5 years Leave to Remain. Other than the difference in status awarded the refugees, the VPRS and Gateway Protection Programme share many things in common. They are both operated by the UNHCR, both receive the same pre-departure health checks, biometric identification, cultural orientation training, assisted transport to the UK (albeit not on shared flights) and a similar package of support once in the UK.

Similar to the Gateway Protection Programme, the VPRS issues a Statement of Requirements to the local authority that they must provide in order to participate on the scheme. The Statement of Requirements is extensive but is also deemed to be well remunerated (participant observation). Housing must be provided, utility companies registered with, and a grocery shop done prior to the refugee arriving into the UK. Orientation is given on arrival and an emergency contact at all times, in addition to case worker support. Case workers are responsible for providing the intensive initial 12 month assistance mentioned previously, such as registering with GPs etc. Ongoing support is provided in terms of sign posting to or providing ESOL classes and assisting the refugees to move towards entering employment. Whilst this support is largely the same as exists under the Gateway Programme, the scale of the VPRS programme means that it has been instrumental in forging partnerships across several different departments, both multi-partnership working within government, within local authorities, and between local authorities. The VPRS (as of September 2015) has been coordinated by a team with representatives from a tripartite of government departments, namely the Department for International Development (DfID), The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Education (DfE). The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was also brought in at senior level with county representatives given the duty of liaising with local job centres to try to ensure the situation of VPRS refugees is understood.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

NRPF is a status someone is designated if they are 'subject to immigration control' (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999). This means that they are not eligible to receive a variety of public funds such as Disability Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Benefit or Tax Credit, Council Tax Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit, discretionary welfare payments or social fund payments (NRPF, 2018).

There are an increasing number of migrants who are now designated as NRPF. They may be migrants who do not have leave to remain, such as someone who has overstayed their visa, or entered the UK clandestinely. It could also apply to someone with limited leave to remain, such as people on student or spousal visas. It is possible to hold

indefinite leave to remain but still be classified NRPF if you are the designated adult responsible for someone with Settled Status in the UK, such as a mother to a UK national or a caregiver to a relative who has status.

Many migrants who are designated NRPF will have little need to come into contact with local authorities. Students for example, are likely to be relatively affluent by virtue of the fact that they can afford UK foreign student rates to begin with. At the pointier end of the wedge, undocumented migrants may only voluntarily come into contact with local authorities when they are absolutely destitute as the local authority is required by law to inform the Home Office of their presence. That said, in 2012/13 in a study involving 174 children's services 63 per cent of NRPF migrants receiving local authority support were visa overstayers (Price & Spencer, 2015, p.27).

If an NRPF migrant does become destitute, there are a number of duties on local authorities to protect the most vulnerable which include migrants. In England (there are different legislation covering similar duties in the devolved nations), if an NRPF migrant has limited or unlimited leave to remain duties on local authorities to support them tend to fall into one of the two following categories:

- A duty under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to protect children in need (and their families).
- A duty under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 to protect adults requiring care and support due to mental health issues, disability or serious illness.

If the migrant is undocumented, a refused asylum seeker who has not made efforts to leave the UK, an asylum seeker who has been granted asylum outside of the UK or an EEA national, then they are excluded from these legislations under Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. These categories of migrants can only be granted social services and housing support if they meet the assessment criteria under human rights or European treaty rights. They also have more stringent restrictions on services such as their use of the NHS.

Unlike some public funds such as Universal Credit, there are no set scales for how much support must be given to NRPF individuals and families. The most significant need of destitute NRPF families is for accommodation (Price & Spencer, 2015). Accommodation may be in hostels, B&Bs, or private rented and may be located outside of the local authority if cheaper. The next highest need is food and clothing. The level of financial support given by a local authority under Section 17 support varies considerably, some local authorities provide it just for children, some to children and their family members, or some as a lump sum to the family. In all cases the level of support given has been found to be routinely below that of welfare benefit, Section 95 support for destitute

asylum seekers and even below that of Section 4 Home Office Hard support case (Price & Spencer, 2015, p.44).

It is not possible to know how exactly much local authorities spend supporting people who are designated NRPF as local authorities do not routinely record or disclose this information. However, the CONNECT database, a joint local authority Home Office venture to map the number of NRPF people in the care of local authorities, listed 2,552 households being supported at an annual cost of £43.5 million to the 50 local authorities involved (NRPF, 2019). These costs are not reimbursed by central government. Furthermore, in recent years both the number of NRPF people being supported by local authorities, and the duration that they are supported have increased. In 2017/18 the average duration of an NRPF migrant being supported by the 50 local authorities who contribute to the CONNECT database was just under 2.5 year, 30 per cent of these had been supported for 1,000 days or more (NRPF, 2018b).

“This increase in numbers and duration of support of NRPF migrants has led some to label local authority support as ‘a parallel welfare system... but a welfare system that is funded by local rather than a central government.”

(Price & Spencer, 2015, p.20)

In their research into local authorities responses to families with No Recourse to Public Funds, Johnathan Price and Sarah Spencer attribute the increase in numbers and duration of support to economic decline, increasing numbers of case law finding local authorities (and not the Home Office) responsible for destitute migration support, but also to increasing restrictions to welfare within Immigration law. Price and Spencer identify the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 Act as being the origin of an increase in welfare restrictions but note that these restrictions have ‘accelerated’ since 2012 (Price & Spencer, 2015, p.21). This increase in post 2012 restrictions to Public Funds by central government has resulted in several costly legal challenges by local government at a point where local authority finances can least afford it. In turn this has fuelled increasing tensions as Price and Spencer describe

‘At play in these disagreements is the imbalance of power between a strong central arm of government, controlling immigration status and the purse strings, and a weaker local arm of government with a statutory duty it must nevertheless fulfil.’

(Price & Spencer, 2015, p.22)

The NRPF network has stated that the ‘need for social services’ support primarily exists due to exclusionary immigration policies’ (NRPF, 2018b). Nevertheless, two thirds of

NRPF migrants will eventually be granted leave to remain with recourse with public funds (NRPF, 2018b). This is due to the fact that they had become destitute whilst they were awaiting an immigration application or appeal but ultimately did meet the conditions required for limited or unlimited leave to remain. Consequently, the speed of resolution of immigration outcomes by the Home Office is key to local authorities reducing the amount spent on NRPF migrants and improving the provision in terms of housing and finances available to the migrants themselves.

The NRPF CONNECT database has been helping to resolve this problem. The database is a joint initiative between local authorities who pay to access the database and the Home Office who pay an annual sum for the database's maintenance. The database enables local authorities and the Home Office to record how many NRPF families are receiving support, for how long, and what immigration status the migrant holds. It enables local authorities to liaise with Home Office staff to track the progress of asylum or other immigration applications and to flag up if a family has been awaiting an immigration status outcome for a lengthy period. NRPF CONNECT has helped to facilitate communication between local authorities and the Home Office relating to particular cases and improve the strategic relationship between them.

European Economic Area (EEA) nationals

EEA nationals are people from the European Economic Area (and those with associated rights i.e. Switzerland, Iceland, Lichtenstein, and Norway). EEA nationals make up approximately 40 per cent of migrants in the UK (ONS, 2017). The majority of EEA migrants come to the UK as economic migrants (Migration Observatory, 2019b). Research on ONS data from 2010-2017 show economic migrants are 15.3 percentage points more likely to be in employment than UK nationals and 16.1 per cent less likely to have a long-term health condition than UK nationals (Kone et al., 2019). The average EEA national contributes £2,300 more to UK public finances than a UK national (MAC, 2018). In a response to a call for evidence by the Migration Advisory Committee into the role of EEA nationals, the Local Government Association (LGA) found 'strong evidence' that a skills shortage would appear in several key industries without EEA nationals, including within local government itself (LGA, 2017). In short local authorities, are aware of the contribution that EEA nationals make to the UK economy.

Nevertheless, since 2010 local authorities have found themselves increasingly supporting EEA nationals as part of their Homeless duties. All EU citizens have the right to freedom of movement, to move and reside in another EU country. This right is contained within Articles 20 and 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and is often referred to as practicing 'European treaty rights'. Access to

benefits or social housing, however, are not necessarily protected, and in recent years restrictions have been imposed. Up to 2014, these restrictions were primarily aimed at more recently joined states (so called A8 or A2 countries), whose economies were not as strong as the original EU members. However, since 2014 all EEA nationals have been subject to many of the same exclusions as NRPF migrants, due to the introduction of the 2014 Immigration Act. Key changes contained within the 2014 Immigration Act included reducing the access of EEA national being able to a variety of benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Housing Benefits, Child Benefits, Child Tax Credits or free NHS care. Differentiation was made between those EEA nationals already living and working in the UK and those newly arriving. More on this is included within the Employment and Housing chapters.

This thesis will explore how migrant integration is being attempted in the South East of England, offering useful insights into how migrant integration policies are designed and delivered in the UK and elsewhere. Using a novel combination of policy analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, it will unpack how policies are delivered and identify the obstacles which hinder their success. The particular context – political and economic – in the UK in the period after the Financial Crisis is examined in great detail, demonstrating how important the wider picture is when we try to evaluate the successes or failures of any policy. Adopting a “whole policy approach” is ambitious and rarely attempted in migration integration literature (see discussion in Chapter 2) however, this is the only way to fully understand the aggregate demand placed upon local authorities when designating integration a local issue.

This thesis covers the time period 2010-2018 as this was the core period where a Localist model of migrant integration was championed. This was outlined in the 2012 Creating the Conditions for Integration (CCI) document which remained the only official integration approach until the Integrated Communities Green Paper was released in April 2018. This neatly book ends the timeframe of this thesis. The research takes a regional approach focusing on South East England as whilst the region is home to the second highest numbers of immigration in the UK, no research has been undertaken previously on local government and migration in this area.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, the findings of this research are relevant both in their implications for methodology but also in returning the focus of accountability to the most suitable level of governance depending upon the integration domain. They also raise questions about the kind of Localism being enacted, demonstrating that in contrast to the ‘New Localism’ of the Blair/Brown government, the Localism of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 was neo-liberal in nature with very different

impacts on the local level. The thesis also challenges the notion that local is always best, by demonstrating that the Centrally devised enabling conditions of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) had transformative effects far bigger than the sum of its individual components on the capacity of local authorities in the South East (SE) of England to facilitate migrant integration.

Organisation of the thesis

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of relevant academic literature on the topic, outlining the local turn literature in greater detail, in addition to giving the working definitions for integration and neo-liberalism. It also adds greater detail to the contributions to new knowledge that this thesis provides.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used to conduct this research, commencing with the research paradigm the thesis is based on before examining the theoretical framework and the research methods used to arrive at the results.

Chapter 4 focuses on the sub question “Did a local turn in migrant integration policy take place under the Localism of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010 to 2018?”

This chapter uses Emilsson’s power lens framework to explore the cumulative normative, legislative and financial policy levers under Localism meant for local authorities in practice. This sets the scene in terms of presenting the overall financial and legislative context for local authorities as they grappled with the additional challenges outlined in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 answer the sub question “How can a whole policy approach help us to map the aggregate demand on local authorities when it comes to migrant integration?”

Chapter 5 focuses on changes to policy in the legal/political domain of migrant integration. It gives an overview of current academic literature on the impact of legal and political policies on migrant integration before unpacking the policy changes in these areas in more detail.

Chapter 6 focuses on changes to policy in the socio-economic domain of migrant integration under these governments. This chapter is longer than Chapters 5 and 7 as it provides extensive detail on education, employment and housing. These dimensions are recognised as having significant impact on migrant integration.

Chapter 7 focuses on changes to policy in the socio-cultural domain of migrant integration under these governments. These changes demonstrate the impact that

central government messaging has on aspects like tolerance of other cultures and how able a migrant feels to maintain aspects of their own culture.

Chapter 8 synthesises the findings of my research and demonstrates how the thesis delivers the contributions to new knowledge pledged within the literature review chapter. It also outlines the limitations of the research and identifies areas for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

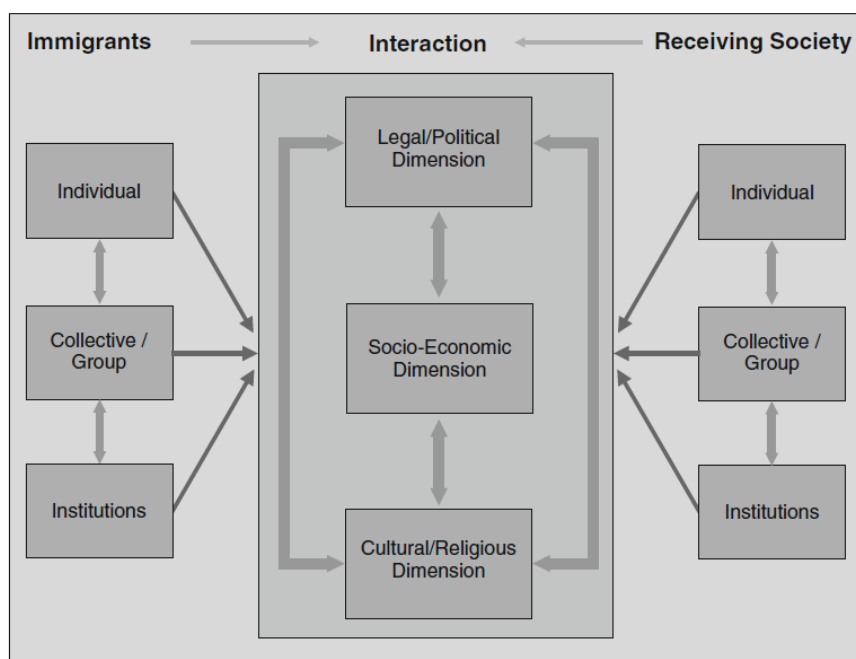
My research question is “Did the designation of integration as a ‘local issue’ under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 help or hinder local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their areas?”.

This literature review will begin with a broad overview of migrant integration literature before venturing in greater depth into the Localism and the local turn literature in order to outline the context for this thesis and the gaps in these bodies of literature it seeks to address.

This thesis defines integration as the process of reaching mutual acceptance between the migrant and the host society, this can be paraphrased as ‘integration as mutual acceptance’. The term integration may have fallen out of favour due to critiques such as it being normative. Nevertheless, in recent years since the proclaimed death of multiculturalism it has seen a resurgence in useage (Spencer & Charsley, 2021). This definition aligns itself with researchers who have argued that integration is predominantly a ‘two-way street’ (EC 2003, Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx 2016). The two-way street alludes to the balance between a migrant’s participation in the host society and the host society’s tolerance for that migrant to maintain aspects of their culture. It also acknowledges that the host society is not homogenous or static and will also be changed as a result of migrant integration, in this way integration can be defined as Spencer and Charsley (2021. P. 15) describe as “without reference to any normative goal, or projecting any participants as ‘other’”. In doing so, integration is distinguished from (a) assimilation where no cultural maintenance is permitted, (b) separation, where cultural maintenance takes place but no participation in host society, and (c) marginalisation where neither cultural maintenance nor participation in host society take place (Hou et al., 2016). It does not ignore the role the country of origin can play in affecting integration but is in keeping with the findings of Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016a) and Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) that transnational orientation and integration into the country of settlement is not a zero-sum game and may co-exist unproblematically. Furthermore, Mügge’s 2016 research into transnationalism and integration noted that the maintenance of transnational links involves a certain amount of economic, political and social capital that excludes many migrants from maintaining these links. She also notes that the requirement to have such capital may encourage greater migrant participation in the host society (such as entering employment) in order to maintain these links. Drawing on Ager and Strang’s 2008 research, diaspora presence in the country of settlement may facilitate

migrant integration through the creation of ‘social bonds’ which help to reduce isolation and help explain host society customs. It could be argued that the role of the country of origin on the migrant’s ability to integrate has always been implicit within the two-way street understanding of integration, in much the same way as a migrant’s relationship with their family back home will impact upon their desire or ability to integrate.

Exactly how and where integration takes place remains contested, but most researchers appear to agree that integration takes place across a series of domains and dimensions rather than being a linear process. This thesis uses a categorisation of legal/political, socio-economic and socio-cultural domains of integration favoured by leading researchers in this field such as Entzinger (2000), Heckmann and Schnapper (2003), Ager and Strang (2008), Spencer (2011), and Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016a). These domains encompass individual dimensions or drivers of integration, such as education, employment and housing within the socio-economic domain. Levels of integration will vary between domain and dimension, equally some dimensions offer greater integration potential than others. For example, employment may offer the opportunity to improve language skills and make what Ager and Strang (2008) call ‘social connections’. Examples of such social connections might be friendships with people from a different culture (what Ager and Strang call ‘social bridges’), or professional contacts (Ager and Strang’s ‘social links’). In this way integration is a multifaceted process between the migrant and host society taking place across several different domains simultaneously. This multifaceted relationship is presented in Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016, p.16) figure below



In recent years particular focus has been placed upon the local level, with many academic and policy papers alike have advised that governments take a 'place based approach' when it comes to migrant integration. Consequently, it would seem as though Localism, with its emphasis on greater agency at the local level would be a relevant area of focus when considering the ramifications for migrant integration. This literature review will now explore the literature in this area.

Localism

It has been seen that on the surface there was apparent consensus between academia and policy that integration takes place on the local level and that as a consequence Localism and the 'Localist turn' in UK migrant integration were to be welcomed (Ali & Gidley, 2014, p.23). Nevertheless, there is not just one understanding of Localism. Localism is not a new concept, most social institutions existed on the local level before the national, international or supranational setting. In the last two to three decades it has become an increasingly contested and heterogeneous term covering aspects such as: structures of managerial, representative and community governance (Hildreth 2011, Evans et al. 2012); anti-globalisation structuring of local economies (Hess, 2008); green energy and/or environmental movements (Eagle et al. 2017, Cowell 2015, Walker et al. 2007) and increasingly locally orchestrated popularist movements (Katz & Nowak 2018, Wills 2015). This thesis is interested in Localism in the first form that of governance, primarily between central government and local authorities. For this purpose, Evans et al.'s (2013, p.405) definition of Localism will be used, for whom Localism is

"An umbrella term which refers to the devolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards front line managers, local democratic structures, local institutions and local communities, within an agreement of minimum standards"

Within the academic literature many scholars argue that historically the UK has traditionally run according to a top-down centrally led model (Hildreth 2011 & 2016, Evans et al. 2013, Jones & Ormston 2014, Davies 2008). Hildreth (2016, p.5) calls it 'Conditional' Localism or Centralism, Evans et al. (2013) call this Managerial Localism. The core components being that any local agency is conditional on power being granted from the centre to local government in return for the accomplishment or delivery of certain policies/outputs. Consequently, whilst changes may take place on the local level that benefit the local, these improvements will also be meeting the purpose of a central priority or plan. Due to the centric nature of this model, accountability may be towards the centre rather than the local but is generally quite clear. The trust people feel towards this model depends upon how well it is working for them and how fair it is seen to be.

Consequently, for some this clear accountability back to the centre means that responsibility for addressing inequalities and regional disparities sits firmly at central level too meaning that, at least in rhetoric, Centralist Localism will likely have some commitment to fairness. In this way, Davies (2008) quotes journalist David Walker that “the case against devolving powers and responsibilities rests on a profound commitment and its name is equity’ (Walker, in Davies, 2008, p.5). Some (Hildreth 2016, Evans et al. 2013) have argued that Multi-level governance might equally resemble some of the conditional characteristics Centralist/Conditional/Managerial Localism holds. In these cases, the accountability is not always to the centre (it could be to a European level of governance) but the accountability is always to the implementer/instigator, any local power granted is conditional on the delivery of certain outputs decided at the top of the hierarchy and reporting is back to that level.

In contrast to Centralist Localism, Hildreth identifies Representational Localism as a more codified split in the division of duties between central and local level with local government having greater autonomy in how it goes about managing the power it has been given. Evans et al. (2013) agree that this model is akin to the European principle of subsidiarity as outlined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe, 1985) whereby what can be done at the local, should be done at the local. Representative Localism is often enshrined in law giving local government much more security that their efforts in these areas are less likely to be reversed by a new government. As a result of this constitutional separation of duties, accountability lines are clearly defined also to the relevant level of government.

A third form of Localism identified is Community Localism (Hildreth, 2011). Community Localism builds on notions of Conservative Communitarianism whereby

“Communitarianism would not only counter the burgeoning size of the modern state and curb the excesses of atomism but, as part of the conservative tradition, would appeal across a spectrum of political allegiances that coalesced around the core belief that social organisations were most virtuous when based upon small, self-governing communities.”

(Gibson, 2015, p.42)

Community Localism as originally outlined by Hildreth (2011) involves not only local government but sometimes central government engaging directly with local communities, indeed sometimes circumventing local government to champion social enterprises or charities. Hildreth expanded this category of Localism in 2016, dividing it further into Commissioning Community Localism whereby “the national delegates responsibility to a local level but retains overall oversight or control” and Community

Asset Community Localism whereby “where control of the asset or service responsibility is devolved to a local community” (Hildreth, 2016, p.56). In terms of accountability, Evans et al. (2013) claim that accountability can become easily confused within this form of Localism. Whilst in its ideal form, (as described by the quote by Gibson), Community Localism extolls the virtues of self-governing communities, Evans et al. warn that under this model, interests can be captured by local elites. This point will be returned to later when considering local migrant integration policies within the local turn section of this literature review.

In addition to these categories of Localism outlined by Hildreth and Evans et al., several academics have pointed to increasing neo-liberal restructuring within central and local governance arrangements. Featherstone et al., (2012) label this ‘Austerity Localism’ as they and other academics (Peck 2012, 2015 & 2017, Blyth 2013) have argued that austerity was used as means to justify neo-liberal changes to procurement, reduction in welfare spending and market orientated restructuring. This type of Localism has similar hallmarks to that of Community Localism in that services can be centrally procured, outsourced or delegated to organisations which by-pass local government. Indeed, Hildreth also acknowledges the role of neo-classic economics and Austerity upon Localism in his 2016 paper. Consequently, I have expanded upon Hildreth’s typology to create the table below outlining the hallmarks of these different types of Localism. It should be noted that Hildreth’s Localism typology was created with the UK models of Localism in mind consequently, a Community Localism might not be found in a European country with a constitutional separation in roles between central and government levels. Equally, it is acknowledged that the same government can exhibit different forms of Localism.

Table 1- Different kinds of Localism

	Conditional /Managerial/ Centralism	Representative	Community	Austerity
Accountability	Accountability is to the centre as the powers given to the local are conditional on the delivery of a policy or other output.	Accountability is clear, usually written in constitution. Accountability is to the relevant level of government	Accountability is in principle, to the local level (Jones & Ormston, 2014). However, due to the nature of the arrangement which can by-pass local government	Accountability is ultimately to central government but can be obscured by sub-contracting contracts (the sub-contracting of asylum accommodation by

		responsible for the task in hand.	straight from central government to community accountability can be “opaque or have weak democratic control” (Evans et al., 2013, p.402)	G4S to Jomast led to the infamous ‘red door’ identification of asylum seekers not being addressed as quickly as it may otherwise have been.
Reporting	Likely to have common and standardised form of monitoring and evaluating progress against nationally set targets. As a result it may be more equitable at least in rhetoric.	Reporting may be back to each level of governance, not directly to central level. Some national standardised reporting can also co-exist.	Reporting is to the local community which can often be the same stakeholders running the programme (Jones & Ormston, 2014)	Monitoring and evaluating can be mixed with reporting to central government but oversight of key safeguarding/standards etc managed by local authorities (as in the case of education or social housing provided by housing associations).
Leadership	“The concept of leadership can become increasingly muddled...constantly subject to the intervention of the national. Hlidreth, 2016, p.58).	“Clear separation of roles and responsibilities between the national and local” (Hlidreth, 2016, p. 58)	Can be vague, be captured by local elite interests (Evans et al., 2013)	Privately run, leadership will have a dual responsibility to shareholders as well as to the beneficiaries.
Coordination across boundaries	Changeable, regional structures may be created or removed according to the government in power.	Codified according to a written constitution	Activities are likely to stay localised.	Due to economies of scale outsourced activities may well take place across boundaries if owned by the same company.

Finance and incentives	Funding may be on a pro rata basis (which may be more equitable), on a payments by results basis or a variety of these. There has traditionally been less emphasis upon raising resources locally under this model (Hildreth, 2016, P.59)	Locally generated tax and locally driven measures to boost the economy such as trying to promote job growth and attract companies to the local area. This can be supported by funds from central government.	This model has only really existed under the Coalition. Under this government “financial incentives were rarely used to encourage innovation, and when they were tried, they were limited in scope. Many revenue and capital grants were tied to specific projects and incentives. (Hildreth, 2016, p.59)	Under the justification of austerity government funding to local authorities is dramatically reduced. “The philosophy (‘base’) behind local growth is more about removing market barriers and public sector reduction to stimulate private sector growth than in managing local economies.” (Hildreth, 2016, p.68)
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Using this typology, Hildreth (2011 & 2016) and Evans et al. (2013) have argued that ‘New Localism’ introduced under the Blair and Brown Labour Governments 1997-2010 were, for the most part, a Centralist kind of Localism. Their findings are in keeping with Jones and Ormston (2014), Davies (2008), and Travers (2007) who have all pointed towards the kind of central control mechanisms outlined within the introduction. Nevertheless, the Blair-Brown Government did have some elements of Representational Localism in the form of the 1998 Devolution Deals but this form of Localism was reserved for the devolved nations. Furthermore, many these same academics have noted the emphasis New Localism placed upon partnership working and consulting at the local level.

The Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have been more closely aligned with Community Localism with its ideological resemblance to Conservative Communitarianism (Hildreth 2011 & 2016, Evans et al. 2013). However, it has equally been noted by these same authors that whilst the rhetoric of Communitarian Localism abounded under these governments, upon closer examination many of the hallmarks of Centralist Localism remain. Evans et al. highlight how powers to raise Council tax were capped by the Coalition and Jones and Ormston (2014) highlight how the abolition of strategic partnerships with their sharing of local indicators meant that data such as crime

figures were no longer shared on the local level and appeared to one local authority officer as though, 'they've centralised the services again and taken accountability with it back to the centre' (Jones & Ormston, 2014, p.152). In relation to the introduction of Austerity Localism, it could equally be argued that this was mandated from the centre as the Coalition and Conservative Governments local authorities to restructure their finances towards market orientated self-sufficiency.

Whilst there is a volume of literature on Localism, the literature on Localism and migrant integration is scarce, with the notable exception of Galandini et al.'s 2018 work (p.685) which also found that there is a "contradiction between the Localism agenda...and the context of austerity". This thesis fills this gap in the literature on Localism and migrant integration by examining how different kinds of Localism impacted upon the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. Chapter 4 examines the impact of the Coalition and Conservative governments dismantling of funding streams, local and regional bodies and reporting infrastructures upon migrant integration. It also provides numerous examples of legislation introduced under Localism from 2010-2018 which carries the hallmarks of Centralist Localism demonstrating that the supposed 'Localist turn' in migrant integration policies and practices did not take place in the manner in which it was presented. The research methodology used to demonstrate this central turn is outlined later within this literature review and detailed within the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3).

Having given an overview of different typologies of Localism and explained which this thesis most closely aligns with, this thesis will now continue by giving a similar overview of the 'local turn' literature.

Local turn literature

Whilst the Localism literature scarcely touches upon migrant integration, the local turn literature focuses exclusively on integration policy. For most countries, immigration policy is a retained power (with the exception of Canada), meaning that it is controlled by central government, integration policy on the other hand is an increasingly contested area, and it is this nexus that the local turn literature focuses on. Like Localism, the local turn literature, whilst often referred to as an uncontested term, is far from being homogenous.

The origin of the concept of a 'local turn' contains within it the implicit suggestion of a distinctness of local integration policies from national ones. In the 1990s a small number of scholars began to question the way that migrant integration was often presented in terms of homogenous national models (Joly 1992, Rex & Samad 1996, Vertovec 1996,

Leggewie 1993). At the time migrant integration was commonly discussed in terms such as the ‘British race relations’ model or the ‘French assimilationist model’, which, they felt, obscured the heterogeneity of local integration policies and practices taking place. They began to bring to light case studies of how different localities had innovated to create their own integration policies and practices. Since then, there have been a plethora of case studies, comparative studies and several large EU funded research projects examining what makes local migrant integration policies and practices distinct from national efforts (Penninx, 2009). The large-scale EU funded research projects on this ‘local turn’, have both brought to light existing local integration policies, and simultaneously stimulated the creation of new ones as local governments read of the perceived benefits (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). This has led to the assertion that national and European integration policy making has been ‘overshadowed by a sharp “local turn” in policymaking’ as localities increasingly create their own policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2016, chapter 6, p.91).

However, when efforts are made to pin down what makes a local policy distinct, the task gets harder. Dekker et al. (2015) attempted to map the different ways that academia has thus far framed local integration policies. They identified what they felt were three main framings.

Table 2: Dekker et al.’s 2015 local integration policy frames

Framing	Description
National	The authors acknowledge that there are certain localities where local integration frames strongly resemble national frames not due to ‘top down’ control but ‘two-way interaction’ (2015, p.643). Dekker et al label these ‘national frames’.
Local dimension	A ‘local dimension’ frame of migrant integration policies asserts that there are commonalities in local integration policies which hold regardless of the city across different countries (Dekker et al., 2015). Indeed, numerous studies have found integration policies formulated at the local level to be more pragmatic in nature than central policies (Borkert & Boswick 2007, Caponio & Borkert 2010, Marques & Santos 2004, Moore 2004, Vermeulen & Stojin 2010). Others have pointed to a greater propensity to actively accommodate diversity (Borkert & Boswick 2007, Caponio & Borkert 2010, Vermeulen & Stotjin 2010). Whilst the local dimension academic literature concurs that local integration policies are distinct from central and likely to be the same horizontally across

	different localities, consensus has not yet been reached on what the exact characteristics of this distinct local dimension are.
'Localist'	A 'localist' frame suggests that each individual policy is created out of a unique local and national context and thus cannot be easily replicated. The migrant population, type of economy (Glick Schiller & Caglar, 2009) or the political leaning of a locality (Mahnig & Wimmer, 2000) have all been cited as variables which will have a unique influence on how a local policy is formulated. This frame thus characterises local integration policies as differing from central integration policies but also differing from other local integration policies.

Dekker et al.'s research used this typology created from the analysis of existing 'local turn' academic literature and compared the content of national and local migrant integration policies across Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Surprisingly, considering the volume of literature on both the localist and local dimension of migrant integration policies, the dominant form of local integration policy identified resembled the national model. Some evidence of localist integration policies were found confirming the existence of 'bottom-up policy entrepreneurship' of the local level (2015, p.652). Perhaps most surprisingly no evidence was found of a specific local dimension across local migrant integration policies.

“Our analysis thus shows that there is not a single, “local dimension” of integration policies, but that multilevel interactions promote mutual exchange between local and national level policies” (Dekker et al., 2015, p.653).

Van Breugel's 2020 research into local migration diversity governance in the Netherlands similarly “argues against a 'local dimension' of migration diversity policies (Caponio & Borkert 2010, Poppelaars & Scholten 2008, Bak Jørgensen 2012)” (2020, p.14). Instead, her research found evidence to illustrate “the variety of local approaches” (ibid), thus for Van Breugel, Dekker et al.'s Localist type was more prevalent.

Scholten's 2016 research into multi-level governance also presents a different typology. Scholten's research is looking more into how the integration policy at central level and at local level relate to one another, whether they are in harmony or not and what the long-term implications of this will be. Scholten identifies four types of migrant integration governance configurations which he predicts lead to either policy convergence or divergence between the centre and local level.

Table 3: Scholten's 2016 multi-level governance configurations

Framing	Description
Centralist	A centralist type of configuration is characterised by local policies which are mere implementations of the central policy. There are clear coordination structures and oversight of how the central policy is rolled out in the form of a specific government department and possibly a minister for integration.
Localist - (this is not to be confused with Dekker et al.'s 2015 or Ali and Gidley's 2014 use of localist)	Scholten's localist type of configuration is typified by similar policies at the local level but a potential difference at central level (this would match Dekker et al's 'local dimension' type. Scholten suggests that the policy division between central and local government of a localist configuration of government follows the logic of 'what can be done locally should be done locally' (Scholten 2016, p.978).
Decoupled	A 'decoupled' governance configuration is typified by having policies at central and local level which may be contradictory or disassociated. This type is typified by there being no communication channels between central to local.
Multi-level governance	In Scholten's multi-level type of configuration there are many opportunities for communication both vertically and horizontally which are not dominated by any particular hierarchy. Power is shared equally.

Scholten used this typology to analyse findings from research he undertook in the Netherlands and the UK examining the policy framing between integration policy at central level and at local level (2001-2011) and seeing which of these typologies best fit the central-local integration governance relationship. In the case of the UK, Scholten determined that the UK most closely resembled this latter MLG form of migrant integration governance (this will be challenged in the conclusion).

Challenging the local turn

However, a minority of scholars have challenged this concept of the inherent positivity of the local turn for various reasons. Mahnig (2004, p.33) found evidence of local authorities being "even less accommodating to migrants in many respects than national governments". Examples include mass hostility in Zürich towards migrants, forced evictions of predominantly migrant populated urban areas and the withdrawal of local government support for foreign families in Paris, and a settlement ban in Berlin. Ambrosini's 2013 research followed 70 migrant cases referred to 47 different local

authorities in Lombardy. His results found evidence of local policies which had been designed to ensure migrants were prevented from benefits and rights (Ambrosini, 2013).

Ambrosini and Boccagni (2015), Papademetriou (2014), and Gebhardt (2014) have all questioned how effective local integration policies and plans are during a time of economic austerity. Meer et al's (2021) research supports the notion that there has been a central turn in integration policy, demonstrating how central government outsourcing of asylum contracts has led to a situation where local government state actors are left out of the decision making of what happens on the local level. Equally, as seen in the introduction there is a tendency for local turn scholars to focus exclusively on global gateway cities or highly urbanised areas (Alexander 2003, Penninx et al. 2004, Poppelaars & Scholten 2008, Caponio & Borkert 2010, Scholten 2013), with the notable exception of Van Breugel (2020).

A comparison of the Localism and 'local turn' literature.

We can see that there is similarity in terminologies between the Localist and local turn language but that they are a) both contested areas of academic literature in themselves and b) there is no single common framework between them.

To the best of my knowledge there is no literature crossing the divide between the Localism and 'local turn' literature. Whilst the bodies of literature are clearly related, often the terminologies between them carry different meanings making it hard to undertake cross comparison. For example, Evans et al.'s 2013 research finds multi-level governance most compatible with a Centralist 'top down' hierarchy kind of Localism whereas for Scholten, MLG means an absence of hierarchy and a 'level playing field' (2016, p.986). Furthermore, Dekker et al.'s 2015 'national frame' more closely resembles Scholten's MLG definition with harmonisation between central and local government on migrant integration policy "not due to 'top down' control but 'two-way interaction' (2015, p.643) than it does his centralist model. As been seen there are even varying definitions of the word Localist even within the local turn literature. One of the gaps this thesis seeks to address is the creation of a unifying typology between these two bodies of literature (this can be found within the findings of the Conclusion in Chapter 8).

Putting semantics aside, it can be said that the Localism literature looks at the balance of power between central and local level whereas the local turn literature looks at what space there is to create locally formulated migrant integration policies and what the specificities of such policies might look like. The former body of literature highlights the limits or the trade-offs which might accompany greater decision making on the local level. The latter body of literature teaches us that whilst greater autonomy on the local level is

“a necessary precondition for formulating and implementing successful integration policies... it is not a panacea” (Penninx, 2008, p.2).

Both these bodies of literature can equally be criticised as being subject to the same methodological critique, that of relying too heavily on policy frame analysis. Consequently, one of the gaps in the literature this thesis seeks to address is this methodological gap. In this way the thesis most closely aligns with Emilsson’s 2015 challenge to the local turn using examples from Denmark and Sweden, and Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016a) call for what I have termed a ‘whole policy’ approach when researching migrant integration.

Emilsson’s critique of frame analysis

Emilsson’s 2015 analysis of power relationships between central and local governments in Denmark and Sweden finds evidence instead of a national turn in integration policy and practices. His critique focuses more on the methods local turn researchers have been using to arrive at their findings. In particular, he argues that the use of frame analysis has masked what is taking place in practice. Frame analysis within local turn literature focuses on incongruences between national and local integration policies and has led to the perception that national integration policies have retreated or weakened.

“If local governments are found to adopt official integration policies that are ideologically different from those of the central government, the conclusion is that national models of integration are disintegrating”

(Emilsson, 2015, p.2).

In place of frame analysis, Emilsson applies a power lens which examines not just the wording of the integration policy but the economic, legislative and normative policy levers which have accompanied it. In doing so, he demonstrates that central government in Denmark and Sweden have increased control over local integration policies through being more prescriptive. His research is a particularly significant contribution to the discourse as Denmark and Sweden are two of the most decentralised countries in the world (Sellers & Lindström, 2007).

The advantage of using Emilsson’s framework is that there is a danger in taking policies at face value, especially in the era of “managed migration” where it has been argued that “a smoke and mirrors strategy has been behind certain policy formulation” (Scott, 2017, p.10). A policy could be vacuous or as Scott describes “largely symbolic and ultimately, and often knowingly, predestined to fail” (Scott, 2017, p.10). Alternatively, a policy may on the surface bear no or little relation to migration but in fact have significant

consequences, Schain (2008, p.4) describes this as “the reluctance of governments to acknowledge the policies that they are pursuing”. Finally, as Emilsson acknowledges, there can be a disconnect between how a policy was intended and how it manifests when carried out on the ground.

Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas’ triple difficulty in researching migrant integration

Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas’ (2016a) review of comparative studies of integration policies outlines a triple difficulty when it comes to studying migrant integration policies, each of which this thesis addresses. Firstly, they recognise that often policies such as housing, education or employment can have as big (or potentially an even bigger) effect on migrant integration than an explicit integration policy itself. For this reason, they call for all policies impacting on migrant integration to be considered when researching integration. I have termed this a whole policy approach when it comes to researching migrant integration. As Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas state, this is a difficulty as it significantly expands the field of study. Nevertheless, this is a key point to address when considering whether designating migrant integration a local issue will facilitate integration, as so much of what is needed for a migrant to integrate is outside the control/jurisdiction of the local.

Secondly, Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas’ (2016a, 2016b) and Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016) findings also echo Emilsson’s misgivings when it comes to policy frame analysis. They state that policy documents often do not match policy in practice and that in order to look at the real effect of the policy, policy measures should be examined. By measures they mean the programmes or activities which accompany the policy and broadly speaking can be understood to cover similar terrain to Emilsson’s policy levers. As they state

“it is fundamental to complement the study of policy frames with a concrete and detailed analysis of the actual policy measures”

(Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p.162)

However, analysing these policy measures can be hard as they are not as easy to locate as the official policy and may be confidential. Thirdly, policy measures and programmes are often implemented according to unwritten norms and assumptions, not listed in official documentation.

To overcome these difficulties, they advise the use of different research methods. Policy analysis remains essential in order to determine how the problem has been defined and

in order to help track the policy measures introduced. In this way, Emilsson's power lens approach is perfectly compatible and fit for purpose. In addition, they recommend that extensive fieldwork be carried out as well as interviews with a number of different actors. The research methods used in this thesis (policy analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews) were not chosen due to this recommendation by Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (my participant observation began in 2015, a year before their publications on this topic), nevertheless, they were chosen due to a similar/shared perception of this triple difficulty. More on this is included within the Methodology chapter.

Neo-liberal literature

In addition to this local turn literature, as the thesis evolved it became noticeable that cutting across both the Localism and the whole policy research there was evidence of neo-liberal restructuring. Neo-liberalism is understood here as "a theory of political economic practices which proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2006, p.145). Neo-liberalism in practice is more nebulous with no country operating entirely upon the kind of system that neo-liberal economists like Milton Friedman or Friedrich Hayek envisioned. Nevertheless, there are some commonalities. The welfare state in particular, built on Keynesian ideas of redistribution of wealth and egalitarianism, is seen not only as a barrier to the pursuit of greater economic efficiency but also as infantilising individuals. Often described by neo-liberals as the 'nanny state', welfare is seen as preventing individuals from achieving their potential through breeding dependency and negating personal responsibility (Hall, 2011). Likewise, state regulation is equally seen as stemming the market from maximising efficiencies. Proponents of neo-liberal claim that it is the only system able to elongate or mitigate against the 'boom-bust' cycle to which closed economic systems (those without free trade) inevitably succumb (Ohlin, 1967). Trickle-down economists embraced by neo-liberalists like Reagan and Thatcher claim that tax cuts to the affluent boost the economy, in turn benefiting the poor (Laffer, 2004). However, each one of these assertions about neo-liberalism has been strongly challenged or disproved. A 2016 paper by the IMF, itself a Bretton Woods neo-liberal institution, found that boom bust cycles have very much continued under neo-liberalism (Ostry et al., 2016) and agreed with Harvard economist Rodrik that boom bust cycles "are hardly a sideshow or a minor blemish in international capital flows; they are the main story." (Rodrik, 1998, p.56). Factor price equalization, under free trade areas like NAFTA has failed to materialise (Stewart 1989, Markusen & Zahniser 1997). Trickle-down economics has been disproved (Ettlinger & Linden 2012, Olinsky & Mayerson 2013,

Howell 2012). In recent years, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has been the most public failing of neo-liberalism's central tenet that the market, when removed of state interference, is able to self-regulate. The magnitude of this failing caused many to declare neo-liberalism is dead, or in the words of French Prime Minister Nicholas Sarkozy "Laissez faire is finished" (Sarkozy, in Vucelja, 2008).

Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis are in keeping with those of Colin Crouch, Professor Emeritus at Warwick Business School, who predicted in 2011 that

"Though the model is one that will continue to have crises because of the inherent instability of the financial model, people will just keep on putting it back on the road, fixing it, putting it back on the road because there's no counter hegemonic".

(Crouch, 2011)

The reduction in funding to the welfare state advocated under Neo-liberalism also impacts upon migrant integration as frequently the resulting pressures upon public services are attributed to immigration. This in turn may lead to increased 'welfare chauvinism' where the host society feels that benefits should be retained only for those with citizenship or the dominant ethnic group. This phenomenon will be explored in Chapter 7.

The gaps this thesis seeks to address

To recap it has been seen that the Localism literature and Local turn literature are not homogenous and both contain gaps. Furthermore, there is no known overlap between these bodies. This thesis will seek to fill these gaps through

- 1) Examining how different forms of Localism affected the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration.
- 2) Creating a joint typology between the Localism and local turn literature which helps to identify what different calibrations of locally created migrant integration policies may look like underneath these different forms of Localism.
- 3) Applying a power lens to both Localism and all policies affecting migrant integration so as to identify whether a Centralist or Localist turn in migrant integration took place under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018.
- 4) Highlighting the aggregate being placed upon local authorities when it comes to facilitating migrant integration and in doing so reflecting back to government how

designating migrant integration a 'local issue' could be deemed a 'White elephant', as local authorities do not have the means to facilitate integration.

- 5) Additionally, the choice of the South East as the loci of case study also addresses gaps in the literature in taking a regional focus in an area where there has not typically been a large concentration of asylum seekers with a high number of rural authorities.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the current academic thinking in the field of migration and local governance and has situated where the contributions contained within this thesis fit within this discourse. The following chapter outlines the methodological rigour and ethical considerations which were used to conduct this research and gives an account of the research paradigm underpinning the research.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction to research question

The previous chapter outlined the current thinking within the local turn literature, the gaps identified within this knowledge, and the original contribution this thesis sets out to achieve. This chapter justifies how the research methods selected for this project are most suited to demonstrate this original contribution and explains the underpinning research paradigm. It begins with an overview of this research paradigm, Critical Realism (CR), explaining how CR has influenced the research design, before outlining the theoretical framework and the research methods which were used. It will be seen that the research is mixed-method, drawing upon three qualitative methods (document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews). The use of three qualitative research methods, has meant that reflexivity has been a core component of the iterative data analysis and subsequent design. Consequently, reflexivity will be discussed throughout this chapter rather than in a stand-alone paragraph.

Critical Realism

My research seeks to answer the question ‘Did the designation of integration as a ‘local issue’ under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 help or hinder the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities?’. In keeping with the CR research paradigm that the methodology is based on, this research question was not identified from the outset, but rather was arrived at through a process of iterative analysis and research design (Edwards et al., 2011; Maxwell, 2012). This is because CR uses retroductive logic, starting with observation and then asking what reality must be like, in order for us to know it. In this way, it is fundamentally different to opposing camps of objectivism and subjectivism, both of which commence from an epistemological standpoint. The prioritisation of epistemology, (how we know something), over ontology, (what we claim something is like), is described within CR as an ‘epistemic fallacy’. This is not to say that CR believes that an absolute blank slate is needed every time, in this way it is different from early Grounded Theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967), however, due to CR’s belief in an ‘open system’, the research does not assume that prior research will necessarily be transferable to a new context.

The belief that the social world is an open system, is at the heart of CR as first formulated by Roy Bhaskar. In Bhaskar’s early works (such as ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (1975)

and 'The Possibility of Naturalism' (1979), he argues that unlike in the natural world, too many variables exist in the social world to identify patterns which can be expected to hold universally. Bhaskar agreed with the empiricists and positivists that there was such a thing as an objective, mind-independent reality; as such he was not against objectivism. However, he felt that the epistemology used by empiricists and positivists, which privileged only that which can be perceived through the senses, was problematic. Taken to its logical conclusion this means that things do not exist until they are observed. He argued that it was a mistake to think that "statements about being can be reduced or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge" (Bhaskar, 2008, p.36).

Furthermore, to ascertain that what is being observed is not a fluke result, empiricists advocate using repeat testing and often large sample sizes. Regularities and correlations are typically gathered, and if considered statistically significant are deemed indicative of underlying laws. In efforts to hone in on these regularities and correlations, it is necessary to discern which are the salient variables at play. Bhaskar's critique of empiricism was not purely due the number of variables at play within the social world but also the nature by how phenomena emerge. Critical Realists believe that open systems contain entities, these entities can be parts of the universe in their own right, or can combine with other entities to form new, emergent entities with new properties (Bhaskar, 2008, p.15). For these emergent entities to arise, they must meet and affect transformation in other entities. This means that entities have the potential to emerge, but only under the right conditions. Considering the complexity and constant flux of entities and emerging entities (in particular those affecting human action and agency), the social world cannot yield the same kind of predictable, universal outcomes as the natural sciences. There is a difference between the "moment of theory in which closed systems are artificially established as a means of access to the enduring" and the "moment of its open-systemic applications" (Bhaskar, 2008, p.118). Hence fresh eyes are needed to observe new phenomena, but it can help to have some understanding of previous research which has taken place in case some similar entities arise. For example, initial attempts within this research to identify local authority migrant integration practices similar to the European local turn literature were unsuccessful, until the expansion of the VPRS, indicating that there were causal mechanisms enabling these practices within the expansion of the scheme. Within the SE only one local authority (that I am aware of) had signed up to the VPRS prior to its expansion in September 2015. This indicates that the positive normative environment for resettling refugees which ensued following the death of Alan Kurdi, was a likely causal mechanism encouraging local authority engagement.

This is not to say that Critical Realists are constructionists. Their commitment to an objective mind-independent reality puts them at odds with both weak social

constructionists who argue that if there is an objective reality we cannot speak about it, or strong social constructionists who claim that there is no reality outside of our subjective discourse. Taken to its extreme, constructionism holds that all opinions must be equally valid. As O'Mahoney and Vincent in Edwards et al., (2014, p.50) describe

“Constructionists rejection of the possibilities of (knowing) a non-subjective, no-discourse reality means that constructionist researchers must not only take narratives, stories, and discourses at face value, they must also reject any claims of (natural or social) science to provide better understanding of the world we inhabit: all theories are equal and ‘reality’ is what people say it is”.

Critical Realists believe that human perspectives are subjective but still hold that there is an objective reality. For Critical Realists perspectives are subjective, but these subjective perspectives can be more or less accurate. Bhaskar states that CR has an ‘epistemic relativism’ in terms of recognising the social construction that influences our beliefs, but that this does not mean it adheres to ‘judgemental relativism’ where “all beliefs are equally valid in the sense that there are no rational grounds for preferring one to another” (Bhaskar, 1986, p.72). Those perspectives which are best at describing events and the mechanisms or powers which affect these events have enabled the advances in science and technology which we rely on daily.

As noted above, CR sees the social world as an open system in a constant state of flux due to the nature of entities and the emergent properties they possess. The “Transformational Model of Social Activity” (TMSA) is Bhaskar’s theory regarding how social structures and institutions can affect one another and as such it is particularly relevant to the study of politics and this research. Bhaskar (1975,1979) believes that structures/institutions necessarily precede individuals, we were born into some form of social structure and as we grow our parents teach us how this system works. However, this structure is not immutable, it is sustained by our adherence to it, our continuation of the values and procedures that it exalts. Consequently, as individuals change so too can they change the structure/institution.

This is not to say that transformation of society or institutions is automatic. Bhaskar believed that entities have various powers, these powers may be possessed (held but not used), exercised (made known but not used), or actualized, (used) (Bhaskar, 1975). For example, the 2015 Conservative Government included legal means to force local authorities to accept Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) within the 2016 Immigration Act. This was an example of exercising power (showing local authorities that they could force them to take UASC if necessary) without actualising it. However, the knowledge that the government could exercise this power at any time, may have led to

some local authorities to participate on the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), a voluntary system of moving UASC between local authorities, in order to avoid the government actualising this power.

This paradigm with its emphasis on open systems is particularly useful when studying migration which, by its very nature, deals with multiple variables across several institutional and international settings, with varying levels of agency amongst migrants. The world of migration frequently finds anomalies to the kind of hard and fast atomistic regularities which empiricist research might expect. For example, as previously stated, whilst public sympathy surrounding the death of Alan Kurdi may have led to the expansion of the VPRS, the individual motivations of different authorities to sign up was very different. In some authorities the leader had signed up immediately believing it was the 'right thing to do', whereas others took much longer or chose not to participate. The political background, the relative affluence of the area or the number of migrants present do not seem to be able to be able to perfectly predict these decision making outcomes. In more than one area there were additional variables at play influencing the decision-making process, some based on historical events which would be very hard to predict. CR provides the theory to design research which allows for the capture of some causal mechanisms to have arisen from individual agency and others from institutional norms or dominant ideologies. It does not negate the idea of an independent reality but it changes how this reality is discussed from immutable causal laws to tendencies, emphasising how our knowledge is fragile and calling for periodic reassessment of how existing systems serve us. In this way, a CR research paradigm, provides the theoretical foundation of this thesis' challenge that the continued use of neo-liberal solutions to domains affecting migrant integration are worsening the problem they are claiming to assist.

Theoretical framework

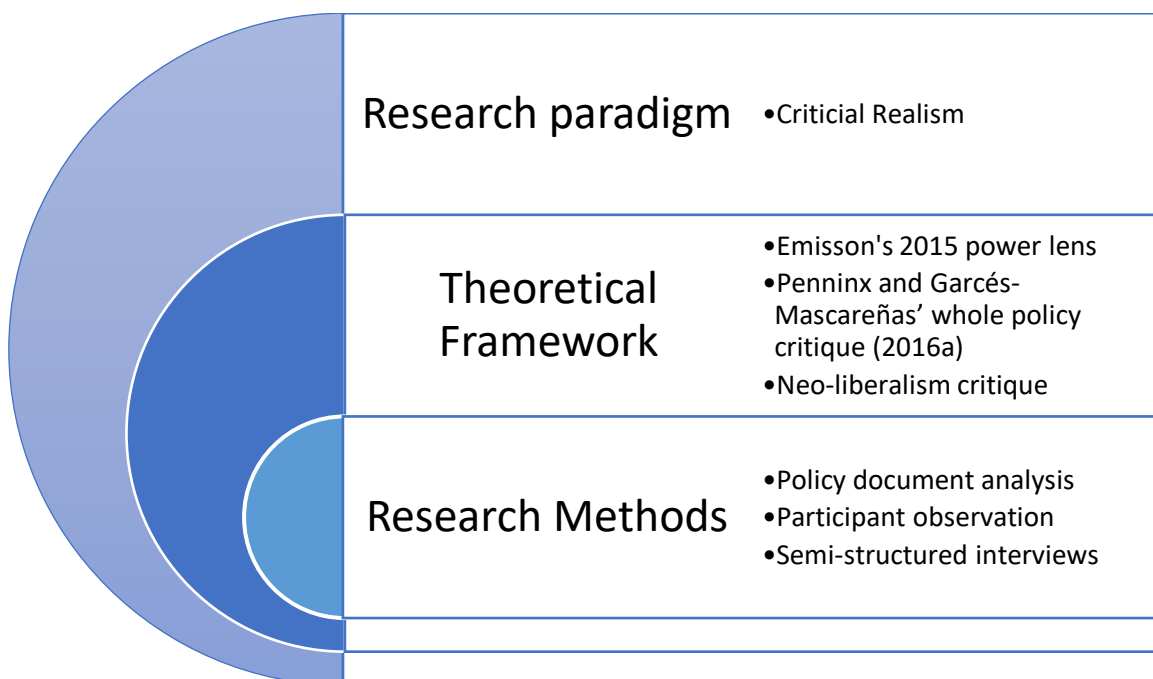
The CR research paradigm underpinning the theoretical framework of this research is supported by the use of Emilsson's 2015 power lens which challenges the use of a frame analysis in evaluating the distribution of power between central and local government when it comes to migrant integration policies. Emilsson's critique of frame analysis was covered in the literature review. He describes his power lens approach as

“A new approach to the study of local integration policies by looking at the multi-level governance of integration policies through a power perspective lens. Power is operationalized by analysing the autonomy of local governments and their compliance with national policies.”

(Emilsson, 2015, p.4)

This theoretical framework thus builds on this CR perception of power as being something which can be possessed, exercised or actualised, but also looks at how it can be withdrawn. It further draws from the Austerity Urbanism and Austerity Localism literature, in looking at the additional responsibilities and restructuring local authorities have encountered as a result of neo-liberalism which can impact negatively on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. This thesis focuses on the top down hierarchical impact of central government policies on local government, as in Emilsson's words "while local governments have more or less power depending on their national settings, they are always subordinate to central government" (Emilsson, 2015, p.4). This thesis recognises that migrants themselves undoubtedly play a key role in how local authorities are able to facilitate migrant integration, however, as stated by Garcés-Mascreñas, and Penninx, (2016a), host society institutions carry more weight in influencing the outcome of the integration process. Consequently, within the constraints of this research, the decision was made to focus on top down power relations. The thesis expands the remit of Emilsson's framework from integration policies to all policy domains affecting migrant integration. The theoretical framework is depicted in the diagram of the research methodology below and within Tables 1 and 2 later in this chapter which demonstrate how it is operationalised using information from all three research methods.

Diagram of research methodology



Research method 1 - Document analysis

The research began with a simultaneous literature review and policy document analysis to assess existing literature on the topic and whether it matched UK policy. The majority of the studies were European with very few examples of what was taking place on the local level in the UK. A key difficulty in emulating this research in the UK is that UK Governments have historically tended to avoid explicit integration policies. On a local level the task was harder still with barely any local authorities posting policies relating to migration on their websites¹. The initial policy analysis undertaken had made me question how local authorities would be able to facilitate migrant integration when faced with the significant cuts in funding which accompanied the Localism Act 2011, but with such little information on this publicly available, the decision was made to undertake participant observation with SESPM.

Nevertheless, policy document analysis was consistently used throughout this thesis for various reasons. Firstly, the policy arena within this field of research rapidly evolved with the timeframe of this thesis to include: two significant pieces of decentralisation legislation; two integration strategies/approaches; two immigration acts; numerous changes to immigration rules; significant changes to legal aid, education, employment and housing policies; a national referendum on EU membership, and the introduction of the VPRS. Only a small portion of this legislation and government policies had been introduced when this research began in May 2015, and much of it (such as the 2014 Immigration Act) had yet to be enacted in full. Secondly, whilst the other qualitative research methods used were key to understanding and interpreting the impact of these policies on local authorities and migrant integration, government policy instruments (as listed within Emilsson's framework) provided the structure from which to capture findings from the research.

Upon discovering Emilsson's framework in late 2015, it was apparent that the hostile environment was having a wider impact upon local authorities than CCI (which most local authorities had not heard of). Consequently, the decision was taken to extend its remit to all policies affecting migrant integration, a rudimentary version of Table 1 was created to collate the policy document analysis. The dimensions were initially based on the key areas of policy impacting on migrant integration as listed by the Migrant Integration Policy

¹ The exception to this rule was Scotland, where there are clear policy documents relating to migrant integration. However, it was felt that research was already going into what was happening in Scotland, it was some distance to travel to undertake research, and meanwhile no research was taking place in SE England which has the second highest levels of immigration in the UK outside of London.

Index (MIPEX)². The MIPEX is an index created by leading integration scholars to map top OECD countries according to how favourable their policies are for migrant integration. As the research developed, the dimensions were expanded to become more UK centric and to capture the key developments within this time period. The 2010-2018 time period was decided on as it marks the beginning of the Localism agenda and its designation of integration as a local issue, until March 2018 when a new integration strategy was created (Integrated Communities White Paper). The new integration strategy broke with this ‘leave it to the local’ approach and emphasised more of a mainstreaming of responsibility for migrant integration. Furthermore, April 2018 saw the end of the Home Office hostile environment to a ‘compliant environment’, in name if perhaps not in practice.

Table 4 – The research framework

		Political lever/Instrument				
Integration Domain	Legal/Political	Integration Dimension	Year & Name of policy/law or source of quote from participant observation or semi-structured interviews	Normative impact	Economic impact	Legislative impact
		Legislative changes and the hostile environment				
		Legal aid				
		Permanent residency				
		Citizenship				
		Family reunion				
		Political participation and voters’ rights				
		Anti-discrimination				
	Socio-Economic	Legislative changes and the VPRS				
		Education and the hostile environment				
		The academisation of schools				
		Access to primary and secondary education				
		Changes to post-16 education				
		Changes to post 19 education				
		Education and the VPRS				
		ESOL				
		ESOL and the VPRS				

² It should be noted that the MIPEX has changed with each release both in terms of the policy areas identified and also in the number of countries participating. Nevertheless, in several areas the policy areas (such as permanent residency), the same policy measures existed in the 2010 MIPEX thus a straight comparison is possible. Mention of policy areas where the UK dropped in country ranking have not been included due to the change in number of countries participating.

Socio-Cultural	Employment and the hostile environment				
	Unemployment benefits				
	Targeted support to assist migrants into employment				
	Employment and the VPRS				
	Housing and the hostile environment				
	Social housing				
	Housing benefit, Benefit Cap and Universal Credit				
	Homelessness				
	Housing and the VPRS				
	Socio-cultural integration and the hostile environment				
	Welfare chauvinism and Neo-liberalism				
	Brexit				
	British values and assimilatory messaging				
	Socio-cultural integration and the VPRS				

Whilst the research parameters are now clearly defined, there was a period of three years where the research was live and was a constant process of tracking how government policies were impacting on local authorities and migrant integration and looking to see if the aspirations of the Localism Act 2011 would indeed assist local integration as outlined within the CCI. The final research framework depicted in Table 4 was the product of constant analysis and reflection. In keeping with the CR research paradigm this research is based on, I was aware that my subjective perspective and positionality, as a white British citizen whose interest in this theme stems from altruism and academic curiosity rather than personal experience of the vulnerability of immigrant status, would affect the document analysis. Equally, the participant observation undertaken might highlight a particular policy which had impacted on local authorities and migrant integration from a local authority perspective. Consequently, efforts were made when researching these impacts to populate the research table with content from sources which were as neutral as possible in their political leaning in order to ensure that the impact being observed had been validated elsewhere. Content for the table was identified through a range of sources from customised Dods Parliamentary Communications, to independent reviews by the National Audit Office (NAO), or the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) as well as academic publications. Grey literature such as NGO reports were used in cases where little other

research had been undertaken, nonetheless efforts were made to check these against House of Commons Library reports, which often included wider stakeholder feedback. In 2018 the table was shared with experts in local government and migration for feedback and to identify any omissions. In the two years since this table was finalised, supporting material has been added as new reports covering the 2010-2018 time period have been released. As the table was iteratively reviewed and updated, neo-liberal restructuring emerged as a theme which has been prevalent across nearly every policy. More on this is covered under the section on triangulation but the table below depicts how instances of neo-liberal restructuring which had affected local authorities and their ability to facilitate migrant integration were incorporated into the table and flagged.

Table 5 – The research framework in practice

		Political lever/Instrument				
		Integration Dimension	Year & Name of policy/law or source of quote from participant observation or semi-structured interviews	Normative content	Economic content	Legislative content
omain	Legal/Political	Anti-discrimination	2010 The Equality Strategy/Repeal of certain Equality Act 2010 provisions	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Brandon Lewis actively wrote a letter to local authority leaders and Chief Executives suggesting they do not spend their time on "time consuming, bureaucratic, tick-box exercises" (Lewis, 2012). In keeping with Neo-liberal preference for removal of 'red tape'	Budget cuts to Equality and Human Rights Commission of 55% plus cuts to grant funding & helpline.	Repeal of duty for authorities to consider equality of outcome.

Research method 2 - Participant observation

At the beginning of the research I conducted informal meetings with local stakeholders working in migration in the SE. I was sign posted towards meetings organised by the South East Partnership for Strategic Migration (SESPM). SESPM is a regional body, funded by but independent of the Home Office, which deals exclusively with issues relating to migration. It acts as an interlocutor between central, regional, sub-regional and local government and sits within South East England Councils (SEEC), a vestige of regional government in the SE made up of the councillors and leaders of local government. I applied to undertake voluntary work on a one day a week basis with

SESPM which commenced in July 2015. Towards the end of 2018 the role became a salaried position two days a week, I also undertook ad hoc paid work for SEEC. Consequently, whilst the majority of this research was conducted as a 'participating observer', where I was an outsider moderately involved in some form of activity (Bernard, 2006), by the end of this research I was an 'active participant' where I acknowledge that I embraced the customs and the skills of the people I worked with and observed (Spradley, 1980).

All degrees of participation in field work hold their own advantages and disadvantages, generally the more closely involved you become, the greater the potential loss of objectivity but the richer the potential data gathered.

As discussed above, CR holds that all of our observations are subjective, but that our subjective opinions may be more or less accurate. My positionality is in keeping with Bernard (2006, p.349) when he states "Total objectivity is, by definition, a myth, I'd worry more about producing credible data and strong analysis and less about whether going native is good or bad".

Active participation within participant observation does not automatically mean loss of analytical capabilities but that subjective perceptions need to be checked and the researcher equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the impact that their presence can have both upon the validity of the research but also upon those being observed. Within this research the potential for the Hawthorne effect (whereby the presence of the researcher can change how those observed behave) was mitigated through the duration of time in the field, as it is difficult for those being observed to change their natural behaviour every week for a three year period. I cannot negate the fact that my inputs into the work being undertaken will have in some way affected SEPSM's outputs but considering that the work was largely administrative, this impact is unlikely to have been considerable.

It should be noted that whilst participant observation helped in the identification of key themes emerging where the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration was affected, SESPM's position itself is neutral and this was indeed the working culture present. The neutrality of SESPM fosters an inclusive environment where both Home Office and advocacy NGOs attend sub-regional meetings in full anticipation of respectful and cooperative interaction. Any observations contained within this thesis are mine alone, pursuing my own research line of enquiry and are in no way reflecting the stance of SESPM. The neutral stance of SESPM greatly facilitated this research as it enabled access a wide variety of different viewpoints on the topic of migration and local governance, from immigration enforcement to advocacy NGOs.

In keeping with the seven ethics reviews undertaken within this research (all accepted without amendments), a key consideration when undertaking participant observation is that the research do no harm to the participants being observed. One of the ways in which I have tried to ensure this is by focusing predominantly on the document analysis and semi-structured interviews to demonstrate key points rather than drawing from aspects witnessed as part of the participant observation. Participant observation, therefore, served as a means through which to be immersed in the world of migrant integration at the local level, not as the dominant means for gathering evidence within this research. However, this immersion was invaluable especially in witnessing the transformative effects of the VPRS.

Research method 3 - Semi-structured interviews

The decision to draw key examples from research methods other than participant observation was one of the reasons behind the use of semi-structured interviews as a third research method. The other reason was that whilst SESPM had regional overview, it could not provide the detailed overview needed to understand the impact of government policies on the local level. Participant observation had highlighted that the introduction of the VPRS had fundamentally changed how local authorities in the SE understood and facilitated aspects relating to migrant integration. In order to understand these changes in greater detail I applied for my second ethics permission to undertake unstructured interviews with lead officers of local authorities who had previously been involved in aspects relating to migrant integration. This was undertaken in order to sound out my proposed area of study and to road test potential semi-structured interview questions. Content from these interviews is not included within this thesis as a) the small number of interviews undertaken would make the authorities potentially easy to identify and b) some of the authorities specifically requested the information remain confidential.

The unstructured interviews cemented my decision to use semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance of focused content on key areas of interest whilst also allowing for new information to emerge. This is in keeping with the CR research paradigm which holds that in an open system, there will be variables which emerge that it is not possible to anticipate in advance. Furthermore, as this research holds that there is always a subjective element to how people perceive reality, it is important to let the informant volunteer what they deem to be important in their own words. Hearing how an informant describes a situation gives an indication of their positionality which ultimately helps to posit their contribution within the overall research and mitigate bias. Efforts were made to make the questions as neutral as possible, and to minimise leading questions, in order to encourage people to volunteer their own

perceptions of the issues being discussed as much as possible. Prompts were used to help to gather more information on a topic but not to influence the response. This was at times challenging at points where little was volunteered. For example, very little information was gathered from the respondents on the Localism Act 2011, but the absence of feedback on this topic was informative in itself. Only one respondent had heard of the CCI which confirmed my desk-based document analysis and participant observation that this integration approach had very little impact on local authorities and migrant integration. Nevertheless, the semi-structured nature of the interviews also enabled new knowledge to emerge, such as learning how local authorities with a background of having worked on the Troubled Families Programme had found the transition to the VPRS relatively simple.

The participants were selected due to their roles as key managers of migration within local authorities. Considerable time was spent in attending conferences and training workshops identifying key personnel responsible for managing migration within local authorities in the SE and asking whether they would be willing to be interviewed. Meeting people in person at events helped to access higher numbers of people who agreed to be interviewed than cold calling or email. Interviews were conducted by telephone as a) they enable greater geographical coverage (Adams et al., 2007; Dinham, 1993; Glogowska et al., 2011; Holt, 2010; Knox & Burkhard, 2009) b) they are easier to schedule and therefore more likely to take place (Fenig et al., 1993) c) the perceived anonymity can encourage people to share sensitive information (Cachia & Millward, 2011; Malta, 2009) and d) they can be less disruptive as the respondent is not distracted by the interviewer taking notes. A significant challenge levelled at telephone interviews is that they do not allow for the visual cues which are important to correct reading of body language and the building of rapport. Nevertheless, research has shown that most cues tend to be verbal (Cachia & Millward, 2011).

The interviews took place over a year from January to December 2017. Research clearance from Canterbury Christchurch was granted in December 2016 with most interviews taking place leading up to Easter 2017. The reason the research was not completed until December was due to additional ethics requests³ from one authority that resulted in the interview being postponed 14 times. In addition to the Canterbury Christ Church ethics clearance already obtained, telephone and written assurances were provided by both my primary supervisor and the head of the Canterbury Christ Church ethics team. The local authority then requested I undertake their own ethics clearance which was undertaken and granted. This was then followed up with the request to apply

³ All ethics clearances can be provided upon request but were not included within this thesis due to their size.

for ethics clearance from the Adult Social Services Directorate (ADASS). This was requested and granted. Pre-empting a possible further request I applied to the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) which was again granted. Due to the sensitivity of research relating to migration it is understandable that authorities can be cautious regarding how research will be used. Whilst the additional Ethics clearances required meant that the interviews took place over a longer timeframe than originally designed, the information received from the authority in question was valuable to the research and the lead officer in question had clearly made efforts to prepare content for the interview. Undergoing so many ethics clearances firmly entrenched the importance of anonymising responses and storing the data in a password protected site.

As discussed above, the role of the observer/interviewer cannot be removed from the research being undertaken which means there is risk of the Hawthorne Effect. This cannot be mitigated through long term exposure to the person being interviewed as participant observation allows. However, in such circumstances a wider number of people interviewed can help to mitigate this factor. The rich interview data within this thesis was taken from interviews with 20 lead officers from participating local authorities, lasting on average 45 minutes each⁴, capturing 114,740 words of transcribed data. Due to the way the VPRS was managed, these 20 local authorities actually represent 45 of the 58 local authorities participating on the VPRS at the time the interviews were taking place.⁵ This is because in some areas the VPRS was coordinated at county level where the lead officer coordinated the scheme for all participating district authorities within that county⁶. As the table below demonstrates this means that the 20 interviews conducted drew from the experience of 77.6 per cent of the local authorities who participated on the scheme in the SE.

Table 3. Local authority coverage according to interviews conducted

	Total LAs covered under County coordination interviews	Total LAs covered under Unitary Authority coordination interviews	Total LAs covered under District Authority coordination interviews	Total
	29	6	10	45
Percentage of 58 participating LAs covered by interviews				77.6

4 A total of 22 lead officers from local authorities participating on the VPRS were interviewed within this research. Two interviews were excluded within this research either due to the interview having been interrupted and not possible to be rescheduled or where the interviewee later withdrew consent.

5 By the end of the VPRS 60 local authorities in the South East had participated on the scheme.

6 No further details of the authorities interviewed within this research have been included in order to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

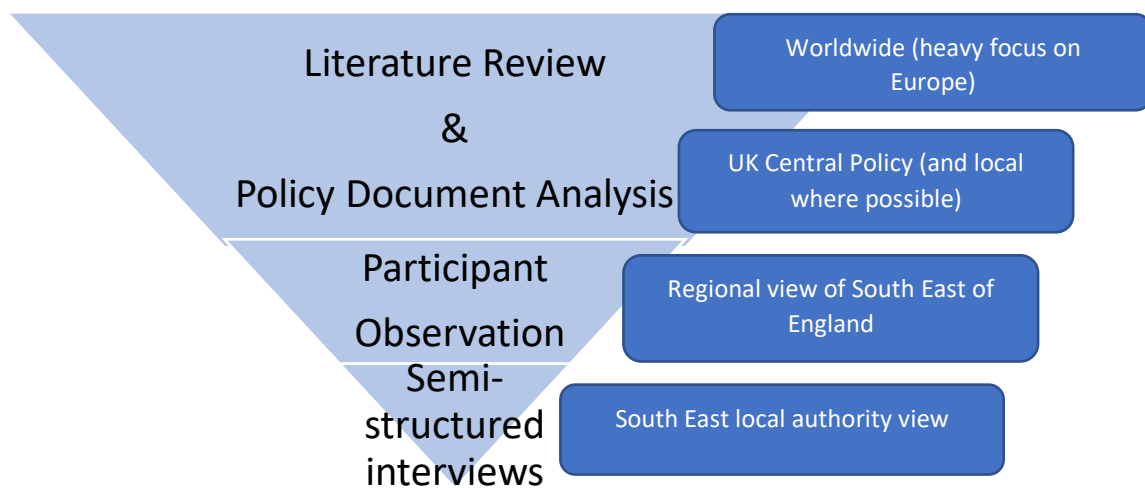
An additional two interviews were conducted with lead officers working on migration in local authorities not participating on the scheme. These interviews were undertaken in order to understand their reasons for this decision. Similarly, to the pilot unstructured interviews, content from these interviews does not feature within this thesis but nevertheless has helped to provide a wider picture of migration related matters in the SE. All of those interviews conducted but not quoted within this thesis have widened the variety of perspectives on the research topic and in doing so have helped to mitigate aspects relating to respondent bias or the Hawthorne effect within the analysis.

The transcribed data was initially reviewed using Nvivo software which assisted in the identification of key themes emerging from the interviews. These themes were used to create an excel sheet template with a sheet for each authority populated with key quotes on that theme and a summary page with the most salient quotes for each theme at the beginning. The transcripts were iteratively reviewed as new information emerged within participant observation or document analysis.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a term originating from land surveying whereby having more than one bearing helps you locate your position at the point where the bearings intercept. The analogy with research analysis is that if you have used three or more different research methods to analyse the same topic then you will be able to get a better picture of the phenomenon you are studying, as you are approaching it from different angles. The findings in this thesis draw from information and insights gained from policy document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Broadly speaking, the research can be seen to have iteratively narrowed the focus from worldwide to European academic literature, to UK policies, regional observations and finally semi structured interviews at the local level.

Diagram depicting research methods and their focus



However, the research methods and the analysis of their results were not as one directional as this would indicate. New information and insights gathered through each method were checked against another method to see if the same aspect was being witnessed within that research method. This does not mean that the insight was dismissed if it did not match with the findings of another research method, indeed the fact that some impacts were localised helped to understand overall events. For example, the fact that an integration related policy might not have impacted upon the local level (such as the CCI), or that a non-integration policy might have had wider impact upon the local level (such as the academisation of schools) was only possible due to the concurrent iterative analysis taking place across these different research methods. The emergence of neo-liberalism as a common underlying contributor to reducing the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration is an example of this cyclical iterative process. Whilst incidences of neo-liberalism restructuring were being recorded, they were not consciously being noted as such. It was only when the table was nearly completed that the prevalence emerged. This perception then led to further academic reading and policy document analysis which in turn led me to highlight neo-liberal examples within the table as exemplified in Table 2.

The framework created (Table 1) enabled the capture of these findings as whenever an aspect impacting on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration was identified, the details were input into the integration domain and dimension. Consequently, themes would emerge occasionally with policy document, participant observation and semi-structured interview data to exemplify what had been identified. The final table produced (Table 1) is the result of several iterations of reflexive analysis. A frequent challenge encountered was deciding which domain to ascribe an impact to. For example, the hostile environment made many legal changes such as the Right to Rent scheme requirement on landlords to check the immigration status of a potential tenant. Deciding whether legal changes under the hostile environment should be located

under the legal domain or within the socio-economic or socio-cultural domain was the kind of difficulty often encountered.

Undoubtedly the structure and the analysis of this research has been shaped by my own positionality and interpretation as I have identified common patterns and themes between the findings of these research methods which led me to identify neo-liberal philosophy behind most policies. It is my position that this subjectivity is inevitable but that this subjectivity does not mean that the findings do not have some basis in reality. The policy analysis was predominantly checked against independent nonpartisan sources such as the NAO or the House of Lords Library Research Briefings. The participant observation undertaken exposed me to a wide range of viewpoints, often countering previously held assumptions. The semi-structured interviews were designed in a neutral way asking questions like “What has your experience been of X?” to learn from the experience of local authority officers rather than using leading questions. A wide (but not unmanageable) number of interviews were carried out in order to maximise the rich data collected on a particular topic and therefore be able to identify shared perceptions on a topic thereby reducing bias. Within the analysis a great deal of reflexivity took place, as Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) argue, themes and patterns do not emerge by themselves, but I have tried to ensure that the findings included within this thesis have backing from other sources as much as possible, even if analysis is my own.

Conclusion

The thesis set out to explore experiences of local authorities facilitating migrant integration in the SE. The application of these three methods and the iterative reflections on policy developments at each stage led to a far narrower focus on the impact of Austerity Localism as well as wider central government policies impacting on migrant integration at the local level and drew my attention to the pervasive influence of neoliberalism and so on. The thesis builds on current academic thinking across both worlds of local government and migration. The intersection between these two fields of study is narrow. In contributing my own research to this niche area this thesis can make an original and important contribution to knowledge as will be demonstrated throughout the rest of this thesis.

Chapter 4 -Localism and migrant integration

Introduction

This chapter examines what Coalition and Conservative Localism was and whether the economic, financial and normative policy levers employed by central government under Localism did in fact increase the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. It focuses purely on the suite of laws, policies and approaches that formed the Coalition Government's new 'philosophy' of Localism (Conservative Manifesto, 2010, p.vii), and will explore the effects these had on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. This is done in isolation from other wider policies or legislation, such as immigration law. Whilst one of the main tenets of this thesis is that policies affecting integration should not be explored in isolation, there are several reasons why an initial focus on Localism is necessary. These are as follows:

- 1) The Localism introduced by the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010 -2018 claimed to hand unprecedented powers to the local level. As leading academics within the field of local government and migrant integration have stated that "increasing the financial and decision-making power of local authorities is a necessary precondition for formulating and implementing successful integration policies" (Penninx, 2009, p.2) it is important to examine the extent to which this has taken place. As a result, a large portion of this chapter will be devoted to assessing what impact Localism has had on the discretionary abilities of local authorities in general.
- 2) Existing research in this area has tended to rely on policy frame analysis as the main research tool which can miss wider power dynamics. Applying Emilsson's power lens to the policy levers used by the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010-2018 to facilitate migrant integration gives a more accurate picture of the cumulative impact of financial, legal and normative policy levers upon the outcome of a policy.
- 3) Examining the impact of Localism upon the ability of local authorities to affect migrant integration in isolation further demonstrates the reasons why wider policies need to be taken into account when researching migrant integration.
- 4) As this research was undertaken, it became clear that there were many aspects of neo-liberal restructuring which took place under Localism, which impact upon the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities.

This chapter will first set out the normative environment which accompanied Localism, what it claimed to do, before going on to revisit the topic through economic and legislative power lenses. As stated in the introduction, it does not seek to assess integration outcomes at the local level, but to see whether central government increased the ability of local authorities in terms of increasing their financial and legal powers and creating a conducive normative environment to facilitate migrant integration. It will be seen that this

designation of integration as a local issue was part of a larger suite of laws, policies and approaches that formed the Coalition governments new 'philosophy' of Localism (Conservative Manifesto, 2010, p.vii).

Normative policy levers under Localism

The main document which presented the Coalition government's 'approach' to integration under Localism was the 2012 'Creating the Conditions for Integration' (CCI) document (DCLG, 2012). This approach specifically designates integration as 'a local issue' (DCLG, 2012, p.7) with local authorities best placed to take a 'leading role' in coordinating integration activities (DCLG, 2012, p.8). The document was reaffirmed as the official integration position of the Conservative Government in 2015 (DCLG, 2015b) and was only changed in 2018 with the introduction of the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper. CCI specified that intervention from central government was to happen only "exceptionally", as integration was the purview of communities who were "better equipped to resolve their own problems" (DCLG, 2012, p.6). The documents view is that integration "is achieved when neighbourhoods, families and individuals come together on issues which matter to them" (DCLG, 2012, p.2). This view of integration goes hand in hand with the Coalition's flagship policy of 'Big Society', the stated aim of which was to bring communities together. Whilst CCI is only 26 pages in length, and cannot be considered a policy per se, roles and responsibilities are nonetheless outlined within the document. Central government's role was to intervene only exceptionally, and predominantly through helping to counter extremism, whereas local authorities were "well placed to take a leading role working through existing partnerships with the police, other agencies and the business and voluntary sectors" (ibid., p.8).

Within the document historic immigration into the UK is presented in a positive light, deemed to have "enriched their neighbourhoods and the country as a whole, and made major contributions to national and local life" (DCLG, 2012, p.3). However, more recent immigration is seen to have posed greater problems, with increasing levels of migrants and increasing race relation issues since 2001⁷ being cited as reasons why the UK should not be complacent about integration. There is also mention of some migrants being "unable or unwilling to integrate" (ibid.).

Little detail is given as to how integration actually works in practice, historic integration is seen to have happened almost organically, with the document stating "In the past, neighbourhoods, families and individuals have come together naturally on issues which matter to them" (ibid., p.6).

⁷ Presumably this refers to the Northern town riots of 2001 and or September 11th 2001.

Due to the aforementioned challenges from more recent integration however, the document identifies five key factors it feels where action should be taken to contribute to integration. All but one of the key factors (tackling extremism and intolerance) are strongly presented as the purview of the local level, from the individual citizen, to voluntary and community groups, faith-based groups, local public services and local government. Local government is specifically identified as being best place to coordinate partnerships with intervention from central government happening only 'exceptionally' (ibid., p.9). This approach is possibly best summed up in the following excerpt

“Successful, integrated communities are ones that make better use of informal support and care; are better equipped to resolve their own problems without state intervention; and can have higher levels of volunteering, social support networks and charity.”

(ibid., p.6).

Where assistance from central government is mentioned, it is provided through mainstreaming of activities. The document states that where the focus on integration activities previously targeted single groups this possibly exacerbated the problem. The document's emphasis on mainstreaming should, in principle, be commended as a movement away from target group constructions. Nevertheless, as has been seen within other fields of study relating to mainstreaming (such as gender), without monitoring mainstreaming can lead to invisibilization (Risby & Todd, 2011). In particular, the Equality Strategy and increased Social Mobility Strategy are referenced as key mainstreamed government policies which will aid integration. However, as will be seen in Chapter 5 equalities monitoring was weakened under the Coalition government. Likewise, the focus on social mobility as the means to overcome inequalities is indicative of the neo-liberal approach whereby reliance on the market and trickle-down economics takes precedence over interventions to enhance social inclusion and fairness. Indeed the document can be seen as having many hallmarks of neo-liberal thinking, such as the push for a retrenchment of the state “Government must not, as happens too often, stand in the way” (DCLG, 2012, p.6), the move away from state regulation where it is claimed that legal approaches “have not solved the problem” (ibid., p.6) and that there is a need to “cut red tape” (ibid., p.7). No mention is made of structural barriers to integration or causes of exclusion, instead these issues are presented as individualist with some people “choosing to remain outside mainstream society” (ibid., p.6) and that in contrast integration is created “through determination, hard work and a readiness to do new things” (ibid.). It will be seen in Chapter 6 and 7 that the onus on the hard work of the individual as a means to work themselves out of poverty and overcome any difficulty faced was a leitmotif of both the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018.

In general, the rhetoric used within CCI can be seen as supportive of migrant integration. Several positive aspects of migration are mentioned and it is seen as having augmented many aspects of British life. Efforts have been made to present delicate topics such as the 2001 Northern town riots and the extremist groups the English Defence League and Muslims against Crusaders, in a balanced and nuanced way. It is reminded that integration is affected by many factors such as location, socio-economic conditions, cultures and faith, for example. However, there are indications of the assimilationist turn that these governments would take within the mention of reforms to immigration and settlement rules where it was reminded that

“Those coming to the UK to work, study or marry are required to demonstrate an appropriate level of English, and those wishing to remain permanently or seek British citizenship are required to demonstrate their knowledge of language and life within the UK.”

(ibid., p.11)

Unfortunately, the document's emphasis on cutting red tape and movement away from monitoring and legal approaches means that there is little means of ascertaining if integration outcomes are actually improving. Indeed, the Coalition Government removed exactly the kind of local monitoring partnerships working on the kind of local collaboration they saw as key to integration, such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). LSPs were formed of local statutory services (health, education, fire, police, local authorities), in addition to voluntary/community sector organisations and local private sector organisations. LSPs had to report on a range of National Indicators, the theme of one being Safer and Stronger Communities. This required the LSP to report on 35 indicators on their local communities, which covered many aspects relating to integration (Ali & Gidley, 2014). With this body removed, it is harder to monitor and evaluate what is happening on the local level in relation to migrant integration, and without standard indicators, impossible to compare across regions.

While the rhetoric contained within CCI sounds largely positive, it often gives the impression that if everything is left to the local level, integration will just happen. This in itself has been identified by academics as another element of neo-liberal thinking, where it is deemed that if the role of the state is reduced, the private sector and free individuals/philanthropists will automatically step into the sphere and find more efficient solutions (Pharoah, 2011; Walker, 2013). There was no minister assigned to integration, no designated team responsible for overseeing its implementation. It was accompanied by some funding under the Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) 'Bringing people together in Strong United Communities' including two £300,000 grants,

£6 million towards community ESOL and £10 million to support Youth groups such as the Scouts, Girl Guides and St John's Ambulance (MHCLG, 2015). However, this funding should be viewed in context as overall funding for ESOL was reduced by 55 per cent between 2010 to 2015 (Refugee Action, 2016) and overall funding to youth clubs shrank by 62 per cent between 2010 to 2016 (Smith, 2018). Furthermore, in terms of specific integration funding at the same time CCI was introduced funding to Strategic Migration Partnerships was reduced (Ali & Gidley, 2014), and in 2010 the Coalition ceased funding for the remaining £16 million Migration Impact Fund (MIF) introduced under Labour. Wording within CCI reminded local authorities that they should not expect funding to assist with integration as "People come together through day-to-day activities, not 'integration projects' which too often feel irrelevant and prove unsustainable" (DCLG, 2012, p.8).

The government's position within the document is clear, integration is a local issue, the government should remove itself from the arena, without large scale integration projects or monitoring.

The Localism Act 2011, mentioned throughout the CCI, was seen as key to freeing up local authorities to find their own solutions to integration issues. "The Government's role in achieving a more integrated society is strongly shaped by Localism and the Big Society" (DCLG, 2012, p.19). Localism, along with its handmaiden 'Big Society' was arguably the flagship of the 2010 Conservative election campaign. It remained a central tenet of the 2015 Conservative Government's plans, with the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016. Even just before her resignation Theresa May was still extolling the virtues of 'boosting Localism' (May, quoted in Welsh Conservatives, 2019). Localism, as a loose term, was not contentious, indeed it had cross party support, but what was different was how far the Coalition Government claimed it was willing to go. The claim was that this was a 'truly radical localisation' (Conservative Party, 2009, p.14), not simply a change in government but "a change from one political philosophy to another" (Conservative Manifesto, 2010, p.vii).

As the Local Government Lawyer (2013, p.16) stated "as an Act of Parliament, it (Localism) was 'spun' to an unusual degree". The language used to introduce Localism and the 'Big Society' can mostly be found within early Coalition documents or the 2010 Conservative Manifesto. Britain is painted as being 'broken', predominantly by the Labour government (rather than the GFC), with a new philosophy needed to save it. This philosophy is 'Big Society' which is possibly best summed up by David Cameron's famous slogan of "We are all in it together" (Conservative Manifesto, 2010, p.vi), coupled with a retreat in the role of the state. The language is at times reminiscent of war time appeals to civic duty as exemplified in the following statements

“How will we raise responsible children unless every adult plays their part?”

(ibid., p.iii).

“When we say ‘we are all in this together’ that is not a cry for help, but a call to arms. Society is not a spectator sport. This is your country. It’s time to believe it. It’s time to step up and own it.”

(Cameron, 2010, cited in The Telegraph, 2010)

Some scholars have commented that the language used was almost populist, caused in part due to a lack of trust in British politics following politician expense scandals and the financial crisis (Tait & Inch, 2016; Featherstone et al., 2012). In terms of what this normative communication meant for fostering an environment conducive to migrant integration, the appeal to people’s sense of civic duty and social responsibility can be seen as encouraging people to interact more locally. Unfortunately, as will be seen in the legislative section of this chapter, austerity led to a reduction in volunteering and money being donated to charitable causes within this time period. Equally Chapter 7 will also demonstrate how the continued use of populist language contributed towards the development of feelings of welfare chauvinism in the UK.

It is worth noting that whilst there was cross party support for Localism, there was not cross-party support for the kind of Localism introduced under the Coalition. The Coalition sought to differentiate their Localism from that of the New Localism introduced under the Labour government. New Localism was deemed too centralised, too controlling, the ‘big government’ it had necessitated was presented as having contributed to ‘Broken Britain’ (Tait & Inch, 2016). In contrast, the Localism the Coalition introduced had at its core “a more decentralised economy, society and politics” (Conservative Party 2010, p.1). In short, the Localism introduced by the Coalition carried all the hallmarks of neo-liberalism such as increased marketisation of public services, de-regulation, reduced spending on the welfare state, privatisation and outsourcing or opening up of public sector activities to private industry. As stated by Featherstone et al., (2012, p.177-178)

“This specific mobilisation of localism is not politically innocent. It is part of a broader repertoire of practices through which the government has constructed the local as antagonistic to the state and invoked it to restructure the public sector. We term this project Austerity Localism”.

The key components of this were outlined in the Localism Act 2011 and its accompanying guide. These included:

- A Power of Competence. The Power of Competence enabled local authorities to act as an individual, meaning to be autonomous in their decision making (DCLG,

2011). Prior to the introduction of the Power of Competence local authorities could in theory only perform activities which were necessary in order for them to carry out their statutory duties. The new power, was aimed at encouraging local authorities to act like private enterprise, enabling them to take initiative at the local level, thus paving the way for driving the economy at the local level.

- **Retention of Business Rates.** The 2011 Act marked the move away from local business tax being collected by central government and then redistributed across the UK. The Coalition passed legislation to enable local authorities to retain 50 per cent of the business rates raised within their localities. Again, the intention was to incentivise local authorities to focus on activities which foster the development of the local economy and to put an end to the redistributive system.
- **Reduction in regulatory and monitoring mechanisms.** In contrast to Labour's 'New Localism', the Coalition's Localism focused on "cutting central targets on councils, easing the burden of inspection, and reducing red tape" (DCLG, 2011, p.1). As a result, regulatory and/or monitoring bodies such as Regional Government, the Standards Board and the Comprehensive Area Assessment, which had monitored performance at the local level across authorities, were abolished.
- **Opening up public services to greater competition.** The Coalition introduced a variety of changes supposedly intended to "pass power back to where it belongs" (ibid.) i.e. the local level. A Community Right to Bid and a Right to Challenge, were introduced, both schemes where local residents could bid to purchase or run a public service if they felt they could do so better than the local authority. These schemes were intended to give power to the local level (away from local government) but were also based on ideas of increasing maximum efficiency and downsizing the role of the state (MHCLG, 2015b). This is in keeping with Cameron's assertion that "public services should be open to a range of [willing] providers competing to provide better services" (Cameron, in Hall 2011, p.719).
- **Big Society.** The essence of 'Big Society' was to "help people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions" (DCLG, 2011, p.1). The state was seen as having stifled the inherent ability and desire of people to come together on the local level and find solutions to the local problems they face, "[o]nly when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all" (Gov.UK, 2010 p.1). The government's role was deemed to be removing "the barriers that stop

councils, local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups getting things done for themselves” (DCLG, 2011, p.1), although many have argued that in fact Big Society and Localism stripped powers away from councils in favour of the sub-local level (Jones, 2010; Gash et al., 2014) as this quote from the House of Lords demonstrates “The infusion of the Government’s pronouncements on Localism with ‘Big Society’ rhetoric implies a diminished, not greater, role for local authorities” (House of Commons, 2011, p.4)

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act claimed to go even further than the Localism Act 2011 with George Osborne, the then Chancellor claiming it was “the biggest transfer of power from central to local government in recent history” (Osbourne, cited in Watt, 2015). The Act intended to facilitate the creation of ‘Northern Powerhouses’, using the example the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which had successfully negotiated a ‘City Deal’ in 2012 that gave it greater control over various financing and planning. The new powers were dependent on there being a mayor elected. In addition, the Conservative Government also extended some of the 2011 reforms such as experimenting with areas retaining up to 100 per cent of their business rates.

Looking at how CCI was presented normatively, alongside the Localism Act 2011 and the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, it is easy to see why academics thought Localism might facilitate migrant integration. CCI’s official designation of local authorities as best placed to taking a leading role in the coordination of integration activities between different actors, in principle, empowered local authorities to take initiative in this area. George Osborne’s claim that the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 was a historic transfer of power to the local government strongly suggests that local authorities had been gifted an unprecedented amount of power to innovate and improve conditions on the local level. The introduction of ‘Big Society’ was supposed to foster exactly the kind of civic participation and community engagement which facilitates integration. In principle, Localism under the Coalition and Conservative governments from 2010-2018 gave local authorities unprecedented means and mandate to facilitate greater migrant integration. However, once the economic and legislative levers which accompanied Localism are examined, it will be demonstrated that designating migrant integration as a local issue could instead be seen as a ‘white elephant’, cost shunting or decentralising responsibility for migrant integration at a time when local authorities could least afford it.

[Economic policy levers under Localism](#)

Probably the biggest impediment to the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration was the economic power levers behind Localism. The new powers contained with the Localism Act came at a price, with a cut of 40 per cent in central grant funding from what local authorities were receiving previously (HM Treasury, 2015). The intention was to incentivise local government to 'increase their income' (NAO, 2014, p.6). This was compounded when in 2016 the Conservative Government announced a further cut of 56 per cent in central grant funding to the DCLG planned for the 2016-2020 period (op cit HM Treasury, 2015, p.78). The full extent of the planned cuts would have been worse but mounting pressures in social care meant the government provided additional ad hoc funding to stave off the severity. This means the rate of reductions in services local authorities are providing in social care has levelled off but is still severely at-risk long term. (NAO, 2018, Summary). The 2018 NAO review of the financial sustainability of local authorities found that from 2010-11 to 2017-19 local authorities had experienced a 49.1 per cent real-terms reduction in funding. This new version of Localism meant making local authorities pay for themselves "By the end of this parliament, 100 per cent of local government resources will come from local government – raised locally, spent locally, invested locally". (Osbourne, cited in Rutter, T., 2016)

The sheer scale of the cuts were "unequalled since the Second World War" (Gardner, 2017, p.157), but have not been matched by an accompanying reduction in statutory duties. Authorities are still expected to meet their duties whilst also being bound by law to balance their budget. No investigation into the feasibility of maintaining these statutory duties under such cuts was undertaken prior to their introduction and a review by the National Audit Office (NAO) in 2014 into the financial stability of local authorities found that the government had "a limited understanding of the financial sustainability of local authorities and the extent to which they may be at risk" (NAO, 2014, p.9).

The NAO review found that in order to meet the cuts in the 2011-2014 period most authorities had made efficiencies in the form of restructuring, downsizing staffing levels and selling off council assets (NAO, 2014). Several studies have shown that local authorities have prioritised protecting the services they provide to the most vulnerable namely Adult and Child Services (Gardner, 2017; LGiU, 2019; NAO, 2014, 2018). At the same time as funding was being cut, demand for council services, particularly Adult and Child Social Services was increasing (ibid.). A 2018 follow up report by the National Audit Office found that between 2010-2011 and 2017-2018 the number of people eligible for assistance under the statutory homeless duty increased by nearly 34 per cent, the number of Looked After Children (LAC) increased by nearly 11 per cent and those over 65 years of age in need of care increased by over 14 per cent (NAO, 2018).

This impact upon Adult and Child Social Services has also directly affected migrants. Various categories of migrants, such as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) or migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), are protected under local authority duties⁸. In the case of UASC, various changes to support structures since 2010 have negatively impacted upon how a local authority is able to care for UASC (see Humphris & Sigona (2017) and Chapter 7). Concentrating on the economic impacts, it has been estimated that it costs a local authority somewhere between £55,194 to £67,364 (EMSMP, 2017; ADCS, 2016) per annum to care for a UASC. During the time period of this thesis it is estimated that central government reimbursed local authorities between 50 to 55 per cent of this cost (ibid.). Even after an extensive consultation in 2019 the per diem increase only covers an estimated £41,600 per annum (Gov.uk, 2019). This means that every local authority needs to find approximately £20,000 per annum per UASC it receives. To demonstrate the impact of the cut in funding from central to local government upon migrants and local authority finance, at peak time during the 2015-16 migrant crisis, Kent County Council (which due to its proximity to France typically has the highest number of UASC in the South East) had close to 1,000 UASC in its care (Hammond, 2016).

Another category of migrant which typically falls under the care of Child Services are children of migrants who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). NRPF is explained in more detail in Annex A but is a category of immigration status whereby someone has a right to be in the UK but is not allowed to access many mainstream public services (eligibility can differ depending on the kind of migrant but often exclude secondary health care, social housing and certain unemployment benefits). Under the Children's Act 1989 and/or the Care Act 2014 local authorities have duties to protect migrants who become destitute. Due to these migrants not being eligible for mainstream benefits this means that the cost for assisting these destitute migrants falls exclusively upon the local authority assisting them. It is impossible to know the average cost to a local authority to support NRPF migrants as not all local authorities record this information, however, a 2019 report of 50 participating local authorities found that in 2018 it had cost them a combined £43.5 million (NRPF, 2019). A 2016 report on migrants with NRPF found that due to increasingly stringent immigration law and increased imposition of the NRPF condition on immigration status, the number of NRPF becoming destitute had increased, leading them to label this category of local authority support as a 'parallel welfare system' (Price & Spencer, 2015, p.20).

⁸ For a detailed overview of the different categories of migrants which local authorities support please see Annex A.

Consequently, this imposition of austerity and reduced funding to local authorities impacts upon the provision local authorities are able to give to the migrants they are duty bound to protect, as they are not fully reimbursed for these costs. In addition to this, the NAO (2014) report noted that local authorities have also had additional cost pressures such as the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, the National Living Wage and an increase in national insurance contributions (ibid.).

Whilst the 2014 NAO report found that local authorities had been able to meet this increase in need by reducing the number of discretionary (non-statutory) services, the 2018 report showed that in 2016-17 66.2 per cent of local authorities with social care responsibilities had done so through by using their financial reserves. There had also been a 32.6 per cent fall in spending in non-social care areas in order to meet the increase in need (NAO, 2018). More worryingly, the report found that 10.6 per cent of authorities with social care responsibilities claimed that if they had to continue to draw from their reserves at the 2016-17 rate, their reserves would be gone in three years (ibid.).

This prioritisation of social care funding whilst understandable and legally obligatory due to the requirement for local authorities to meet their statutory duties and balance their budgets, has meant cuts in funding to areas which have traditionally facilitated migrant integration. The 2018 NAO report into the long-term financial sustainability of local authorities found that spending on Cultural and Related Services had seen a 35 per cent reduction from 2010-11 to 2016-17. Cuts to largely discretionary services such as cultural services have meant a reduction in the very transversal spaces which facilitate integration such as libraries, playing fields and sports clubs, all the kind of transversal spaces at the local level which help to promote the kind of integration envisioned within CCI.

A loss of nearly 50 per cent in real terms funding between 2011-12 and 2017-18 has forced local authorities past the point of saving through efficiencies, to dip into reserves at an alarming and unsustainable rate. At the time of writing 16 local authorities had or were facing going into administration, a situation never before known. Within such a context discretionary spending on migrant integration activities is extremely unlikely. This finding was not just arrived at through analysis of policy levers but was witnessed within the participant observation undertaken and also volunteered by local authorities within the semi-structured interviews, as the following quotes describe

“I do think that austerity has meant that local authorities have moved further towards what is statutorily required and further away from delivering what would

be nice to do, and I know that has definitely had an impact here on supporting refugees and other migrants”

(Local authority 7)

Many of the local authority officers interviewed as part of this research felt that the predominant way they had been able to assist and work on aspects relating to migrant integration was through the VPRS scheme

“Local authorities are under just terrible financial strain, so we wouldn't be able to do what we're doing with the Syrians... I can only speak for them really, if we didn't get this funding. So, the fact that this scheme comes with funding attached is absolutely vital because if it didn't, in this current financial climate, we probably wouldn't be able to do half of what we doing.”

(Local authority 1)

Only one of the local authority officers questioned had heard of CCI and when asked whether the Localism Act had improved the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration, answers were either neutral (claiming not to know enough about the topic) or negative as the following quote describes

“No, no I don't I don't because councils loathe to be seen to spend anything on, they will spend it but I don't think councils like to be seen to be spending things on integration related type projects because it panders to the lowest common denominator, how it's perceived. So no I can't see that, no, not at all in fact I would completely disagree with that.”

(Local authority 4)

One of the ways in which the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 claimed local authorities would be able to make up for the short fall in social care funding was by removing the cap on council tax (after an initial freeze for the first two years). Councils could raise rates annually by 3 per cent⁹ and social care authorities could raise this by an additional 2 per cent, this is known as the ‘social care precept’. Not only was an increase in taxation to the local level, but it fundamentally changed the redistributive nature of centrally funded social care funding, to one based on local property value. This necessarily increases the disparity between areas as richer areas with more expensive housing generate more council tax than areas with lower property value. Even in affluent areas the shift to the social care precept has fallen far short of meeting the reduction in central social care funding, in poorer areas this disparity is even more apparent. In 2015,

⁹ This rate can be increased if a local referendum is in favour.

Liverpool City Council claimed that the increase in Council tax would cover only £3.2 million of the £172 million annual social care bill the council faced that year (Booth, 2015). Since the end of the freeze on Council tax, nearly all local authorities have increased their council tax, with 331 councils out of 354 (old structure) English councils in 2017-18, having increased their rates (Tax Payers Alliance, 2018). Regarding social care, authorities who are eligible to increase council tax by an additional 2 per cent to cover social care costs, the LGA has stated that in 2019/20 even if all social care authorities increased tax to the maximum amount allowed, a shortfall of £1 billion would still remain (LGA, 2019). As previously mentioned, the government provided some respite in terms of annual one-off payments to relieve pressures in adult social care such as the Better Care Fund. However, one-off payments make it difficult to plan for the future and the financial model of intending local authorities to be self-sufficient remains unchanged. The social care precept is an example of how the Coalition Government 2010 devolved the responsibility and risks for welfare to local authorities which still retain the same statutory duties to protect the wellbeing of its inhabitants despite the dramatic cuts in funding. Furthermore, this is just one of several examples within this thesis of how neo-liberal restructuring under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 has increased disparity in service provision across the UK, as poorer areas are hit hardest due to the removal of redistributive mechanisms. As the Austerity Localism literature describes, the cessation of redistribution in favour of encouraging local authorities to become financially independent disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged areas. As Theodore (2020, p.9) describes

“(Austerity) perpetuates the fiction of discrete local economies within which market forces can be “liberated” through programs of deregulation and privatization, while also placing responsibility for managing the uneven burdens of decline directly on those areas least able to bear them.”

This increase in regional disparity has implications for migrant integration as most migrants are initially accommodated in poorer areas (more on this is covered in the housing chapter), this has historically been the case for adult asylum seekers who are accommodated in areas with the lowest accommodation prices.

Another neo-liberal restructure contained within the Localism Act which was claimed would help local authorities generate income was the ability to retain 50 per cent of locally generated business rates. This reform again stands to dramatically increase disparity of income between localities. Under the previous system, all business rates were collated centrally and redistributed nationally according to the number of people in that area. The new system was intended to encourage local authorities to drive local economies to attract more business and operate in a more business friendly manner, in competition

with other areas. This was a component of the Localism Act introduced via the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which came into being in April 2013. However, in its first year the scheme made a deficit of £27 million, which would have been closer to £200 million had a safety net mechanism not been in place to redistribute money from better performing authorities (LGA, 2015). The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 increased the ability of local authorities to retain business rates to 100 per cent and has been phasing the increase in rates in slowly in pilot areas since 2017. Nevertheless, there are several misgivings amongst councils about the risk involved with migrating to this new system. A 2014 Local Government Association (LGA) survey completed by the Chief Finance Officers of 34 per cent of English councils found that 66 per cent of councils felt they were overly reliant on a small number of large businesses to collect their business rates and 21 per cent stated their business rates income was at risk due to potential closures or appeals from the ratepayer. Most councils remain on the financial model created to help them retain 50 per cent of business rates which has a built-in safety net but it is unclear how the inequality between better and poorer performing areas will work once all councils move to 100 per cent. The current pilots also have a 'no detriment clause' which means that they are not facing the kind of risk they would if it were a nationwide roll out without this clause (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2018). The business rate model is another example of what Peck (2015, p.6) calls the "devolved risk" and "neoliberal proclivity for downloading, by way of responsibility dumping", and what Theodore (2020, p.1) calls the "distribution of economic risk", for income generation to the local level, which both have identified as a core component of Austerity Localism and Austerity Urbanism.

The model of financial restructuring under Localism has been highly criticised by leading associations of local authorities across the political spectrum and by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee. The Committee's report 'Social Care Funding: Time to end a national scandal' voiced concerns about the marketization of local authorities under Localism. "We share the concerns of many witnesses about the Government's plans to make local authorities more fiscally self-reliant" (House of Lords, 2019, p.3).

The Chairman of the Local Government Association, himself a Conservative, explained the likely severity of the cuts:

"Even if councils stopped filling in potholes, maintaining parks, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums, leisure centres and turned off every street light they will not have saved enough money to plug the financial black hole they face by 2020."

(Rutter, T., 2015)

It is interesting that opposition to these reforms have been heard from both Labour and Conservative Councillors alike. Ahead of the 2018 annual spending review, Leaders from 76 Labour Councils including large Councils such as Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle wrote a joint letter to the Government calling for an end to the current system (Public Sector Executive, 2018). Equally, ahead of the 2019 annual spending review the Conservative dominated County Councils Network (CCN) representing 36 two tier authorities published a report claiming authorities are being 'plunged into disarray', with the Chairman, Paul Carter, himself then Chief Executive of Kent County Council stating

“Even these draconian cuts won't be enough for many well-run councils to balance the books and it will leave our finances in disarray with many of us struggling to deliver even the basic level of local services.”

(Butler, 2019).

The 2019 annual Local Government Information Unit think tank (LGiU) survey found that of the 123 councils surveyed, 80 per cent said they had no confidence that the government's current model of local government finance is sustainable. One in 20 councils surveyed felt that they were concerned they would no longer be able to meet the legal minimum of statutory duties. 53 per cent of these councils were having to dip into financial reserves with 40 per cent having had to draw from reserves for the second year running (LGiU, 2019). At the time of writing 16 local authorities were either at risk of or had entered into insolvency as a result of the cuts (The Guardian, 2019). In her 2017 review of how English local authorities have coped with the cuts under austerity, Alison Gardner states that there is now a “narrowing expectation of what the local state could achieve.” (Gardner, 2017, p.164).

The fact that such strong cross-party opposition to these reforms exists at local authority level is demonstration of an interesting disconnect between central government political ideal and local government policy implementation in practice. In this case it is indicative that these neo-liberal reforms are not succeeding in their objectives. This finding is in keeping with those academics who have noted that just because neo-liberal reforms take place does not mean the market or individuals automatically steps in to fill the vacuum created.

“The awkward reality that the state and the market do not exist in a zero-sum relationship, and the stubborn fact that the suppression of the Leviathan state does not result in an automatic expansion of freedom, is a lesson that neoliberal reformers had to learn in political practice, not from classical theory. The contradictory strategy of public-sector cuts is nevertheless a recurring one.”

The cuts in central government grant funding to local authorities have had seismic effects on the ability of local authorities to work on anything other than their core statutory duties. Migrant integration is not a statutory duty and any responsibility to monitor disparity in integration outcomes has been removed. Even within the core services such as Child and Adult Social Services, which have been prioritised and largely protected from the worst of the cuts, service levels have decreased at a time when need has increased. Child Social Services assist migrant groups such as UASCs or NRPF families, some of this funding is reimbursed by central government, but as has been seen this is not at full cost recovery, and the wider costs fall to Child Social Services. Adult Social Services also support migrants such as the elderly or those with mental health illnesses who will also have felt the impact of the reduction in funding. Equally, whilst Adult Social Services were given annual top ups after the Care Quality Commission stated that Adult Social Services were approaching 'a tipping point' (NAO, 2018, p.36) the current precariousness of depending on annual injections, without the security of long-term funding or the ability to be able to store any of these annual injections in reserves has negative effects.

More than once within the semi-structured interviews conducted there was evidence that, whether aware of the concept of Austerity Localism or not, lead officers on the VPRS were noticing that designating migrant integration as a 'local issue' was cost or responsibility shunting. As one local authority officer describes "Basically, they are just pushing the duty and the issue down to local government, and they are not willing to fund it as required" (Local authority 6).

Whilst the socio cultural chapter evidences how neo-liberal thinking has become the 'only game in town' which has justified many of the restructuring which has taken place, it is not just academics who had misgivings about the changes brought in under the auspice of Coalition Localism, a House of Lords report into Localism had similar misgivings as they state "Localism should not be adopted purely as a way to achieve reductions in public sector cost" (House of Commons, 2011, p.3)

Legislative policy levers under Localism

Of all the legislative changes contained within the Localism Act 2011 which were intended to help local authorities offset the financial cuts they were experiencing, the Power of Competence has been described as the intended 'jewel in the crown' (Local Government Lawyer, 2013, p.6). The power was intended to give councils the confidence to innovate and to drive down costs (ibid.). Local government organisations

like the Local Government Association (LGA) had themselves lobbied for the introduction of the power and presented a draft local government bill to Parliament in 2010 suggesting the power which later became incorporated into the Localism Act 2011 (LGA, 2013). The LGA describe the Power of Competence as “a symbolic statement which promotes innovation and frees up thinking” (LGA, 2013, p.5). Nevertheless, despite being in favour of the power, the LGA themselves have criticised the way it was introduced as a having made it “limited by significant constraints set by central government” and subject to “central interference” (LGA, 2013, Foreword). The Chairman of the LGA called for an end to the “command and control, parent child relationship” between central and local government if the Power of Competence is to make a difference (ibid.).

Once a power lens is used to examine the legislative levers which accompanied the Power of Competence we can see why in contrast to the promise that the Power of Competence would mean that “No action – except raising taxes, which requires specific parliamentary approval – will any longer be ‘beyond the powers’ of local government”, in reality, the power delivered far less than the “explicit freedom” it had promised (Conservative Party, 2009, p.13).

A 2013 survey of 78 local authorities conducted by Local Government Lawyer (LGL) publication found that two years on from the introduction of the Power, only 6 per cent of local authorities felt it had made any significant difference and nearly half claimed it had made “no difference at all” (Local Government Lawyer, 2013, p.5). The publication stated that the ‘low use’ was due to the fact that the powers provisions “do not actually do what they say on the tin” (ibid.). The key reasons for this (as outlined in the LGA’s 2013 document “The General Power of Competence: Empowering councils to make a difference”) are as follows:

The Power of Competence only allows for charges to discretionary and not statutory services, in order to protect against people being charged for things such as adult and child social care. It is understandable that such core public services should not be chargeable. However, where charging discretionary services is allowed, local authorities are only allowed to charge cost recovery and the rules explicitly forbid profit or surplus making. Local authority officers thus see themselves as underfunded but not given the means to generate greater income.

With the Local Government Lawyer survey, less than a quarter of local authorities surveyed felt that the competence could actually be relied upon in practice, with the same amount stating the problem was that it remained, “unclear where the limits of the power lie in the absence of significant direction from the courts”. (Local Government Lawyer, 2013, p.6). This was similarly felt by the LGA who found that due to the unfamiliarity of

the terrain it was easier to use an existing law than the new power. A key problem for this being stated that “the GPC does not extend the ability of councils to create byelaws or undertake enforcement” (LGA, 2013, p.5). Nevertheless, the Local Government Lawyer publication did feel that the cuts to local authority funding coupled with the need to innovate meant that lawyers were being forced out of their comfort zone and in future will have to be more comfortable with legal risk, so in the long run these legal uncertainties may balance out (LGiU, 2013).

Local authorities are restrained by the Power of Competence in the kind of companies they allowed to trade as they can only trade with companies which have particular structures such as companies limited by shares. This restraint is in fundamental contradiction with the rhetoric surrounding Big Society under the Localism Act that aims to benefit civil society and foster local communities to be more involved with the running of local services. As the LGA describe “This prevents the use of community interest companies or similar, which councils may find more appropriate in some circumstances.” (LGA, 2013, p.5)

This requirement speaks to the neo-liberal economisation in nature of this particular form of Localism, where value is synonymous with cost- effectiveness, rather than any wider social good that may come from nurturing, exactly the kind of small local companies it was supposedly championing.

The Community Right to Bid (initially called the Community Right to Buy) and the Community Right to Challenge were key components of the Localism Act 2011 designed to give ‘revolutionary new rights’ to local residents (DCLG, quoted in Local Government Lawyer, 2013, p.14). £16 million was given to support community groups in accessing the capital needed to exercise these rights (My Community, 2012). The rights were in keeping with David Cameron’s 2010 emphasis on ‘Big Society’ where Britain was ‘all in this together’ (Conservative Manifesto, 2010, p.iii). Responsibility was firmly placed with individual citizens to do their part as Cameron argued “how will we revitalise communities unless people stop asking ‘who will fix this?’ and start asking ‘what can I do?’” (ibid.).

The Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Challenge have both been hampered by the fact that there is no preferential treatment given to the community group when the tendering process takes place. In the case of the Community Right to Challenge only 13 per cent of the Local Government Lawyer respondents claimed it was being used ‘a bit’ with 87 per cent saying it had not been used at all (ibid.). Worse yet, the process had in some cases prompted a tendering exercise which “rather than community management, lead to Serco or similar winning the contract.” (Local Government Lawyer, 2013, p.14) .This finding is supported by the Civil Exchange which

conducted 'Big Society' audits in 2012, 2013 and 2015 on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation drawing on large scale data sets such as the British Attitudes Survey and Gini Co-efficients amongst others. All audits have found that in direct contrast to the rhetoric of Localism the opening up of public services has benefitted the private sector far more than voluntary and community organisations (Civil Exchange, 2012).

Unfortunately, Big Society has not been able to fill the holes left by the welfare state retrenchment of local authorities. This is in keeping with Walker 2013's observation that

“the 'Big Society' project pretends that there is a zero-sum relationship between society and the state. It purports to believe that removing state funding will spontaneously create more community participation.”

The Civil Exchange's 2012 audit found there to be a 'Big Society Gap' in terms of both the level of finance and support on the local level which is needed due to cuts in central grant funding and restructuring, and what is available. This gap has been felt unequally across the UK, with the most deprived areas having the worst performing public services, the least amount of trust in public services but also the least likelihood to engage in social action or participate in volunteering (ibid.). The audit highlighted that those who volunteer are most likely to be middle aged, highly educated, religious and in professional occupations (ibid.). The inference is that these volunteers are likely to live in affluent areas and are thus less likely to help stem the declining standards within deprived areas. Equally, the report highlights that volunteering levels declined by 11 percentage points between 2005 and 2016 and the percentage of income an individual gives has also declined across all age ranges other than the over 65 (ibid.). The 2012 'Big Society' Audit found that rather than being strengthened the voluntary and community sector faced £3.3 billion cuts in statutory funding between 2010-16, a gap it felt would be impossible for 'Big Society' to fill through 'donations' (Civil Exchange, 2012, p.4).

Throughout Localism a kind of paradox can be witnessed where market models are purported as best placed to meet community interests. As part of the Coalition's stated intention to encourage community groups to have 'services enjoyed collectively....delivered by community groups' (DCLG, 2010 in IHBC) it created The Compact. The Compact was a renewed agreement for the government (and all of its delivery agents such as arms-length bodies) to work with Civil Society organisations (HM Government, 2010). The Compact was intended to encourage Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to collaborate in the building of 'Big Society' through reducing barriers to participation. In particular, the document includes several pledges to 'reform the commissioning environments in existing markets' this includes pledges to work with

the sector to reduce bureaucracy which might prevent the involvement of small organisations. For example, it pledges

“to remove barriers that may prevent CSOs accessing government funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.”

(HM Government, 2010, p.3)

However, the 2013 Big Society audit found a “largely negative or no change” effect on the government’s ‘Big Society’ aspiration to open up public services to ‘individuals demonstrating innovative ways of delivering public services and charities, social enterprises and private companies showing new ways of delivering them’ (Big Society Awards, quoted in Civil Exchange, 2013, p.20). According to a 2013 National Audit Office report into the role of major contractors in the delivery of public services, 100 companies held 60 per cent of central government contracts with 4 billion of these being held by just four companies: G4S, Serco, Capita and Atos (NAO, 2013). Whilst the audits highlight that the trend of commissioning out to large organisations like G4S first accelerated under the Labour government, they still find the trend has continued, and fallen far short of David Cameron’s 2010 promise to end the “big, giant state monopolies” (Cameron, quoted in The Telegraph, 2010). Indeed, the Public Accounts Committee who reviewed contracting out of government services found that “quasi-monopoly suppliers are emerging who squeeze out competition, often from smaller companies with specific experience” (Public Accounts Committee, 2014, p.4).

As stated within the section on the Power of Competence, the requirement to only trade with companies which are limited by shares or similar structures can limit the kind of organisations able to apply for tenders, excluding smaller organisations. In addition, tendering processes can be prohibitive to smaller community organisations due to the size of the task involved in providing all the documents required by the tendering portal.

Furthermore, in contrast to the claim that the Localism Act would lead to greater transparency, the ‘Big Society audits, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee all find evidence to suggest that the prevalence of large scale providers within government contracting is “reducing, not increasing, transparency and accountability”. (Civil Exchange, 2015, p.6).

Due to the cuts in funding to local authorities instead of championing the support of local community organisations, often local authorities engage in commissioning joint services with other local authorities in an effort to save money through economies of scale. This is direct contradiction with the aspirations of Localism and again benefits larger

corporations but is necessary under the conditions of austerity. As one of the local authority officers interviewed within the semi-structured interviews for this research describes

“Here at our council we have had a new Commercial Director and everything was supposed to make money, well how do you make money? How do you make this commercial? You can make this best value, and you can try and get value for money, you can share services for efficiency, but local is better, I mean we are busy sharing services but what it is, it is spreading resources further away if you like.”

(Local authority 4)

Whilst local government had been asking for the Power of Competence for some time, the restrictions by which it was introduced meant that in effect it was not the panacea to cure the ailments which the cuts in central grant funding created. The inability to make a profit or charge for discretionary services above cost recovery coupled with restrictions on the kind of company which authorities could work with meant that the power fell short of aspirations. At the same time, the powers supposedly given to communities, such as the Right to Bid and the Right to Challenge, did not deliver in terms of facilitating greater local ownership or notions of ‘Big Society’. Consequently, the legislative powers given did not increase the ability of local authorities and as such did not provide them with greater ability to facilitate migrant integration.

Austerity meant a reduction in the volume of people volunteering and in the portion of income people donated to charity. An additional danger of handing so many of the efforts needed to tackle inequality and promote integration on ‘Big Society’ can be that ‘Big Society’ may not agree with government on which groups or causes deserve their time and efforts. This may have direct effects on migrants and minorities as stated by a review of the Localism Act by a House of Lords enquiry.

“There is not universal support for the idea that central government should retreat entirely from local affairs, allowing accountability to local people to replace performance monitoring from the centre. In particular, organisations representing vulnerable, marginalised or minority groups argue that these sections of the community need protection that cannot be provided by the current mechanisms of local democratic accountability.”

(House of Commons, 2011, p.3)

In short, many of the powers supposedly given to local authorities under Localism were curtailed by accompanying legislation dictating how they could use these powers.

Researchers have commented how some of the reforms under Localism benefitted the sub-local rather than local government, and often ultimately benefitted large scale state monopolies who could best navigate centrally dictated tendering processes.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that Localism under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 failed to increase the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. It has been seen that the normative discourse under Localism was generally positive when it comes to creating an environment conducive to helping local authorities facilitate migrant integration. In many respects it seemed to reflect current academic thinking on how integration works best, championing the role of the local and also moving away from focuses on single groups of migrants which can be detrimental. Academics in local integration in the UK stated that “the United Kingdom’s localist turn and the emphasis on mainstreaming should be welcomed” (Ali & Gidley, 2014, p.23). However, CCI also showed a neo-liberal preference for social mobility rather than supported interventions to help migrant integration and a movement away from monitoring integration outcomes.

The fact that the normative policy levers surrounding Localism and migrant integration are on the surface complimentary to the academic literature on this topic is one of the reasons why policy-frame analysis does not always serve to give an accurate picture.

Within his work analysing types or models of integration governance, Scholten (2016) uses policy frames to ascertain that the UK as having ‘the ideal type of multi-level governance’ when it comes to migrant integration (Scholten, 2016, p.986). This type is constituted as having no sense of hierarchy with “actors from various levels are to meet on a level playing field” (ibid., p.986). Admittedly, the core component of Scholten’s research method involves analysing policy documents from 2000-2010 which is outside of the timeframe of this thesis, however he does interview people who work in UK policy and he references CCI as being evidence that “coordination framework at the national level has remained weak” (ibid., p.983). While officially coordination has remained weak, what is missed is the removal of funding as well as additional statutory duties which make it much harder to work on anything which is not a statutory duty. This chapter has focused wholly on policy levers which constitute part of the Localism agenda under the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010-2018. Once a power lens is introduced we see a picture which is far from conducive to local authorities facilitating migrant integration. In fact it could be argued that the designation of integration as a ‘local issue’ in during a time of super austerity could be deemed a ‘white elephant’ as it becomes one more responsibility on top of the other statutory duties on local authorities. In keeping

with Brown's 1995 research into the dangers of neo-liberalism, it argues that in this case greater freedom and responsibility was actually a constraint as it brought with it additional duties whilst at the same time decimating the resources local authorities had to promote integration.

In terms of general powers given to local authorities, Localism promised to deliver a radical handover of power from the central to local level. George Osborne, Chancellor Exchequer at the time, declared the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 to be the "biggest transfer of power from central to local government in recent history" (Osbourne, cited in Watt, 2015). In theory, local government was handed an unprecedented opportunity to facilitate migrant integration. Nevertheless, as this chapter has shown, once these financial and legislative policy levers are examined, they point to a very different picture for local authorities.

This chapter has shown that the additional powers to increase council tax to cover the shortfall in social care funding do not cover more than a fraction of the mounting costs involved and this has forced the government to provide ad hoc year on year cash injections to stop further authorities falling into administration. The ability to retain a portion of business rates is so far not delivering the kind of return envisioned, and it remains unclear how this will work for poorer authorities once the safety mechanism currently in place is removed. At the local level there has been cross party opposition to these reforms, indicating that those councillors working within local authorities see a danger in the assumption that market forces will step in to fill the hole that that central funding has left.

Within this environment local authorities are seeking to prioritise those services most crucial to the wellbeing of their constituents, those of Adult and Child Social Services. These are also the services with some of the most stringent statutory duties which local authorities are bound by law to fulfil whilst still balancing their budgets. Local authorities are being handed the mantle of responsibility for driving integration at exactly the time that their assets and means to do so are being stripped away.

The general Power of Competence which was intended to free up local authorities to innovate came with constraints, such as restrictions on the kind of organisation they could commission services from. These restrictions, and others relating to tendering, serve as a barrier to accessing exactly the kind of local organisation Localism was supposed to champion and seem to have mostly benefitted large UK monopolies or international organisations who win a significant portion of central and local government contracts. Furthermore, the legal uncertainty caused by the introduction of the Localism Act, in addition to austerity, have meant that local authorities are reluctant to innovate,

although some are being forced to due to the severity of their positions. 'Big Society' all but disappeared from government discourse after the 2015 Conservative election and as the 'Big Society' audits have demonstrated, it has fallen very far from its original goals. Rather than stepping up to fill the void, volunteering and the portion of income people donate to charity reduced by 11 percentage points between 2005-2016 (Civil Exchange, 2015).

Consequently, the overall picture for the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration appears to have lessened rather than increased as a result of Localism. Local authority officers working on migration who were interviewed as part of this research have noted a reluctance by local authorities to work on anything other than core statutory duties. Some local authority officers have mentioned that there is even greater reluctance than previous for local authorities to spend money on activities related to migrant integration. This is deemed to be the result of the negative normative climate associated with migration which is perceived to have worsened since the 2015 Migrant Crisis and the 2016 Referendum on leaving the European Union (EU). More on this normative climate will be covered in Chapter 7.

These findings are in keeping with other academics who have seen these cuts not just as a necessary result of the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis but as part of a deeper attempt to usher in a neo-liberal agenda into public services and weakening or dismantling of the welfare state (Clarke & Newman, 2012; Levitas, 2012; Newman, 2013; Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011; Wilks-Heeg, 2011). The concern is not just the severity of the cuts but also the very ethos of marketizing local government which is a public good. Local authorities have duties to protect the most vulnerable, it will be seen in Chapter 6 that for many migrants local authorities perform the function of a parallel welfare state, necessarily supportive and redistributive. The results found would not have emerged had a power lens not been introduced and policy frame analysis had been relied upon.

Chapter 5 – The Legislative/Political domain

This chapter examines the question how changes in the legal and political domain of integration under the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010 to 2018 affected the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration?

Introduction

The legal political dimension of integration (as first outlined by Entzinger (2000)) encompasses integration aspects relating to status and the ease of which it is possible to attain full citizenship. It also encompasses political rights, such as the right to vote or enjoy political liberties such as forming political associations. Of the eight policy areas identified by the MIPEX as key domains of integration, five fall into the legal political category and will be examined within this chapter: permanent residency, access to nationality/citizenship, family reunion, anti-discrimination and political participation. In addition to these categories, key legal changes affecting the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration such as the removal of legal aid will also be covered in this chapter.

Legal regularity can be seen as spectrum with full citizenship being the most secure, permanent residency still affording many entitlements down to more precarious forms of leave to remain such as NRPF. For this reason, this thesis uses the term irregular or undocumented migrant to refer to those who have fallen off the end of this spectrum as legality is often not binary but rather a grey area (e.g. ascertaining whether an unsuccessful asylum seeker has taken necessary steps to leave). Likewise legal status does not necessarily reflect levels of integration, as a migrant could be well integrated socio-economically and socio-culturally but could fall into a position of being irregular such as a LAC who has grown up in the UK but has not been supported to access citizenship by their social worker and loses their eligibility when they turn 18).

That being said, as Sarah Spencer has pointed out, legal rights and responsibilities are the foundations to long term integration (Spencer, 2006). Legal and political rights 'make participation in each (integration) domain possible or impossible' (Feldman & Gidley, 2013, p.41). Similarly, Ager and Strang in their 2008 conceptual framework of migrant integration had rights and citizenship as the core 'foundation' underpinning all other migrant integration domains (Ager & Strang, 2008). Research has shown that status and its accompanying rights generally play a significant role in how a migrant might feel that they have integrated into their host country (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014; Bloch, 2000).

Factors such as not being able to be reunited with family members can undermine resettlement efforts for a refugee (UNHCR, 2011), whilst a lack of rights for migrants on spousal visas contributed to a weak sense of belonging for refugees in Canada (Hou et al., 2016). Restrictive policies relating to securing permanent status have a much more punitive effect on vulnerable migrants (Strik et al., 2013; Pedersen, 2011), exactly the kind of migrants who are at greater risk of becoming destitute and potentially in need of assistance by local authorities. Lack of status puts irregular migrants at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers and landlords, potentially living and working in difficult conditions (Bloch et al., 2014). Precarious accommodation for irregular migrants

can impact on children's access to education due to moving locations and heightened anxieties about school enrolment (Sigona & Hughes, 2012). Thus, even if local authorities undertake work to promote a sense of community, and a local sense of belonging, if a migrant is unable to reunite with their spouse, or vote in a referendum which affects their future citizenship rights for example, this will likely impact on how integrated a migrant feels. Local authorities have no say in retained powers such as immigration law or voting rights. However, the kind of laws and status given to a migrant have a direct effect on the kind of assistance local authorities can provide for a migrant or the kind of migrants who might end up falling into their care. As a consequence, when considering whether the designation of integration as a 'local issue' helped or hindered the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration, the legal and political changes which took place under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 must be considered to see what impact they had on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration.

Legislative changes and the Hostile Environment.

The Conservative Manifesto 2010 included a pledge to lower net migration to the tens of thousands annually by 2015 (The Conservative Party, 2010). This pledge was retained within the Coalition Agreement 2010. As a result of this pledge many restrictive immigration measures were introduced as the Coalition Government under Theresa May as Home Secretary designed to make the UK a "really hostile environment for illegal immigrants" (May, cited in Kirkup & Winnett, 2012). In stark contrast to the weak coordination from central government that had epitomised CCI integration strategy, the hostile environment was born out of an inter-ministerial group specifically created to address these issues named the Inter-Ministerial Group on Migrants' Access to Benefits and Public Services (MATBAP). MATBAP was comprised of 12 Ministers or Parliamentary Undersecretaries responsible for Immigration, Care Services, Employment, Government Policy, Treasury, Schools, Housing and Local Government, Foreign and Commonwealth, Universities and Science, Justice, Health and Transport (Bolt, 2016). It was overseen principally by David Cameron as Prime Minister and Theresa May as Home Secretary (Grierson, 2018). As the breadth of these ministries involved in MATBAP indicates, the desire was to make it harder for irregular migrants to live in the UK in every walk of life. These measures saw the UK lose points in several areas and in the case of family reunion the UK ranked the lowest of the 38 countries measured.

“These major restrictions were mostly motivated by the government's pledge to cap migration at the tens of thousands and to pursue austerity and localism. Now non-EU residents in the UK who want to invest in their integration will face greater hardship and costs than almost anywhere else in the developed world to reunite with their spouses and children, settle permanently or become citizens”

(MIPEX, 2015)

The 2014 Immigration Act introduced many legislative requirements aimed at creating the hostile environment, such as checking immigration status when applying for drivers licences, a requirement on landlords to check the immigration status of potential tenants, a requirement on banks to check status of account holders, and on employers to check their status of their staff. Additional charging and immigration status checking was required of NHS staff. Some academics have labelled this encroachment of enforcement activities into the lives of ordinary citizens as ‘everyday bordering’ (Wemyss et al., 2018). Local authorities supporting migrants on the VPRS to overcome these every day borders have regularly commented on how difficult the changes introduced under the hostile environment have been, often saying that without their support they were not sure how they would have gotten it done. As one local authority officer commented

“Now you have to factor in the changes, to the legislation and things which has made it much more difficult for people whose immigration status, well say for somebody who is not, who doesn't work in immigration... You really have to jump through a lot of hoops now to open a bank account the people on our schemes, and people who aren't on our scheme not on the Syrian resettlement programme trying to open a bank account without having an advocate there, who is pressing at every stage of the process, to get the required evidence and to remind bank staff what is and isn't appropriate, it would be really, really difficult for someone not on the scheme”

(Local authority 4)

Additional aspects of the hostile environment were the exclusion of migrants from forms of benefits, such as barriers for EEA nationals to access unemployment and housing benefit and expanding the categories of migrants classified as NRPF. More on these aspects are covered in Chapters 6 and 7. The 2016 Immigration Act extended many of the aspects of the hostile environment from criminals to all categories of migrants. This was the case for aspects such as ‘deport first, appeal later’, which had previously only applied to migrants with a criminal background but was extended in 2016 was ruled unlawful by the supreme court in 2017 (Jones, 2018).

If the existence of a centrally controlled ministerial led team such as MATBAP is considered alongside the clear control mechanisms outlined within the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, we find a migrant integration governance model resembling Scholten's 2016 'centralist' type. He describes this type as having

“clear top-down and hierarchical relations between levels of government... this involves a clear central codification of the division of labour between levels and control mechanisms to make sure that policy implementation at the local level clearly follows central rules and reflects the central policy frame. In this type, one should expect there to be a clear national structure for policy coordination, such as a specialized department and a political responsible minister specific for integration policy.”

(Scholten, 2016, p.976)

Yet Scholten's research identified the UK as having a MLG model of migrant integration characterised by “vertical interaction and joint coordination of relations between various levels of government” and to “not involve a sense of hierarchy; rather, actors from various levels are to meet on a level playing field” (ibid.). The difference between Scholten's 2016 findings and those in this thesis cannot be attributed to Scholten's research predominantly having focused on policy frames up to 2010 alone as he also includes mention of the CCI within his research, claiming that it is “indication that the coordination framework at the national level has remained weak” (Scholten, 2016, p.983). Rather, the difference in classification is evidence of the danger of using policy frame analysis which a) focuses only on migrant integration policies to the exclusion of wider policies affecting migrant integration and b) it does not capture the power levers which are not explicit within the written policies. This evidences why this thesis and Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016a) suggest a methodology which support a component of local level field work in addition to a wider analysis of all policy levers.

Legal aid

When it comes to the legislative changes affecting the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018, one of the most immediate economic levers employed was the removal of legal aid support to migrants for almost any legal need other than asylum claims. The 2012 Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) saw the end to legal aid support to migrants for all forms of legal cases other than asylum and a few other exceptions, such as victims of domestic abuse, human trafficking or modern slavery

(Ministry of Justice, 2019). LASPO also made it illegal for immigration advice to be given unless that person is certified by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). This change meant that many migrants suddenly found themselves without support to navigate complex legal situations. Some examples of where support was removed include people in detention centres (excluding asylum claims), people seeking leave to remain and young migrants such as UASC who had any kind of claim outside of asylum grounds.

As a result of LASPO there was an 85 per cent reduction in the volume of non-asylum immigration cases and an 80 per cent reduction in spending on non-asylum cases supported by legal aid in comparison to pre LASPO levels (Ministry of Justice, 2019). In total, it was estimated that spend on non-asylum immigration had shrunk from £10 million to £2 million per annum and civil representation for migrants from £10 million to £4 million.

Due to the diminished funding available it is harder to find lawyers working in this area, and as fewer lawyers work on non-asylum immigration cases, it becomes harder to find lawyers with the relevant expertise. A lack of access to legal advice has been a recurring theme witnessed throughout the participant observation undertaken for this thesis, which has created what has become known as 'advice deserts' with one local authority dispersal area complaining that the nearest legal advice for the 200 asylum seekers in their area was over 40 miles away. Whilst the costs of attending meetings with legal advisors is in theory reimbursable to asylum seekers, there are often delays in payment being put onto their Aspen cards (the cards they receive their weekly support), meaning that transport to attend a meeting with a lawyer 40 miles away has to come out of the £37 per week the asylum seeker is living on (participant observation). There are now five providers of LASPO supported legal advice across the entire South East, an area of 7,400 square miles (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

Within government facilities the situation is no better where only half of those in immigration detention have any legal representation, and half of those who do have access to a solicitor (Electronic Immigration Network, 2019).

Many of the costs of providing legal advice have fallen on local authorities, NGOs or lawyers who are willing to work pro bono. However, there has also been a worryingly increase in the number of vulnerable migrants trying to self-represent themselves in court, leading to situations where there judges have provided "advice from the bench which could, if not handled sensitively, undermine their impartiality" (Ministry of Justice, 2019, p.35).

In terms of the effect of the introduction of LASPO on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration, the following points can be considered. There has been a direct transference in costs from central government to local government at a time when local authorities are facing unprecedented cuts and are scaling back on anything other than statutory services. Whilst it is hard to calculate the exact cost LASPO has had upon local authorities, it is possible to get a few indications from the type of support given by local authorities to migrants who have been affected by this law.

Legal aid funding was removed for family reunification and for separated UASC needing legal support outside of asylum grounds. Local authorities have been criticised in recent years for not taking steps to regularise a child in care's status as the authority is the legal guardian of a child in care and securing a child's status should be part of a child's care plan. As LASPO also banned the provision of legal aid advice to anyone who is not OISC accredited, this means that local authorities have to cover the cost of obtaining necessary legal advice. It is hard to estimate exactly what that cost is to local authorities. However, a report by East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (EMSMP) found that for every UASC looked after by an East Midland authority the average legal costs to that authority were £896 per annum (EMSMP, 2017). That cost includes age assessment which would be incurred whether LASPO had been introduced or not, but it also includes judicial reviews, which would have been covered by LASPO. A similar report by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) noted the difficulty accessing legal aid imposes for local authorities wishing to help a UASC or young migrant in their care

“Respondents commonly described challenges around the asylum process, and in acquiring sufficient numbers of legal aid solicitors which young people are entitled to, as well legal counsel for the authority to navigate the asylum process. The rising demand has, and is likely to continue to put additional pressure on the system.”

(ADCS, 2016, p.25)

Fortunately, in 2018 The Children's Society in conjunction with Islington Law Centre won a legal challenge against the government's removal of legal aid support for children, which should have meant that going forward the Lord Chancellor would reinstate legal aid for this cohort (Islington law Centre, 2018), although at the time of writing it was still not taking place.

Another area of cost shunting to the local level as a result of LASPO is when it comes to supporting a migrant child in care to access citizenship. Accessing expert legal advice in this area, which is undoubtedly in the best interests of the child is costly to the local

authority. This cost could be offset by the Home Office foregoing the cost of applying for citizenship or charging the local authority cost price. As there is no reduction, this meant that in 2017 the Home Office was making £587 for every child a local authority assisted to acquire citizenship (NRPF, 2017).

Other legal costs to local authorities relate to the NRPF supported by local authorities. LASPO removed legal aid assistance to applications for leave to remain under family life rules, private life rules which are the immigration routes most frequently used by people on social services support (NRPF, 2018). At present only approximately 3 per cent of people who are cut off from social service support return to their country of origin, the remaining 97 per cent make further immigration claims to remain in the UK (NRPF, 2018c, p.2). Whilst an authority may not be responsible for the legal costs to support people who are NRPF, they may well find themselves supporting them in terms of accommodation or subsistence, the length of time they receive that support is extended if they are unable to resolve their legal case.

In addition to these costs being transferred to local authorities, there is also the detrimental psychological impact uncertain status has on migrants (Olukotun et al., 2019; Stewart & Mulvey, 2014), which means that the additional barriers to regularising immigration status caused by LASPO may well have made it harder for migrants to integrate.

The stated aim of this cut in legal funding was on austerity grounds, however, in keeping with the Austerity Localism and Austerity Urbanism literature, some academics have argued that the true rationale was to reorganise the legal field upon neo-liberal lines. LASPO was another state retrenchment of the welfare state, with state funded legal aid being the kind of interventionist, equaliser of structural disadvantages deemed superfluous under neo-liberalism (Mant, 2017). LASPO removed support not just to immigration law but also to family law, social welfare law and early civil law enquiries. Mant (2017) draws on Brown's (2015) labelling of cuts to legal funding as part of a neo-liberal 'stealth revolution' with legal representation becoming a commodity rather than a public right under the welfare state. She argues that "the 'economisation' of social policy such as welfare and legal aid and the family justice system, has resulted in an economic re-making of the ideas of justice, fairness and equality" (Mant, 2017, p.1). Mant argues that austerity ushered in the kind of thinking that made previous political commitments to fairness and equality within the legal sector be recast as luxuries the state could ill afford to uphold. Furthermore, part of the justification in removing legal aid was the claim that certain legal avenues were simple to navigate and as such did not require support or representation. This claim has been refuted by several organisations working in support

of migrants and is backed up by the fact that immigration law wording doubled between 2010 to 2018, with 1,300 changes to immigration law introduced in 2012 alone under the first introductions of the hostile environment (Nour, 2018). This recasting of the need for legal advice as a failing on behalf of the individual to navigate the immigration system by themselves is another hallmark of neo-liberal thinking, with its the hyper individualist belief that anything is possible provided you just work hard enough (Wiggan, 2012; Mant, 2017).

Permanent Residency

Researchers have pointed to a connection between security of status and sense of integration (Bloch, 2000; Stewart & Mulvey, 2014; Strik et al., 2013; Pedersen, 2011). Hou et al. (2016) found a correlation between a weak sense of belonging and barriers preventing migrants from having the full rights associated with permanent residency, indicating that the harder it is to achieve this status, the less of a sense of belonging towards the host country the migrant may feel.

The policies introduced under the Coalition in relation to permanent residence caused the UK to drop 11 points in this area, it placed 31 out of the 38 countries assessed for permanent residency policies within the MIPEX (MIPEX, 2015). The extension of various requirements such as income and language abilities have made it as difficult for immigrants to become permanent residents as it is to become citizens (ibid.). The MIPEX index found the UK to have

“One of the most restrictive and expensive paths to settle permanently and become UK citizens, with few free English and citizenship courses for immigrants to succeed.”

(MIPEX, 2015)

In 2011, the Coalition introduced its first restrictions in this area, requiring any applicant for residency to have spent all the criminal convictions (Gower, 2015). In 2012 post-study work visas were abolished preventing any international students from undertaking any work in the UK for up to two years post-graduation thus denying them a path to settle permanently. Most Tier 5 temporary workers and Tier 2 non-EU skilled workers now had to leave the UK after six years and the ‘private life route’ where long settled immigrants could claim status was extended from 14 to 20 years.

In addition to greater restrictions on eligibility, tougher conditions were also imposed to accessing permanent status. The income threshold for Tier 2 skilled workers (excluding skills shortage professions) rose to £35,000 annual income, and a ‘Life in the UK test’

alongside a language test set at B1 fluency (high) were introduced. The fee to obtain residency was also increased from £155 in 2003 to £1,500 in 2013, in April 2018 this increased to £2,389 (UKVI, 2020). In 2015, £1,500 was double the monthly average earnings of a non-EU migrant (MIPEX, 2015b). These increased restrictions meant that in 2015 the UK had the third most restrictive policies out of the 38 countries. By comparison, most other MIPEX countries have only basic salary and language requirements and cost between £200-350 for the application (ibid.). There was, however, a small improvement in the clarified allowed absences outside of the UK, which was set at 180 days every 12 months, rather than having to record each individual day over the relevant time period.

The UK equally did not score favourably when it came to security of status either, with potential waiting times longer than most other countries and an element of discretion when it comes to who is granted permanent residency with only basic means of appeal (MIPEX, 2015b). Residency can also be overturned more easily such as upon receipt of a criminal conviction.

The impact of these changes on the ability of local authorities to facilitate integration is that they may deter people from applying for permanent status which can both affect a sense of belonging but also lead to a migrant remaining on a less secure form of leave to remain. Permanent residence gives someone the ability to live and work in the UK with no time restriction, it is an incentive to put down roots and a likely factor in helping people to feel more integrated. Increasing the barriers to accessing permanent residency, further increases feelings of precariousness unnecessarily.

Citizenship

If security of status contributes to an increased ability to integrate, then the most secure form of status is citizenship. For many, citizenship brings the security to finally put down roots (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014; Bloch, 2000). In their 2014 research interviewing 30 refugees of 23 different nationalities in Scotland, Stewart & Mulvey found that “Talking of the benefits of becoming a British citizen, many interviewees felt that only citizenship would mark the end of their asylum and refugee journey” (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014, p.1028). Citizenship not only enables full access to all voting privileges and benefits, it also affects how the host population view the migrant. Bloch’s (2000, p.78) research involving 180 refugees in the London borough of Newham concluded that “Anything less than full citizenship will impede settlement because members of the host society do not see the migrant as part of that society’. The danger of facilitating permanent residence

but restricting citizenship is that it can lead migrants to be treated like second class citizens when it comes to national politics, for example, such as not being able to vote in a national referendum such as Brexit.

Whilst the Coalition Government were praised for having discarded Labour's 2009 'earned citizenship' route which was deemed excessively complicated they nonetheless increased the language requirements involved, more on this is covered in the Education section of Chapter 6.

The fee for citizenship at the time of MIPEX publication in 2015 was the highest amongst all the countries on the index, although at £906 it was still lower than the price of permanent residency £1,500. This fee post April 2018 increased to £1,330 (UKVI 2020). Permanent residency in general needs to have been obtained and held for a year before citizenship can be applied for, meaning that the cumulative cost of applying for citizenship (not including English language tuition and life in the UK test preparation), cost the equivalent of two month's salary of a non-EU citizens' average monthly income in 2015 (MIPEX, 2015b).

In addition to these conditions, a 'good character' clause was also introduced in 2012 and expanded in 2014 whereby criminal convictions were grounds to refuse naturalisation (Gower, 2015). Anyone who had a criminal conviction, which automatically included having entered the UK clandestinely, would not be able to apply for citizenship for 10 years after this offence. The bar for what constitutes a criminal offence has been set very low with young people who have received cautions or had fights at school being classified as criminals.

A 2017 report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration criticised the good character clause for not discerning between children and adults and questioned how enforcing such a clause for all children over the age of 10 balanced against safeguarding responsibilities for welfare of children (Bolt, 2017). The Home Office issued revised guidance on the matter in 2019 but this has still been criticised for not taking into account the recommendations of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration report (Rahman, 2019). These changes can have an impact on how local authorities support UASC and care leavers to access citizenship, as UK children in care are six times more likely to be cautioned or convicted of a crime than other young people (Prison Reform Trust, 2016).

Local authorities in the UK have responsibilities to ensure the welfare and safeguarding of children in their care, which includes having access to specialist legal advice to assist them in securing their status and obtaining citizenship if applicable (NRPF, 2017). In recent years, local authorities have been criticised for not taking timely action to secure

citizenship for children in their care (Local Government Ombudsman, 2016). In 2016 the Local Government Ombudsman criticised Greenwich Council for failing to assist a teenager in their care to obtain citizenship before she reached 18 with the consequence that her application for leave to remain was rejected by the Home Office meaning she would have to return to Nigeria. Children only have to have been resident in the UK for seven years before they are eligible to apply for citizenship whereas the criteria are much stricter for adults. Failing to submit the application before the age of 18 meant that she was no longer eligible for this shorter residence duration to access citizenship (Foreigners in UK, 2016). Dudley Council has also had similar accusations made after it failed to assist two children who would have been eligible for citizenship (Mohdin, 2018). Even if a local authority member of staff is well acquainted with the legal system to help a child access citizenship, LASPO has meant that legal specialists have to be consulted which can be difficult to find and prove costly. In addition to these legal costs, in 2017 the fee to register a child as British stood at £973. There is no reduction to this fee if the child is in care, even though the actual cost to the Home Office of processing that application was only £386 (op cit NRPF, 2017). On a more positive note, the UK has continued to uphold its recognition of dual nationality for immigrants and UK born children.

The introduction of the good character clause for accessing citizenship which sets the bar as low as a caution, when children in care are six times more likely than their counterparts to receive cautions, places additional pressures on local authorities to safeguard the wellbeing of the migrant children in their care. In addition the removal of legal aid, the requirement for any person issuing immigration advice to be OISC accredited, the increase in cost of applying for citizenship, with no reductions for children in care mean that the additional costs involve fall on the local authority. For these reasons, it is argued the changes to citizenship rights under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have made it harder for local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities.

Family Reunion

Research has shown that the ability to be reunited with your family plays a strong role in how integrated a migrant may feel in their host country (Sibley et al., 2012; Choummanivong et al., 2014; Refugee Council, 2018). Most of the research focuses on refugees or asylum seekers and family reunion as in these cases there is often the additional worry as to the security and wellbeing of their separated family members, whose lives may be at risk (Choummanivong et al., 2014; Refugee Council, 2018).

However, Sibley et al.'s 2012 research demonstrates that family reunion is still a major concern to a broad spectrum of third country nationals in the UK including those on temporary visas, British nationals and even naturalised British Citizens.

The contribution of family reunion to integration is recognised within the EU Directive of Family Reunification

“Family reunification is a necessary way of making family life possible. It helps to create sociocultural stability facilitating the integration of third country nationals in the Member State, which also serves to promote economic and social cohesion, a fundamental Community objective stated in the Treaty.”

(EU Council Directive, Preamble)

This is recognised by the UNHCR who state that

“Without the opportunity to reunite with family members, resettlement runs the risk of not being a meaningful, durable and sustainable solution.”

(UNCHR, 2011, p.269)

Family reunification is generally the most common way by which migrants will have access to enter a country, with 28 per cent of EU residency permits in the 2013 being granted for family reasons, compared to 23 per cent for work and 20 per cent coming for education (European Commission, 2015). The UK has a similar finding with 44 per cent of immigrants coming into the UK in 2017 stating their principal reason for coming was family reunification, with the next most common reasons being employment (29 per cent) and study (12 per cent) (Kone et al., 2019). It is perhaps, unsurprising then that when tasked with trying to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands by 2015, the Coalition Government aimed to introduce restrictions in this area.

Of the eight integration policy domains reported against by the MIPEX, the UK scored the lowest in the category of family reunion. Due to the changes introduced to this category by the Coalition Government the UK ranked 38 out 38 countries (MIPEX, 2015).

There are various different legal routes for a migrant to be reunited with their family depending upon their status, often confusingly all discussed under the umbrella term of family reunion. For ease of clarity the following paragraphs examine British citizens wishing to be reunited with their family under the Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016.

The key change was the introduction of a minimum income requirement of £18,600 per annum to bring a spouse or other partner to the UK, rising to £22,400 if the spouse or partner is also bringing one child and an extra £2,400 on top for every additional child. The amount was set at the rate where Housing Benefit is no longer available. If it is not

possible to demonstrate the amount as annual salary it could also be demonstrated by proof of savings or alternative income. It is estimated that 47 per cent of the UK working population would not be able to afford family reunification at these rates (ibid.). These sums must continue to be proved for two and a half years after arrival to secure continued leave to remain and at the five-year interval if applying for permanent status. In 2015 fees to apply stood at £956, the highest of any country in the world, the average MIPEX country fee costing around £100-160 (MIPEX, 2015).

Additional changes included the introduction of basic English language requirements and familiarity with UK culture, for spousal or other partner (civil partner, fiancé(e) unmarried or same sex partners) leave to enter. Newly married spouses, or new other partners, now have to wait five years after entering the UK to apply for settlement in order test the validity of the relationship. The right of spouses or other partners who have been together for four years or more prior to arrival in the UK to apply for immediate settlement was also removed, and a similar wait time of five years after they have been in the UK introduced (Gower, 2015).

It has become harder to bring wider family members, with dependents or grandparents only eligible to apply if it can be proven that they require long term care from the UK relative which could not be given elsewhere. If relatives arrive under such criteria, they are designated NRPF. Aunts and uncles are no longer eligible under any circumstance (MIPEX, 2015b). Family members who wish to visit can no longer appeal against a negative family visit visas application unless on a human rights or discrimination ground (Gov.uk, 2013). On a more positive note, the minimum age for visa application for family reunion was lowered from 21 in 2008 to 18 (MIPEX, 2015b).

Resettled refugees, former asylum seeker refugees and asylum seekers have different options open to them to be reunited with their families. Resettled refugees can apply for family members to join them (providing those relatives are within the countries the UK accepts resettled refugees from). To avoid confusion with the official UNHCR family reunification route, within the VPRS this category has come to be known as the family connections route (participant observation) and is run and coordinated through the VPRS teams in the UK. The official UNHCR family reunification route is one of the seven categories of vulnerability which makes a refugee eligible for resettlement, very few refugees are resettled this way (participant observation).

Refugees who have not been resettled through the UNHCR can apply to be reunited with a relative who has refugee status in the UK through family reunion under Immigration laws (UKVI, 2021). This category of refugees will not receive the same financial and integration support resettled refugees do and will likely have to pay for their flight to the

UK. In general, non-resettled refugees and those granted humanitarian protection do not have to satisfy aspects such as the income requirement that British citizens do (Gower & McGuinness, 2018). These applications are usually free of charge and the reunited refugee is eligible for the same welfare benefits on arrival as other refugees. Asylum seekers who have spouses, siblings or children in Europe can apply for family reunification under the Dublin III scheme provided the family member is formally registered in Europe as an asylum seeker or refugee (Mobile Info, 2019).

Political Participation and Voter Rights

The political dimension of integration ranges from the right to vote (and at what level - local, national, referenda etc.) to involvement in civil society. UK policies have generally been inclusive when it comes to both voting rights, with Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK being able to vote in every election, regardless of whether they have citizenship. Migrants with UK citizenship and Republic of Ireland residents in the UK are also eligible in every UK election. EU citizens are (at the time of writing) eligible to vote in local and European elections (Gov.uk, 2019b). The UK Electoral Commission also communicates key messages regarding voter registration and forthcoming elections in a number of languages.

Referenda have different rules each time on who is eligible to vote, depending on the topic in question. In the 2016 Brexit referendum for example, only UK citizens, Commonwealth residents in the UK and Republic of Ireland residents in the UK were allowed to vote, leaving those with permanent status and EU citizens excluded from a vote which arguably affected them more than other Commonwealth citizens. Several researchers have demonstrated that the referendum and Brexit have had damaging effects on migrant's sense of belonging in the UK (Botterill et al., 2019; Burrell & Schweyher, 2019; Guma & Jones, 2019; Ranta & Nancheva, 2018). As Ranta and Nancheva (2018, p.8) describe

“EU nationals had been excluded from taking part in the Brexit referendum, even though its outcome significantly affected them. This created a democratic and legitimacy deficit, which exacerbated the legal insecurity around the status of more than three million EU citizens living in the UK. It is inevitable that such a context would affect EU nationals' sense of belonging.”

The decision to exclude EU citizens from the Brexit referendum is in contrast to the referendum on Scottish independence which allowed those with residency status and EU citizens to vote (Tatham, 2016). Additionally, UK citizens who had lived abroad for more than 15 years were also excluded from voting, leaving a potential 1 to 2 million

British citizens living in Europe at risk of potentially losing the right to remain in their current residence (Tatham, 2016). Considering the Leave vote won by 1.2 million votes, it is likely that had the 3 million EU citizens living in the UK been eligible to vote, the result would have been in favour of remaining. The impact of Brexit on local authorities is at the time of writing, unknown, uncertain and still unfolding, although some research on the immediate effects is emerging (Frost, 2019).

The time boundary of this thesis ends with the introduction of the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper in March 2018 which saw the end to the designation of integration as a 'local issue'. Consequently, issues such as the EU withdrawal bill and EU Settled Status fall outside of the scope of cover here. Nonetheless, Brexit equally cannot be ignored as the rise in hate crime immediately post referendum and the ensuing uncertainty of status for European citizens took place within the 2010-2018 timeframe of this thesis. The impact of Brexit on migrants impacts on several different integration dimensions, and will be addressed within the relevant section, but is covered most extensively within the Socio-Cultural Chapter 7.

Brexit referendum aside, it has been argued that in general voter rights, though important, can carry less weight than other socio-economic dimensions of integration, when it comes to impact on integration, as often it is only those with citizenship who are eligible to vote (Joppke, 2013). Meanwhile, affiliations to political or civil society organisations or associations are more accessible for all cadres of migrants and therefore may have a more significant role to play when it comes to integration (Penninx & Martiniello, 2004). Promisingly, the participation rate of non-EU born adults in aspect of UK political life such as being part of a political association, signing a petition, contacting a political or participating in a demonstration is akin to that of the UK born population (46 per cent per cent vs 47 per cent respectively) (MIPEX, 2015). This similar rate of participation in political activity also holds for the less educated too (35 per cent non-EU citizens vs 38 per cent UK born citizens) (ibid.). Nevertheless, in comparison to other Western European countries, UK immigrant and ethnic minority organisations do not receive as much state funding.

Anti-discrimination

International research on discrimination tends to be on perceived discrimination which can be harder to link directly to individual policies (Bilgili et al., 2015). Nevertheless, research does show that that an increased knowledge of equality rights can lessen discrimination (Ziller et al., 2014) especially if the individual is well integrated socially (Ehsan, 2019). Discrimination has been linked to poor health outcomes in first generation immigrants (Borrell et al., 2015) and migrants remaining in sub optimal employment

positions (Aalto et al., 2014; Constant & Massey, 2005). Recently, levels of perceived discrimination have doubled since the EU referendum (Migration Observatory, 2020) and have caused a rise in General Anxiety Disorder amongst EU migrants (Frost, 2019).

Since the late 1990s the UK has traditionally held strong anti-discrimination laws, which increasingly involved more proactive actions to monitor and reduce discrimination, including a public sector equality duty on local authorities to pay 'due regard' to equalities considerations (legislation.gov.uk, 2010). Discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or nationality is illegal in the UK, across all areas of life. It has been estimated that half of the UK public are aware of their rights when it comes to discrimination, a percentage only beaten by Nordic countries in Europe (MIPEX, 2015). Equally, the highest levels of trust in the police are reported in the UK and Nordic countries (ibid.).

However, in more recent years the UK has begun to weaken some of means of monitoring discrimination. In 2012, the UN wrote to Theresa May to warn her that the Coalition's dramatic cuts in funding to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) risked the body's independence and threatened the UK's accredited A' status (Syal & Hencke, 2012). The EHRC is responsible for enforcing equalities legislation in the UK. The Coalition also targeted the removal of discrimination monitoring through Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). EIAs are a means of assisting organisations to demonstrate that they have considered several aspects relating to the elimination of discrimination within their operating practices. This ranges from employment choices, training courses, strategic decision making. David Cameron claimed the EIAs were "bureaucratic nonsense" (Aggett, 2013). The danger with dismissing EIAs is that they remove incentive to monitor and therefore to be able to track incidences of discrimination.

The government did not just remind people that EIAs were not mandatory. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Brandon Lewis actively wrote a letter to local authority leaders and Chief Executives suggesting they do not spend their time on "time consuming, bureaucratic, tick-box exercises" (Lewis, 2012). Lewis's stated aim was to give 'clear guidance' as to whether in accordance with government "best value" guidance, it was necessary to resort to "unnecessary lifestyle or 'diversity' questionnaires of their local residents and suppliers" (Lewis, 2012). Such reduction or burning of 'red tape' has been labelled a 'motif' for neo-liberalism (Hanlon, 2015), under the auspice that bureaucracy and market forces are fundamentally incompatible (Hamel, 2014). This thinking comes from a notion that creativity is stifled by legal and bureaucratic constraints, yet when it comes to equality, it overlooks the negative effect discrimination can have on creativity and performance. Research has shown that discrimination impedes economic growth (Charles & Guryan, 2008; Esteve-Volart, 2004; Ascher,

2012). Consequently, even using neo-liberalism's own monetised evaluation criteria, the maintenance of anti-discrimination mechanisms are important.

The push to move away from using EIAs by the Coalition is even more counterproductive once it is noted that Lewis' letter also reminded authorities that they still had a duty to pay "due regard" to equalities considerations. As the duty still requires public bodies to keep an audit trail of how they demonstrate due regard to equality assessment, many local authorities still undertake EIAs to demonstrate their compliance (Aggett, 2013). Likewise, both civil society organisations, courts and the Equality and Human Rights Commission still favour the use of EIAs "to ensure that the effects of a particular policy decision are analysed" (EHRC, 2017). Ironically, since 2010 the Coalition and Conservative Governments have found themselves increasingly called upon to publish EIAs alongside the release of new finance bills, a practice common amongst local authorities (Pyper, 2018).

These kind of conflicting messages from the Coalition embodies the cost and responsibility shunting onto local authorities which took place under the timescale of this research period. The Coalition can be seen to have simultaneously pushed for the removal of EIAs as a form of red tape, at the same time as stressing the fact that the duty still remains to undertake equalities considerations, and cutting funding by over half to the independent body responsible for monitoring anti-discrimination. They can be seen as a kind of insurance mechanism on behalf of the government where market solutions are propagated as a solution to cuts in funding from the state, yet responsibility is placed at the local level as a backstop in case things go awry.

Legislative changes and the VPRS

Refugees on the VPRS have been protected from many of the difficulties which have affected other cadres of migrants. Chapters 6 and 7 evidence how local authority officers have assisted VPRS refugees to overcome many of the barriers caused by the hostile environment. Funds to access solicitors and private immigration advice for VPRS refugees can be charged to the scheme (participant observation). In addition, they are often supported with legal matters by their case workers. One example of this is the assistance which has been given by local authorities to assist people who arrived on the VPRS prior to July 2017 to convert their immigration status from Humanitarian Protection to Refugee Status. Syrians on the scheme arriving into the UK prior to the 1st July 2017 were classified as being under Humanitarian Protection, after this date those arriving were automatically granted Refugee status (UK Parliament, 2017). Due to the fact that Refugee status provides greater access to aspects such as home tuition fees (people on HP are charged international rates), and the ability to travel to a wide number of countries

outside of the UK, this status is preferred (participant observation). Any Syrian who has arrived independently of the scheme will have to apply for this process themselves, whereas those on the scheme are routinely assisted with the process. As one local authority case worker describes “The paperwork is actually really straightforward, it’s about 24 pages, for each person, so that’s 15 times I’ve done that, I’ve started to go a bit mad with it!” (Participant observation).

When it comes to family reunion, ordinarily, a local authority would not get involved unless they are supporting a UASC being reunited with a family member coming over under Dublin III. However, as a result of the VPRS, local authorities have become more involved in family reunion as it relates to people on Resettlement. During the participant observation undertaken for this thesis, the issue of family reunion has often arisen at regional events arranged for people on the VPRS as it is clear that families are unable to fully focus on their future and new life in the UK whilst they continue to be concerned about the wellbeing of an absent family member. One of the first things local authorities are often asked is how they can bring family members to the UK. The local authority will then complete the necessary paperwork to submit to the Home Office Resettlement team and begin the process of trying to identify accommodation. However, it should be noted that these efforts to resettle VPRS families with family connections has come about through the VPRS and was not part of prior government policy, as described by joint the IOM and UNHCR 2017 review of the VPRS

“There are indications that in the future LAs may have preference for refugees who have family connections with refugees already resettled in their area... There are signs that such matching is happening through the refugee referral and LA acceptance process... usually with the assistance of and through the coordination actions of LAs (with the RSMPs playing a role). However, there is no clear policy position from the Government on reunification.”

(IOM & UNHCR, 2017, p.23)

The existence of both designated local authority staff and the provision case workers to assist VPRS families with various aspects of migrant integration is not something which should be passed over quickly as it did not exist prior to the scheme. Out of the 20 lead officers interviewed within this research (representing 77.6 per cent of participating local authorities¹⁰), only seven had a single point of contact (SPOC) for aspects relating to migrants within their authority prior to the VPRS. This is not to say that only seven

¹⁰ See Methodology chapter for breakdown of statistics on VPRS lead officers and the local authorities they represent.

authorities had any prior interactions with migrants, but that these interactions were not significant enough to warrant a designated person being named single point of contact. By March 2018, each participating local authority had a lead officer for the scheme, and 15 of the 20 lead officers interviewed had been made a SPOC for the local authority for all matters relating to migration.

The absence of migration SPOCs within local authorities prior to the VPRS is something which surprised many, including myself when first commencing this research. On several occasions at the very start of the VPRS when conducting participant observation, I witnessed Home Office staff ask where was the list of the SPOCs for migration within local authorities, only to be told such posts did not usually exist. Likewise, within the semi-structured interviews it was common to hear the following

“(it) makes me think there should be somebody at local government whose responsibility this is, since I've been doing this job since April, I have not found that that is the case. I think it's what I assumed there should be but it's not something I've come across, and I know another authority they do have someone who's responsible for it, maybe it's spread across a couple of different posts but there is nobody responsible in my mind in any of the local authorities I deal with... Maybe it's something, maybe I'm wrong maybe there is and X authority has got something going on without me, but there's not a one go to person as far as I am concerned in there or one department for whom it's their department”

(Local authority 4)

“I was quite surprised because when this started to become an issue (preparation for receiving first VPRS family) I went to a colleague over in our Communities department and said oh I was assuming that we had an officer, a council officer who was sort of community liaison or Voluntary Sector liaison or something like that, I just assumed that and we didn't at all, that wasn't a post, that didn't exist, that wasn't a thing so we built that, so that has been a positive things just come out of the scheme for other residents of the district.”

(Local authority 15)

One of the reasons why SPOCs may not have existed prior to the scheme is that in several areas of the SE there were few migrants present. However, in many other areas it is likely that specialist support for migrants did not exist as it was not considered a priority or an area where additional resources needed to be allocated. Out of the 74 local

authorities present in the region¹¹, my research indicates that only 12 were actively engaged in activities relating to migrant integration prior to the VPRS¹². Prior to the expansion of the VPRS in September 2015, the authorities SESPM was in most contact with tended to be urban (several on the outskirts of London) with high concentrations of migrants, or alternatively existing asylum dispersal areas along the coast, or areas with high numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Some authorities had experienced issues of community cohesion with attacks against migrants or had hard to reach migrant communities present such as Roma. There were outliers, like Brighton & Hove City Council, that had voluntarily participated on refugee Resettlement programmes such as the Gateway programme¹³ prior to the VPRS, but this was certainly not usual. In contrast, within the timeframe of this thesis, a total of 58 local authorities out of the 74 participated on the expanded VPRS, pledged to bring 2,000 refugees into the region between 2015 and 2020 (participant observation). Consequently, the role of the VPRS is expanding the experience and knowledge of local authorities working on migrant integration should not be downplayed. Even at county level, where there tend to be a variety of different cadres of migrants present, the VPRS meant a whole new level of engagement, as the following different county respondents describe

“So before SVPRS we had no migrants whatsoever so the SVPRS as was, was the first involvement as a County Council organisation we had with any government refugee program, any formal interaction with refugees at all, the only other stuff we had ever been involved in was this the clandestine entry which is people being dropped out the back of a lorry and in every case those people all went to London, so the County Council was not hands on at all, so everything was brand new.”

(Local authority 2)

“As a local authority we haven’t really had much of a history of working with migrant related issues and we are not a very diverse county”

(Local authority 3)

These SPOCs/lead officers and case workers were in part the result of a condition within the Statement of Requirements (SoR) used by the Conservative Government to contract any local authority participating on the scheme to ensure that adequate personnel is

¹¹ In 2020 this number became 71 due to the merger of several Berkshire local authorities to become one unitary authority.

¹² This number is arrived at through participant observation and discussion with the SESPM Partnership manager plus the semi structured interviews but should be read in conjunction with the caveats included within the Methodology chapter.

¹³ Please see Annex A for more information on the Gateway programme.

provided (Home Office, 2015a). However, these SPOCs/lead officers and case workers have played a role far greater than just facilitating the VPRS. They have come to be the go-tos for migration related queries for several Home Office consultations (such as for the Integrated Communities consultation), numerous pieces of academic and policy research and daily ad hoc enquiries (participant observation). Many have become knowledgeable about the legal situations of various other cadres of migrants, such as NRPF or UASC, and these officers have also been drawn upon by the government to help publicise how EU citizens can access Settled Status (participant observation). They have all become knowledgeable about the challenges facing migrants wishing to integrate in the UK. As this Strategic Migration Partnership Officer describes

“The learning curves for authorities like that has been huge, they have picked it up and are running with it. It builds knowledge of other communities, down to a basic level when you are planning services, training staff in different ways now to support the refugees. That’s been the case for a number of key areas, all will have had some kind of experience but not to the level that this has brought up”

The VPRS can also be seen as having created good working relationships between local authorities and the Home office when it comes to resettlement and possibly having opened the avenues to a more wholistic understanding of migrant integration within the Home Office staff working on the scheme. Both participant observation and the semi-structured interviews demonstrated highly positive relationships between local authorities, the central Home Office team and the SE SMP. As the following local authority officers describe

“Well first to say is that I have absolutely nothing but praise for the Home Office, my experience with them is that they are completely efficient, helpful and so supportive so it's been a very, very positive experience so far under the current way in which is been organised”

(Local authority 13)

“Great bunch of people, wish they would stop moving round people in posts every two seconds. But no, generally, they are really good. And, they have struggled as well with this. Because the whole project was put together so quickly and as an immediate reaction to political will from the Prime Minister that it...you can see their issues around project implementation, checking on compliance and stuff like that.”

(Local authority 12)

Consequently, in contrast to the individualist neo-liberal justification in removing legal aid access to all migrant cases other than asylum whereby migrants are expected to be able to navigate complex systems themselves, migrants on the VPRS are assisted by designated staff, adequate funding for legal support if needed and a dedicated Home Office team. The VPRS scheme also differs to the wider neo-liberal trend of reducing monitoring of outcomes and anti-discrimination. Progress for VPRS migrants in terms of numbers in employment, numbers accessing ESOL, numbers involved in a youth club or volunteering with a community organisation are regularly recorded and submitted to the Home Office and benchmarked in terms of progress across the regions. Chapter 7 explores the socio-cultural reasons behind the difference in provision for VPRS versus other cadres of migrants. This chapter notes that the schemes additional personnel has helped increase understanding of legal issues relating to migration amongst local authorities which will have helped other cadres of migrants.

Conclusion

Although local authorities have no power over the legal and political rights of migrants, changes in these areas nonetheless have a very real impact in how they are able to facilitate migrant integration and on the experience of migrants trying to integrate in their localities. It has been seen that the legal domain underpins the very foundation of migrant integration, yet changes introduced under the hostile environment increased the precariousness of nearly every form of immigration status. New financial and linguistic barriers to citizenship and permanent status in addition to the introduction of a good character clause made it harder to access the most secure status. On the other end of the scale, greater number of migrants were assigned the NRPF condition of immigration status and asylum seekers whose first application had been unsuccessful were expected to leave the country before appealing this decision. The criteria for family reunion, a key driver of migrant integration, became the hardest in the developed world. At the same time that security of status was being reduced, access to legal aid had been cut for all but asylum cases meaning that there was less access to assistance to navigate complex legal avenues at a point where they were needed the most. Consequently, the legal domain is certainly one where power not only possessed at central level but exerted (or actualised as CR proponents would describe) as part of a deliberate and centrally coordinated effort to reduce immigration matching Scholten's 2016 centralist model of migrant integration governance.

The direct effect on these changes on local authorities is that they face additional duties and large-scale associated cost shunting. Instead of coming from central funding legal fees for (non-asylum seeking) migrant children in the care of local authorities are now

fully charged to local authorities, thus in cases where local authorities cover the legal fees of migrant children in their care to acquire citizenship central government actually profits. The increasing cadres of migrants being given the NRPF condition of immigration status and then becoming destitute means that the cost of supporting these migrants has been transferred from central to local level. Cost shunting itself is never acknowledged but the legal changes which have caused these cuts in central funding have been justified by a range of means including austerity measures and as part of the hostile environment. These justifications are deeply neo-liberal in their rationale. As has been seen the reduction in legal aid according to the rationale that the legal avenues were straight forward and therefore possible for an individual with no legal representation to navigate has not only been proven to be incorrect but is also evidence of the kind of responsibility shunting to the individual inherent within neo-liberalism. The increasing restrictions on access to public funds is also reflective of the neo-liberal reduction in access to welfare state provision. Furthermore, the cut in funding to the body overseeing equalities provisions and the discouragement of local authorities to undertake EIAs is evidence of another neo-liberal reform, namely reductions in bureaucracy and the reach of the state.

The indirect impact on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration is that the migrants in their localities are left with few legal and welfare resources which makes it harder to navigate the fast changing legislative terrain directly affecting them. Politically, whilst the freedom to participate in political associations remains, the EU Referendum has negatively impacted on how politically included EU migrants feel. When coupled with the changes introduced under the hostile environment, we begin to see evidence of 'othering' within the legal/political domain of migrant integration.

In contrast, the VPRS in providing personnel and an enabling environment to manage many of these legal barriers on behalf of the refugees, has increased the understanding at local level of many of the barriers migrants face when it comes to integration. For many it has also increased their understanding of the status of different cadres of migrants. Their understanding of the legal changes introduced under the hostile environment such as the new duties on bank clerks and hospital staff to check immigration status will have helped to visibilise these problems and to advocate on behalf of the refugees and other migrants. In this way, the VPRS can be seen to reflect back up to central government aspects where logic of certain changes (such as the removal of legal aid due to the purported simplicity of legal applications) is erroneous in practice. This thesis does not argue that the VPRS has mitigated against the effects of the hostile environment but rather how it has helped to draw attention to the plight faced by migrants as a result of these changes. It also demonstrates a counter narrative to the dominant neo-liberal

thinking prevalent across the majority of the Coalition and Conservative Governments' 2010-2018 policies. It demonstrates that in contrast to the 'leave it to the local' approach of the CCI, when the government is favourable to migrant integration, adequate legal and other interventionist support is justified. In doing so, it highlights an inconsistency within the overarching neo-liberal rationale used to remove access to welfare, monitoring of quality outcomes and other support provision to other cadres of migrants and vulnerable UK native populations. The next chapter identifies how these themes of creating a hostile environment, neo-liberal cost shunting and the downloading of responsibility to the local level also occur within the socio-economic domain.

Chapter 6 – The Socio-Economic Domain

This chapter examines the question how did changes in the socio-economic dimensions of integration under the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010 to 2018 affect the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration?

Introduction

The socio-economic domain refers to how migrants fare within the social and economic areas dimensions such as education, employment and housing. Within these dimensions, quantitative research tends to measure integration in terms of how well migrants are faring in comparison to their host society, benchmarking them against native born attainment. Such comparisons can be easier to obtain in this domain as socio-economic needs tend to be universal plus they are mostly taking place within the public rather than the private sphere. Equally, data in these dimensions can be easier to capture than the socio-cultural domain, for example, as interactions tend to take place within institutional settings such as schools or the workplace. For this reason, there tends to be more research available within this domain. Equally, it is generally in this domain that most time is spent mixing with the host society, as education is obligatory until 19¹⁴ and working hours generally occupy a third of a day. As a consequence, this chapter is longer than the Legal Political or the Socio-cultural chapters as there is a wealth of information to draw from. Furthermore, due to the weight of impact that education, employment and housing have upon integration these areas, it was deemed important to go into further depth in these areas. A brief summary of the research in each of these individual dimensions is given at the beginning of each of the following sections which focus on Education, Employment and Housing.

6.1 Education

Introduction

Education directly affects migrant integration (Bilgili et al., 2015; Nusche, 2009). Migrant children who enter the school system of the host country at a younger age, fare better in terms of language acquisition (Böhlmark, 2008; Cortes, 2006), qualifications (Corak, 2011; Cohen Goldner & Epstein, 2014; Hutchinson, 2018) and employment outcomes than those arriving later (Bilgili et al., 2015). In general, migrant children tend to fare

¹⁴ Although as will be seen, not necessarily enforceable.

worse than native children in a number of educational outcomes such as qualifications achieved, drop-out rates, repetition of school years (ibid.) although this diminishes with second and third generation settlers (Dronkers & De Heus, 2012). Whilst the socio-economic status of the parents seems to be the most significant determinant of a child's educational outcomes (Bigili et al., 2015), the school a migrant child arrives into can still play a significant role (Dronkers & De Heus, 2012). Certain policy interventions such as provision of additional assistance in the form of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes or extra classroom resources for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) can help the adjustment of a child into UK school system (UNICEF, 2018; Refugee Action 2016, 2018).

When it comes to adult education, the provision of ESOL classes and work based ESOL classes are identified by the MIPEX as beneficial policies to facilitate migrant integration, with language identified by many as key to migrant integration. The 2016 Casey Review into 'opportunity and integration' stated knowledge of the English language is "a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration" (Casey, 2016, p.4). Local authorities met with as part of the participant observation undertaken in this thesis routinely mentioned the importance of English for integration. In addition to aspects like finding employment and building good relationships with the neighbours it was also felt that a good understanding of English is crucial to being able to navigate increasingly bureaucratic and online UK systems.

"Facilitate learning English, it's the key to integration, if you have the language you can understand the systems. If you don't have English you are at risk of being vulnerable to the whims of different aspects of the whole system."

(Participant observation)

Education and the Hostile Environment

MATBAP first intended to remove the right to education for children who were irregular migrants, however this was backtracked as some within MATBAP felt it was going too far (Bulman, 2019a). Nonetheless, all migrant children (except UASC) who do not hold UK citizenship are excluded from accessing free school meals, although many schools still provide these from their own funds, costing the school an estimated £32,000-£100,000 per annum (Citizens UK, 2019). MATBAP identified the school pupil database as a potential means through which to identify irregular migrants. A Memorandum of Understanding was created between the Home Office and the Department for Education (DfE) where the DfE agreed to include questions relating to a child's nationality and country of birth within the annual school census. This census could then be drawn upon

by the Home Office to identify potential irregular migrants with a view to removing them. The sharing of this database was eventually stopped in June 2018 after widespread campaigns against it by teachers and parents alike, many of whom boycotted answering the census (Schools ABC, 2019). A report into the effects of the hostile environment within education found that two thirds of the headmasters interviewed had witnessed a negative effect on the wellbeing and academic achievements of students with irregular status (Citizens UK, 2019).

Another area of intervention within education as a result of the hostile environment was the well-publicised efforts to clamp down on ‘bogus colleges’ which were colleges facilitating fraudulent education visas, although some within the education sector have argued that the problem was disproportionately presented as wider than it actually was (Ratcliffe, 2017).

Downsizing the role of the state in education

One of the biggest changes to the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant education under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018, is the change to school governance arrangements which resulted from the increased number of academies. Initially introduced under the Labour government of Tony Blair, academies are privately run schools taken away from the control of the Local Education Authority (LEA) under the neo-liberal rationale that they will become more efficient if privately run (Benn, 2011; Parish et al., 2012). Academies mark a retrenchment of the state within education which the Coalition government strongly supported and expanded their remit from solely being used to turn around under-performing schools to the preferred form of school. The number of academies accelerated dramatically after 2010, as the then Education Minister, Michael Gove sought to make them ‘the norm’ (Gove, cited in Shimmon, 2010). In 2018, 35 per cent of all state funded schools were academies, this is more prevalent amongst secondary schools where 72 per cent were academies in comparison to 27 per cent of primary schools (NAO, 2018b). The push to normalise academies has made the work of local authorities harder as they were initially forbidden from opening new Local Education Authority (LEA) maintained primary schools, despite there being widescale shortage of places (130,000 places needed in 2017-18) (LGA, cited in Adams, 2013). Furthermore, between 2011-2014 local authorities were forced to use £22.4 million from their own budgets to cover the cost of converting schools to academies at a time when budgets were being cut centrally (The MJ, 2014). To date, research is beginning to show that whilst academies are improving the plight of poorer performing schools, state-maintained schools which become academies appear to fare worse under the new governance (LGA, 2017b). Furthermore, academies have been accused of ‘gaming’,

where they have opted to enter children into exams by equivalent qualifications which are deemed easier (Wrigley & Kalambouka, 2013). Whilst this practice has been done in some state run schools, it was found to be twice as prevalent within academies, pointing towards the kind of short term artificial skewing of results prevalent within the private sector as a means of quickly augmenting market value. Similar to Peck's 2012 misgivings about the efficacy of neo-liberal market reforms as a solution to the financial crisis, Maisuria's (2014, p.290) research into the neo-liberal reform of education under the Coalition finds that

“It seems that the policy of introducing the market imperative in schooling, in terms of performance, has been at best a spurious success and at worst an expensive failure. Nevertheless, the neo-liberal drive continues unabated.”

The significance of this for local authorities and migration is that whilst the LEA of a local authority will have statutory safeguarding duties for all children in their area, academies themselves are not directly accountable to the LEA, but to the Department for Education. This means that a local authority cannot mandate an academy to accept a migrant child, even if there is space and the academy is the most suitable school for that child. In order to do this, a local authority would have to write to the Secretary of State for Education, asking them to force the school to take the child. In practice, this is time prohibitive as local authorities have a duty to get all LAC into education within 20 days of being in care, (although as will be seen later, this duty is often not met). A 2018 UNICEF report into access to education for migrant children involving 115 local authority responses to FOI requests, focus groups, interviews with 86 migrant families and interviews with educational experts found that “there's a perception that academies know they can refuse and get away with it” (UNICEF, 2018, p.29). Consequently, once again the neo-liberal emphasis upon de-regulation in the name of improving efficiency actually has negative consequences for the efficiency other parts of the system, in this case upon LEAs trying to assist migrant children.

[Access to Primary & Secondary Education](#)

Whilst they have lost power to mandate a school to accept a migrant pupil, LEAs still have a duty to ensure full time education is available for all children of compulsory school age within their authority, including migrant children of all immigration status. Children who are in the care of the state, are given highest priority when it comes to admission waiting lists, and in accordance with their personal education plan, should be found a placement within 20 days of becoming a LAC (DfE, 2014).

Unfortunately, there are several barriers which mean that this entitlement to education within 20 days of becoming a LAC is often not possible. Of the 113 replies to FOI requests issued to 205 local authorities by UNICEF, not one region in the UK had been able to enter all their UASC into education within the 20-day limit. In one region 27 per cent of UASC had to wait more than three months before a secondary school place was found (UNICEF, 2018). The time of year a child arrives is a significant factor in the creation of delays of enrolment. A school cannot legally refuse to admit a child at the beginning of an academic year unless the school is already full or there is a prescriptive aspect of their admissions policy, such as being a member of a religious group if it is a faith based school (CORAM, 2017). In year admissions are far harder as there are not the same legal requirements.

The situation is most acute within secondary schools. Not only is the percentage of academies at secondary school level higher (72 per cent) than primary schools, (meaning LEAs cannot mandate the school to accept a child) but the number of UASC presenting is typically highest in years 10 and 11, exactly the years when students prepare for and sit their GCSEs. The UNICEF report found that a key deterrent in schools accepting a migrant child is the potential effect this will have upon the school's GCSE attainment levels. As one professional interviewed described

“We had a lad here last year who arrived in the UK in April desperate to go to school - and this is off the-scale unacceptable, he was 16, so should have been in Year 11, and there was no school in Birmingham who wanted a GCSE aged child who didn't speak a word of English, in April of Year 11”
(KIIWestMidlands6)”

(UNICEF, 2018, p.28)

Sadly, this barrier could be removed if there was more widespread understanding of the regulation surrounding league table reporting. All students enrolled within a school as of January in Year 11 have their attainment recorded, however if a child has arrived within the last two years from a country where English is not the official language the school is permitted to omit their results (Nye, 2017).

Likewise, another factor which helps overcome barriers to education is that of funding. Additional students should not cost a school more money as government funding is based upon head count. If the child is a UASC, a child of an asylum-seeking family, a migrant child whose parents are in receipt of benefits, or on working tax credits, then they will be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), which further allows the school to draw down on additional funding under the Pupil Premium. The Pupil Premium was introduced

by the Coalition Government to help schools with disadvantaged children, LAC such as UASC are eligible for Pupil Premium Funding which is additional funding which goes to the local authority virtual school to support that child's personal educational plan (ESFA, 2019)

“Even though people sometimes talk about immigrants as a burden on public services, these families actually keep the schools viable”

(LEA Policy Advisor, interviewed in Jensen & Gidley, 2014, p.24)

However, if that child is enrolled mid-year, they will not have been calculated into the Direct School Grant and the education institution will bear all the costs of educating that child, as reported by the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

“For in-year admissions (i.e. if the UASC is not included in the October census) the school does not receive any DSG funding and will incur costs directly in support of the unaccompanied child (funding factors relevant to UASC would include basic entitlement, LAC, low prior attainment, and education as an additional language). One local authority calculated indicative costs for secondary school years 10 and 11 as £8,995 per pupil.”

(EMSMP, 2017, p.6)

It should be noted that migrant children over the age of 14 have the option of being enrolled directly into a Further Education (FE) college rather than entering a school. As to which option is better, experts in education encountered during the participant observation of this thesis felt it very much depended upon the circumstances of the child and also the kind of provision within the school or FE colleges nearby. There is a perception that school may offer smaller classes, more pastoral care and opportunity for interaction with peers, whereas college sometimes meant children were not mixing with students outside of their ESOL classes. Conversely, schools could also be seen as a waste of time for a child arriving with no English who is forced to sit GCSEs and only enters official ESOL classes when they turn 16 and they go to college. However, a lot depends on the individual institution, some schools offer ESOL classes in breakfast or afterschool sessions with the option of completing an official ESOL qualification. Some colleges offer very good wrap around service for young migrants other than just ESOL¹⁵.

¹⁵ For a more detailed review of the intricacies of providing education and ESOL to 16-19 year olds, please see <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/20th-Nov-Redhill-ESOL-final-report.pdf>

Whilst UASC may face particular competition over school places due to their average age of presentation and entry into GCSE years, other cadres of migrants face their own challenges when it comes to education. In particular, migrant parents who do not speak English well or who have lower levels of digital literacy can find navigating the enrolment systems and processes particularly difficult. One third of the families interviewed within the UNICEF report stated that they had encountered significant difficulties when trying to enrol their child (UNICEF, 2018). As stated by one expert interviewed, they

“may have to apply to the Local Authority system and also to three or four different academies, in different areas to look for a place, which can be very confusing” (KIINational1).

(UNICEF, 2018, p.24)

Unsurprisingly, the participant observation and semi-structured interviews undertaken found that the cadre of migrant which found accessing education the easiest were Syrians on the VPRS. Nevertheless, the challenge of being able to find education for the 16-17 age cohort remained even for those on the VPRS,

“We have had to do various things with 16, 17 year olds that was a very big challenge..... in one place, we had to use some of the Syrian funding to pay for a girl to go to a private English college because that was the only thing we could find at that stage. That was quite a struggle.”

(Local authority 1)

Once migrant children are in school, teachers are expected to foster an environment which promotes inclusivity. Ever since the Swann report in 1985, which drew attention to teachers own racism or bias towards the educational attainment of ethnic minority and immigrant children, the UK education system has generally sought to promote the notion of ‘education for all’ rather than focusing on problematising different ethnic groups in education (Jensen & Gidley, 2014). The Calderdale Education Authority review of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in 1986 was in keeping with the Swann report in advocating for mainstreamed classrooms where migrant children were not educated separately to their peers (Harris & Leung, 2011). Funding and initiatives to support migrant and ethnic minority children have waxed and waned over the years although funding for EAL has existed since Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act (Tikly et al., 2005). New Labour replaced Section 11 funding with the introduction of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, (EMAG), intended to promote whole school change in performance when it comes to educating children in classrooms with minority and migrant children. EMAG’s purpose was to promote innovation in this area as well as

things such as bilingual classroom assistants or specialised courses to help train teaching staff. Whilst EMAG has been criticised as not having provided any additional funding than Section 11 and in some cases having created job instability (Tikly et al., 2005), it nevertheless married education with other race equality initiatives also introduced under New Labour, placing a spotlight on educational gaps between different ethnic groups. It also provided some of the tools to critically analyse these gaps as the grant funding requirements required LEAs to include a high level of detail as to percentage of ethnic minority or migrant children in their area and their attainment rates. It has been argued this data has helped to further understanding of the migrant education picture

“The guidance of this and subsequent documents is also supported, however, by the availability for the first time of national pupil level data relating to achievement, which enables detailed monitoring of achievement and exclusion by ethnicity.”

(Tikly et al., 2005, p.291).

Changes to EMAG provision in education policy under the Coalition and Conservative Governments were responsible for the UK dropping 11 points on the MIPEx Index in the Education field (MIPEx, 2015). EMAG required schools to provide additional EAL and support minority and migrant children in their learning. Under the Coalition Government the EMAG grant became absorbed into the national funding formula for schools, the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) so that schools are allowed to spend the funds where they see fit, not necessarily on EAL students. Equally any funding drawn down on for EAL only available for three years of a child’s education (NALDIC, 2015) when research shows it takes more than three years to become fully proficient in English (Hutchinson, 2018). An extensive review of the mechanisms of the new EAL funding by the Education Policy Institute found that

“The principles and aims of the funding formula are the right ones to bring about a more rational and fairer system. However, the proposed implementation of the formula has been controversial due to the overall level of funding passing through the formula, combined with significant increases in schools’ staffing costs, which result in real terms losses for many schools.”

(Hutchinson, 2018, p.17)

A similar appraisal of the new arrangements by the National Association for Language within the Curriculum (NALDIC), found that “EAL and bilingual learners therefore no longer had specific funds attached to meeting their particular language learning needs.” (NALDIC, 2015).

Additional funding is available via competitive applications to the Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) which was £100 million over the course of four years (Foster & Bolton, 2018). However, most CMF projects are one-off and also the scope of funding is wider than just education which makes competition fierce (MCHLG, 2018). Equally, whilst under Labour the majority of EMAG funding went directly to schools a small amount was retained by the LEAs and used to create specialist teams which provided advice and guidance on issues relating to the educational needs of migrant and ethnic minority children. The loss of staff with these specialist skills as a result of the removal of EMAG by the Coalition was highlighted within the UNICEF report as a key challenge in providing education to migrant children. A 2018 report by the Education Policy Institute evaluating the impact of the new funding arrangement found that the number of local authorities with no EAL had nearly doubled, from 39 to 72 since 2011. The report also found that a lack of CPD opportunities within the EAL field was directly attributable to the removal of the EMAG.

“The abolition in 2011 of dedicated resourcing and specialist support for this group of learners has meant the absence of any national oversight or provision of professional qualifications, staff development and specialist roles for teachers and other school staff working with children with EAL”

(Hutchinson, 2018, p.6)

Fortunately, despite the removal of central funding to LEAs, some authorities have opted to retain a team specialising in migrant and ethnic minority educational needs, seeing the value such a skill set can offer. The participant observation undertaken within this thesis highlighted how some local authorities have opted to retain an Ethnic Minority Achievement Service which offers help for bilingual children from pre-school throughout their education. One authority provides a simplified one-stop-shop application form to apply for school admissions, and training for parents and carers with Positive Parenting Programmes offered in Arabic, Chinese, Polish and Pashtu. The service can support bilingual children in 20 languages and also provide advice and support for those receiving home tuition.

Another authority interviewed during the research for this thesis applied for funding from the Controlling Migration Fund to support schools working with migrant children so that “in every senior school they are going to get a specialist... We really put some effort into making sure that this element of the school access team, had specialism...had the right tools to do it.” (Local authority 8). The CMF project which supported all EAL children was prompted by participation on the VPRS. As the local authority officer interviewed describes

“It (the VPRS) started a whole discussion with schools. Now what happened was because of the discussions, particularly with one school which was a primary school which the third family they said “Well where is the network of expertise in dealing with people who come to our school with absolutely no English?”. They were used to people from Europe or from a Commonwealth country or other places... (where) they have at least a good knowledge or some start in English. The Syrian people presented something a bit different, and it did change how schools were then looking at it...Some people, actually, one school, was very much wanting to accept children even though they didn't actually have anyone in their area. And what we did was we started a network...this was just with the schools which took the Syrian families to start with, and it has grown and grown and grown. Part of the Controlling Migration Fund (application) was informed by that group”

(Local authority 8)

Changes to Post 16 Education

Most migrant children are eligible for post 16 education if they have secure status in the UK when they commence their studies. This form of education is not considered a public resource and therefore even those designated NRPF can access FE and Sixth Form college or school (CORAM, 2018). Whilst it is compulsory to stay in education to 18 (though not enforced), it is not compulsory to continue in full-time education, with a proliferation of work-based options such as apprenticeships, traineeships, and even volunteering whilst in part time education expanded by the Coalition and Conservative Governments (Gov.uk., 2020).

Migrant children arriving with low levels of English are more likely to attend an FE college than a Sixth form College or School Sixth form by virtue of the fact that most Sixth form colleges require 5 GCSE results at Grade C or above (Claridge, 2020). This is no reflection of the innate learning ability of the child, in fact research shows that if migrant children fare just as well as their peers, make greater progress and even outperform their peers if taking the English Baccalaureate (Hutchinson, 2018). Nevertheless, the age a child with low levels of English enters the UK education system has a direct effect upon their educational performance. As stated by the Education Policy Institute (2018)

“At GCSE level, pupils with EAL scored an average grade of a C if they arrived between reception and Year 7. This decreased to a grade of around a D if they arrived in Year 8, 9 or 10 – falling further to below an E if they arrived in Year 11.”

However, post 16 education has also been subject to many of the same neo-liberal restructures that was seen with academisation. Key changes introduced to FE under the Coalition and Conservative Governments affecting migrant education include funding cuts and the change in FE funding formulas.

FE (for 16-18 year olds) and school Sixth Form colleges have seen their budgets fall by 8 per cent and 21 per cent respectively between 2010 to 2018, the steepest cut in funding in any area of education (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2018b). Colleges have undertaken a number of measures to cope with these cuts which include cutting support services and reducing teaching staff both of which may impact upon migrant students (IFS, 2018b). This reduction in funding is partly due to the shift in focus (amongst all political parties) towards apprenticeships and vocational training. Funding for 19+ apprenticeships now makes up 36 per cent of all educational funding compared to 13 per cent in 2010 (IFS, 2018b). Most 16-19 year olds at FE and Sixth Form colleges are expected to undertake Study Programmes, which is 600 hours of learning including one main qualification, mandatory English and Maths, a work experience placement and other no qualification-based character building activities. Whilst this move towards a more Austrian or Swiss model of work experience within education may work for many, it is less clear whether it assists new or recently arrived migrants with lower levels of English. Several FE colleges met with as part of the participant observation undertaken within this thesis listed the identification of work-based placements as a key obstacle in providing a relevant study programme to a migrant student with levels of English below Level 1 (SESPM, 2019). Level 1 is 4 levels above the level a newly arrived migrant with no English would enter, and would take around 480 hours to reach, based on an average of 120 hours to go up each level (De Castella, 2013).

Furthermore, changes to the funding mechanisms from central government to post 16 education introduced in 2014 have cost FE colleges an estimated £1.5 million per annum each (Mersinoglu, 2019). The condition of funding as originally introduced in 2014 meant that educational institutions are not reimbursed for the costs of educating a 16-18 year old student who has not achieved Grades C in English and Maths at GCSE unless they are enrolled to resit these GCSEs (IFS, 2018b). In 2016/17 this was relaxed slightly, so that an institution could be reimbursed 50 per cent of the costs of educating a pupil who had not achieved or enrolled on these GCSEs. Not only did the condition of funding cost

FE colleges who have already suffered a reduction in budget but it means that students who are not naturally strong in English, Maths or both, are forced to continue to sit retakes. The requirement has driven up overall student GCSE achievement rates, but it is less clear what this picture is like for migrant children. Many educational experts, such as Ofsted's Chief Inspector worry that the condition of funding risks putting all students who find these subjects challenging off studying altogether

"We continue to be worried about the effectiveness of the government's policy...resit pass rates are low, at 24 per cent for English and 19 per cent for mathematics, and the impact of repeated 'failure' on students should not be underestimated"

(Amanda Spielman, quoted in Fino, 2019)

This shift towards a 'payment by results' method of reimbursement and a reorientation towards providing Apprenticeships and training targeting the needs of the workplace has changed the nature of post 16 education along increasingly neo-liberal lines. Hill et al., (2013, p.72) have commented that FE colleges have changed from being "community educational facilities for predominantly working-class people of all ages into Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) servicing the local economy".

Post 19 Education

Compulsory education finishes at 18, and even before then it is not enforced (IFS, 2018b), hence many migrants may leave the education field to enter employment. For those who remain in education, there is generally a cost to pay and there may be issues around eligibility. Key changes to post 19 Education to have taken place during the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 include the introduction of 'no study' immigration bail conditions and the removal of eligibility for home fees or student loans.

When 'Immigration bail' was introduced in early 2018, the government placed 'no study' restrictions on some migrants with leave to remain in the UK. One law firm estimates that thousands of asylum seekers were affected (Clayton & Hemp, 2018), before the government was forced to modify some of the conditions surrounding a study ban, although they are still enforceable if the migrant has another condition of bail attached such as being Appeals Rights Exhausted (ARE) (Home Office, 2019).

Asylum seekers are banned from working which can mean that they face some barriers to participating on a number of the 19+ vocational based training which the government is advocating, although apprenticeships are possible if they have been in the UK for more than six months or are a LAC (ESFA, 2019b).

In addition to legal restrictions, cost can be a significant factor which makes education prohibitive, especially as Coalition neo-liberal efforts to further privatise education has meant that the cost of university education has tripled since 2010. Since 2012, asylum seeking students including UASC who are LAC or care leavers, are not eligible for higher education home tuition fees even if they have lived in the UK for three years (CORAM, 2016). They are also ineligible for student loans (CORAM, 2019). However, there have been case law examples since which challenge some of these eligibility rulings, such as *Kebede vs Newcastle*, and *Tigere vs Secretary of State* (ibid.). The result of these case law wins is that, in the case of *Tigere vs Secretary of State*, there is some greater eligibility for home fees, and in *Kebede vs Newcastle* there is now a duty on local authorities to pay for higher educational expenses as part of leave in care support (CORAM, 2016), thus this cost is now transferred to the local authority. However, some universities use their discretion to set home rates for migrants. Refugees are eligible for home rates and student loans (ibid.). On a more positive note, in part as a result of the Syrian scheme, Oxford University now runs a Refugee Scholarship programme (Oxfordstudent.com., 2019, and participant observation).

Education and the VPRS

Without exception the local authorities participating on the VPRS were positive about their engagement with the LEA and the DfE.

“Nearly every (education) department that I have dealt with, to try and set up something bespoke for the Syrians have been very accommodating.”

(Local authority 1)

“We’ve had no bother getting someone who will find school places and I have heard, although we are only in our second week, that the younger children are already placed.”

(Local authority 14)

“That’s been fantastic as part of the family relationships team we have got some contacts with them. We had to go through the official channels to register with

schools but once we had sort of done the official paperwork stuff they have been really good and really supportive.”

(Local authority 18)

The prioritisation for school placements given to children on the VPRS is partly because of the vulnerability of the children involved, but it is also due to the support from central government. In contrast to the *laissez faire*, ‘leave it to the local’ approach to integration outlined within CCI, the VPRS, like MATBAPs was highly centralised. The VPRS team was a cross-departmental team¹⁶ housed within the Home Office but financed and staffed from the Department of International Development (DfiD), the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The team was headed by Richard Harrington who was appointed Minister for Syrian Refugees, although just resettled refugees, not Syrian refugees who had claimed asylum in the UK. The minister and his team ensured buy-in at the highest level within government across all relevant departments involved in resettlement and ensured that communication cascaded down so that senior officers within Education, DWP and Health were aware of their responsibilities to refugees on the VPRS. As the previous quotes demonstrate this cascading worked extremely well within education, it will be seen that it was less effective within other departments such as the DWP, but even in these cases, there were senior members within the DWP who could be called upon to help smooth out misunderstandings. In particular, having a minister committed to the scheme was found to be extremely helpful by the local authority officers interviewed

“I found him to be you know very always listening and changing things as they go along...I thought Richard was one of the most impressive ministers I have ever met. He engaged us, he took some of the things back, I have no doubt that he got the budget and even if he didn't he deserves the credit. ... I think he was key and I think he listened intently to people across all different political factors and decided that something needed to be done.”

(Local authority 8)

“I'm sure he got DCLG and the Home Office working together, better. And raised the profile in government of the refugee scheme”

(Local authority 1)

¹⁶ After the VPRS ended, the newly created UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), no longer involved DCLG/MCHLG or DfiD (participant observation).

Furthermore, all these roles and responsibilities across departments towards the VPRS were captured in writing within the SoR for the scheme. What the SoR demonstrated is that rather than believing that integration is best left to the local level as stated in the CCI, when it came to resettlement the Conservative Government 2015 were extremely prescriptive in what it deemed necessary for migrants to integrate. This explicit support, cross departmental facilitation and buy in at senior level is highly significant when it comes to understanding why the VPRS has been so successful in comparison to the integration experience for other cadres of migrants. As one local authority lead officer stated, when trying to help asylum seekers not on the scheme "there were relationships with different bodies but because they weren't through the Syrian scheme, we couldn't shake the Statement of Requirements at people" (local authority 6). Within education, this disparity between the assistance given to refugees on the VPRS and the position for other categories of migrants was also noted.

"So previously, again people would just have to do it themselves or rely on community workers or contacts or friends to assist them with getting their children into school. Now on the VPRS we have a single point of contact again at county... So schools are forewarned so they'll have someone like an VPRS Officer who will go along to the school with them, to ease them into that relationship with the school and ensure that everything is in place, where is somebody not on the scheme and previously that just wasn't available so there's a big disparity there."

(Local authority 4)

If the designation of a specific minister and department to manage migrant integration as well as a clear control mechanisms such as the SoRs are taken into account, we begin to see that the UK looks even more like the 'centralist' integration governance model outlined by Scholten (2016) detailed in Chapter 5. This does not mean that local authorities were purely implementers, as they had to be highly innovative to overcome the significant barriers in their way, such as high housing prices in the SE. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the laissez faire, 'leave it to the local' approach to integration outlined within CCI and the highly centralised VPRS.

ESOL

Under Labour, funding for ESOL increased threefold between 2001-2009, with £300 million made available in 2008-9 (Hubble & Kennedy, 2011). Eligibility for adult ESOL

had begun to be narrowed under the latter years of the Labour government (2007+), with free ESOL classes being restricted to only those on various benefits. Nevertheless, at around the time the restrictions were imposed, an additional £4.6 million was made available for ESOL being taught in the workplace and to support vulnerable learners such as low-paid workers and spouses (ibid.).

For reasons of austerity, the Coalition government cut funding to the ESFA ESOL budget in England by 55 per cent between 2009 and 2015 (Refugee Action, 2016) with funding standing at £95 million in 2015. The ESFA ESOL funding is the main body of funding for ESOL and comes from the Adult Education Budget (AEB), but other government departments also have ad hoc budgets for ESOL depending upon their objectives at the time. Between 2013 and 2017, the MHCLG spent £12 million on community based English language programmes (including £3.4 million specifically to assist vulnerable women) (Foster & Bolton, 2018). Following the introduction of the VPRS, an additional £10 million was committed in 2016 to be spread over three years, but this was only for migrants on the VPRS. Several million pounds has also been given to Strategic Migration Partnerships to help improve coordination and provision of ESOL in their regions. An additional £2.3 million was pledged over four years for childcare funding whilst ESOL classes took place (Morris et al., 2018). The MHCLG CMF, (mentioned above by local authority 8), can also be used for EAL and ESOL. Nevertheless, even with this additional funding, ESOL funding in 2017-18 is unlikely to have come close to the levels it was in 2008-2009 (participant observation). Furthermore, £45 million was lost to the sector when the Conservative Government removed funding for mandatory ESOL for Job Centre Plus clients who have been deemed to have language barriers preventing them from accessing employment (Foster & Bolton, 2018). ESOL training in the work place was stopped altogether (Hubble & Kennedy, 2011).

During the participant observation undertaken for this thesis and also the semi-structured interviews, early access to ESOL was deemed essential for a number of reasons, not least of which was harnessing the initial motivation refugees have to learn when first arriving. Fortunately, for the VPRS the SoR state that refugees on the scheme must be attending ESOL classes within one month of arrival. Likewise, migrants newly registered with Job Centre Plus who have been identified as having a language barrier to accessing employment are mandated to attend ESOL classes and take priority on waiting lists (AoC, 2014). Nevertheless, for migrants who are not mandated by Job Centre Plus or on the VPRS, waiting lists to access ESOL classes within FE Colleges have gone up dramatically as places have decreased. The number of migrants enrolled in ESOL dropped by 36 per cent from 179,000 in 2009-10 to 114,000 in 2016-17 (NATECLA, 2014). A 2014 survey by the National Association for Teaching English and Community

Languages to Adults (NATECLA) found that 80 per cent of respondents claimed to have waiting lists of up to 1,000 students, with 66 per cent directly attributing the increased waiting lists to funding cuts (NATECLA, 2014). These findings were in keeping with a report by Refugee Action which found that the ESOL providers interviewed had over 700 on a waiting list as standard often going up to 1,000 (Refugee Action, 2017). Bolton College has an average waiting time of 20 months to two years, whereas several other colleges interviewed within the Refugee Action report were waiting for over a year (ibid.). For some, the oversubscription is such that they have stopped enrolling new learners altogether “Due to unmanageable numbers, certain providers have stopped taking new applicants for the first time in recent memory in order to cope with the backlog.” (Refugee Action, 2017, p.3)

The number of hours of ESOL needed to become proficient in English to a level where they could undertake an office job, for someone already literate in their own language has been estimated to be 1,765 (Schellekens, 2001). However, most ESOL providers talk in terms of 360 hours being needed to reach ESOL Entry level 3, which is a lower intermediate level (ESOL Centre, 2015). Refugees on the VPRS are expected to receive eight hours of ESOL a week as part of the Statement of Requirements. Migrants in receipt of Job Centre Plus ESOL are mandated to attend but the exact number of hours can be negotiated between the Job Centre and the ESOL provider, however it cannot exceed 16 hours a week and is only available for a maximum of six months (AoC, 2014). The 16 hour maximum rule is intended so that the job seeker has adequate time during the week to be looking for employment. It should be noted that funding for this mandated ESOL was cut in 2016, which saw a loss of £45 million to the sector, whilst the duty for FE colleges to accept Job Centre Plus clients remained (Evans, 2015). In reality, due to the funding cuts many colleges have reduced the number of hours tuition which are available for ESOL, with some providers cutting the number of hours offered by half (Refugee Action, 2017). A survey undertaken by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) found that the average number of hours ESOL provision per week in the South East was 4.25 (L&W, 2017). Assuming that a migrant was already literate in their own language attended an average weekly ESOL class of four hours a week, it would take them nearly two years to reach Entry Level 3, and eight years to reach the standard needed to work in an office. Whilst many migrants are very enterprising in how they learn English outside of the classroom, there are many for whom it is hard to befriend native speakers, who may have childcare commitments or vulnerabilities which mean they are more reliant on formal ESOL provision. A report by Middlesex University concluded that the changes to ESOL funding and provision under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 threatens progress made in this field under Labour

“rather than consolidating the position of ESOL in the further education mainstream, or addressing the notable gaps in provision, the new strategy threatens to undo the achievements of the past ten years and push ESOL back towards the educational margins of under-resourced provision, with volunteer-run classes for under- and nonfunded groups.”

(Kofman et al., 2011).

The ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities has been directly and indirectly affected by the changes to ESOL under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 in the following ways.

Local authorities have been hit by the cuts in funding to the AEB ESOL budget in the same way FE colleges have. Local authorities draw down on the AEB funding and organise ESOL classes themselves or fund FE Colleges to run the courses for them (Foster & Bolton, 2018). Historically, local authorities have delivered more community learning based ESOL than FE colleges (Evans, 2015), which can help to attract learners who might be put off by a traditional classroom setting. Some local authorities benefitted from the additional ESOL funding made available under MHCLG Community-based English language programmes, indeed an early evaluation of one of the trainings funded by MHCLG showed participants scored ‘significantly higher’ than those who had not attended the training (MHCLG, 2018, p.39). The funding targeted areas with the highest proportion of migrants who could not speak English well or at all. This targeting is understandable but does mean that there were relatively few areas which have benefitted from this funding. The overall picture for community based ESOL learning funded by local authorities has been cuts to services.

Some local authorities were also directly hit by the cessation of funding for mandated ESOL for Job Centre Plus clients, which to make matters worse was introduced two weeks before the start of the academic term at a time when learners were enrolled and teachers hired.

Indirectly, the cessation of funding for Job Centre mandated ESOL may have affected integration in local areas as the ESOL training provided helped migrants into employment and provided opportunities for community cohesion through better English

“The college’s FE principal, John Kenyon, said this provision had made a “significant contribution” to community cohesion, as well as helping people into both voluntary and paid work, with between 10 and 15 documented job outcomes per month.”

(Evans, 2015)

ESOL and the VPRS

Local authorities participating on the VPRS were also directly affected by the requirement within the Statement of Requirements to have VPRS refugees attending 8 hours of ESOL per week within one month of arrival. Meeting this requirement was identified by many of the local authority officers interviewed as one of the hardest parts of delivering the VPRS, with half of the respondents (including some counties) stating that that there was no or very little ESOL provision in their area when they first began participating on the VPRS, as the following quotes describe

“To be honest that has probably one of the been the most difficult things to source is ESOL provision”

(Local authority 16)

“A real challenge was the ESOL provision, we thought that the infrastructure was better than it turned out to be. Adult education were not actually providing as much coverage as we’d anticipated it would have”

(Local authority 3)

“There was none in X when we started. ...Because of the funding cuts around ESOL provision in the county, they had pulled the adult ESOL provision out of X completely and the nearest one was based in authority Y, or authority Z, which would have been for our first families just an impossible ask for them”

(Local authority 12)

“There have been issues particularly around rural X around ESOL provision, they just aren't significant numbers of registered qualified ESOL providers where we have found it people have to travel quite a way”

(Local authority 2)

“We've got specific provision for them which has been provided specifically since the scheme started there was nothing before”

(Local authority 15)

Where there was college provision, many authorities reported difficulty placing learners which had pre-entry level English or basic literacy skills in their native language as often ESOL courses start at Entry Level 1.

Unsurprisingly, the authorities which had experience of working with migrants prior to the introduction of the scheme seemed to have experienced the least issues finding and accessing ESOL. This was not necessarily because the FE colleges near them were able to accept new intake (although this was the case for some), but these authorities were also aware of alternative ESOL providers or local voluntary groups able to assist with ESOL

“We got them into ESOL straight away. The Syrians started from absolute scratch, so we gave them some intense work first. It was really an access course that we put them through, we have got (private) language providers here ... and they specialise in one to one, you know from the start. It is quite a skill to take someone from absolutely no English and to teach them in the medium of English so that they can let so that they can then access X College”

(Local authority 8)

Just under a quarter of authorities interviewed mentioned having undertaken mapping exercises to identify the sources of various forms of ESOL provision in their area.

“I think the issue we have got in X is we weren't clear on what the ESOL arrangements were around us, so it was a case of going out and having to dig and I would suggest we are still not there yet. So where we are now is that we're looking at producing an integration document...that maps all the ESOL availability in the Boroughs and outside”

(Local authority 6)

“Well the huge amount of ESOL provision was one of the things which immediately needed mapping, so there is you know that much more sort of standardized provision provided by colleges, there's churches just offering like an evening a week, you know much more sort of voluntary based, it's all going on. There's a bit of stuff to do with the university that they have started, there is something with the Arabic language exchange, the Arabic students are doing Arabic language exchange. And so, now we've got that mapping it is easier for people to advise migrants what is out there.”

(Local authority 13)

Whilst other authorities did not specifically mention having undertaken such an exercise, it was clear that most of the authorities interviewed had significantly increased their knowledge of local ESOL provision as a result of the scheme. Nevertheless, the advantage of the formal mapping exercises is that this information then became a central resource able to be shared, rather than being held by individuals within an institution.

SESPM also commissioned Learning and Work Institute to undertake a mapping exercise depicting ESOL provision available in the South East on an interactive Google map.

Bespoke provision of ESOL was mentioned by over three quarters of the respondents. This was not purely due to the lack of hours or waiting lists in FE colleges, but also due to other barriers to access such as disabilities or inadequate childcare facilities. One local authority officer, experienced in working with migrants spoke of being able to provide classes which fitted around the schedules of the Syrian families rather than the other way round.

“We can tailor things around ESOL and we can pay extra to have bespoke classes and classes at certain times of the day which the college would not normally provide, and again it’s a bit uncomfortable because it’s creating a two tier system again whereas people who have come and got ESOL at the college and are on benefits have to fit in their lives around those ESOL classes because we’re not paying for them....just to tailor courses to fit in around people dropping the kids off at school, around people’s training courses, and that just would not happen, that would just be pie in the sky for a normal, you know anyone who’s not on the Syrian resettlement process.”

(Local authority 4)

The duality of ESOL provision between migrants on the VPRS and those accessing mainstream services was noted by many,

“I have valued for example central government saying we are giving you money for ESOL and we expect you to be providing 8 + hours, so I don’t know if you know anything about ESOL but statutory funding, if you are just any old migrant here, is you would only get four hours so they are affecting effectively giving a group of people double that.”

(Local authority 13)

Several of the authorities which had prior experience working with migrants and some others made efforts to “spread the honey more evenly” (local authority 9), and enable migrants not on the VPRS to benefit from the extra ESOL services which were being provided as a result of the scheme.

“So if we get the funding for more ESOL on this program can we open it up as much as possible, and we use that to improve the ESOL offer for the city as a whole for anyone. I’d say certainly the ESOL classes that are already running for the new arrivals on the scheme on the programme, X have made those open to

other people who are beginners as well. As otherwise, it's a waste to just have three people sitting in a classroom learning beginners English when there are another 10 people outside who could be benefiting from that class”.

(Local authority 9)

Conclusion

Changes to Education policy instigated by the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have had an array of impacts on the ability of a local authority to facilitate integration in their localities. Direct impacts include cost shunting such as the mandated requirement of LEAs to invest funds in the start-up of academies, ineligibility of migrant children (such as those with NRPF status) to access free school meals and the duty on local authorities (through case law) to pay university tuition fees (which have tripled since 2010) for LAC in their care. Local authorities have a duty to enter LAC into education within 20 days of their arrival, yet under the Coalition Government their power to mandate a school to take a migrant child was voided for academies, as was their ability to mandate a new primacy academy school be built in an area of school shortage places.

The indirect impact on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration is that the migrants in their localities have been affected by cuts in funding for ESOL provision both for children and adults, higher education costs at the same time that cuts of a fifth of funding for FE colleges may have led to a reduction in the quality of education received. Many of these changes such as the transfer of funds from state education to academies, the introduction of a payment by results mechanism for FE requiring students to resit GCSE Maths and English if they have achieved less than a C grade, and the gaming of exam boards prolific within academies are neo-liberal in nature.

The VPRS has been able to mitigate against some of these negative impacts with additional ESOL funding, minister led support to expedite Syrian children into school places, and the harnessing of voluntary sector support. Whilst these benefits mostly facilitated the integration of Syrian migrants, learning from the scheme has led to wider benefits for other cadres of migrants. Local authority officers' knowledge and understanding of local ESOL provision has increased considerably, especially in those authorities with less prior experience of working with migrants. As has been seen, many authorities assumed there was a greater level of ESOL provision by the colleges than actually was the case, and were also not aware of the difficulties in accessing pre-entry ESOL or finding ESOL provision which could cater for those who with basic literacy skills in their own language. The issue of rural access to provision in areas where there is little transport has also received elevated attention, as has the scarcity of ESOL provision

with crèche facilities. All of these issues existed prior to the VPRS but would have received less attention as the authority was not in the position of having to assure ESOL provision. The following section outlines where examples of cost and responsibility shunting in addition to neo-liberal reforms has been noted within the field of employment.

6.2 Employment

Introduction

Employment is a dimension that provides a multitude of opportunities to facilitate mutual acceptance between migrants and the host society. Employment offers the means to become financially independent, it also offers the opportunity to mix socially, improve language proficiency, create social bonds and social bridges (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, these links are not automatic, and research has shown that anti-social working hours, or employment in professions where there is little opportunity to mix with native born workers, can adversely affect integration (Spencer et al., 2007). Migrants as a whole tend to be more entrepreneurial than native populations (OECD, 2010), and also contribute towards employment creation, with 24 per cent of former asylum-seeking migrants in the UK having employees compared to 18 per cent of native born (Kone et al., 2019). As neo-liberal conceptions of people's values increasingly focus on their economic output, employed migrants have been demonstrated to boost the economy of the receiving nation (Goldin et al., 2018), whereas unemployed or migrants receiving benefits are viewed unfavourably (Koning, 2011). For local authorities migrants can help to innovate and rekindle dwindling local economies, with areas such as Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh and Cleveland all having proactively tried to attract migrants in recognition that migrants "are going to create the jobs, create the new companies, create the businesses of the future." (The mayor of Chicago (USA), Rahm Emanuel quoted in Turner, 2012, p.8). As a result, employment is an important driver to consider when looking at integration.

Key changes to policies relating to employment and unemployment benefits introduced under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 include increased penalties for employing irregular migrants, changes to eligibility surrounding the right to work for asylum seekers and volunteering, restrictions on Job Seekers Allowance for EEA nationals, and changes to specific programmes to support migrants into employment. The introduction of the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit will be covered under the Housing Chapter as these benefits are often operationalised within Housing Departments of local authorities, and do not exclusively relate to people seeking

employment. For example, in November 2018 only 18 per cent of claimants who had their benefits capped were claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), many more were claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA), which means they have already been assessed as having limited capacity to work, likely due to illness or a disability (Work and Pensions Committee, 2019).

Employment and the Hostile Environment

Refugees, people with humanitarian protection, and anyone with limited leave to remain have the right to work in the UK (CORAM, 2017b). However, for those who do not have the right to work in the UK, the 2016 Immigration Act made it a criminal offence which can lead to deportation and the seizing of any wages which may have been earned (ibid.). This was the first time penalties were introduced against the worker and not just the employer. Penalties against employers hiring people without the right to work were increased to a potential fine of £20,000 and a possible five-year prison sentence (Home Office, 2016b). Moreover, duties were now placed on the employer to demonstrate that they had checked the right to work status of the employee. At the same time, the types of migrants eligible to work was becoming increasingly confusing, with apprenticeships being included the types of illegal employment, and international students restricted working during or after university (ibid.). Hurstfield et al. (2004) demonstrated that employers were less likely to employ a migrant due to concerns over documentation and the fear of subsequent Home Office investigations and penalties. Consequently, it is possible that now the penalty for employing someone without right to work is a £20,000 fine and potential five-year prison sentence, this may deter potential employers even further from being willing to employ a migrant, even with the right to work. However, the Home Office have introduced an online employment status check to help employers.

Other than the increased employment checks on irregular migrants under the hostile environment, there were not many changes in rights to work for migrants during this period other than for asylum seekers and refugees. Since 2005, any asylum-seeker who, as a result of delays within the Home Office, has been waiting more than 12 months for a verdict on their application, has the right to work (CORAM, 2018). In 2010, in keeping with a Supreme Court judgment, the Coalition agreed that this concession also applies to asylum-seekers who have made fresh claims for asylum (ibid.). However, at the same time, the Coalition also introduced the requirement that any employment found by an asylum-seeker must be on the skills-shortage list, they cannot be self-employed or set up their own business (Gower, 2019). The Coalition government claimed that the introduction of the skills shortage occupation list requirement on asylum seekers was necessary to align asylum seekers with wider migration employment practices (ibid.). A

2018 survey headed by Lift the Ban, found that the decision to restrict asylum seekers to only be able to apply for jobs on the skills shortage occupation list, has made it nearly impossible for asylum seekers to work with only two of the 36 refugees having found work. In addition, the Coalition also opted out of adopting the EU Directive on Reception Conditions for asylum seekers which would have seen permission to work being granted after nine months of awaiting a decision (Gower, 2019). The combination of this opt out and the skills shortage occupation list requirement led the UK to have one of the most restrictive policies on working entitlements of asylum seekers amongst its peers in 2018, with most European countries requiring nine months or less, the USA six months and Canada no wait time before entering employment (Refugee Action, 2018).

The same reticence to hire migrants has been noted within the sphere of voluntary work. The Home Office distinguishes between volunteering and voluntary work, with voluntary work subject to the immigration restrictions as paid employment (CORAM, 2017b). This means that asylum seekers cannot undertake voluntary work either. Within the participant observation undertaken for this thesis, local authority officers commented on how companies found the difference between asylum seeker and refugee confusing, especially in terms of eligibility for volunteering or for work. Fortunately, for those on the VPRS, case workers were able to explain the difference and reassure the company that refugees were eligible, equally volunteers on the VPRS have helped make introductions and facilitate the finding of work or work experience for refugees on the scheme.

The indirect consequence for local authorities and migrant integration is that this restriction reduces the opportunities to become economically self-reliant, at a cost both to the asylum seeker, the nation state and to the local economy. The 2018 Lift the Ban report estimated that an additional £42.4 million per annum could be given to the Exchequer if asylum seekers were allowed to work after a six-month waiting period. Furthermore, a comparative study in Germany found that the longer the initial restriction on being able to access employment, the longer it took to find employment afterwards (Marbach et al., 2018).

The direct impact on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration as a result of these additional barriers to asylum seekers accessing employment relates to community cohesion. Whereas prior to the 1999 Act migrants tended to gravitate towards areas where there were pre-existing migrant communities, the introduction of asylum dispersal meant many asylum seekers often found themselves in homogeneously white native communities not used to migrants (Hynes & Sales, 2010). Asylum migrants are often a highly visible category of migrants, either due to the colour of their skin if not white, or the fact that they cannot access employment. With a weekly support allowance

30 per cent lower than UK benefits (£36.95 per week in 2017), asylum seekers have very little they can afford to do. As Hynes and Sales describe

“This made them highly visible, a visibility increased by the removal in 2002 of the ‘concession’ which had allowed asylum seekers to apply to take up employment after six months. With no work and no money to spend, they had little choice but to just ‘hang around’”

(Hynes & Sales, 2010 p.54)

‘Hanging around’ may sound innocuous in itself but it can have negative consequences for community cohesion. Not only does it make asylum seekers more visible, but it makes them more visible in a way which is clearly not economically active and in doing so contributes to conceptions of migrants as a drain on the welfare state, regardless of the fact that they are legally banned from working. Within the participant observation undertaken for this research when attending community discussions on migration, members of the public often mistakenly assumed that asylum seekers can work but are too lazy.

Unemployment Benefits

The topic of migrants, employment and unemployment benefit is emotionally charged within UK right wing media and has led to the contradictory depictions of what has been labelled ‘Schrodinger’s immigrant’, someone simultaneously taking British people’s jobs at the same time as claiming Unemployment Benefit and scrounging off the state. In reality, the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 made it harder for migrants to access benefits.

Most non-EU migrants entering the UK will not be able to access benefits until they have lived in the UK for at least five years and have been granted indefinite leave to remain (exceptions to this as highlighted in Annex A are refugees and those granted humanitarian protection). EEA nationals have previously been able to access benefits, under reciprocal EU arrangements. However, in 2013 the Coalition introduced restrictions on EEA nationals right to claim unemployment benefits. Different criteria were introduced depending on if the EEA national already resided in the UK or if they were a new arrival.

If an EEA national has lived and worked in the UK for over a year, they are able to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) immediately upon losing their employment (NRPF, 2018d). These individuals can obtain ‘worker’ status which gives them the ability to claim

housing assistance (subject to meeting the housing assistance criteria such as being able to prove a 'local connection'). If an EEA national with worker or student status had been not found employment within six months of receiving JSA, they would need to show evidence they had a 'genuine prospect of employment' in the UK before continuing to receive support (ibid.). A genuine prospect to work most commonly means a written offer of imminent employment (Child Poverty Action Group, 2015, p.8). After this point the EEA national would lose worker status and have three months to reside as a job seeker. Some allowances are made for if the worker has been unable to work due to illness or has ceased working in order to pursue training or education related to their previous employment, these allowances also hold for those who are self-employed. Lastly, EEA workers are means tested, if they have not earned above £149 a week (either through being self-employed or otherwise) they are able to receive JSA but no longer eligible for Housing Benefit (NRPF, 2014, p.4).

Any new EEA nationals who arrived after the 1st January 2014 have to wait three months before being able to apply for JSA and are not able to claim Housing Benefit under the same channels as an EEA worker (more on Housing Benefit is covered under the housing section). Once they have held continuous employment for one year, they would be eligible for worker status and the increase in benefits this entails.

The impact on local authorities due to these changes in entitlements for EEA nationals to access unemployment support is that it is possible they will receive more people becoming destitute and needing their support, as the NRPF network describe

“Since January 2014, the government has imposed several restrictions on benefit eligibility for EEA nationals, and so therefore social services are likely to receive more referrals for assistance from such families.”

(NRPF, 2017b, p.45)

Despite the fact that access to benefits for migrants became harder under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018, the depiction that migrants were abusing the system was perpetuated by these governments who augmented this binary between migrants as drains on the state and hardworking British public. As this Conservative survey question demonstrates

“Do you agree with controlling immigration so our economy and local services deliver for hardworking taxpayers?”

(Conservatives, cited in Cocco, 2014)

It is argued throughout this thesis that migrants and other vulnerable populations have been attributed blame for failings which have arisen due to neo-liberal reforms. Within employment it is worth exploring how neo-liberal associations between poverty and unemployment have transferred blame onto the individual if they are in need, rather than acknowledging any systemic failings. The phrase 'hard working' was a mainstay of the Coalition Government as a twitter hashtag, campaign slogan and in speeches (Farey-Jones, 2013). It has been argued that the use of this phrase was deliberate. In keeping with the Austerity Localism and Austerity Urbanism arguments, Evans (2013) argues that the phrase hardworking legitimises the introduction of policies which remove or restrict access to benefits for those deemed not hard working, and "encourages us to avoid remembering that the rewards for the 'hard-working' are getting fewer and fewer". The Coalition Government's 2010 'State of the Nation Report: Poverty, Worklessness and Welfare Dependency in the UK' attributed all causes of poverty to unemployment and was the justification the DWP's overhaul of the welfare system was based upon. Yet, under the Coalition in-work poverty grew to record levels with nearly half of those living in poverty having a job (MacInnes et al., 2014) and the number of people on zero- hour contracts rising from 168,000 in 2010 to 697,000 in 2014 (ONS, 2015). The simplified reification of the protestant work ethic, that all you have to do is work hard enough, is at the heart of neo-liberal reforms and removes systemic problems from scrutiny. The agility companies need to be able to quickly corner new markets and remain competitive lead to rapidly changing employment contracts and increased casualisation of work (Nadvi, 2004). The neo-liberal notion that labour is fluid and if incentivised enough through fear of poverty, people will move to fill the most advantageous employment opening, presents humans as motivated by materialism alone and overlooks social ties to people and places. It also overlooks the strains on the non-monetised aspects of the economy such as care work which often falls on women. Yet as Evans (2013) describes the systemic failings of neo-liberalism to move people out of poverty, are deflected towards the 'other', notably the vulnerable and in particular migrants who are blamed for needing to use the welfare state. The suggested restriction of immigration and benefits so that "so our economy and local services deliver for hardworking taxpayers" (Conservatives, cited in Cocco, 2014) is demonstration of this welfare chauvinism.

Targeted support to assist migrants into employment

Targeted support to assist migrants into employment has been identified by migrant integration scholars as a marker to determine how conducive a country's employment policy are towards integration (MIPEX, 2015). These include targeted training to help migrants enter employment, job specific language training, bridging courses or

programmes to encourage the hiring of migrants. Support in this area was almost entirely stopped under the Coalition Government.

In 2011 the Coalition ceased to fund the Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES), a nation-wide service run by NGOs contracted to support newly recognised refugees into employment for their first 12 months after achieving status (APPG on Refugees, 2017). In addition to job seeking advice, refugees were supported with a personal integration plan, advice about accessing benefits, and also had the possibility of a community mentor who would assist them during the transition phase (ibid.). The programme cost approximately £2,000 per client which was deemed too high during a period of austerity (ibid.). The NGOs who previously had RIES contracts, such as Refugee Action and Refugee Council, are still giving support to asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees, but without central funding, this is at a much-reduced rate (ibid.).

Assistance in funding for bridging courses, which help a migrant to transition from their profession in their home country to the regulations of the equivalent profession in the UK were stopped in all fields but nursing (MIPEX, 2015b). In terms of job specific language training, as was seen in the Education section, ESOL for the workplace was stopped under the Coalition and Conservative Governments as was the £45 million for Job Centre Plus Mandatory ESOL.

In terms of support provided by the DWP, the experience of local authorities working on the VPRS indicates that access to translators, which is a provision the DWP are mandated to provide under their own Equality Impact Assessment (DWP, 2011), is not standard practice. The majority of authorities interviewed within the semi structured interviews had experienced difficulties working with the DWP, those aspects relating to benefits are covered within the Housing chapter, however, of those who reported problems, several volunteered having encountered problems with interpreters.

“So I need to be open about it and I'm sure you've heard me say in a meeting in London a while back, the DWP do not resource interpreters for as far as I'm aware as required as in their contracts that they should...So in effect the local authority is paying for interpreters as required to attend the Job Centre, or we have to find people who can speak Arabic and English...Which is a big mess and we are having to pick up local issues with the DWP as it continues.”

(Local authority 6)

“We found we found that the DWP or Job Centre support staff initially were not familiar with their responsibilities to the Syrian vulnerable person Scheme and

they weren't prepared to buy in interpreters or anything, they were very difficult at the beginning”

(Local authority 5)

“The only issue was around us organising our interpretation services to be there so yeah we didn't, we already had that good relationship they had never dealt with non-English-speaking clients before in that respect.”

(Local authority 15)

“I think the first initial assessment we had an Arabic speaker with us, again a volunteer who interpreted for me.”

(Local authority 18)

At the beginning of the VPRS, central government assured buy in from several government departments such as Education and the DWP to assist on the VPRS. Senior regional representatives within the DWP provided key contacts to local authorities to assist with the VPRS (semi structured interviews, participant observation). Consequently, if these problems were experienced by people working on the VPRS, the situation for migrants arriving independently, who are not part of the scheme may be worse as they do not have case workers supporting them. This is particularly worrisome when it has been shown that former asylum seeking migrants are twice as likely to rely on job centres when looking for employment than the native population (Kone et al., 2019). As one local authority interviewed described

“But other migrants, in terms of the support that we in partnership with JCP here put in place for them (VPRS refugees), attending interviews and being supported in attending those interviews where necessary; other people don't get that at all.”

(Local authority 12)

On a more positive note, in 2017 the DWP introduced the Work and Health Programme which offers support into employment for all job seekers who have been seeking work for more than 24 months, or available immediately for vulnerable groups including refugees. The training involves support in looking for work, as well as being put in touch with employers. (Powell, 2018). Funding is expected to be £130 million per year although this is less than the Work Programme and Work Choice DWP programmes which existed previously, for which the combined expenditure was £540.8 million in 2015/16 (ibid.).

Employment and the VPRS

Supporting refugees on the VPRS into employment is a key concern for local authorities participating on the scheme, it is also part of the Statement of Requirements. In addition to the fact that employment is a key driver for integration, the concern for nearly every local authority interviewed was how the VPRS families were going to cope once the five year support package they arrived with ended. Due to the introduction of the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit, many families stand to potentially not be able to afford their housing once the scheme has finished, despite the efforts of local authorities to place families in affordable accommodation (semi structured interviews). More on this is covered within the section on the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit within the housing section, this section focuses on the efforts local authorities have made to assist people on the VPRS into employment. It should be noted, that by virtue of having qualified for the VPRS, those refugees on the scheme are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable in the refugee camps. As seen in Annex A, they have been selected according to seven categories of vulnerability, and many families may fill the criteria for more than one of these categories. Consequently, they are likely to face greater difficulties entering the labour market than an EEA national might. Nevertheless, as will be seen, the experience supporting refugees into employment gained by local authorities as a result of the scheme, means that local authorities in the South East are now more aware of the difficulties in accessing employment for refugees in general, whether they are former asylum seekers or on a government programme.

Many local authorities in the South East initially focused on getting the families settled, but for many it soon became evident that the families were going to need greater support into employment than they had perhaps recognised. By Spring 2017 only 2 per cent of UK VPRS refugees who had arrived in 2016 had found employment (Bolt, 2018). As one authority interviewed described

“We have done all the soft touch stuff. We have given welfare as far as we can as far as the families have wanted us to do that, we have supported them, we have helped them with their social care issues, we have helped them with all their benefits claims, we have done all that side, but we need to move on to the next track now which is getting those who are capable into the workplace. That's what we really need to up the ante on”

(Local authority 2)

However, several authorities noted findings in line with Spencer et al. (2007) that certain employment does not offer the opportunity to learn the language which can be counterproductive to integration.

“Two of the young men who have got a job now, you know they work in a sort of Turkish café and they’ve fed back that whilst it’s great they have been offered a job but they are ending up just speaking Arabic the whole time and it’s not helping them learn English. The ones that have done better are the ones who have got jobs in McDonald’s or something so they can speak English.”

(Local authority 5)

Several local authorities in the South East were concerned that the generic support being provided by the DWP and regular ESOL classes was not enough to assist VPRS families into employment and decided to take a more proactive approach. The participant observation undertaken within this thesis helped to capture the case study of Ashford Borough Council as an initiative born out of the VPRS which has proved particularly effective.

Ashford Borough Council was one of the first local authorities in the South East to sign up to the VPRS, with the leader pledging to accept 50 people a year for 5 years. After a few months of the first few families arriving, the lead officer on the scheme, noticed that the men, in particular, in the families seemed despondent. In the camps the men had had a purpose, keeping the family safe and registering the family for resettlement. Once arrived into the UK, this sense of purpose was waning which the lead officer found worrying.

“We need to be building on resilience and all of those things that most support services in this country are centred around people who are broken. We have got a very different sort of people who are coming in, with a past that they have to deal with, but they are not necessarily broken. They are resilient. They are resourceful. If we don’t build on that then we risk breaking them rather than supporting them”.

As a result, the lead officer began to phone round organisations involved in training to see if they would be interested in working on some bespoke activities to help both assist the refugees into employment, but also work on rekindling the sense of confidence and resilience the men had arrived with. A local company called CONCEPT Training, had previous experience assisting those Not in Employment or Education (NEET) into employment and understood the holistic approach to employment coaching that Ashford Borough Council were looking to create. Together, and in consultation with the local Job Centre Plus, they created the Language and Industrial Skills Programme (LIST). The programme has three main focuses, language and training for community and family life, language and skills training for employment, and providing a safe and therapeutic ‘enabling environment’ to help talk through issues and even provide advocacy support if

needed. Refugees discuss their previous employment in their home country and their aspirations in the UK, they are helped to create an individual learning plan. Depending on the needs of the individual, this plan might include computer literacy or driving theory training, in addition to work placements and sector specific language and many other relevant trainings. The intention is not just to assist the refugee into employment, but into a job in the area of their choice, building their confidence and knowledge of UK culture along the way. Oxford City Council has taken similar measures in commissioning bespoke training for their VPRS families via Aspire, a charity established to assist homeless and other vulnerable cohorts into employment.

In addition to these bespoke employment trainings, the VPRS has also seen volunteers coming forward from the community, many of whom assist with aspects such as checking CVs or simulated interview practice. Volunteers have also helped to signpost refugees towards relevant employers or even introduce them, in this respect the 'social bridges' which the VPRS has created have helped refugees into employment. As one local authority describes

"It's run by a church. They run all the food banks, and they already do work for women to get them into employment and that sort of thing. So, they expanded that provision there to work with refugee families too. So, we've got a volunteer job club...an example would be, it's great to get people into the Job Centre get them on the right benefits which is a minefield itself and that needs constant overviews because things go wrong, you know not just with the families but with the DWP and documents missing and things like this. So, that's a job in itself, but it's the things which take a lot of time so doing job searches and that sort of thing. They need someone to sit down and help to fill out CVs and maybe make some calls that sort of thing and that's where the Voluntary Sector comes in that's where we need them"

(Local authority 17)

Conclusion

As has been seen employment is a key driver when it comes to integration, helping to provide independent means of support for the individual and lessen need for support from the state, a factor which negatively viewed by native populations and the government alike. Employment in English speaking environments helps to strengthen language skills and creates opportunities to build social bonds and bridges. Consequently, the changes to employment legislation under the Coalition and Conservative Governments from 2010-2018 can be seen as having indirectly and directly

hindered the ability of local authorities to facilitate integration in their localities in the following ways.

The requirement for those asylum seekers who are eligible for work to only apply for jobs which are listed on the skills shortage list is a significant impediment for those who have already been waiting for 12 months for a verdict on their application from the Home Office. As has been seen research has shown that the longer an asylum seeker is held from applying for employment, the longer it takes them to access employment once they are eligible to apply (Marbach et al., 2018). For local authorities with asylum seekers present, this means a more visible asylum migrant population, surviving on less than forty pounds a week, unable to contribute to the local economy, and drawing on local services such as foodbanks and other voluntary sector provision potentially putting them in competition with native populations. Furthermore, harsh penalties for illegal working, introduced under the 2015 Conservative Government in the 2016 Immigration Act, may well serve to disincentivise employers from employing migrants legally eligible to work, due to not understanding immigration status and erring on the side of caution. The same applies to migrants eligible to undertake voluntary work, as the legislation surrounding who can and cannot volunteer is far from straightforward. All of this means that a local authority is less able to facilitate migrant integration, more likely to encounter issues of community cohesion, and less able to boost the local economy through accessing migrant entrepreneurialism.

The restriction on eligibility for benefits for EEA nationals directly affected local authorities as it is often the housing department who are involved in assessing whether the migrant meets the local connection housing connection to make them eligible. Furthermore, the NRPF network has stated that it is very likely that destitute EEA nationals not eligible for certain benefits may well end up in the care of the local authority, as part of a local authority's responsibilities under section 17 of the Children's Act or under a Human Rights Needs Assessment.

The cessation of the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), removal of £45 million for Job Centre Plus Mandatory ESOL, end to workplace ESOL provision and the removal of bridging programmes meant that there is less support available to help migrants into employment. For local authorities this had direct impacts as some of the local authorities were involved in the provision of the JCP mandated ESOL, but it also means that the tools to help migrants into work are missing. More migrants are likely to become destitute, potentially falling into the care of local authorities, or to take longer to get into employment, potentially causing some of the local issues mentioned previously. Increasing neo-liberal messaging depicting those in receipt of benefits as lazy and a drain on the welfare state has transferred responsibility for poverty onto the individual

rather than pointing to problems with a system where in work poverty has risen dramatically.

In contrast to this, the 2015 Conservative Government's decision to create the VPRS has meant that local authorities in the SE of England are far more involved in assisting refugees into employment than previously. As a result, aspects such as advocating for the provision of interpreters by the DWP on a local level has taken place, this may mean in some areas that JCP staff are now more accustomed to providing translators for other categories of migrants. It also means that there are people within local authorities who have an appreciation of the need for more work based ESOL commissioning or the complexities surrounding eligibility to undertake voluntary work. Furthermore, the voluntary and community support which has flourished as a result of the scheme is being extended in many areas to support migrants not on the scheme. More about this is included in Chapter 7 on Socio-cultural changes. The following section outlines where examples of cost and responsibility shunting in addition to neo-liberal reforms has been noted within the field of housing.

6.3 Housing

Introduction

Housing impacts on migrant integration in a multitude of ways and has been described as "critical to the welfare and integration of new migrants" (Perry, 2008, p.1). Research shows that new migrants in the UK are three times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation and less likely to own their own homes than native born inhabitants (Vargas Silva & Fernandez-Reino, 2009). Poor and unstable living conditions can make it harder to integrate (Perry, 2008), and can also contribute to migrants being exploited by unscrupulous landlords, with undocumented migrants being "particularly exposed" (CECODHAS, 2007). Intentionally or otherwise, migrants often find themselves in housing with other migrants, which can lead to issues of segregation from native populations (Musterd & Murie, 2006), often in the poorest areas (Edgar, 2004). Segregation can be a positive aspect, it can made creating social bonds easier and quicker for new arrivals as they encounter people of the same nationality or culture as themselves (CLIP, 2006; Fleischmann et al., 2012). However, segregation can be negative for wider integration, as opportunities to learn the language and culture of the host nation, as well as creating social bridges and bonds with native populations can be fewer (CLIP, 2006; EUMC, 2005). Segregation can also lead to certain areas becoming

'ghettoised' which can lead to discrimination in aspects such as seeking employment (Palomares & Simon, 2006).

Research documenting discrimination in choosing natives over migrant populations within the private and social rented sector is well documented (Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Zick et al., 2008; EUMC, 2005). In Europe, a 2005 report into 15 EU member states found widespread discrimination in housing, both in the social rented sector and by private property owners (EUMC, 2005). A more recent study in the UK, found that historically "traditional allocation procedures discriminated against ethnic minorities and immigrants" (ibid.) within social housing, and that until the 1980s there had been "a penalty to being an immigrant household", although this is not the case today (Battiston et al., 2014, p.4). Although research exploring discrimination and negative integration outcomes is scarce, perceived discrimination has been demonstrated to have negative effects on the health and wellbeing of migrants (Missinne & Bracke, 2012; Borrell et al., 2015; Frost, 2019). However, whilst the research would seem to suggest that migrants are discriminated against not only when it comes to accessing private but also social rented accommodation, it is the area of social housing which has become particularly contentious over the last two decades (Powell & Robinson, 2019; Robinson, 2010; Battiston et al., 2014). Several researchers have pointed to a rise in the belief among right wing populist parties and their supporters that benefits should be restricted, often to native populations. This rise in welfare state nationalism or 'welfare chauvinism' as it is was termed by Andersen and Bjørklund (1990) appears to be particularly apparent in housing as it is a more visible form of benefits (Battiston et al., 2014). This juxtaposition between the competing needs of migrant versus street homeless native populations has become a prevalent narrative in the UK as austerity has seen more people become homeless.

Local authorities are directly involved in housing, both as providers of social housing stock, coordinators of Housing Benefit and safety net providers of temporary accommodation for the destitute and homeless. This section will explore changes to housing introduced by the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 in order to assess if they have helped or hindered local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities. Key areas of focus are the introduction of the Right to Rent scheme as part of the hostile environment, changes to social housing stock and the Right to Buy scheme, additional duties to combat Homelessness and housing provision under the VPRS.

Housing and the Hostile Environment

Part of the hostile environment's extension of immigration duties into the public realm was the introduction of the requirement on private sector landlords to check that any tenant had immigration status that gave them the Right to Rent (Immigration Act 2016, Chapter 3.1). The requirement was introduced within the 2014 Immigration Act with landlords facing a civil penalty if they failed to demonstrate they had checked immigration status. This penalty was extended within the 2016 Immigration Act to a potential five-year prison sentence for those landlords failing to comply (ibid.). Not only does the law require landlords to learn about the different forms of immigration status and to carry out follow up checks for those who may have limited leave to remain, but it also requires the landlord to report any tenant who they suspect may have reached the end of their eligibility to remain in the UK (Immigration Act 2014, Chapter 24). A major concern to the Right to Rent checks voiced by NGOs, civil liberty groups and a number of landlord associations was that the scheme would lead to discrimination against all migrants, including those with unproblematic immigration status (Foster & Bellis, 2019). In response, the Government created a Code of Conduct for landlords (ibid.). Nevertheless, the Residential's Landlord Association (RLA) found that 82 per cent of its members were against the introduction of the checks and stated that "untrained British civilians" should not be expected to undertake the work of immigration officials" (RLA consultation response, cited in Foster & Bellis, 2019, p.13). In response the government introduced the Landlord Checking Service which allowed landlords to receive advice on immigration status. An initial Mystery Shopper evaluation of the scheme commissioned by the Home Office found no evidence of discrimination against migrants but it did note some commentary on bias towards less complicated immigration statuses and a reluctance to rent to someone with temporary leave to remain and a preference for 'people with local accents' who were felt to be less risky (ibid. p.16). Subsequent reviews of the scheme carried out by the VCO sector, most notably the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) published in 2015 and 2017 found strong evidence of discrimination towards migrant and ethnic minorities. The 2017 JCWI review found that of 150 Mystery Shopper tenancy enquiries, only 12 per cent received a response. A survey of 2,792 members of the RLA in 2017 found that 44 per cent of landlords were less likely to rent to a non-British citizen, 55 per cent were less likely to rent to a non-EU national and 58 per cent were less likely to rent to someone with time limited leave to remain (RLA, 2017).

A survey of tenant and voluntary organisations found concerns that the scheme was more likely to effect the most vulnerable migrants and counterproductively, potentially push them towards the kind of 'rogue landlords' that the scheme claimed to be targeting (Home Office, 2015b). A Home Affairs Committee report into the Windrush scandal found felt that the Home Office's offer to improve guidance available to landlords was unlikely

to overcome the discrimination against migrants in the rental sector (Home Affairs Committee, 2018).

In 2018, the High Court gave the JCWI the right to challenge the Right to Rent scheme in court. In 2019, the Court ruled that the scheme breaches Human Rights as outlined in the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and recommended it not be rolled out further. The Home Office won an appeal to this ruling and as of 2020 the scheme carries the dubious status of being found discriminatory but lawful (March, 2020).

The Right to Rent scheme may negatively affect the ability of local authorities to facilitate integration due to the negative impact perceived discrimination can have upon migrant populations. Some local authority officers working on the VPRS scheme reported increased difficulties reassuring landlords about the legitimacy of renting to refugees as a result of the Right to Rent scheme, as one officer mentions

“We had a big problem one landlord in X I think it was, ... it's because of the new duties on landlords, and even though I think in the end, I'm just trying to remember what happened, in the end we had to get them to talk to the Home Office direct.”

(Local authority 1)

Furthermore, the NRPF Network reports that “an increase in workload for NRPF services was reported anecdotally by local authority representatives interviewed as part of the Home Office evaluation” (NRPF, 2015). This means that there was an increase in numbers of vulnerable migrants presenting as destitute to the local authority as a result of the scheme, thus drawing on the finances of local authorities and potentially placing the migrant in less amenable accommodation such as hotel bedsits.

Another provision also included within the 2016 Immigration Act as part of the hostile environment which had a direct impact on local authorities and housing was the end to support for asylum seekers who have had their asylum claim refused and had not appealed to overturn this decision. There were some exclusions, such as if the person could prove they were taking reasonable steps to leave the UK but were awaiting receipt of a passport for example, or had medical issues needing completion of treatment in the UK, but these exclusions are uncommon and require detailed understanding of the law. Asylum seekers have 14 days to appeal a refused claim but due to the time the refusal letter takes in the post, the actual time has been estimated to be 7-12 days (Williams, 2019). However, many asylum seekers miss the refusal letter, cannot prepare grounds for appeal fast enough or just do not realise they are entitled to accommodation while they appeal. Consequently, a third of the asylum seekers evicted by the asylum accommodation provider Serco in 2018, still had limited leave to remain at the time of

eviction (*ibid.*). Initially, Serco had continued to pay the accommodation costs of these refused asylum seekers out of their own pocket but had to change the locks after it was costing them over £1 million per annum (Clarke, 2018). The result of these evictions has been an increase in the number of destitute or homeless asylum seekers. As described by Serco's CEO "We are put into the impossible position of having to make the choice of paying for people's accommodation ourselves or making them homeless and destitute." (Serco CEO Rupert Soames, cited in Clarke, 2018).

These changes can affect the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in direct and indirect ways. There are a variety of instances where the local authority has duties to protect the most vulnerable (for an overview of these please see Annex A). This would potentially be the case where an asylum seeker has not been able to submit an appeal in time ahead of their eviction but still has leave to remain. This would also be the case for certain groups excluded from social service support such as refused asylum seekers with no leave to remain, where subject to a human rights assessment by the local authority the authority may be determined to have a duty to provide accommodation and subsistence (NRPF, 2018). Destitute asylum seekers who are awaiting the outcome of an appeal also fall into the category eligible for support. In recent years over half of initially refused asylum claims have been overturned at appeal, with 52 per cent of asylum claims overturned in 2017 and 75 per cent overturned in 2018 (op cit Williams, 2019). This means that this change in legislation in the 2016 Immigration Act, removing support for asylum seekers who have been unable to turn around their appeal in 7 to 12 days, may have transferred the number of asylum seekers with valid grounds for asylum, from the responsibility of the Home Office to the cost of local authorities and other NGOs, voluntary and community organisations willing to help these individuals. The impact of these changes on local authorities is described by the LGA "Large numbers of referrals of families resulting in increased assessment costs, and potentially then receiving a long period of support from local authorities" (LGA, 2015b).

The direct effect of these changes means less money for local authorities at a time when they are encountering unprecedented cuts in funding from central government, more time taken undertaking human rights assessments or fulfilling their homeless duties and more disruption and hardship for the migrant themselves. As has been seen previously, a migrant's initial experience of a country has a significant effect upon their long term integration, potentially being made homeless early on in their time in the UK can only be negative for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Indirectly, these changes may serve to frame migrants and asylum seekers in a negative light, both to local authorities and to local populations as a burden to already scarce resources, even when the asylum seeker has a valid claim.

Social Housing

Housing has been described as “the ‘wobbly pillar’ of the welfare state” (Torgerson, 1987). Since the Right to Buy scheme was first introduced under Margaret Thatcher in 1980, social housing stock has continuously declined, with a decrease of 25 per cent between 1980 and 2016 (Sargeant, 2019), while demand remains high with one million people currently on waiting lists in 2019 (Booth, 2019). Social housing has undergone large scale neo-liberal restructuring since the 1980s. Under Margaret Thatcher housing stock was sold to tenants at a discounted rate and local authorities were initially not allowed to reinvest any revenue earned from the sales to purchase new housing stock, in a direct move to reduce the size of the welfare state (Sargeant, 2019). The fact that demand for housing vastly outweighs supply is one of the factors that has contributed to social housing becoming such a contentious issue as there is now greater scrutiny over its allocation (Powell & Robinson, 2019; Robinson, 2010; Battiston et al., 2014). Battiston et al.’s 2014 research into the effects of increased migration upon housing stock allocation found that by far the largest negative effect on native households was caused by the reduction in housing stock. The research did note modest effects from migration but noted that

“Once one controls for factors like the demographic structure of the household, the area of residence and economic circumstances (all factors that one would expect to affect the probability of being in social housing) these differences disappear and immigrant households are significantly less likely to be in social housing than equivalent native households.”

(Battiston et al., 2014, p.3)

Even if research indicates that there has been no prioritising of migrants over native populations (Rutter & Latorre, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Battiston et al., 2014), the scarcity of housing, at a time when social housing rents in places like London can be 40 to 70 per cent lower than private sector rents (Battiston et al., 2014), means that any migrant family in social housing can cause resentment. Furthermore, migrants in social housing are easily visible in a way which other benefit allocation is not.

However, while there is no evidence to support migrants having ‘jumped the queue’ to access housing, according to the 2014 Citizenship Survey it is White Britons who scored highest in levels of perceived discrimination in social housing (Battiston et al., 2004). This was the highest area of perceived discrimination reported by White Britons with 20 per cent citing it an issue, in comparison to only 5 per cent White Britons perceiving discrimination in education or health. The only ethnic group with a higher level of

discrimination were Black Britons reporting perceived discrimination by the police or criminal justice system (ibid.). Researchers in this area have traced the origin of this false narrative back to 2006/7 when a number of popularist far right parties in the UK such as UK independent Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP) in addition to Labour MP Margaret Hodge began to argue for preference for native populations over migrants when it came to social housing allocation (Robinson, 2010; Powell & Robinson, 2019). The ensuing press coverage on this issue “tapped into this reservoir of ill-will” towards migrants (Robinson, 2010, p.62) and appears to have helped this false narrative and welfare chauvinism take hold within public perception.

“The perception that new immigrants and migrants are unfairly advantaged in the allocation of social housing is one of the most frequently cited injustices of new immigration in Britain.”

(Robinson, 2010, p.1)

The Coalition Government removed the subsidy for social housing given to local authorities as part of the 2012 Localism Act’s intention to make local authorities self-finance (Adams, 2015). They also lowered the discounted rate at which Right to Buy properties could be purchased promising that every home sold would be replaced on a one-for-one basis (Bate, 2018). However, whilst they allowed local authorities to retain 75 per cent of revenues from the sale of these houses, they were only allowed to do so for a maximum of three years and could only use 30 per cent of the revenue from one house to go towards the cost of building a new one (Sargeant, 2019). The intention was to encourage local authorities to build larger numbers of new houses but MHCLG statistics indicate that this has not happened as the number of new social houses built has not matched those sold (MHCLG, 2018c). As part of their 2015 Manifesto the Conservative Government pledged to extend the Right to Buy scheme to the Housing Association sector, although this stalled as Housing Associations (which are non-profit making but private companies) only agreed to participate on a voluntary basis (Sargeant, 2019). The reduction in social housing has not been helped by the fact that since the 2008 financial crisis private sector rent prices have increased at rates above increases in income, in London the average rent increased twice as much as the average income (32 per cent to 16 per cent respectively between 2006 to 2016, (ibid.)). Whilst government efforts such as the Affordable Homes Scheme and the Help To Buy scheme were intended to alleviate problems within the private rented sector, they may have also helped to maintain higher rates within the private sector (NAO, 2017).

In contrast to (and possibly as a result of) public opinion that migrants were being favourably treated, changes introduced by the Coalition Government made it even harder

for migrants to access social housing. In 2013, the DCLG issued statutory guidance on the allocation of social housing, stating that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government “*strongly encourages*” local authorities to introduce a two-year Habitual Residency Test (HRT) to all those applying for social housing (DCLG, 2013). This means that most migrants that have not lived in an area for two years and do not have a ‘local connection’ are not eligible for social housing. There are exceptions such as if a former asylum refugee can demonstrate having resided in an area whilst in dispersal accommodation, or if a migrant is a victim of domestic abuse, but in general it is very hard for newly arrived migrants to access social housing (Perry, 2017). Non-EEA migrants are generally not eligible to receive any housing benefit until they have been in the UK for five years (DWP, 2017). One of the local authority officers interviewed for this research identified the Localism Act and the ensuing conversation which led to the introduction of the local connection rule as having exacerbated public discontent with migrants when it came to housing.

“So, a lot of the things that came out of it...potentially sparked... “Are these people different? Should they be here?” attitude. Again, it is not a piece of legislation that I know massively well. But the little bits that touched on what I was doing at the time in homelessness and housing, it certainly, almost brought up some values instead of getting rid of them.”

(Local authority 12)

Consequently, in contradiction to the perception amongst 20 per cent of the native population that migrants are responsible for the increased difficulty in accessing social housing (Battison et al., 2014), nine out of ten new lettings by social landlords go to British nationals (Perry, 2017). This is despite the fact that migrants are more likely to be eligible (Battison et al., 2014). This does not mean that migrants are discriminated against when it comes to accessing social housing (legal exclusions aside), but that those who are eligible are less likely to apply (ibid.). Research strongly demonstrates that increased competition over the allocation of social housing stock has predominantly been caused by policies which reduced local authority social housing stock (Powell & Robinson, 2019; Battison et al., 2014), yet blame is still attributed to migrants. This incongruence has been attributed to increasingly popularist stances taken by UK political parties and the media which have perpetuated this false perception (Powell & Robinson, 2019; Robinson, 2010). It has also been noted by some researchers to be a feature of neo-liberal thinking.

[Housing Benefit, Benefit Cap and Universal Credit](#)

Not only did local authority social housing stock decrease under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018, but so too did the benefits someone in need of housing was eligible to receive. In 2010 the Coalition Government announced their plan to make changes to the welfare state. It was announced that all benefits would be capped at a set limit, and that a number of these benefits would be combined and paid for in one monthly payment from the DWP. The cap on payments is known as the 'Benefit Cap' (BC) and the single payment process is known as 'Universal Credit' (UC). The BC would be no higher than the average amount earned by a working household. The rationale in doing so, was that no family dependent on benefits should be earning more than the average working family income, thereby ensuring that those in employment did not feel at a disadvantage for working, and incentivising unemployed people into work (House of Lords Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). Whilst it is the DWP who determine a number of benefits, such as JSA, Child Tax Credit etc, housing allowance is a more local affair and has traditionally been managed by local authorities.

The BC initially capped the total amount of benefits which someone can receive to £18,600 per annum for a single person with no children or £26,000 per annum for a family (Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). In 2016, this was lowered to £13,400 for a single person with no children and £20,000 for a family living outside of London, within London the amounts were £15,100 and £23,000 respectively (ibid.). UC is the combined payment of a number of benefits into one monthly payment into the to the recipients account. UC covers a number of significant benefits including JSA and Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Income Support amongst others. BC and UC have demonstrated an increase in people entering employment but they have also hit families and single parents the hardest, especially larger families with more than two children, as no extra income support was provided for any third or subsequent child (Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). Between 2013 and 2016, of the 84,000 households affected by the BC, 77 per cent had three or more children (ibid.). The 2016 reduction in BC is believed to have affected another 88,000 households between 2016 and 2018 (Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). UC has been introduced incrementally across the UK, research by the Trussell Trust and UK Debt charity StepChange found that there had been an increase of 52 per cent in the use of foodbanks in areas which had transitioned to UC for a year (Trussell Trust, 2019). StepChange has warned that those on UC are three times as likely to be in debt as someone not on benefits, and twice as likely to be in debt as those receiving benefits in areas which have not transitioned to UC (ibid.). The charity has also warned that the five-week wait for the first UC payment is pushing people to taking loans from loan sharks (Trussell Trust, 2019).

As these examples have shown, the introduction of UC and BC were an active reduction and further dismantling of the welfare state. The impacts detailed above are included not only because they will have impacted upon migrants, but also because they help to explain how members of the UK public have been pitted against one another as access to welfare becomes scarcer. The Austerity Localism and Austerity Urbanism literature demonstrate how this neo-liberal reduction in the welfare state has been ushered in under the name of austerity. Concurrent to these reforms has been the deflection of blame for this reduction and restructuring of the welfare state to the very people who need and use it, principally migrants but also white underclass. The harnessing of welfare chauvinism to deflect from the failings of neo-liberal reforms has shifted attention away from the fact that it was neo-liberalism's failure to self-regulate which caused the GFC, onto those needing to use the heavily depleted welfare state. As this quote describes

“Housing has also been centrally implicated in the unprecedented dismantling of the social welfare safety net since the GFC. Here, the (overly) large, welfare dependent, ethnic family is one of two parallel constructions central to the symbolic image of a “broken welfare state”; the other being the irresponsible, white working-class figure, so often the subject of “poverty porn” (Skeggs, 2009). Both serve as a means of mobilizing disidentifications and securing popular support for welfare retraction that impinges just as sharply on the white working-class as it does on ethnic and migrant groups.”

(Powell and Robinson, 2019, p.206)

Meanwhile, local authorities with their duties to prioritise the well-being of their constituents have the responsibility of trying to patch the system together, transitioning to the reduced welfare state model whilst simultaneously trying to support those who are becoming destitute at a point where they face unprecedented cuts themselves. Local authorities are expected to assist households which have difficulty transitioning to UC by using the funding it provides through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) funded by central government. However, the funds received are not enough to match the costs needed due to welfare system reform undertaken by the Coalition and Conservative Governments. In 2016/17 local authorities spent £4.4 million of their own funds to cover the actual DHP costs entailed, in 2017/18 this rose to £6.3 million (Merrick, 2018). It is worth noting that this is another area where the lack of local authority owned social housing stock has an impact, as the cost of local authority owned social housing is far lower than other forms of accommodation.

“The average housing benefit claimant living in the private rented sector costs the Government £982 a year more in housing benefit than a housing association tenant, and £1,242 more than a local authority tenant.”

(Shelter, 2019, p.173)

One of the reasons councils are having to pay DHP out of their own funds is that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, (the funds paid to support those on benefits in the private sector) have not risen in line with private sector rents since 2010 and were frozen between 2016-2018 (Shelter, 2018).

The complexity of the rules and regulations surrounding housing in comparison to the simplicity of the welfare chauvinist arguments help to explain why this neo-liberal sleight of hand has been so successful.

Homelessness

Local authorities have a duty to find accommodation for people identified as being in priority need. Since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, these duties have increased and they now had a duty to work to prevent homelessness for all. This does not mean that they have to house everyone, but to provide assistance to help prevent homelessness (Wilson & Barton, 2020).

Homelessness in the UK has risen year on year since 2010, rising by 169 per cent between 2010 and 2017 (Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2017, quoted in The Guardian, 2018). Whilst the reasons someone becomes homeless are complex, many authorities have pointed to the disparity between rising rents within the private sector and average earnings coupled with reduced benefits being key drivers. An evaluation by the National Audit Office in 2017 found that

“Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years, and at present costs the public sector in excess of £1 billion a year. It appears likely that the decrease in affordability of properties in the private rented sector, of which welfare reforms such as the capping of Local Housing Allowance are an element, have driven this increase in homelessness. Despite this, the government has not evaluated the impact of its welfare reforms on homelessness, or the impact of the mitigations that it has put in place.”

(NAO, 2017b, p.10)

Whilst any migrant can become homeless, some categories can be seen as being particularly vulnerable. Newly recognised migrants face almost ‘inevitable destitution’

(British Red Cross, 2018, p.2) after their 28 day move on period as it is almost impossible to receive National Insurance Numbers (NINOs), open bank accounts and find employment from a standing start. The Refugee Council in their submission to a Work and Pensions Select Committee state that they believe BC and UC have made this worse as now there are less funds available and a five-week waiting time in which to receive them (Refugee Council, 2018). Moreover, refugees are more likely to have health problems than native populations (Kone et al., 2019), and the process of accessing Personal Independence Payments (PIP), for those who cannot work due to health problems is notoriously arduous (Refugee Council, 2018).

Numbers of EEA nationals becoming street homeless has also increased since 2010 (North East London Migrant Action (NELMA), quoted in The Guardian, 2017). National homeless figures do not include much information on nationality breakdown. The closest idea of nationality break down is best gleaned from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network database (CHAIN) which uses its outreach workers to record numbers and nationalities of street homeless they support in London. CHAIN annual bulletins show that numbers of Central and Eastern European (CEE) street homeless rose steadily since 2005 to 2016 (from 9 to 37 per cent of all recorded street homeless), whereas by comparison other European nationalities have remained quite constant over the same period routinely around the 10 per cent mark (CHAIN 2009/10, 2018-18). CEE percentage of all CHAIN recorded London street homeless hit 30 per cent in 2013/14 and peaked in 2015/16 at 37 per cent, matching the percentage of UK street homeless for the first (and only) time in February 2016. 2016/7 to 2017/18 saw a quick decline (ibid.) perhaps due to Brexit.

A 2019 survey of local authorities by Crisis found that 52 per cent of all respondents found homeless amongst EEA nationals to be a problem in their area, with over half of the London boroughs surveyed categorising it as a 'major problem' amongst this cohort. By comparison homelessness amongst asylum seekers was thought to be a problem by 32 per cent and other categories of migrants being considered a problem by 13 per cent. Whilst it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the increase in CEE street homeless many charities believe that it was driven by the restrictions on access to benefits and housing which were introduced to all EEA nationals as part of the 2014 Immigration Act.

“In elaborating on their responses on EEA migrants, many respondents noted that the situation of those lacking entitlement to benefits was highly problematic, while the prospects of those who had attained ‘worker’ status was much better.”

(Crisis, 2019, p.40)

As shown in Annex A, migrants who are designated NRPF are more likely to be at risk of becoming homeless as they are not eligible for housing benefit. The number of NRPF migrants presenting as destitute at their local authority has increased since 2012, whilst the reasons for this are complex, the NRPF network has cited increasingly '*exclusionary immigration policies*' as a main contributor (NRPF, 2018b). For example, the NRPF network has seen an increase in migrant families on spousal visas, who have fallen destitute as the spouse is forbidden from working (participant observation). This increasing reliance on local authority support since 2012 due to immigration exclusions has led people working in local authorities label the support given by local authorities, a "a parallel welfare system" unfunded by central government.

This thesis argues that this notion of a local authority funded parallel welfare state is not just reserved for NRPF migrants, but to all UK natives, increasingly finding themselves unable to access social housing and/or reside on the new funding levels under the BC. As a result of rising numbers of people becoming homeless, the cost of accommodating temporary housing borne by local authorities increased three-fold between 2015-2018 (LGA, 2018). As the LGA describe

"Councils are providing temporary housing for over 70,000 households, including over 120,000 children. In this time, councils have been housing an extra secondary school's worth of homeless children every month on average."

(LGA, 2018, p.2)

As the Deputy Chair of the LGA described "The Benefit Cap has moved the financial burden of dealing with homelessness from central government to councils." (Taylor, in Peters, 2013) This is another example of the cost shunting through devolving and downloading of risks and responsibilities to the local level which Theodore (2020) and Peck (2015) identify as hallmarks of Austerity Localism or Austerity Urbanism. Local authorities as providers of housing are once again asked to do more with less and rendered culpable if the problem persists. This transfer in duties also masks the systemic reasons contributing to the rise in homelessness, namely the very measures meant to help overcome austerity.

Within the participant observation undertaken for this thesis some of the local authorities participating on the VPRS mentioned that they would not be participating on the scheme in future due to pressure from local residents to assist local homeless populations in their place. As seen, this aspect of welfare chauvinism appears in almost every area of state support but is perhaps the most heated within housing, with possibly its most extreme contrast being between the supposed deservedness of a migrant and a UK homeless person. Housing is an expensive benefit, and one where recipients are more easily

visible than someone receiving Unemployment Benefit for example. Right-wing media and government alike have amplified and this notion that housing is a zero-sum game, where for every migrant who gets access to social housing, one native does not. As seen earlier, the housing crisis has not been caused by the presence of migrants but rather due to neo-liberal reforms to the housing sector which have continuously reduced social housing stock. This simplified zero-sum presentation of a complex issue has deflected attention away from the culpability of those governments who have further pursued this neo-liberal restructuring and masked the failings of these reforms.

Housing and the VPRS

Finding suitable and affordable accommodation was the 'single greatest challenge' for local authorities participating on the VPRS (Bolt, 2018, p.7). From the outset the government had impressed upon local authorities the desire to share the scheme equitably across the UK and also not to use social housing to accommodate the make the scheme due to the potential public backlash.

"I remember the very early description with the Home Office regarding remote locations being identified as suitable for refugees and their response was we want remote locations to be used, we want them to be spread out thinly across the country rather than putting them in communities leading towards ghettoization and they want their spread thinly to help them and enable them force them to integrate."

(Local authority 2)

These two unwritten rules proved especially taxing for local authorities in the SE where accommodation prices are some of the highest in the UK. Authorities were conscious that any housing sought should be able to be supported at Local Housing Allowance rate in order to prevent families being forced out of their homes once the funding from the scheme stopped. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews undertaken for this thesis demonstrate that in the early days of the scheme, the strong support of the VPRS Minister Richard Harrington was extremely helpful in helping to address this concern and facilitating uptake on the scheme. The minister gave verbal assurance within meetings with South East local authorities that the VPRS tariff could be used to top up any shortfall in funding between the cost of the houses identified and what could be covered from Housing Benefit. As one local authority describes

"The other major concern is whether we would be able to get sufficient properties in the South East, because we knew we would be able to get housing benefits

for them but there is there was an issue at the beginning which was not clarified at the time and X will be able to tell you about this in that we had to rely, rely in the end on statements made by ministers included Richard Harrington in meetings..... It was never at the beginning completely clear in terms of advice that we are allowed to do this, but we were told that we were, at one stage I even had to quote Richard Harrington and refer to the minutes in which he said it was acceptable.”

(Local authority 1)

Some authorities did opt to use social housing stock, but these were very much in the minority. Nearly all accommodation within the SE found to house the 2,000 VPRS refugees settled on the scheme between 2015 to 2020 were accommodated in private sector housing (participant observation). Private sector housing has been in the form of social landlords, landlords attracted to the prospect of a five-year underwritten by the local authority, investment landlords looking for a new business opportunity or philanthropic landlords interested in helping the scheme for altruistic reasons. Identifying this accommodation has been done by any route possible, as one local authority officer describes

“Even in pubs I'll hear people talking about renting properties out and I'll go up to them and say “hi there if you want to rent... we can give you void costs and things” so there's a lot of that there is a lot of that and basically going into agents and chasing up things in local papers and stuff like that”

(Local authority 4)

Philanthropic landlords willing to accept rents often far below the regular private rental market can be seen as innovation in local housing provision which has arisen as a result of the scheme (semi-structured interviews, participant observation). Whilst some initiatives providing accommodation to vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees existed in the UK prior to the scheme (such as NACCOM, the No Accommodation Network), in the South East this form of accommodation was virtually non-existent (participant observation). Following the announcement of the scheme, several philanthropic landlords came forward to offer property, often from faith-based organisations, particularly Christian and Quaker organisations.

“Quakers! Quakers are absolutely delightful for things like that. Some of our places in the more expensive parts, in X for example, a couple of families are in accommodation there that has been donated by the Quakers or owned by the Quakers, and they never ever want more than the going rate, the local housing

authority rate. They just want the local housing authority rate it is completely philanthropic, completely altruistic. And we've had a few, we've had again a Quaker couple who approached the local council by the council leader here in Y and said they just come into money they didn't need so they were willing to purchase a house which could be used for the resettlement programme and they've done that and we're moving a family in next month! It's a four bedroom house and it's just amazing, and I know how much it's cost them but they just said they inherited the money they don't need it they live quite comfortably on what they've got and they would just like to help say things like that you can really take you aback sometimes."

(Local authority 4)

"Well the property they have gone into is a philanthropic landlord, he has left his property, which is a three storeys, four bedroom property, which he has completely refurbished following closure order, he has let it at LHA housing limits so this family if they get with him, or in this property for the long haul, long term, they've got a good quality property which has been inspected by our private housing team as well that they can settle in and make a life in really."

(Local authority 14)

For a couple of local authorities, philanthropic landlords were key to their involvement on the scheme, without which they would not have been able to participate.

"We have had nine properties that have been offered to us (from philanthropic landlords) for Syrians arriving on the scheme... So that is the main way people get on the scheme really is because of the offer of accommodation. The Council can't provide accommodation, none of the refugees can go into council housing so there's no other source of accommodation there's either council housing or there's these private landlords and private landlords are so few and far between."

(Local authority 9)

In some cases, the offer of philanthropic accommodation has led to an increase in council stock, as the landlord is willing to accept people who are not on the scheme.

"The fact is that if we are offered properties with the Syrian scheme that we are unable to use under scheme, I know exactly who to go to within a housing department. So the man who really wants a refugee to live in his house could find another refugee from the housing waiting list who is a refugee so this helps reinforce and connections across support services which would be useful for everyone."

(Local authority 10)

There are some indications that the VPRS has helped to increase the housing available for those on the housing waiting list who are not on the scheme. Within the participant observation and semi-structured interviews you would occasionally hear of landlords who had come forward offering accommodation at LHA rates to help families on the scheme but had indicated that they were willing to continue working with the local authority after the family had moved on. There are other examples of how the VPRS had helped to increase the social housing available for UK homeless through the innovations created under the scheme. One authority had an incident where they had to move a family out of their original accommodation very quickly which meant taking steps outside the formal council procurement protocol, opening up a new accommodation supply route.

“We wavered the procurement (we have a procurement waiver), so we did it all by the book but we did it all in a week... And that just opened my eyes to how I could do it. And that's what we have done. And this year I have procured eight properties exactly the same, so leased those properties and moved some over to these properties so they were cheaper in the long run for us, better and we have our own people to do the maintenance, so we are offering something to the program. Now X who is the director and is also my program sponsor for this, suddenly said “that's amazing that we can do that” and so he's has changed the whole way that we are doing procurement for properties, so that we are going to this private landlords directly, and we're doing the whole thing for the homeless groups too now.”

(Local authority 8)

It was not possible to ascertain exactly how many non-council housing stock properties had been secured by local authorities in the SE as a result of the VPRS. However, participant observation strongly suggests that as only a handful of authorities were using any of their own housing stock, it is very likely that the VPRS increased the amount of housing available to local authorities in the SE. This is an avenue for future research. However, it looks unlikely that this reliance on private sector/philanthropic landlords will continue for future resettlement schemes as the introduction of the BC and UC during this scheme has now become the biggest barrier to participation in the scheme.

The Home Office's own risk register shows the greatest risk to the VPRS was securing accommodation (Bolt, 2018). The cross departmental VPRS team set up from the initiation of the scheme worked to try to remove as many barriers to accessing accommodation as they could. Refugees on the VPRS were exempt from the habitual residence test and were also allowed to use funding from the scheme to pay for any

increase in accommodation costs above Local Housing Allowance rate (participant observation; Bolt, 2018). Furthermore, following a Tribunal case ruling, refugees and those on Humanitarian Protection were exempted from having to take a Past Presence Test to receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP) (Disability Rights, 2017). Nevertheless, the Home Office Resettlement team were unable to obtain an exemption for VPRS refugees from the BC

“DWP told inspectors that the Home Office had requested exemption from the Benefits Cap for certain vulnerable refugees, but these requests had been rejected as it did not want to be seen to be prioritising refugees over other vulnerable individuals.”

(Bolt, 2018, p.31)

The exemptions requested were not permanent but temporary and in keeping with a number of other categories which are exempt from immediate enrolment onto BC, such as the 39 week grace period for those who have been in full time employment for over a year and have become unemployed due to no fault of their own. Many of the local authorities felt that the position of a newly arrived vulnerable refugee was at least as permissive an argument for temporary exemption from UC as a newly unemployed UK resident, but that it was the political optics which affected this decision from the DWP.

“I mean we’ve been to various meetings and this has been raised for ages, well over over a probably year, two years, several times and there’s quite a simple solution actually. We’re not asking them to exempt such families forever, they have exemptions to Benefit Cap in the regulations so there’s a whole list of people who are exempted from it to do with disability, because they’re working, various other reasons, it’s been requested of them... I expect it’s a political thing to do with how you know refugees being treated more favourably than other people but, it would only be for, we are only asking for it for a temporary period, and that’s causing big problems.”

(Local authority 1)

Some of the lead officers interviewed felt that had Theresa May retained the position of a Minister for Syrian Refugees, that Richard Harrington would have been able to lend weight behind this request for an exemption with the DWP, “maybe if he had (still) been here we would have solved problems like the Benefit Cap” (Local authority 1).

The result of this decision has been that several local authorities are reporting situations where families have gone from having a couple of hundred pounds to live on a week to less than £50 or less, with some families receiving fifty pence per week after the

introduction of the cap (participant observation). The result has been that local authorities are using either funding from the VPRS tariff or discretionary housing payment to cover the shortfall. However, these payments are unsustainable and lead to large questions about whether resettled refugees will be able to afford the accommodation they are in after the end of the scheme. This has undone much of the hard work undertaken by local authorities to house them in accommodation at local housing allowance rate to begin with and some of the good will from philanthropic landlords who find that the already heavily discounted rates they have agreed to are still too high for the family.

As a result, many local authorities participating on the scheme have ceased to take families with more than two children. This is a challenge to the scheme as Syrian families tend to be larger than UK families and having more than two children is common.

“So now we can only take smaller families or, if we find larger properties we have to take extended families so two families in one property it might be parents or brothers and sisters and extended family so then there are two families with two benefit claims. That’s the only way we can get around it.”

(Local authority 2)

Additionally, some landlords have been hesitant to become involved now that rent payments are made from the tenant and not the council as they felt there would be more work involved potentially chasing families for payments (Bolt, 2018). Several authorities commented that a significant amount of time was now taken working with the families to explain the benefit system,

“The Benefit Cap and Universal Credit were cited by all authorities as being key obstacles to the VPRS with two focus groups saying that case worker support time spent on helping families’ benefits had gone up four fold as UC has been rolled out. Whilst authorities understood that refugees could not be exempt from the Cap, it was wondered whether a temporary exemption could be allowed in order for there to be some time for refugees to learn English.”

(SESPM, 2018, p.3)

The challenges faced by VPRS and VCRS families will be similar to those faced by all UK families trying to adapt to the change in the UK welfare state, only migrants often face additional challenges such as lack of language skills and social bridges and bonds to manage this transition. Those on the VPRS have been assisted by case workers, but this will not be the case for migrants outside of the scheme

“We tried to keep an eye on these things in asking so that if somebody is without money for those reasons we would have to step in and help them basically. We

wouldn't...I don't think we've had anybody in X going to food bank for example, if someone has had a problem budgeting in the early stages we would certainly help if they run out of money completely.”

(Local authority 1)

As a result of the challenges created by the introduction of BC and UC several authorities have indicated that they will not participate on the scheme in future (Bolt, 2018). Housing had been the biggest impediment in the South East for local authorities to participate on the scheme and the welfare reforms had moved something already difficult to extremely challenging. Several of those interviewed within this thesis went so far as to state that they felt it was irresponsible to bring people from refugee camps into a life of poverty in the UK.

“Potentially if you're not careful you'll fall into an issue where you're suffering from poverty.”

(Local authority 10)

“Local authorities stated that they would take families of 6 only if there was “a strong likelihood of accessing disability related benefits”, as they “did not wish to see families brought to the UK to live in poverty.”

(Bolt, 2018, p.29)

Local authorities in the SE have faced a situation where they have been willing to participate in a scheme to help resettle vulnerable refugees, often to areas which have little to no prior history of migration but have been thwarted in their efforts through two competing and directly contradictory government policies. The desire to safely resettle is being hampered by the competing political agenda of another department not to appear to be favouring migrants. As a direct consequence the lives of those arriving on the VPRS and the work of local authorities to facilitate the integration of migrants within their localities has been made harder by opposing central government policies. This feeling was evident amongst the local authority officers interviewed for this research

“There has been no flexibility from government although everybody, every local authority has gone back to them and said look this is causing us enormous problems and some others have said we can't accept more families, because they don't get the benefits that they need to survive and they're not ready to go to work they don't have the English and everything they can't survive. There has been no flexibility at all, no recognition of that as an issue, well they recognise it as an issue but no willingness to do anything about it, no transitional

arrangements for refugees coming on this scheme in terms of Benefit Cap, no relaxation of laws nothing like that”

(Local authority 2)

“I feel that the government doesn’t understand the consequences of the program and how it affects the local authorities... . I sort of felt that, yes that is a real problem, they’re creating problems and we’re having to solve them”.

(Local authority 10)

“(There are) issues which can only be dealt with by government departments, I mean the Benefit Cap is the biggest issue to be honest...that is a very big problem, which, that’s DWP, but I do feel that they could have done more, national government to try and sort that problem”

(Local authority 1)

“But I think the single most disappointing thing in that regard, has been whilst we have been discussing this enormously is that in order to enable it to work properly it is completely contradictory to other government policy, predominantly the Benefit Cap.”

(Local authority 2)

Conclusion

Research shows that new migrants often live in poorer, segregated, insecure and overcrowded accommodation and are more vulnerable to accommodation instability and discrimination within the private rental sector. These factors can make it harder for them to integrate both in terms of creating social bonds and bridges, but also in terms of developing a sense of belonging. Likewise, negative and false stories suggesting migrant families are prioritised for social housing also make it harder for native populations to accept migrants thus making it harder for migrants to integrate. Changes to housing policy introduced under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have been seen to have hindered the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities.

The Right to Rent scheme introduced as part of the hostile environment, pushed the responsibility of having to check (and keep checking) potential tenants immigration status

onto the landlord. Research carried out by the voluntary sector and landlords associations found the scheme disincentivised landlords to accept tenants who were not British citizens and also ironically pushed vulnerable migrants toward exactly the kind of 'rogue landlords' the scheme was supposed to prevent. The hostile environment also ended support to asylum seekers who had had their asylum cases refused despite the fact that in recent years up to 75 per cent of initially unsuccessful asylum applications have been overturned. The hostile environment narrative accompanying these legal changes can also be seen as detrimental to integration as it contributed to notions of 'bad' illegal migrants unlawfully present.

Social housing stock has been in continuous decline since the 1980s, however the removal of subsidies for social housing under Localism, and the reinvigoration of the Right to Buy scheme meant that local authorities now have less finances and less housing stock with which to tackle housing problems. Access to social housing for migrants was made harder through the introduction of the Habitual Residency Test, requiring an applicant to have a local connection and usually to have lived in the area for a minimum of two years prior to applying. Since 2014 new EEA national arrivals have been unable to access a number of benefits including housing. Massive changes to the welfare state in the form of the introduction of the BC and UC have seen a correlated increase in food bank use, increased personal debt and a 169 per cent increase in homelessness. Examples from the VPRS scheme demonstrate how these changes have affected families of five or more the hardest, with support for only the first two children, meaning that some families have gone from having two hundred pounds a week to live on to fifty pence once rent had been paid. It has been seen that the VPRS 2015-2018 had for the most part not used social housing and may have potentially increased the availability of housing for local authorities. However, increasing clarity that VPRS families are not eligible for any exemption from the BC means that it is questionable how the avoidance of use of social housing will be possible in future and many local authorities claim they will no longer participate as they do not wish to bring vulnerable refugees into a life of poverty in the UK. Every one of these changes made by the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 is likely to have directly impacted upon the number of migrants becoming destitute and in need of support by local authorities leading to the claim that local authorities have become a parallel welfare state.

The ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration when it comes to housing has been directly hampered by legal, financial and normative policy levers from central government. These policy levers can be argued to have come from different policies, but have (for the most part), had similar effect. In the case of changes introduced as a result

of the hostile environment this can be seen to have been part of an overt attempt to reduce undocumented migrants, the reduction in social housing stock and the changes to the welfare state have been argued by some academics to be part of a larger neo-liberal agenda to dismantle the welfare state and create a more market orientated economy (Powell & Robinson, 2019; Tunstall, 2015). The outlier to these policies would appear to be the VPRS which promotes the safe resettling of vulnerable communities. Consequently, it was perhaps inevitable that this policy would come into direct opposition with the introduction of the BC changes, where the political optic of not wishing to appear to prioritise migrants over natives, despite being able to evidence the comparable or greater needs of migrants, won out. In this way the changes to housing under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 can be seen to have exacerbated the misconception of migrants as responsible for the housing crisis and to pander to the welfare chauvinism which has increasingly been noted by populist parties across Europe.

7. The Socio-cultural domain

Introduction

The socio-cultural, (or cultural-religious as Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016a) refer to it) dimension of integration looks at the degree to which a host society permits cultural and religious practices different to its own and even adopts these practices. Taking integration to mean mutual acceptance, policies and messaging in this area can impact on how much cultural maintenance the host society permits and consequently have bearing on a migrant's integration. Nevertheless, this dimension extends much further beyond cultural and religious policies and practices to wider messaging about who is 'us' and 'them'. The various constructions of this 'othering' can influence public attitudes and perceptions towards migrants and integration. This domain encompasses shifting perceptions of migrants and the host society which change over time, consequently it is less about objective differences but rather about the classification of who is accepted and why.

Whilst there is a strong body of research demonstrating that integration, or the 'negotiation of difference' takes place on the local level, the impact of these negotiations, though considerable, may remain localized unless it reaches the media. Migrants themselves clearly influence this socio-cultural environment, either at a local level or through participation in political or civil society organisations. However socio-cultural messaging at central government level can have more wide-reaching impact, not least due to the authority that government carries. Central government policies and practices directly impact on how migrants are classified, their temporality, their legality, eligibility for public services and also how they are perceived, their contribution to the host society, their deservingness, or otherwise. This categorization is not uniform, and migrants can be split along ethnic, religious, geographic, economic, skills level and vulnerability lines. In this way, central government plays a significant role in determining and messaging who is 'us' versus 'them' and the degrees of eligibility in between. As the Social Scientists Against the Hostile Environment (SSAHE) describe

“Similarly, issues of racism and racialisation are inherently concerned with the categorical differentiation between 'us' and 'them', and different political projects of belonging differentially determine where the boundary line is placed.”

(SSAHE, 2020, p.10)

The content of central government policies determining these boundary lines of acceptance has been seen to be influenced from both the bottom up and top down in

addition to the party's traditional ideological stance. A number of academics have researched how public opinion shapes party stances (Adams et al., 2004, 2006; Adams, Haupt & Stoll, 2009; Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009; Bale & Partos, 2014; Hills, 2002; Norris & Lovenduski, 2004). Adams et al. (2004) and Adams et al. (2009) bottom up research, found that political parties change their ideological positions when public opinion is moving away from the party, or as Norris and Lovenduski (2004) describe 'rational politicians' keep their policies within the 'zone of acquiescence' (p.99). Bale and Partos (2014) and Ford et al. (2015) show how this has indeed been the case in the UK when it comes to immigration whereby "restrictive policy change on immigration is a response to public demand" (Ford et al., 2015, p.1408). Equally, top down government conceived ideas can influence public perception. Partos (2014), and Jones et al. (2015) give examples of how Coalition immigration policies hardened public attitude towards certain cadres of migrants. Leruth and Taylor Gooby (2019) cite similar findings of how top down messaging on immigration from parties like UKIP and the Conservative party have found their way into public understanding of migration issues. The fall from grace of the term multiculturalism in favour of the term diversity has been argued by some to depoliticise the inequalities between ethnic groups as the terms inclusivity of multiple other factors of difference (age, class, gender) creates an 'equivalence of difference' (Vertovec 2012,p.289). Indeed, for some one risk of the term diversity is that its emphasis on the multisectionality of an individual could potentially be quasi neo-liberal in its shift away from the group to the individual identity (Berg and Sigona, 2013).

The following chapter examines the impact of Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 socio-cultural messaging when it comes to the perceptions of migrants amongst the UK population and how much tolerance there was for migrants to be able to maintain aspects of their culture. It will be demonstrated that socio-cultural messaging surrounding migrants and migrant integration became increasingly negative and assimilatory due to bottom up pressures to appear harder on immigration in order to capture more votes. Once in power, these governments then perpetuated these negative socio-cultural perceptions about migrants through top down policies and the normative messaging accompanying them. This messaging augmented the welfare chauvinism described in Chapter 6 leading to anti-migrant feelings which many researchers have directly correlated to the outcome of the Brexit referendum. Welfare chauvinism deflected the blame away from the reduction in access to and size of the welfare state caused by neo-liberalism restructuring. Yet whilst the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 were able to use welfare chauvinism to deflect blame from neo-liberal failings, this populism can only be ridden so far, as neo-liberalism itself requires migrants in order to have access to an optimal pool of labour. Consequently, whilst the overall Coalition

and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 pledge was to reduce migration to the tens of thousands, it was not to stop all immigration. Instead, government socio-cultural messaging contributed towards othering with some migrants deemed deserving and others less deserving. It will be seen that migrants who were deemed deserving were those able to satisfy increasingly assimilationist policies, such as Dame Casey's assertions that all migrants should speak English. As a result, this chapter argues that contrary to the 'leave it to the local' concept of migrant integration contained within the CCI, socio-cultural messaging under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 was assimilatory. It will also be demonstrated that existing socio-cultural messaging purporting that neo-liberalism as 'the only game in town' continued under these governments, helping to justify the austerity measures and neo-liberal reforms taking place and transferring the blame onto those migrants and vulnerable using the welfare state. In this way, socio-cultural messaging under these governments greatly hindered local authorities wishing to facilitate the kind of migrant integration understood as mutual acceptance, or a two-way¹⁷ street advocated for by the majority of migrant integration scholars. The key areas of socio-cultural Coalition and Conservative Government policies, practices and messaging examined in this chapter are; the hostile environment, welfare chauvinism, 'British values', Brexit and the Migrant Crisis leading to the VPRS.

Socio-cultural integration and the hostile environment

Although the Coalition Immigration Minister, Damien Green stated "whatever your stance on immigration, if you are not basing policy on decent evidence you will be likely to fail." (Green, quoted in Partos, 2014, p.12), many academics have questioned if the Conservative pledge to reduce migration to the tens of thousands was realistically feasible (Gardner, Z., 2017; Owen, 2017; Newman, 2010; Sumption, quoted in Warrell 2019). Researchers have instead argued that the hardened stance on immigration stance was influenced from the bottom up, to attract voters who felt Labour had performed weakly on immigration (Bale & Partos, 2011; Bennett, 2018). This pledge led to the introduction of the hostile environment policy which had profound effects upon the socio-cultural perceptions of migrants and integration. Several academics have documented that whilst the policy claimed to target only irregular immigration, the effects have been felt by migrants with leave to remain and even second and third generation migrants (Jones et al., 2015; Yuval et al., 2018; SSAHE, 2020). The policy saw the extension of outside border controls into almost every area of public life and transferred many of the border control responsibilities onto everyday citizens. This movement

¹⁷ Or even three-way street, as scholars supporting this view also argue that cultural maintenance is essential for migrant integration.

towards citizen on citizen immigration checks, under the hostile environment has become known as 'everyday bordering' (Yuval et al., 2018). In addition to presenting immigration as a security threat, some researchers have argued that it furthered migrants into categories of deserving and undeserving, increasing perceptions of migrants as criminal (Guentner et al., 2016).

Chapter 6.1 demonstrated how the hostile environment required teachers to provide the Home Office with the addresses of migrant pupils. Chapter 6.2 detailed the increased checks placed on employers to verify potential employee's right to work in the UK. Chapter 6.3 showed how the requirement on landlords to check immigration status of potential tenants was found to be in breach of human rights. In addition to these checks, the hostile environment also saw citizen on citizen checks when opening bank accounts, getting married, and obtaining a driver's license. There is now a raft of UK citizens ranging from employers, landlords, bank clerks, NHS staff, driving license and banking clerks who are expected to have some understanding of immigration status. Despite efforts from the Home Office to create web pages or resources attempting to assist citizens understanding of different immigration status, experience from local authority officers on the VPRS interviewed for this thesis has been that the area is still too complicated for most people. As these quotes describe

"We've had to spend a bit of time explaining about the status of the families because some people whether it's a landlord, a DWP official or ... some agencies think, they are worried about their status and think "oh is it the same as an asylum seeker?". And we had to do it quite a lot to explain to them that they have got refugee status or humanitarian status humanitarian protection before and that gives them full rights to public funds, to work and to claim benefits etc. that's quite an important thing which we've had to, sometimes you know do a lot of explaining about."

(Local authority 1)

In terms of migrant integration and the effect that these checks have had on UK citizens, it is possible that migrants may be seen at best to pose additional bureaucratic difficulties and at worst with direct associations of criminality. Evidence from landlord associations demonstrates how the difficulty of trying to understand complex immigration status can lead to privileging categories of more straightforward migrant statuses over others (such as EU citizens). This again reinforces the differentiation of migrants into categories of deserving or undeserving, troublesome or untroublesome.

In terms of migrant integration and the effect that these checks can have on the migrant, home addresses being given by schools to the Home Office heightened anxiety amongst migrant children and their parents and may have increased a sense of precariousness. Partos (2014) has argued that attitudes towards foreign students hardened in 2012 as a result of the Coalition's messaging regarding restricting foreign student's right to work in the UK. Partos' findings are supported by Jones et al. (2015, p.3) who state

“Traditional anti-racism campaigns are finding it hard to keep up with changes in the focus of hostility and discrimination, for example with how to engage with the status of international students.”

Chapter 6.2 and 6.3 showed how employers and landlords are likely to err on the side of caution and in doing so increase migrant discrimination. The implications of this are that those with more complicated forms of immigration status, who may very well already be vulnerable, are most likely to be impacted negatively upon. Nearly every local authority interviewed within this thesis had encountered problems in accessing health care for the refugees they assist. Most common problems cited were registering refugees with GP practices and accessing interpreting services, although this also extended in a few cases to hospital access. As one local authority describes

“In view of these still recent changes, where effectively the NHS and the Frontline staff are actually asking, almost like guardians for the Home Office ...I've noticed in the last year or so that there's a lot more reticence for people to be treated without first establishing their immigration status.”

(Local authority 4)

It is impossible to know how many migrants were refused a bank account or had their accounts frozen erroneously as a result of hostile environment as there is no requirement on banks or building societies to monitor this information. Nevertheless, a 2016 report by the Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders Control found that 10 per cent of the 169 individuals placed on the disqualified persons list they sampled still had valid right to remain and should not have been included within the list (Bolt, 2016). The difficulty in opening a bank account for a migrant was commented on by many of the local authorities working on the VPRS, most of whom had initially experienced problems. As these local authority officers demonstrate

“The biggest problem that we had with our Syrian families and I think we're going to have it again, was getting banks to accept the family and open a bank account it took us six weeks. It was just a complete nightmare and the thing is that if we can't open a bank account they can't receive the benefits, so yeah it was just a disaster, it was such hard work.”

(Local authority 7)

“Let me say we first went through [Name of bank] they were not a good at all, and they kept freezing accounts and opening accounts all over the place.”

(Local authority 8)

These additional difficulties for migrants opening bank accounts have profound implications for integration as they make it nearly impossible to obtain phone contracts, receive online salary payments, loans and a whole myriad of online systems requiring bank account details.

In terms of hostile environment impacts on migrants being allowed to drive in the UK, in 2015, 259 licenses which had been retained due to suspicions that they belonged to irregular migrants were found to be legitimate. In 67 of these cases new evidence of valid leave was provided and in 192 cases it was demonstrated that new applications to remain in the UK had been presented to authorities prior to their license being retained, indicating that the data being used to identify who had leave to remain was not accurate. Other hostile environment aspects relating to driving include the 2014 decision to end foreign language voiceovers and interpreters on motorcycle and driving theory tests (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, 2014). This decision to end translation assistance for driving tests has frequently been commented on by local authority staff as a real hindrance trying to facilitate the integration of VPRS migrants within the UK. Migrants with international drivers licences can drive on this licence for their first year in the UK, this greatly facilitates accessing ESOL classes, attending job centres or job interviews and other daily activities which assist with integration. Consequently, often migrants who have been safely and legally driving in the UK for a year are suddenly unable to continue until they have sat the tests which must be conducted in English. In addition to this, the 2016 Immigration Act granted additional powers to police to conduct stop and checks. The powers enabled police officers to stop and check the driving licenses of anyone they thought may not be in possession of a valid license. This led to some concerns in

Parliament that police officers might stop vehicles due to the 'ethnic appearance' of the driver, thereby impacting negatively on police/community relations (Bolt, 2016, p.52).

Everyday bordering has made life harder for migrants to access services in every walk of life. It has impacted upon all categories of migrants, including UK citizens of ethnic minority background. It has linked associations of migrants with criminality and threats to security and legally been found to have a discriminatory effect on migrants. In addition to everyday bordering the Coalition Government led a number of high-profile campaigns showcasing their work tackling irregular immigration and in doing so feeding and creating a perception that irregular migration was widespread. These included televised raids promoted on social media. Possibly the most overt messaging of the hostile environment policy was the use of posters on the side of vans stating "In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest". These became known as the 'Go Home' Vans' (GHV). The vehicles were driven for less than a week in six boroughs of London before huge outcry from the public, migrant organizations and local authorities led to them being withdrawn. The vans were found by the Advertising Standards Authority to have used misleading statistics, giving the impression that the number of arrests in the local area were higher than the actually were. However, whilst the ASA Chief Executive stated that "go home" was "reminiscent of the racist slogan" and "clearly carries baggage" they stopped short of claiming they were offensive (Casciani, 2013). Nevertheless, several academics have researched the impact of the vans on migrants and community relations and found evidence to the contrary (Jones et al., 2015; Lowndes & Madziva, 2016; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018; SSAHE 2020).

An Ipsos Mori survey commissioned by a consortium of academics from six British universities found that 15 per cent of the 2,424 people surveyed nationally had become more worried about irregular immigration as a result of the vans. Respondents were quoted as saying they had become "concerned that irregular immigration might be more widespread than they had realised" (Jones et al., 2015, p.6). This is perhaps unsurprising given that the high-profile nature of the campaign and the misleading statistics used. Many of those interviewed within the studies felt that the vans rhetoric both fostered existing mistrust and also created new divisions which did not exist previously.

Many of those interviewed within Lowndes and Madziva's 2016 research thought that the van was a 'gimmick' whose main purpose was primarily to send a signal to the UK public that the government was taking a hard stance on irregular immigration. They felt that the GHV campaign was not part of an evidence-based approach on effective means to encourage voluntary return. As one respondent commented

“Genuine voluntary return programmes are all over the place and they are not a secret as the migrants we support are fully aware of their existence, so there was absolutely no point for having this [the van].”

(Lowndes & Madziva, 2016, p.680)

This research appears to be in keeping with enforcement officers who had been involved with the GHV who felt that stated that low profile community engagement strategies were far more effective and that the GHV were ““macho” gesture politics” (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018, p.232).

In wishing to appear tough to the public on irregular immigration the Coalition Government employed populist socio-cultural messaging legitimising the arguments of UKIP or the English Defence League. In doing so, the Coalition increased concern that irregular migration was a greater threat than people had realized, thus hardening attitudes against migrants. This can be seen as evidence of top down impact on socio-cultural perceptions about migrants. Similar to the everyday bordering, the GHV planted and reinforced associations of migrants with criminality, presenting them as potential threats to security, thus legitimizing their mistreatment.

In terms of the effects of the GHV campaign on migrants, research has shown there to have been a negative and long-lasting effect (Lowndes & Madziva, 2016). Many migrants with no issue surrounding their leave to remain, including some with British citizenship, or even second and third generation migrants reported harassment as a result of the GHV campaign and the wider Coalition messaging accompanying it (ibid.). As one respondent describes

“You talk to people and they say... “Are we going to be allowed to stay here?” This is third generation, they’ve contributed, you know. There’s this sort of slight feeling with what’s going on, not necessarily the neighbours, but with the rhetoric.”

(Jones et al., 2015, p.8)

In this instance, this is an example of how a top down government campaign, not based on evidence or research but due to a desire to appear tough on immigration for political purposes, has impacted upon the ability of a migrant to integrate, even in areas where good local relations already exist. The GHV had a very direct effect on the local

authorities the GHV campaign took place in. Conscious of the damage that this campaign could have on community relations and migrant integration, the leaders of Brent and Redbridge councils, in particular, were vocal with Redbridge issuing a statement saying

““[W]hatever effect this campaign might be intended to have on people who are in the country unlawfully, that message is far outweighed by the negative message to the great majority of people, from all backgrounds, who live and work together in Redbridge, peacefully, productively and lawfully“

(Redbridge Council, quoted in EIN, 2013).

Another example of this overt socio-cultural messaging linking migration with criminality and security threat can be seen with the introduction of the term ‘Immigration Bail’. Under the 2016 Immigration Act all forms of temporary admission to the UK, were re-labelled as being on ‘immigration bail’ (Home Office, 2020). This meant that some migrants entering the UK lawfully (such as asylum seekers) were no longer given leave to remain but were given a classification of immigration status which sounded as though they had already committed a crime. This ‘guilty until proved innocent’ classification is not just attributed to people who have breached a condition of their temporary admission into the UK but is automatically given to people who are ‘liable to be detained’ (ibid., p.8). All asylum seekers exercising their right to claim asylum in the UK are therefore automatically classified as ‘likely to be detained’. As was seen in section 6.1 on Education, the misunderstanding of this category and incorrect application led to likely thousands of lawfully present migrants being unable to study. Once again these are extremely complex categories of immigration status which regular UK citizens are highly unlikely to understand, and when faced with a document stating ‘immigration bail’ a potential employer or landlord may well make an erroneous association with criminality and/or be reluctant to take the risk. It may also mislead public perceptions about the number of irregular or criminal migrants in the UK.

Overt hostile environment messaging such as the GHV and terms like ‘Immigration Bail’ were also accompanied by terms such as ‘bogus’ colleges, or ‘bogus asylum seekers’ and ‘sham marriages’. These heavily weighted terms move the conversation on immigration further away from evidence-based discussion, to emotionally charged rhetoric which legitimizes the mistreatment of migrants as they are presented as law breakers trying to abuse the system.

[Welfare chauvinism and neo-liberal thinking](#)

The hostile environment MATBAP team were also responsible for reducing migrant access to benefits and the negative socio-cultural messaging which ensued. Welfare chauvinist arguments were given centre stage as justifications for this welfare state retrenchment as this 2013 quote from David Cameron demonstrates

“Controlling immigration has been a job for the Home Office, but the reality is you can’t control immigration if you have a welfare system that takes no account of who it’s paying out to. You can’t control immigration if you have a healthcare system that takes no account of the people using it. And you can’t control immigration if you have a housing policy that doesn’t take account of how long people have lived and contributed to a local area.”

(Cameron, 2013 in Bolt, 2016, p.11)

Welfare chauvinism is not a new term. The belief that benefits should be prioritized towards those with citizenship can be found across Europe, the USA and Canada (Koning, 2011). Kymlicka (2015) highlights that levels of anti-migrant feeling do not appear to relate to the generosity of the welfare state. This indicates that “the perception of economic burden is an effect of perceptions of cultural otherness, not vice versa” (Kymlicka, 2015, p.11). Thus, whilst there may be tensions which can arise as a result of increased migration, the political messaging surrounding migration is the larger determiner of socio-cultural problems when it comes to migrant integration.

Despite Immigration Minister Damien Green’s statement that immigration policy must be evidence based, the findings within this thesis are in keeping with several academics who have found the Coalition and Conservative Government’s messaging on immigration and welfare deliberately misleading and sometimes knowingly in contradiction with the evidence (Partos, 2014; SSAHE, 2020; Powell & Robinson, 2019). As stated by Vince Cable, a liberal democrat part of the Coalition government

“When I was business secretary there were up to nine studies that we looked at that took in all the academic evidence....It showed that immigration had very little impact on wages or employment. But this was suppressed by the Home Office under Theresa May, because the results were inconvenient.”

(Cable, quoted in Gelblum, 2017)

Despite knowing this, Theresa May still gave public addresses stating migration to have a negative effect on UK wages

“I know a lot of people don't like to admit this. For someone who finds themselves out of work or on lower wages because of low-skilled immigration, life simply doesn't seem fair.”

(May, 2016 cited in Merrick, 2017)

Rather than acknowledge the impact of the GFC and its effect upon unemployment, migrants were instead blamed for a suppression of wages. This scapegoating of migrants for the failings of neo-liberalism to improve quality of life for British public was a hallmark of these governments, as the previous and following quotes demonstrate.

“(W)e believe in an open economy. But we've got to be able to cope with all the pressures that free movement can bring—on our schools, our hospitals and our public services. Right now the pressures are too great”

(Cameron 2015, cited in Bennett, 2016, p.154)

If the quote above is unpacked, it is noticeable that migrants are blamed for pressures on schools, but no mention is made of how the Coalition's academisation of the education sector banned local education authorities from opening new primary schools and failed to mandate free schools be built in areas of high or severe forecasted need of extra places. Within health, the government will also have been privy to research that has found that assertions of 'health tourism' have cost only 0.3 per cent of NHS spending and do not factor in the contribution migrants make to the NHS workforce, with nearly 30per cent of UK doctors and 20 per cent of nurses in 2018 being non-UK nationals (ONS, 2019). Equally, no mention is made of neo-liberal reforms to the NHS under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act which has seen deficit increase sharply partly due to increased costs of agency staff and less recurrent income as more profitable parts have been sold off (House of Lords, 2016). Section 6.3 saw how migrants have been blamed for a shortage in social housing despite the forced sale of local authority housing stock since the 1980s, and conditions forbidding local authorities from being able to use the full receipt of funds from the sale of stock to purchase new housing. Nevertheless, migrants have been persistently been scapegoated as the following quote demonstrates.

“In the last decade or so, we have seen record levels of net migration in Britain, and that sheer volume has put pressure on public services, ..., especially housing”

(May, cited in Foster, 2017)

Various research was commissioned by the Coalition Government in order to evidence the impact of migrants on UK, such as numerous reports the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), yet the results, which have found migrants to either cause either no burden or marginal burden on UK services have not been widely publicised. One piece of government commissioned research into benefits, even found migrants less likely to claim benefits than the host population, nonetheless the government narrative around 'benefit tourists' remained the same (Partos, 2014).

This purposeful linking of migration and strains on the welfare state was a mainstay of Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018, positive aspects relating to migration were downplayed or deliberately ignored, especially under Theresa May. Every one of these public sector spheres, purportedly under pressure due to migration, has undergone often unparalleled funding cuts or freezes as a result of austerity under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018. They have also undergone efforts to privatize, often (as in the case of the sale of social housing stock or parts of the NHS) reducing the size and effectiveness of the welfare estate as a result. Neo-liberal failings within these services have been ignored despite evidence pointing to their detrimental effects, instead the culpability is deflected towards migrants as this quote by David Cameron demonstrates "the problems in our welfare system and the problems in our immigration system are inextricably linked" (Cameron, cited in Sparrow, 2013).

One reason several academics have argued, that there is less acknowledgement or criticism of the impact of these neo-liberal reforms, is that neo-liberal thinking has become so widely accepted within political and public life alike as to appear almost invisible (Peck, 2013; Theodore, 2020; Wiggan, 2012; Jensen, 2014). Neo-liberalism itself is rarely mentioned by name within public discourse, a review of the coverage of 1,000 quotes on the GFC and austerity between 2007 to 2014 across five main UK newspapers found the actual term was found in only one article. As the research states "the ideas underpinning the ideology might be ubiquitous, but direct use of the term is rare" (SPERI, 2015, p.2).

Neo-liberal thinking has slowly become the mainstream school of thought even though most people would not recognise the economics or the theory behind it, rather it has insidiously become synonymous with common sense. Phrases like 'to pull yourself up by the bootstraps', or notions of the 'American dream' where the individual can supposedly achieve anything provided they work hard enough and do not expect 'hand outs' feed a hyper individualised conception of society ripe for reducing access to welfare

benefits. As Guentner et al. (2016, p.396) describe “public welfare has shifted from the founding principle, ‘from cradle to grave’ (Attlee government 1945–1951) to ‘from welfare to work’. Perhaps the success of neo-liberal thinking is that this shift in thinking has not taken place overnight, the first attacks on collectivist groups like Trade Unions took place under the Thatcher Government of the 1980s, but with Labour also adopting many of its principles it has become the only game in town. Nonetheless, many researchers have argued that the neo-liberal reforms undertaken by the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have pushed the deepest neo-liberal reforms so far (Hall, 2011; Pantazis, 2016; Peck 2012). As Hall (2011, p.718) describes, reforms under the Coalition were “arguably the best prepared, most wide-ranging, radical and ambitious of the three regimes which, since the 1970s, have been maturing the neoliberal project”. What the Austerity Localism and Austerity Urbanism literature outline is how these ambitious reforms were slipped in under the guise of austerity, where again common sense expressions such as “we’ve got to sort out the mess that we inherited from the previous lot.” (Clegg, in Feedland, 2011), gave a sense of inevitability to the measures introduced. The notion that we have to ‘tighten out belts’ during economic crisis is easily understood by the public and appears to be more common sense than interventionist policies such as investing in job creation or creating access to affordable childcare. The common sense notion that you have to ‘pull the bandage off quickly’ to shorten the pain experienced overlooks the fact that for some wounds pulling the bandage off too quickly is fatal. The cessation of welfare benefits under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 has been widely claimed to have led to thousands of deaths and suicides (Bulman, 2019b), exact figures are hard to ascertain due to insufficient information being captured by the DWP (NAO, 2020). The findings of a 2016 report by the UN’s Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), led the CRPD chairwoman to label the UK welfare reforms a “human catastrophe’ for disabled people” (Degener, in Kentish, 2017).

It is not just in relation to welfare cuts that neo-liberal thinking pervades. The notion that the ‘private sector is more efficient’ is a widespread trope despite numerous examples in the UK within health, care homes, rail and construction where the state has had to intervene when private enterprises either went bankrupt or could not fulfil their contracts. This is of course, in addition to the state having to bail out the banking sector following the GFC. Furthermore, the notion of Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand of the market’ benefitting the average person through increased competition and lower prices, overlooks how large corporations frequently become quasi monopolies despite competition law. The widespread capture of government contracts (including the asylum accommodation estate and immigration detention facilities) by Serco for example is evidence of how smaller firms can be priced out, eventually decreasing

competition. Professor Crouch of the University of Warwick has argued that this trope of the private sector being more efficient is particular to recent decades of neo-liberal thought that have drifted away from the original economic theory neo-liberalism was based on due to the excessive involvement of self-interested large scale corporations.

“The idea that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector has risen with neo-liberalism. As a consequence persons from the private sector, encouraged by government, now play a role in advising public policy and the running of organisation...This approach cannot be explained by the theory of the market or the theory of democracy. The nearest explanation is the theory of consumer welfare and large corporations which emerged as part of the general neo-liberal model in the 1970s and 1980s”

(Crouch, 2011)

Consequently, in contrast to the neo-liberal common sense messaging that all is needed is to hard work and to pull yourself up by the bootstraps, research shows that in nearly every country where neo-liberal reforms have been introduced the disparity between rich and poor has increased (Furceri & Loungani, 2015; Ostry et al., 2016). This disparity means that that the “loudly proclaimed, narrative of “shared sacrifice” austerity is based on (Theodore, 2020, p.9) misleadingly deflects away from the way in which it impacts the poorest people hardest. Instead of the social mobility and factor price equalization which free trade was supposed to bring, research into free trade areas (like the maquiladora industry within NAFTA) demonstrates that lower skilled labour often get locked into pockets of poverty (Markusen & Zahniser, 1997). Furthermore, as seen in Chapter 6 market competition is increasingly leading to short term contracts and worsening labour conditions. However latent neo-liberal thinking has transferred responsibility for poverty and hardship from structural issues of inequality to an individual’s lack, laziness and dependency. It is the harnessing of welfare chauvinism to deflect blame away from the failings of these neo-liberal reforms to the vulnerable, in particular the migrant vulnerable, which is in many ways a genius sleight of hand. As Jensen, T. (2014, p.1) describes the real coup of these reforms is in “making the social world appear self-evident and requiring no interpretation and creating new forms of neoliberal common sense around welfare and social security”.

The composite effect of this dominant neo-liberal thinking and increased welfare chauvinism has had negative effects on the local level. Local authority officers interviewed within this research have noted how several aspects about resettling refugees have been made harder as a result of these governments not wishing to appear too lenient on migrants when it comes to accessing benefits. Chapter 6 has shown how

local authorities were strongly discouraged from using local authority housing stock to accommodate VPRS refugees due to a fear of negative feedback from the public. It also demonstrated that VPRS migrants have not been added to the group of people exempt from immediate enrolment on UC, despite their eligibility being comparable, if not more deserving than those who are exempt. Again, it was deemed by those interviewed that this was caused by the government not wishing to appear weak on migrants, even when this is a cohort being invited to the UK due to their status as being the most vulnerable of vulnerable refugees. Equally, written into the SoR for the VPRS was a stipulation that no other white or brown goods other than cooking and washing facilities could be provided to the VPRS beneficiaries as they did not wish to provide them with “entertainment appliances” (Home Office, 2015, p.1). This meant that local authorities were not supposed to purchase laptops or televisions both of which considerably help with learning English and consequently integration. In the case of laptops some local authorities have argued that these are essential for applying for other jobs and other integration activities and have subsequently been permitted to purchase them. Within the participant observation and semi-structured interviews, several VPRS lead officers have commented that whilst they have very good working relationships with the civil servants working on the VPRS, they wish senior government leaders would be more explicit in its support to the scheme and publicly explain why this cohort need the full range of welfare benefits native populations are eligible for due to their vulnerabilities. Instead, they feel like they have to navigate and resolve these competing messages and duties issued from the government themselves. As one lead officer commented “they’re creating problems and we’re having to solve them” (local authority 10). They have to both fulfil the SoR and help vulnerable VPRS migrants to integrate, whilst not using the full range of the benefits which would be available to native populations. As the following quote describes

"The whole thing needs to be thought about and not left out, not just left to local managers to solve all the solutions. What we can't have is a sort of hybrid, and I think we hide the fact that we do it, and we have politicians say we won't use our own houses, nothing on the local tax payer, and I just think that that doesn't help and there are great risks in this for the individuals who are part of it."

(Local authority 8)

This is evidence again of local authorities being given responsibilities without the necessary means to enable them. It is also evidence of local authorities providing a safety net in a system increasingly orientated towards survival of the fittest. Local

authorities are supported within five years tariff funding with which to resettle the refugees, which is generously funded enough to cover most costs during those years. In principle, they could use the tariff to cover the shortfalls in housing and benefits and then discharge the refugees from their support at the end of this time with their duties fulfilled. The fact that they have advocated so strongly for exceptions to the Benefit Cap is due to the fact that they are thinking beyond this five-year period and are trying to prepare these refugees to be self-sufficient at the end of this period. A common expression heard at meetings is that local authorities did not wish to 'set them up to fail'.

Brexit

In terms of the socio-cultural impacts upon the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities, Brexit must count as a severe hindrance to this process. Many researchers have identified controlling immigration as being the key focus within the EU Referendum campaign (Ipsos Mori, 2016; Guma & Jones, 2018; Ford & Lymperopoulou, 2016). As has been seen in Chapter 4, the decision to exclude EU Citizens from being able to participate in the EU Referendum left EU Citizens feeling disenfranchised (Rancha & Nancheva, 2018).

Immediately after the referendum, migrant and non-Christian religious organizations began reporting a sharp rise in hate crime towards their members. This rise in hate crime appeared to be towards anyone who could be considered an immigrant or foreign, this includes Black and Asian minorities (many of whom were British citizens), as well as EU migrants, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs. Komaromi (2016) has reported how the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) reported 6,000 hate crimes within the first four weeks of the Referendum result. These crimes ranged in severity from murder to vandalism and verbal abuse. It is likely that the number of actual hate crimes is far higher as many migrants and minorities did not report the abuse. Guma and Jones (2019), Burrell and Schweyher, (2019) and Botterill et al. (2019) have reported on the sense of fear migrants have felt since the result as a result of these attacks. Lumsden et al. (2019) report migrants withdrawing from UK public life due to being afraid to speak in public for fear of their accent giving them away as being foreign. As one respondent describes

“Some of my friends, they're engineers, they got PhDs and they don't go out to town and they don't speak our language. They speak English because they feel uncomfortable ... people will start asking 'Oh, where you from?' ...When you go to the pub now, you don't tend to speak. (Interviewee 6, Polish, female, in UK since 2007)”

Various researchers have documented the widespread shock of the referendum result experienced by migrants and how this has negatively impacted on their sense of belonging in the UK (Lulle et al., 2018; Guma & Jones, 2019; Botterill et al., 2019; Burrell & Schweyher, 2019; Ranta & Nancheva, 2018). The participant observation undertaken for this thesis is in keeping with this research in noting a rise in uncertainty and precariousness amongst EU citizens. Within work undertaken helping to prepare EU citizens to apply for EU Settled Status, vulnerable migrant communities like Roma, who have a history of persecution have been particularly affected. These communities also face the biggest barriers in applying for EU Settled Status due to lack of documentation, such as passports, and high employment within the gig economy meaning that they may not be able to evidence the five continuous years of settlement needed to obtain status. Local authorities in the South East have been particularly concerned that the legal aid advice deserts mean that EU citizens with complex cases may not be able to receive the help they need to apply for status. Perhaps the best indication of the effect of Referendum result has been the emergence of declining numbers of EU migrants from the UK. Migration to the UK which had peaked in 2016 has been in sharp decline since the Referendum result and in March 2018, stood at the lowest level it had been since 2012 (ONS, 2018).

Whilst UKIP and right wing tabloid media ran some of the strongest anti-migrant socio-cultural commentary leading up to the Referendum, several researchers have pointed to how the hostile environment policies introduced by the Coalition Government contributed towards the Referendum result (Burrell & Schweyher, 2019; Guma & Jones, 2019; SSAHE, 2020). Furthermore, by failing to counter the xenophobic language of UKIP and suppressing research detailing the more positive effects of migration the Coalition and Conservative Governments can be seen as having legitimized the claims of UKIP by failing to provide an effective opposition. In 2016, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) directly attributed the rise in hate crime and discrimination which had emerged as a result of the Referendum was the result of the politicians involved in the campaigning. As the 2016 report states

“the referendum campaign was marked by divisive, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric, and that many politicians and prominent political figures not only failed to condemn such rhetoric, but also created and entrenched prejudices, thereby emboldening individuals to carry out acts of intimidation and hate towards

ethnic or ethno-religious minority communities and people who are visibly different.”

(CERD, 2016, p.4)

48 per cent of the UK population voted to remain and Guma and Jones (2019) document the Referendum equally spurred many Remain voters to express messages of support to UK migrant populations that they were still welcome. The hate crimes perpetrated were by a minority of the UK population. Nevertheless, a 58 per cent increase in hate crime took place between 2015 and 2016 which the MET police have directly attribute to the Referendum (Travis, 2016). Of the 6,000 crimes reported to the NPCC, in 51 per cent of cases the perpetrator had made reference to the Referendum in their abuse. The most common phrase cited was “go home” (Komaromi, 2016). In addition to this messaging were attempts like ‘Punish a Muslim day’ (BBC, 2018). Perhaps worse yet is that this rise in hate crime, which spiked after the referendum, has continued to increase year on year, including within schools where incidences of reported hate crime in schools rose by 57 per cent between 2015 and 2016 (Camden, 2017). Even within Primary schools, exclusions for racism have increased by 40 per cent between 2007-2017 (McCamley, 2020). The findings of racism being so prevalent even at Primary school age is some indication of the level of xenophobic feeling prevalent within the UK host population. Respondents within Guma and Jones and Burrell and Schweyher’s research felt that the Referendum result has sanctioned this xenophobic feeling.

“Before the people can think but they don't say it because it's embarrassing to say what the people think. Now because of Brexit everyone can say whatever they want because they think it is fine.”

(Portuguese respondent, in Guma & Jones, 2019, p.4)

During a training event on countering right wing extremism attended as part of this participant observation the trainer commented that in his twenty years of work de-radicalising members of right-wing groups, there had never been so many militant groups. This is in keeping with other research which has shown that far right extremism has been on the rise in the UK since the Referendum. Numbers of far-right referrals to Prevent doubled between 2016 and 2018 (Grierson & Dodd, 2019). Britain’s most senior counterterrorism officer (at the time of writing), said that there is “clearly a correlation” between the rise in hate crime after the Referendum and far right activity (ibid.). In 2016, the Conservative Home Secretary Amber Rudd announced the far-right group National Action had been proscribed, the first right wing group to receive such a ruling.

British Values and assimilatory messaging

Running parallel to the hostile environment were concerted efforts to promote a form of integration which many have seen as assimilatory (Ali & Gidley, 2014; Bale et al., 2011; Allen, 2018; Bennett, 2018). David Cameron described these assimilatory measures as ‘muscular liberalism’, a deliberate attempt to put an end to the ‘doctrine of state multiculturalism’ and have “a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years” (BBC, 2011). Within the Conservative 2010 Manifesto were phrases such as “everyone coming to this country must be ready to embrace our core values and become a part of their local community”, and assertions that an English language test would be introduced for anyone who wished to come to the UK to marry. These aspects of the Conservative Manifesto were carried into the Coalition, whereas Bale et al. (2011, p. 405) have said, as far as immigration is concerned “there can be little doubt that it was the Tories who trumped their junior partners”. This section examines these assimilatory efforts, most notably in English language speaking, promoting ‘island’ history and ‘British values in education and increased assertions of the UK as a ‘Christian country’.

The push to encourage greater English speaking was not just reserved for newly arrived migrants but to UK citizens who did not speak English well. The DCLG Secretary of State Eric Pickles issued guidance to local authorities telling them to stop translating documents claiming it undermined integration. Pickles stated

“Even if publishing only in English could put some people at a particular disadvantage, such a policy may be justified if local authorities can demonstrate that the integration and cost concerns pursue a legitimate aim and outweigh any disadvantage.”

(Pickles, 2013)

A public sector duty was placed on local authorities in 2016 to ensure that all public sector facing workers were fluent in English, this included unqualified teaching posts, teaching assistants and unregulated NHS posts (Cabinet Office, 2016).

The Casey Review in 2016, conducted by Dame Casey at the request of David Cameron and Theresa May looked at integration in deprived communities. The review concluded that not enough people in the UK spoke English, despite ONS data showing that only 1.3 per cent of the 4.2 million population with a main language other than English could not speak English well, and only 0.3 per cent of this could not speak English at all (ONS,

2011). Dame Casey's concerns about numbers of people speaking English appear to be less about the numbers and potentially more about the perceived threat of the issue within public opinion

"I don't care how we've got here, I don't care who can't speak English, I don't care what's going on but what I do know is that everybody of working age and of school age should be able to speak the language. And I think the public in particular would feel some relief.....And I would be quite old-school about this and I would set a target that says "By X date we want everybody in the country to be able to speak a common language."

(Casey, 2016)

The Casey review has been criticized as placing the onus for integration exclusively upon migrants, particularly Muslims (Taylor, 2016). However, this may have been the intention, as Dame Casey informed the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee that "integration is not a two way street" and that host communities should not have to "*give as much*" as migrants (BBC, 2017).

In addition to ending the 'passive tolerance of recent years' (Cameron, quoted in BBC, 2011), the Coalition sought to create more of a UK national identity. This included introducing the mandatory embedding of 'British Values' within the National Curriculum. British Values are described as 'the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2014b). These values in themselves were uncontentious, what has been more problematic for notions of acceptance and belonging, has been the assertion that migrant communities, were not abiding by them

"We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values"

(Cameron, quoted in BBC, 2011)

In particular, Muslim communities have queried whether British Values were aimed at them, as British Values were first introduced within the Coalition Government's 2011 counter terrorism Prevent strategy. Prevent was amended in 2015 to have more of a focus on countering all forms of terrorism including right wing extremism, but the 2011 Prevent work has been criticized as focusing too heavily on Islamist terrorism (Arwan,

2012; Thomas, 2016). Equally the Casey Review was criticized for focusing too heavily on Muslim self-segregation (Taylor, 2016).

Equally within education, the Coalition sought to teach more British literature within English Literature and 'island history' within History lessons. The Coalition Education Minister Michael Gove stated the UK should ""celebrate the distinguished role of these islands in the history of the world" and portray Britain as "a beacon of liberty for others to emulate". (Gove, cited in Higgings, 2011).

These efforts to encourage more Britishness within education have seemed to some as artificial constructs, ignoring the interconnectedness that Britain has had globally both through waves of immigration, emigration and trade. They have been described as 'inward looking and isolationist, longing for a mythical more homogeneous past,' (SSAHE, 2020, p.14). Michael Gove also insisted that a copy of the King James Bible be sent to every school run by local education authorities in the UK (Allen, 2018).

Gove's issuing of the bible was in keeping with a wider effort under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 to reassert the fact that the UK is a predominantly Christian country. Allen (2017, 2018) has noted that in comparison to the earlier Blair/Brown Governments' assertions that they didn't "do God" (although they did 'do' multi-faith), the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 made a concerted effort to 'do God', or rather to do Christianity. Bruce (2013) notes that this overt incorporation of Christianity into statehood was unprecedented among former British prime ministers. Cameron is quoted as saying that "Britain was an undoubtedly 'Christian country' something that politicians as indeed all members of society 'should not be afraid to say" and that "the Bible has helped to give Britain a set of values and morals which make Britain what it is today" (Allen, 2018, p.6). Theresa May continued this Christian messaging with stories of her own upbringing as a vicar's daughter. Under Cameron and May's Governments the Church of England was in 'unprecedented' partnership with Government (Allen, 2018, p.5). The Church of England was funded to provide various community programmes for these governments, such as the Near Neighbours programme, which saw them receive £5 million to fund localized projects promoting social cohesion. These projects were also available to cross-faith partnerships. The Church was also envisioned as a key driver in the Coalition's 'Big Society' efforts.

The participant observation and semi-structured interviews undertaken for this thesis found several examples of how the Church of England and other Christian groups have played a significant role in filling holes in welfare provisions for migrants. This section

does not seek to critique the efficacy of the Church as a Government partner, but rather to assess whether the assimilationist language and practices of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 have helped or hindered local authorities to facilitate migrant integration.

In and of itself support for the Church may not be controversial, however once coupled with strong messaging about how multiculturalism has failed, how some migrant and minority communities (Muslims in particular) are choosing to live outside of the mainstream, this emphasis on Britain being a Christian country could be seen as increasing othering. As Allen describes

“Cameron and the Conservatives drive towards an ever more discursively recognized and accepted ‘Christian country’ can be seen as something of a forceful and detrimental political mechanism that seeks to differentiate, demarcate and subsequently discriminate.”

(Allen, 2018, p.13)

This reassertion of Britain as a Christian country is even more questionable when you consider that the 2011 Census showed Christianity to be on the decline with only 59.2 per cent of the population identifying as Christian (ONS, 2011b). Indeed, Cameron himself prior to becoming Prime Minister had described his faith as “*the metaphor of a poor radio signal* - “it sort of comes and goes” (Cameron, cited in Allen, 2018, p.6).

As discussed within the literature review, cultural maintenance is a key factor in assisting people to integrate rather than assimilate. British Values still allow for other faiths to practice their beliefs, but the socio-cultural messaging accompanying them has been overtly less tolerant of non-British culture. Allen has pointed out that whilst multiculturalism may have lost favour in the 2000s, Conservative assimilationist messaging and practices appear to be aiming to ensure that “even the merest remnants of multiculturalism should be killed off” (Allen, 2018, p.11). English language requirements for marriage, for working within the public sector and the messaging to local authorities to stop translating documents appear to be public messaging rather than responses to an actual problem. This muscular liberalism with its assertions that integration is not a two-way street and of the UK as a Christian country with an island history could feel artificially created with a purpose to exclude or to reduce even third generation immigrants to feel like second class citizens. Again, the messaging and narrative being presented appears to be in keeping with courting public opinion rather than addressing evidence-based policy. The danger with this one sided presentation is that it misses (perhaps deliberately) the contribution migrants give to the host nation and

in doing so make it harder for the migrant to feel accepted and to want to be accepted, if acceptance means giving up too much of one's own culture. This need for redress in terms of the presentation of migrants and minorities within government socio-cultural messaging was stated by the Muslim Council of Great Britain in response to the Casey review.

“We must recognise that our public discourse and conversation has a part to play in furthering integration. Integration is fostered when the media reports on stories that speak of achievement of minorities, of people coming together and where national moments are shared by all.”

(Khan, cited in Taylor, 2016)

For local authorities wishing to facilitate migrant integration in their localities, they too face these assimilatory practices such as having to defend translating documents for their local migrant populations, or needing to promote British Values within schools. The bigger hindrance to facilitating migrant integration for local authorities is the difficulty such assimilatory practices have upon a migrants ability to maintain and practice their own culture, and how they may be perceived by the host population as less British and therefore less deserving.

Socio-cultural integration and the VPRS

Several researchers have commented on the negative language and symbology used by UK politicians to describe migrants during the 'migrant crisis' of 2015 (Berry et al., 2016; Bennett, 2016). Whilst the media undoubtedly fuelled this negativity, research has shown that the news stories most heavily sourced within the media were those quoting UK politicians (Berry, 2016). Of these political news sources, the Conservatives were quoted in 68.6 per cent of cases and UKIP only 9.3 per cent (ibid.). Whilst UKIP posted the most frequent messaging on the migrant crisis, the Conservative government was not far behind. An analysis of official political party twitter accounts over the period of the migrant crisis found that

“Firstly, the two Labour accounts were not active on Twitter with regard to immigration—3 per cent and 13 per cent of their tweets were on this topic. This is in comparison to Nigel Farage's (40 per cent) and to David Cameron's (33 per cent) accounts”

(Bennett, 2016, p.145)

In public David Cameron used insect like language when describing a “swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean”, Philip Hammond described migrants were ‘marauding’ (Shariatmadari, 2015). Migrants were strongly painted as ‘economic migrants’ wishing to abuse the system.

“The gap in standards of living between Europe and Africa means there will always be millions of Africans with the economic motivation to try to get to Europe.”

(Hammond, cited in Perraudin, 2015).

This socio-cultural messaging changed overnight on the 2nd September 2015 when photos of a young Syrian Kurdish boy drowned in the Mediterranean Sea caused widespread European and UK sympathy. Even the UK’s most xenophobic tabloids ran headings such as ‘Tiny victim of a human catastrophe’ (Daily Mail, cited in Berry et al., 2016, p.5). The Conservative government were initially reluctant to commit to expanding the existing resettlement scheme, citing fears of increasing pull factors, but the groundswell in public support was overwhelming with #refugeeswelcome becoming a top twitter trend and a parliamentary petition to resettle refugees gaining 300,000 signatures in two days (BBC, 2015). Furthermore, the Press were also supportive. As a clear response to a bottom up shift in public opinion, on the 7th September David Cameron announced that the UK would expand the Syrian Resettlement scheme from the low 200s it had accepted so far to an additional 20,000 Syrian refugees under the UNHCR resettlement scheme.

Following this announcement Bennett (2016) notes that the language from the Prime Minister’s twitter account changed to include more mention of humanitarianism, morality and responsibility.

“In general there is a reorienting of the discourse that justifies governmental action through a combination of legitimation via moral evaluation (e.g., “responsibility”) and a topos of crisis rather than threat”

(Bennett, 2016, p.153).

Within days David Cameron had visited refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan and created a ministerial led cross departmental team to oversee the scheme with a publicly announced goal to have the first 1,000 refugees resettled in the UK by Christmas 2015.

For local authorities in the SE of England the announcement of the VPRS and its positive messaging from central government led to a previously unknown outpouring of public support as constituents contacted local authorities to petition the authority to participate on the scheme (participant observation). This is not to say that everyone was supportive

but local authorities interviewed for this thesis felt that most people contacting the council wanted the council to be involved.

“I think the biggest thing for them has been the public support for what has been done, there was a great deal of nervousness at the start but yes we want to do this but we will keep it very quiet, we wouldn't upset the resident population of X that we will be bringing refugees into the county but actually the public response has been, yeah what you're doing is great but you're not doing enough of it, you're not doing it quickly enough rather than you shouldn't be doing it at all”

(Local authority 2)

“There was public, as I believe that was up and down the country, support for refugees, following on from it being in the media and there was a public meeting to meet up to meet that support which came out of the council and a pledge to do the VPRS came out of that and following on from that was the formation of the refugees and asylum seekers coordination group, and wider group.”

(Local authority 13)

Through announcing the scheme, the government legitimized the outpouring of public support towards refugees, meaning that those who wished to offer support had some officially sanctioned buffer to defend themselves against those with more welfare chauvinist opinions. The scheme also offered a focus through which to channel this support, in the form of an organised structure managed by the local authority. Whilst many support groups (most notably faith-based groups) sprung up independently from the council, individuals phoning their local authority to express support could be signposted towards an existing group or invited to a public event to harness volunteers. This both provided access to a community of like-minded individuals for members of the public and also enabled links into the community which may not have previously existed for the local authority. As these quotes describe

“It wasn't something that we initiated it was people approaching us and groups setting up themselves as well, or just individuals or small groups of people within the community and then gradually we started to get more involved with them...”

(Local authority 15)

“There's a lot of groups which has sprung up as a result of you know the Refugee crisis, the war in Syria. And it's been really useful to go out and speak to them.”

(Local authority 4)

In some instances, these new voluntary and community organisations which arose as a result of the scheme have gone on to support the council in other work as well

“So we’ve become much more involved with the sort of community and voluntary sector and as a result, and that’s... that has spilt over into other areas of what we do in particular housing and homelessness, so we’ve got a sort of network with volunteers now which is something we didn’t have before.”

(Local authority 15)

“The authority more broadly seem to be much more aware of migrants and integration over the last 18 months and it is not just around Syrians... The whole ethos is about drawing the community in.”

(Local authority 12)

The scheme has extended community but it has also transformed both local authorities and host societies through its facilitation of intercultural understanding. It opened channels for discussion and increased tolerance, bringing back elements of integration being a two-way street. The increased learning as a result of the VPRS means that many local authority members of staff and volunteers within the community now have an understanding of aspects of Islamic culture and practice that was often prior to unknown. They found themselves learning where the local mosques were or where to buy Halal food, learning about Ramadan. As one local authority officer describes

“Speaking for myself it has open my eyes. I had never been involved in anything like this and it has been really interesting and just the opportunity to meet people and the communities. I had an interesting experience last year, ... we made contact with the Syrian diaspora in Manchester and ended up taking all our families up to a festival of Eid celebration in Manchester, and I would say fully participated myself, so I was one of the very few white faces in the audience amongst the participants but I thoroughly enjoyed it, I loved their food, loved the culture so yes. And I think other people have been involved in the county council who have been involved in it yes it has given them a different work area and a different perspective and I think on the whole it has been very positive.”

(Local authority 2)

Even if the migrants being supported under the VPRS are for the most part refugees, there is still a volume of learning which the VPRS has afforded which means that local authorities and the voluntary and community organizations working on the scheme are better equipped to work with other migrants and minority ethnic populations in future.

For the VPRS and VCRS refugees being supported under these programmes, the voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) have been invaluable to facilitating their integration. The kind of support provided has been far reaching and begins before the families have even arrived. Many VCOs have stepped in to help furnish new properties, in particular they often assist in the provision of white goods such as televisions and laptops which local authorities were forbidden from providing within the Statement of Requirements.

“So the mechanism for furnishing properties is through that group, so as soon as we know that we've got another property coming online, they will then look at all the goods they've got already, then understand what the makeup is of the families, so if the family has got younger children or a baby, they will go away and get a Moses basket and all the other stuff that is required... for the two families we have taken the council has not had to provide one stick of furniture.”

(Local authority 6)

“It brings me to tears anyway, to go into the house and see how they have put it together, because just the furniture and every drawer has clothes...They even had a jigsaw that was partly made so that the family could come in and just complete it.”

(Local authority 8)

The VCO sector have also been instrumental in helping with many of the day to day activities which facilitate integration such as orienteering, conversation cafès, assistance in preparing for job interviews and many other aspects which make people feel welcome. Several of these have been covered elsewhere, but examples of those wrap around forms of support which may have been missed elsewhere, such as the provision of social bonds and bridges are captured below

“They are doing things like helping the family with transport helping them get about helping take them to the supermarket making sure that they can get to the

mosque if they need to get to the mosque, integrating with the local community involved in community activities, supporting their own activities”.

(Local authority 2)

“New volunteers ... that's enormously helpful for integration because you were getting to know another British person you're making what do they call those, social capital links you, if you want to borrow something, if you want to get some experience of working , these links are being made for you by having a volunteer.”

(Local authority 13)

As the quotes demonstrate the VPRS has had a huge impact on the support available locally to facilitate the integration of refugees on the VPRS. Nevertheless, as has been covered in other chapters, this support is often channelled exclusively towards refugees on the Syrian scheme. In some local authorities in the SE Syrian refugees may be the only migrant community present and as such this is adequate. However, other authorities, especially those more used to working with migrants have channelled this extra support resulting from the VPRS to enhance support for other migrants present locally

“I was uncomfortable with the disparity between people who come in clandestinely and he was seen as illegal and people who come here on this scheme who are seen initially as the worthy migrant that's what I had a problem with, so I'm trying to address that all the time and I think now I'm doing it I think yeah it's quite successful.”

(Local authority 4)

“So, you know, we've already got one or two people who... aren't on the resettlement scheme and it's about expanding that kind of provision and support and community and real community hub where people can support each other and taking that to carry on long after this scheme is ever finished. I mean, we do want it to be a community legacy coming out of this.”

(Local authority 12)

Furthermore, many faith-based and voluntary sector organizations which initially became involved with the local authority due to the VPRS have expanded their remit to supporting other migrant organizations also.

The announcement of the VPRS by the Conservative government in 2015 undoubtedly helped to change the tide in socio-cultural messaging surrounding migration which had been prevalent until that point. It helped local authorities facilitate migrant integration through legitimising an outpouring of support from voluntary and community organizations to help Syrian refugees integrate. The scheme also had knock on effects in terms of volunteer support and also knowledge of what is needed to facilitate migrant integration within local authorities, which is likely to assist non-Syrian migrants also. Ultimately, the good will leveraged by the Syrian scheme helped to facilitate other migrant schemes as the VCRS, (which supported refugees from Middle East and North Africa) and has helped local authorities to better understand what is needed to facilitate migrant integration.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the far-reaching impact that socio-cultural messaging can have on migrant integration. It has shown how attempts to appear tough on immigration to court votes led to the creation of the hostile environment which itself led to the deliberate suppression of positive messaging on migration, deliberately linking migration with the decline of public services. This messaging in turn has been attributed by many researchers as a likely contributing factor to Brexit and its associated rise in hate crime and increasing prevalence of far-right activity. The impact of Coalition and Conservative Government 2010-2018 socio-cultural messaging on migrant integration can therefore be seen as having been overwhelmingly negative. Furthermore, the fact that the hostile environment was tightly coordinated at central level by an inter-ministerial team, research on the positive impact of migration deliberately suppressed and a welfare chauvinist narrative used to attribute declining public services to immigration, is clear evidence of these governments strong centralist control over the immigration narrative. In this way, this research finds strong evidence against the 'local turn' in migrant integration policies and practices claimed within the dominant European literature.

In terms of direct impacts on local authorities wishing to facilitate migrant integration, the hostile environment imposed additional duties, (such as the requirement for registry office staff to check immigration status), as well as potential cost shunting due as increasing numbers of migrants became destitute due to additional barriers and potential discrimination when accessing bank accounts, housing and employment. The work of local authorities to help foster community cohesion has been rendered harder due to increased associations between migration and crime/threats to security as well migrants being scapegoated for unemployment, increased housing waiting lists, a lack of school places, declining NHS standards and a reduction in welfare benefits.

The indirect impact on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration is that the migrants in their localities have had additional barriers presented to them in every aspect of their daily lives as well as strong assimilatory messaging making it harder and less safe for them to publicly maintain aspects of their cultures. Since the EU referendum migrants and BAME nationals have experienced a rise in hate crimes which has led many to feel unsafe speaking their native languages in public. A dramatic rise in the number of far right prevent referrals and numbers of primary school age children being reported for racism are indications that tolerance for migrants and ethnic minorities in the UK severely diminished under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018.

At the same time, it has been demonstrated that neo-liberal thinking has sanctioned the reduction in assistance from the state and increased responsibility onto the individual if they find themselves unable to prosper within the new systems. This thinking and scapegoating of migrants for a decline in public services has served to obscure the role of neo-liberalism in the GFC and made further neo-liberal reforms appear to be the only game in town.

Against this backdrop, the introduction VPRS has been demonstrated to be a lone reprieve from this onslaught of anti-migrant socio-cultural messaging. The positive messaging from both the Coalition and the Conservative Governments towards the scheme sanctioned an outpouring of support for pro migrant voices and sentiment and a conduit in the form of local authorities, through which to channel this support. The scheme has fostered learning about other cultures amongst local authority staff and volunteers alike in addition to raising awareness of the barriers migrants face when trying to integrate that the previous chapters have outlined. The inherent inconsistencies between the anti-migrant messaging when it comes to a Syrian asylum seeker versus a Syrian who has come on the scheme, has helped to visibilise the falsehoods within much of the anti-migrant socio-cultural messaging. A wider exploration of the cumulative effects of Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 legal/political, socio-economic and socio-cultural policy levers upon the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration will now be given within the Chapter 8's conclusion.

Chapter 8. Final conclusion

Introduction

This thesis set out to answer the question “Did the designation of migrant integration as a ‘local issue’ under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 help or hinder the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in their localities?”. This question was chosen because there was a dominant consensus between academia and policy that a local turn was taking place within migrant integration policies, with increasing numbers of integration policies being formulated at the local level, and that this would deliver the best integration outcomes. The implication of this dual consensus was that the UK’s Localist turn, with its designation of integration as a local issue, had created the most favourable conditions for migrant integration. Consequently, if integration outcomes did not improve, the implication was that this was the fault of local authorities who have been given a ‘leading role’ (DCLG, 2012, p.8) by these governments to coordinate and promote integration. This thesis challenged both the academic and the policy thinking behind these assertions in order to return the focus of accountability back on to the responsible level of government. It also highlighted the danger in focusing on migrant integration policy alone and not taking into account the wider effect of other relevant government policies (immigration, education, housing etc) upon migrant integration. It did so by breaking the main question down into the following two sub-questions:

1. Did a local turn in migrant integration policy take place under the Localism of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010 to 2018?
2. How can a whole policy approach help us to map the aggregate demand on local authorities when it comes to migrant integration?

Summary conclusions – Sub-question 1

Did a local turn in migrant integration policy take place under the Localism of the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010 to 2018?

This question was designed to examine whether the designation of migrant integration as a local issue had led to greater innovation on the local level when it comes to migrant integration. And if not, why not? Did this mean that the academic literature was wrong to place such importance on the local level as the principal locus for migrant integration or did it mean that a number of other enabling factors need to be taken into account?

Consequently, this question was designed to unpack the Localism-local turn nexus, challenging the seeming supposition that Localism is necessarily positive for the local level. In doing so, the resulting research contributes new knowledge in this area as to the factors which facilitate migrant integration on the local level and those which stem it (summarised in the policy recommendations at the end of this chapter). It also brings together for the first time the Localism and local turn research, resulting in the creation of the first typology mapping the two bodies of research (see Table 6 at the end of this sub-question). As noted in the literature review, whilst 'local turn' has for many academics been understood to mean an increase in innovation in integration policy and practice on the local level, there is no single definition of what this looks like. This multiplicity of meanings evidenced in Tables 2 and 3 has been captured in Table 6.

Within the participant observation and the semi-structured interviews undertaken for this research it was evidenced that Localism, the policy responsible for designating integration a local issue, had not resulted in local innovation on migrant integration. Only seven out of the 20 the lead officers working on migration in the SE undertook work in this area prior to the introduction of the VPRS. Several of these lead officers voiced that they felt the Localism Act had had a negative effect on migrant integration, reducing the ability of local authorities to work on anything but their core statutory duties. It was evident that the suite of policy levers accompanying Coalition and Conservative Localism needed to be explored in order to understand their cumulative impact on local authorities and subsequently on their ability to facilitate migrant integration. The comparison of Localism under New Labour and that of Coalition and Conservative Localism via policy analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews enabled the creation of the first typology blending Localist and local turn typologies (see table 6).

A summary of this research will now be given according to these power levers, with an initial point of departure contrasting the impact of Localism under New Labour on local authorities to that of Coalition and Conservative Localism.

New Localism under Blair and Brown was criticised by the Coalition government and academics alike for having been closely managed from the centre (Davies 2008, Travers 2007). Consequently, academics labelled New Labour as being Centralist or Managerial in the form of Localism that they introduced (Hildreth 2011 & 2016, Evans et al. 2013). Once Emilsson's power lens is applied, this Centralist finding is borne out. Due to the high level of coherence between the normative, legislative and economic power lenses under New Labour I have termed this form of Localism 'Overt Centralism'. From a normative power lens perspective, despite mention of partnership, the Labour government made it clear that any local government was still subject to a hierarchical governance. Their normative stance towards migration was largely positive (for the first

ten years), using evidence-based policy to demonstrate the benefits of migration for the economy¹⁸. In terms of legislative powers, these were earned through the meeting of targets in the form of Local Area Agreements rather than through trust alone. Asylum law under Labour became increasingly restrictive. However, for those granted asylum, a national integration strategy for refugees was created and implemented, codifying the responsibility of the state towards this cohort. In terms of economic powers, New Labour invested more in education and health than any other post war government, and social care funding saw a 40% increase in real terms (Ivory, 2007). Whilst migrant integration was to a large degree mainstreamed within the wider efforts to reduce inequality, targeted economic support was given in the form of RIES, increased ESOL funding and the creation of Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships in 1999 and a £70 million Migrant Impact Fund created in 2009.

Having established the type of Localism under New Labour, the type of local turn integration frame taking place in the SE at that time will now be analysed. It was not possible to use the exact same research methods for New Labour which were used for the 2010-2018 period. This because participant observation only began in 2015 and many of those interviewed within the semi-structured interviews only began working in migration in 2015. However, as noted previously, only seven of the 20 lead officers interviewed within this research had a single point of contact (SPOC) for aspects relating to migrants within their authority prior to the VPRS. These contacts tended to be in urban areas close to London or in dispersal areas. The seven officers questioned indicated that work in this area under Labour had been reactive in response to increasing numbers of new migrant arrivals. There was one local authority outlier neither a dispersal area or close to London which had innovated in this area due to the direct support of local constituents and politicians, This outlier is a reminder that whilst the kind of Localism and government levers accompanying a policy does impact on the kind of local turn/ innovation which takes place this is not the sole determiner and a local culture supportive to migrant integration can be transformative. Nevertheless, overall, the research indicated that the Overt Centralism of New Labour's Localism did not spark much innovation in this area in the region. Out of the seven local authorities which had undertaken work in this area, it most closely resembled the Centralist- Localist local turn integration frame (see Table 6) where complimentary activities were undertaken to

¹⁸ The topic of economic migrants is an interesting example of changing perceptions of which migrants governments choose to integrate. Under New Labour economic migrants were deemed a favourable category of migrant due to their contributions to the economy, whereas during the migrant crisis of 2015 the conservative government reappropriated this term pejoratively, associating it with migrants presenting with fraudulent asylum claims.

strengthen Central policy. There were no examples of Scholten's 2016 decoupling where a divergent policy approach is taken on the local level to central.

In contrast to this Overt Centralism, the Coalition and Conservative governments claimed that their Localism was a 'radical decentralisation' (DHCLG, 2010, P.1), a paradigm shift from Labour's 'big government' (Cameron 2009, quoted in Balazard et al. 2017). Consequently, academics claimed that this particular localist turn was 'to be welcomed as the processes of integration occur primarily at the local level' (Ali & Gidley, 2014, p.23). Chapter 4 applied the same power lens to the Coalition's Localism to question whether or not the power levers behind the policies did indeed support this radical decentralisation and whether this had freed up local authorities to make local integration policies and practices.

The findings demonstrated that normatively, the Communitarian Conservatism language used under the Coalition's 'Big Society' led some academics to label it a "Communitarian Localism" (Hildreth, 2011). However, it was also shown that when Emilsson's power lens is applied the policy levers which accompanied the 2011 Localism Act and 2016 Cities and Devolution Act, it unearths a predominantly Neo-liberal Localism with some elements of Centralism.

Despite the 2010 Conservative campaign slogan that 'we are all in this together' with its war time-esque appeal to civic duty, there was also messaging which was neo-liberal in nature. The role of the state was to be severely reduced "government must not, as too often happens stand in the way" (DCLG, 2012, p.6). There is a strong assertion with the normative power lens messaging of these governments that accountability for quality of services has been transferred to the local level or the individual "[o]nly when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all" (Gov.UK, 2010, p.1). Migrant integration would take place "through determination, hard work and a readiness to do new things" (DCLG, 2012, p.6) and an end to people "choosing to remain outside mainstream society" (ibid). This primacy on the role of human agency rather than structural inequalities as the reason behind social exclusion can be seen as a particularly neo-liberal element of the normative messaging. In this way it is moving the focus of accountability from the centre to the individual.

Applying a legislative power lens, Chapter 4 demonstrated that the powers the Coalition and Conservative governments claimed to hand to the local level, were in practice limited by constraints from the centre. The 'power of competence' lauded as the most significant power under the Localism Act enabled only charges to discretionary services and only at cost recovery, equally it did not enable the creation of byelaws or additional

enforcement powers. Moreover, the requirement on local authorities to only contract services or trade with companies which had particular structures (such as those limited by shares), meant that they could not trade with the very community interest companies which might have been expected from a 'Community Localism'. The Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Challenge were equally hampered by the fact that no preferential treatment could be given to community groups during tendering. In keeping with the neo-liberal Localism identified elsewhere, the Civil Society audits covering the changes under Big Society found that the opening up of public service benefitted the private sector far more than the community or voluntary sector. Ironically, the impact upon local authorities from these changes has often been to move away from working with local organisations to commission joint services with other authorities in an effort to make economies of scale and reduce costs. When it comes to migrant integration, legislative requirements on local authorities such as removing the national indicators and the LSPs has meant that there is not the national data to monitor increasing disparity between areas and has led some authorities to cease work in that area. On a related note, authorities were also discouraged from translating council materials and conducting equalities impact assessments. The impact of these changes being that contrary to the claim that "no action – except raising taxes, which requires specific parliamentary approval – will any longer be 'beyond the powers' of local government" (Conservative Party, 2009, p.13), local authorities have still found many controls still held by central government. In contrast to the overt centralism of New Labour, these controls can be seen as a 'Covert Centralism'.

Arguably the biggest blow to the ability of local authorities to work on local integration policies and practices was the changes to the financial arrangements. Using Emilsson's economic power lens it is evident that local authority finances were decimated, losing 40% of grant funding from 2010 to 2015 and significant cuts again after that. Spending on all but the very core statutory duties was cut. This meant a loss of more than half the 2010 expenditure on libraries, youth clubs and other cultural activities conducive to integration. Targeted funding to assist integration was also cut, as ESOL funding was cut by 55%, RIES ceased, SMPs funding reduced and the remaining £16 million of the Migrant Impact Fund ceased.

In terms of whether a local turn in integration policy took place in the SE under Coalition and Conservative Localism, it has been seen that lead officers working on the VPRS felt that the Localism Act had not helped migrant integration. Those spoken to as part of the research for this thesis voiced how their services have been cut back to the bare statutory duties they are responsible for, and that, if it had not been for the VPRS they would likely not have been able to work in this area at all. It is ironic that a centrally funded and

coordinated government scheme was the only lifeline to support migrants that local authorities had to mitigate against the pernicious effects of a Localist policy supposedly designed to empower them. The enabling nature of the VPRS has been covered in detail in Chapter 7 and is a contribution to knowledge of this thesis detailed later in this chapter. Some local authority officers voiced how they felt that the designation of integration as a local issue was cost or responsibility shunting to the local level. Mapping this analysis against Table 6, it would appear that Coalition and Conservative Localism most closely matches the Austerity/Neo-Liberal – Centralist typology where most local authorities are reduced to providing core statutory duties with no additional innovation in this area. Some local authorities have tried to advocate for changes to wider policies effecting migrant integration (such as UC) which would match the Austerity/Neo-Liberal – Localist typology more closely as local authorities innovate in a way which challenges central government. Conversely, the VPRS resembles more of a Centralist policy which in turn resulted in increased innovation on the local level best resembling the Centralist – Localist typology.

What this research question's findings have demonstrated is that there is no one type of Localism and that it is essential to unpack each power lever behind a policy to identify exactly what the compound effect may be upon integration. It has demonstrated that an overtly Centralist type of Localism, if evidenced based and fully funded might have positive effects upon migrant integration even if outcomes are mandated from the centre. Conversely, a seemingly Communitarian Localism can actually mask neo-liberal retrenchment in welfare state and an increase in regional inequality (see Table 1 in Chapter 2). It also evidences how detrimental it can be to local government if the legislative and economic power levers accompanying the normative power do not align. In contrast to the policy levers under New Labour's Localism which mostly pulled in the same direction, Coalition & Conservative Localism's policy levers contradicted and undermined one another. Local authorities were asked to innovate at the same time as having funding cut, they were asked to restructure whilst covert controls stemmed the ways in which they were able to do so. Under Labour's Localism the line of accountability was clear, with checks and balances across governance levels but with ultimate responsibility, and hence culpability, residing at the Centre. Under Coalition and Conservative Localism, local authorities were designated accountable for migrant integration detracting attention from the host of austerity and neo-liberal measures introduced by Central government which decreased the ability of local authorities to innovate in this area. This is reminiscent of 'smoke and mirrors policy strategy' that Scott argues is behind the era of managed migration these governments have furthered (Scott, 2015, p.10). In this way the designation of migrant integration as a local issue can be seen as a white elephant providing an additional burden on local authorities at a time

when their resources are stretched the most, whilst detracting attention from where accountability should lie.

These findings are not challenging the research demonstrating that integration takes place at the local level, rather they add nuance to the Localism and local turn literature, demonstrating that it is a complex terrain and urging academics to move away from policy frame analysis to examine all policy levers when it comes to assessing the impact of a policy on migrant integration.

The table below demonstrates the types of Localism mapped throughout the course of this research and the many different kinds of local turn integration frames which they could effect. This table is the first Localism and local turn typology and is a contribution to knowledge of this research.

Table 6 – Localism/Local turn typology

Type of Localism	Type of local turn integration frame	
	Centralist	Localist
Centralist/ Managerial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities clearly follow integration plans set by central government. • Monitoring against centrally set targets is reported back to central level. • This is similar to Scholten’s 2016 Centralist type (between central and local government) and Deker et al.’s 2015 National frame where local policy matches central due to managerial structures and monitoring set from the centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in agreement with central integration plans, local level governance might seek to add to these central plans, in order to assist /add to anything the central plans do not address. However, due to the lack of codified separation of duties (as there is with Representative Localism), these innovations might be reactionary and time limited depending on the whimsical nature of the Central policies set. • If the localist integration plan goes against the centrally set plans this may result in tension of even retrenching between central

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If EU or other supranational funding are involved, it could also refer to Evans et al.’s 2013 MLG type (between EU, supranational, regional and local government). The key here is that the local level is viewed as the implementer within a hierarchy with the goals being set at the top of the hierarchy and not an equal partner (this hierarchy between levels differentiates Evans et al.’s 2013 MLG Localism from Scholten’s 2016 local turn MLG type). • Local authorities at this level do not innovate but merely implement. 	<p>and local government. This is similar to Scholten’s 2016 Decoupling relationship type.</p>
Representational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to the EU principal of subsidiarity (Council of Europe, 1985), what can be done locally is done locally according to a constitution or other codified agreement of roles and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with the Representational/ Centralist local turn model, the EU principal of subsidiarity applies. • What can be done locally is done locally. • If local innovation results in similarities in the kind of policies created at local level between different localities this would resemble Deker et al.’s 2015 ‘local dimension’ of migrant integration policy.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If local policy develops idiosyncratically according to each different local circumstance, the type of policy created will differ between each area. This is where Deker et al.'s 2015 definition of a 'Localist' local integration policy might emerge. • Due to the relatively more stable and enduring structures of representational Localism, policies created at the local level are less subject to the whim of intervention from Central government. Nevertheless, this does not automatically mean they will be pro-migrant, as with any of these policies, they can seek to exclude as much as include as shown by (Mahnig, 2004).
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local level implements the plans of central government to foster a kind of 'conservative communitarianism'. • Greater ownership might be made of migrant integration by voluntary and community organisations but equally local government might lose some of its power to create local integration policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of local government is curtailed as greater power is given to VCSE organisations but local government seeks to work with the voluntary and community sector to meet a local integration policy designed by all stakeholders. This might involve 'venue shopping' (Guiraudon, 2000) where local authorities seek to apply for EU or other supranational funding. This

	<p>themselves. Their role is curtailed and they do not seek to innovate beyond the role set by central government.</p>	<p>might resemble Scholten's 2016 MLG relationship type where there is no hierarchy between any level of government.</p>
<p>Austerity/Neo-liberal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government's funding is cut significantly making it harder for local authorities to work on anything other than their statutory duties in this area. • Neo-liberal restructuring reduces the role of the welfare state, increases the role of private sector and re-orientes responsibility for facilitating migrant integration onto the migrant to navigate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the Centralist local turn model, local government's funding is cut significantly making it harder for local authorities to work on anything other than their statutory duties in this area but attempts are made to innovate where possible. • Neo-liberal restructuring reduces the role of the welfare state, local authority tries to find ways to help the migrant to navigate the terrain within the limited funds they have. • Local authority highlights areas where central government policy contradicts another government policy. For example, a policy to reduce access to welfare (e.g. benefit cap) contradicting another government policy area (the desire to resettle vulnerable refugees with more than two children).

How can a whole policy approach help us to map the aggregate demand on local authorities when it comes to migrant integration?

The second sub research question demonstrated how wider government policies can impact more on migrant integration than an official integration policy itself evidencing why academia needs to move away from focusing on integration policy alone. It detailed how each of these wider policy areas impacted upon local authorities, sometimes resulting in additional duties placed upon local authorities, sometimes in covert controls being introduced or sometimes simply in cuts to funding. Consequently, taking a whole policy approach also highlights the aggregate demands being placed upon local authorities, helping to bring to the fore the full weight of the responsibility involved in being tasked with facilitating integration. Building on from the first sub question it asks what sense does it make to designate migrant integration a ‘local issue’ when so many central policies, outside of the control of local authorities impact significantly upon migrant integration? It also enables us to pinpoint the areas of central government policy impacting the most upon migrant integration.

Chapters 5-7 examined how key legislative, socio-economic and socio-cultural policies introduced by the Coalition and Conservative governments impacted on migrants and the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration. Each dimension of integration policy was broken down according to Emilsson's power lens to show the full impact of that individual policy upon local authorities. This conclusion will now analyse the main findings of these chapters according to the power lenses rather than the integration domain in order to demonstrate the aggregate demand being placed on local authorities when it comes to facilitating migrant integration. This power lens also helped to continue to identify where power has been given to local authorities and where it has been retained or even consolidated by central government. In doing so, it continues to map how far the policies of Localism extended into other areas, thus further addressing the question of how radical a transfer of power to the local level actually took place under the Coalition and Conservative governments. The results of this research are that similar covert Centralist and Austerity/Neo-liberal typologies can be found within wider government policy impacting upon migrant integration.

Applying a normative power lens this thesis has shown that under the Coalition and Conservative governments there was a conscious decision to move away from a multicultural model of migrant integration to an assimilatory one with the explicit statement that “integration is not a two-way street” (Casey 2017, in BBC 2017).

Requirements to teach British values and 'island history' in schools, the issuing of the King James bible and insistence that the UK was a Christian country are all evidence of this turn. The CCI and the Casey report both presented some migrants as choosing to remain outside of the system, with the latter concluding that not enough migrants spoke English despite the ONS statistics showing that only 0.3% of the migrant population did not speak English. Local authorities were also mandated to ensure that any front-line staff they have were fluent in English and issued a ministerial letter requesting they no longer translate council documents into other languages. Chapter 2's review of migrant integration literature showed that the majority of the academic literature argues that migration is a two- or three-way street and that the maintenance of cultural identity is important for integration. Consequently, assimilatory messaging can make integration harder.

Furthermore, in addition to this assimilatory turn, the normative messaging which accompanied the hostile environment has been shown to have directly worsened the perception of migrants in the UK and even to have contributed to the rise in hate crime post-Brexit. Chapter 7 demonstrated how Go Home vans displaying inaccurate statistics increased levels of worry amongst the public about the levels of irregular immigration in the UK. It also demonstrated how, contrary to the evidence-based policy the Coalition Immigration Minister Damien Green claimed they would follow, the Coalition and Conservative government knowingly suppressed research demonstrating that immigration had negligible impact on wages or UK employment. In comparison to New Labour's explicit statement that migrants helped the UK economy, the Conservative and Coalition governments took the opposite approach. Despite research to the contrary, these governments explicitly linked immigration to declining standards in housing, healthcare, employment and access to school places. Furthermore, the symbology of prominent government ministers such as Prime Minister David Cameron's use of the term 'swarm' to describe migrants seeking asylum in Europe, can be seen as having lent credibility to far right populist groups with similar messaging. Not long afterwards the Brexit referendum took place, a 2016 UN report found that the political messaging surrounding the Brexit referendum had failed to condemn anti-migrant rhetoric and as a result had emboldened hate crime towards migrants. During the local authority interviews conducted for this thesis, several respondents commented that the government's desire to appear tough on immigration meant that local authorities were being asked to find solutions to problems central government had created. Examples include refusing to include refugees on the VPRS within the list of groups exempt from immediate enrolment onto UC, not permitting white goods within the statement of requirements for people on the VPRS and discouraging the use of social housing for this cohort. This led to what some authorities called a 'hybrid' system where positive integration effects of one

government policy (VRPS) were being negated by the negative effects of another (the hostile environment).

Consequently, once these normative levers have been examined it is clear that their detrimental effect upon the socio-cultural domain of integration made it harder for migrants to integrate. It also made it harder for the local authorities wishing to facilitate migrant integration as public perception of migrants worsened and they were cautioned as to what they were told they could translate or provide. The shift in emphasis towards the migrant to fit in rather than examining structural inequalities and the messaging from the centre to local authorities on what they can provide is in keeping with previous identification of covert Centralist and neo-liberal typologies. It was demonstrated that connecting immigration to declining standards within the welfare state led to an increase in Welfare Chauvinism and a reduction in support for migrant integration. In this way, an additional contribution of this thesis is to add migrant integration to the growing body of academic literature documenting casualties of neo-liberal welfare state retrenchment. Against this backdrop it is worth considering whether migrant integration was designated a 'local issue' due to a belief in the role of the efficacy of Localism and integration on the local level, or due to the fact that any centrally held responsibility for integration strategy potentially faced being in direct contestation with other government policy.

Applying a legislative power lens Chapters 5 to 7 demonstrated the detrimental impact of the hostile environment policies in nearly every area of life affecting migrant integration from finding accommodation, employment, accessing healthcare, obtaining a driver's licence, opening a bank account and even getting married. These legislative changes were designed to make life harder for irregular migrants but as evidenced in these chapters, they affected all migrants as well as those members of the public who became responsible for conducting immigration checks. The hostile environment impacted upon local authorities also as they were asked to undertake additional checks on marriages and some even had immigration officers seconded to them within assessment teams. However, even outside of integration and immigration policy, wider Coalition and Conservative policies impacted upon local authorities and their ability to facilitate migrant integration. In many of these areas, the driving factor behind these changes was neo-liberal restructuring. For example, a difference in legislation between local authority run and privately run academy schools meant that local authorities could not mandate academies to take UASC, impacting upon the duty of the local authority to get UASC into education within 20 days of being in care. Additionally, this push towards privately run academies meant that LEAs could not open new primary schools in areas where school places were oversubscribed, yet this was not mentioned when central government cited immigration as a cause of oversubscription in schools. Increased restrictions were placed

on EU migrants accessing unemployment benefit in keeping with augmenting welfare chauvinist attitudes amongst the population, as migrants were blamed for a decrease in the welfare state and also a suppression of wages. Several changes in legislation in housing from landlords checks to the recommendation to undertake habitual residency tests and the mandated sale of social housing all made it much harder for a migrant to access accommodation in the private or social sector or for a local authority to assist a migrant family. Restriction in legal aid to only those with asylum cases meant an 85% reduction to non-asylum cases and a loss of millions of pounds in funding. This has meant a direct transference in costs to local authorities to provide legal support for those migrants in their care. Case law has demonstrated that it is the duty of local authorities to pay for eligible migrant LAC in their care to access citizenship, yet this cost is neither reimbursed nor charged at cost rate. A weakening in equalities impact assessment may well also be impacting upon the monitoring of the kind of discrimination that research into the effects of the hostile environment is suggesting may be taking place.

Applying an economic power lens, Chapter 4 demonstrated how the Coalition and Conservative governments drastically reduced core funding to local authorities and that despite the neo-liberal hope that local authorities would become 100 % self-sufficient, the new powers granted were not able to make up for the shortfall. As a result, local authorities reduced services to those they are statutorily obliged to provide and cut back on cultural services (such as library funding or youth clubs) by a third. At the same time demand for local authority services is at an all-time high across housing and also adult and child social care. At the time of writing eight out of 10 local authorities within adult and child social service responsibilities are at risk of bankruptcy (Centre for Progressive Policy, 2020). Whilst this recent result is to a large part the result of the Covid pandemic, the report states that Covid “exposed the existing financial problems faced by local government and deepened them” (ibid). The introduction of Universal Credit had shifted the financial burden of homelessness to local authorities who are not fully reimbursed for their work in that area. Several changes in legislation have also led to an increase in migrants with the NRPF bail condition becoming destitute and needing support by their local authority costing some local authorities nearly a million pounds a year. Several controls introduced on how a local authority is able to manage its finances such the ability to only retain 75% of the proceeds of the sale of social housing and only use 30% to fund new social housing. These are in addition to the controls already mentioned regarding the kind of companies a local authority is allowed to trade, the capping of council tax interest rates and the ability to charge for anything but cost recovery on non-statutory services.

When it comes to funding for migrant integration whilst there has been an increase to the funding provided to UASC, the 2019 rate was estimated to still run at a shortfall of approximately £20,000 per child per annum. Due to case law, local authorities have additional duties to cover the cost of higher education for children in their care, yet the government does not cover these costs or mandate that local authorities supporting these students only be charged home fee rates. The cut in funding to the Migration Impact Fund in 2010 was compensated by the introduction of Controlling Migration Fund in 2018 but no replacement was made for the Refugee Integration and Employment Services cut in 2010 and levels of funding for ESOL are still well below 2010 levels despite waiting lists being at all-time highs. Nonetheless, as this thesis demonstrates the VPRS was widely felt to be well funded and to have enabled local authorities to support refugees in a way which would have been impossible without the funding.

This thesis has analysed all of the ways in which migrant integration was made harder as a result of a myriad of wider policies impacting on nearly every aspect of a migrants life. The unpacking of these policies also helped to demonstrate the aggregate demand being placed on local authorities' when it comes to facilitating migrant integration. It is worth noting though that until the VPRS was created, the full impact of what these policies meant for integration is unlikely to have been understood by local authorities. Each of these policies relate to different departments within a local authority, hence education will be aware of the impact upon UASC but they are unlikely to be aware of the impact on homelessness from changes to asylum policy. Housing might be aware of the number of NRPF migrants but will likely not understand the ESOL provisions for migrants. The transformative effect of the VPRS was that the statement of requirements mandated that all of these aspects became the responsibility of the lead officers and case workers supporting these refugees. Consequently, the lead officers were forced to navigate this terrain of overlapping and often contradictory policies and in doing so they developed a greater understanding of what it takes for migrants to integrate. Prior to this under Austerity neo-liberal Localism there was no incentive for local authorities to work on aspects like integration which lead officers term a 'nice to have' (participant observation), especially at a point where all but core services were being cut back. This thesis holds that the designation of migrant integration as a local issue was a white elephant due to the weight of responsibility which comes with this designation, but this is not to say that it views integration as another piece of 'red tape' to be removed from local authorities. Rather, it presents the argument for migrant integration to be supported at central government level in order to facilitate the kind of cross departmental working needed to take a whole policy approach. Precedent for such intra-ministerial working can be seen in the MATBAP team created for the hostile environment and also for the VPRS,

hence such a suggestion is not new terrain. Likewise, cross departmental and multi-partnership working proved highly effective on the local level for the VPRS, in particular, the embedding of DWP officers into local authorities facilitated engaging support for refugees on aspects like access to benefits. Migrant integration requires both support at central government level to ensure that different departmental policies do not undermine each other and also partnership working on the local and central-local level. In this way, the research contained within this thesis advocates for a representation type of Localism ideally supported by a localist type of local integration policy working to adapt to local circumstances. A representational Localism would enable a clear codification of duties between different governmental levels and would return accountability for funding certain aspects relating to migrant integration back to central government level. The reason a representational Localism and not an MLG Localism is advocated for is due to the inherent inequality which arises between the retained powers of central government over immigration and wider policy and also funding over the local level. It is the opinion of this thesis that to suggest that there is no hierarchy when it comes to migrant integration is unrealistic. To argue that there is no hierarchy in integration policy means not to have taken a whole policy approach when it comes to migrant integration. Currently, there are very few countries in the world where local government has a say in immigration policy and this agency is not extended in these countries to all wider policies impacting on migrant integration. Equally, a representational Localism would free local authorities from the kind of dogmatic Centralism which was deemed too controlling and interventionist under New Labour. A codification of roles and responsibilities between levels of governance would also help to ensure that migrant integration does not get lost between the different local authority departments and atrophy through neglect. Key to all of this is regular central-local government communication and a return to evidence based policy.

Contributions to new knowledge

As the summary conclusions have indicated, this thesis' research question developed new knowledge in several areas. It demonstrated how Localism is not necessarily the panacea for migrant integration in and of itself, adding nuance to the understanding of the kinds of Localism needed to facilitate migrant integration. It also demonstrated that in contrast to the dominant local turn literature, when all policies affecting migrants are considered, the UK can be seen to have taken a neo-liberal or Covert Centralist turn in migrant integration governance. This has key methodological implications for the field, as it demonstrates how over reliance on frame analysis can be misleading and how wider

policies other than integration need to be considered when evaluating the overall impact on migrants. In every policy domain examined, evidence of neo-liberal restructuring and thinking was identified. In this way this thesis contributes to the growing body of literature which evidences how austerity was used as a guise to introduce neo-liberal reforms. This thesis demonstrates how these reforms have led to increased welfare chauvinism and consequently, to a reduction of support for migrant integration, positing migrant integration as another casualty of welfare state retrenchment. The final contribution of the thesis to new knowledge is the demonstrable impact the VPRS had on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in the SE of England. It has been shown that this scheme delivered benefits for migrant integration larger than just the sum of the refugees supported. It built capacity in terms of skilled personnel, knowledge and understanding of migrant integration related issues and provided a channel for the outpouring of voluntary community and individual support on a local level. The scheme also helped to counter some of the argumentation/ logic behind the neo-liberal reforms and in doing so helped to counter the narrative that austerity welfare state retrenchment is the only option/ game in town. These contributions to new knowledge are explored in greater depth below before looking at the methodological implications and the policy applications resulting from this new knowledge.

Contribution to new knowledge 1 – Not all Localisms are conducive to migrant integration (Table 6)

This statement may appear obvious, but it must be remembered that initially Coalition Localism was considered by academics as a step in the right direction as this quote indicates “The United Kingdom's localist turn and the emphasis on mainstreaming should be welcomed, as the process of integration occur primarily at the local level” (Ali & Gidley 2014, p.23). Ali and Gidley did recognise that austerity and mainstreaming presented threats to this agenda but not to the prohibitive level that this thesis has identified. The first contribution to new knowledge of this thesis is that it posits the devolution of responsibility for migrant integration within the full normative, economic and legislative context of what Localism under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 meant for migrant integration. It demonstrates the unprecedented scale of the funding cuts and the inefficacy of the new powers granted to make up for this shortfall. It also outlines how the restructuring was undertaken in such a way as to make local authorities act like businesses, despite the fact that the fallout from state retrenchment at central level has meant that local government increasingly plays the role of a parallel welfare state. It notes that in comparison with the New Localism introduced under Labour, this Localism removed several means of monitoring inequalities and integration

outcomes, thus invisibilising these issues. The implication of this new knowledge is that it highlights the importance of examining policy levers to identify what kind of Localism is being introduced and what these levers mean for migrant integration. It calls into question those focusing on the “relative freedom of action on the local level” (ibid., p.6) such as George Osborne’s claim that Localism enabled the “biggest transfer of power from central to local government in recent history” (Osbourne, cited in Watt, 2015). In doing so, the contribution of this thesis is in demonstrating that designating migrant integration a local issue is not a panacea for migrant integration if the local level does not have sufficient finance, legislative powers or an enabling normative environment to support it. The implications of this new knowledge are that it returns the focus of accountability to central government if migrant integration outcomes worsen. It also questions whether local authorities with their duties to act as a safety net to protect the wellbeing of their constituents and assist the destitute, should ever be expected to be 100 per cent self-reliant as they perform the role of a public good. The blending of Localism and local turn typologies within Table 6 helps to map the kind of impacts on the local level which can result from these different forms of Localism.

Contribution to new knowledge 2 – The UK between 2010-2018 had a covert Centralist or Austerity/Neo-liberal type of migrant integration governance.

Scholten’s 2016 work on migrant integration concluded that the UK had an MLG type of migrant integration governance with no one level of government having dominance. Not only has this thesis demonstrated that Localism and CCI made it harder for local authorities to facilitate migrant integration, it has also demonstrated how much more arduous the task became once all policies affecting migrant integration are taken into account. In contrast to the CCI with its weak coordination from central government, the findings show that the hostile environment and its ensuing negative effects on migrant integration were tightly coordinated by an inter-ministerial team with heads of 12 government departments overseen by the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. This second contribution to new knowledge demonstrates that central government control under the Coalition and Conservative Government 2010-2018 increased in nearly every aspect of migrant life in the UK. Funding cuts to areas directly supporting migrant integration such as legal aid, the MIF, RIES, ESOL, targeted support into employment, the exclusion of migrants from accessing various benefits, additional barriers to seeking employment, housing, bank accounts, health provision, driving licences and marriage licences were all orchestrated by central government. Furthermore, local authorities were advised by central government to stop translating documents for migrant constituents, to stop carrying out Equality Impact Assessments, to cease giving local

housing to anyone who had not been resident in the area for two years and not to use social housing for vulnerable refugees being brought to the UK under a UK sanctioned scheme. Central government socio-cultural messaging regarding migrants has also been seen to have negatively impacted upon migrants and local authorities wishing to facilitate migrant integration. Consequently, the research shows that migrant integration governance under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 better resembles Scholten's centralist type of migrant integration than MLG. The implications of this new knowledge have bearing again on the signposting of accountability when it comes to migrant integration outcomes.

Contribution to new knowledge 3 – Neo-liberal reforms under the guise of austerity have increased welfare chauvinism and contributed to a reduction in support for migrant integration. In this way, the third contribution of this thesis is to add migrant integration to the growing body of academic literature documenting casualties of neo-liberal welfare state retrenchment.

This thesis demonstrated how neo-liberal reforms under the auspice of austerity have negatively impacted upon migrant integration in every policy domain researched. It has evidenced how the restructuring not only made it harder for local authorities to facilitate migrant integration but how central government's attributing blame for declining public services to migrants further solidified welfare chauvinist attitudes and anti-migrant feeling. In this way local authorities wishing to facilitate migrant integration faced a dual difficulty, as there was both fewer resources to support migrant integration and less public and central government support to do so. The thesis not only demonstrated that the neo-liberal reforms introduced under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 hindered the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration but that the designation itself was a form of "devolution, decentralization, and downloading" of risk and responsibility (Peck, 2015, p.22) often with implications of 'cost shunting'. It demonstrated that local authorities under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 increasingly became a back stop whose role it was to overcome the failings or bear the responsibility when neo-liberal reforms fail to deliver. In this way, a smoke and mirrors effect has taken place where there is a deflection of the blame for the failings of neo-liberalism onto local authorities if they are unable to adequately perform their safety net role. It was seen that the same reapportioning of blame has taken place within the welfare system, as migrants and vulnerable individuals who are unable to adapt to these neo-liberal changes are seen as lazy and unwilling to work (Jones 2012, Jensen 2014, Grdešić 2019). Immigration in particular was directly correlated with weakenings within the welfare state, despite evidence to the contrary. Consequently, this thesis has outlined how migrant integration was another casualty of the neo-liberal reforms ushered

in under austerity. In doing so it adds migrant integration to the body of academic literature demonstrating how austerity was used to legitimise welfare state retrenchment in legal aid (Mant 2017, Brown 2015), in education (Benn 2011, Maisuria 2014), in employment (Pantazis, 2016) in housing (Bennett 2016, 2018, Powell & Robinson 2019, Battiston et al. 2014) and to download responsibilities to the local level (Peck 2012, 2015, 2017, Featherstone et al. 2012).

Contribution to new knowledge 4 – The impact the VPRS had on the ability of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration in the SE of England.

The final contribution to new knowledge provided by this thesis has provided is a detailed overview of how the VPRS augmented the capacity of local authorities in the SE of England to facilitate migrant integration. It has evidenced how local authority personnel working on migrant integration related issues increased as a direct result of participation in the scheme and how this has in turn increased knowledge and understanding of what is needed for migrants to integrate across the region. In doing so, not only does this thesis provide new insight into a region which has not been covered within the migration and local government literature previously, but it also contributes new knowledge in demonstrating the transformative nature of the scheme. Numerous examples were given throughout demonstrating how the scheme led local authority staff to be involved in the granular, day to day aspects of integrating into UK society and bureaucratic systems. In doing so they experienced by proxy, the difficulties migrants encounter when opening bank accounts, registering with GP practices, accessing translators at the DWP, navigating UC etc. Consequently, parts of the system which were supposed to work but in practice often did not (such as access to translators) were visibilised and local authorities (often with the support of the Home Office resettlement's multi departmental team) were able to advocate for changes. In this way, the scheme countered some of the neo-liberal thinking which presents aspects like navigating complex legal systems as the responsibility of the individual. In shining a light on the enormous difficulties migrants face overcoming these structural barriers without access to translators or legal aid, local authority staff have helped to counter some of the rationale for state retrenchment. As a result, the scheme had an impact far greater than the cohort of migrants being directly supported as it helped to address structural challenges facing all migrants. The following quotes were selected as they best summarise the impact the scheme had

“Those things will have been going on for years to other refugees. This programme can highlight these, it can raise the profile. It takes a smaller cohort

of refugees to reveal the more systemic problems we could be getting the civil servants on this scheme to raise the problem elsewhere for all refugees”

(Participant observation)

Methodological Contributions

The first methodological contribution of this thesis was the move away from policy frame analysis to incorporate normative, economic and legislative policy levers into the research on migrant integration. Not only was Emilsson’s (2015) power lens framework used to capture these additional policy levers but it was augmented by the addition of participant observation and semi structured interviews as additional research methods to capture information. As a result, this research was able to demonstrate that the Localism introduced under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 failed to improve the capacity of local authorities to facilitate migrant integration.

The second methodological contribution of this thesis has been in demonstrating the importance of taking a whole policy approach when it comes to migrant integration research. This has been demonstrated to be crucial in understanding the wider picture of factors affecting integration. For example, Ali and Gidley’s 2014 research focuses purely on migrant integration policy. Whilst their research fills a valuable gap in knowledge by explaining how integration has historically sat within UK race relations policies, no mention is made at any point of the hostile environment within their research despite the far reaching effects this has had into the everyday lives of migrants. As a result, their representation of the task of facilitating migrant integration which local authorities were assigned does not take into account any of these additional barriers, or the cost shunting or decentralising of responsibilities which local authorities faced. Consequently, a reader may underestimate the challenges local authorities faced in this area. This contribution to new knowledge is significant as a whole policy approach is rarely undertaken due to the (highly demanding) breadth of the research undertaken. Nevertheless, as Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016a) have also underscored, it is invaluable to enhance understanding of the wider picture. For example, a focus on integration policy alone misses the impact of neo-liberal restructuring within education, which made it harder for local authorities to place migrant children within education. Again, the research was augmented by the addition of participant observation and semi structured interviews as additional research methods to capture information. Whilst Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas may have suggested that a whole policy approach be undertaken, this is the first research which has actually done so.

Using a power lens approach it has been demonstrated that local authorities have been impacted on all levels, demonstrating the aggregate demand placed on them when it comes to facilitating migrant integration. It posits the devolution of responsibility for migrant integration within the full normative, economic and legislative context of what Localism under the Coalition and Conservative Governments 2010-2018 meant for migrant integration. It demonstrates the unprecedented scale of the funding cuts and the inefficacy of the new powers granted to make up for this shortfall. It also outlines how the restructuring was undertaken in such a way as to make local authorities act like businesses, despite the fact that the fallout from state retrenchment at central level has meant that local government increasingly plays the role of a parallel welfare state. It notes that in comparison with the New Localism introduced under Labour, this Localism removed several means of monitoring inequalities and integration outcomes, thus invisibilising these issues. The implication of this new knowledge is that it highlights the importance of examining policy levers to identify what kind of Localism is being introduced and what these levers mean for migrant integration. It calls into question those focusing on the “relative freedom of action on the local level” (Ali & Gidley, 2014, p.6). In doing so, the contribution of this thesis is in demonstrating that designating migrant integration a local issue is not a panacea for migrant integration if the local level does not have sufficient finance, legislative powers or an enabling normative environment to support it. The implications of this new knowledge are that it returns the focus of accountability to central government if migrant integration outcomes worsen. It also questions whether local authorities with their duties to act as a safety net to protect the well-being of their constituents and assist the destitute, should ever be expected to be 100 per cent self-reliant as they perform the role of a public good.

Policy recommendations

This research supports the following policy recommendations:

- The expectation that local authorities become financially self-sufficient should be removed in recognition of the role that they play supporting the most destitute and as a parallel welfare system.
- All policies affecting migrant integration should be considered when creating an integration strategy, not just local aspects such as community engagement and ESOL provision, central government policies impacting on migrant integration need to be included within this strategy also. A national migrant integration policy

taking such a whole policy approach should be created in order to capture and embed this approach. This would also help to highlight areas where two central government policies might be in contradiction with each other. Ideally, this policy would be overseen by an inter-ministerial team in much the same way as the hostile environment was in order to ensure that all ministries are supporting the same integration outcomes.

- Do not consider Localism a magic bullet for migrant integration. It is essential to determine the kind of Localism which is being put forward in order to consider its potential impact upon local integration frames. This thesis advocates for a representational kind of Localism as it enables clear accountability according to the policy aspect in question and a codification of duties. Whatever form of Localism is used, it is essential to examine all the power levers accompanying Localism to be able to measure what impact it has on the ground.
- The aggregate demand on local authorities should be considered when designating new responsibilities or duties so that they can be monitored to ensure they are not being set up to fail. For example, undergoing a yearly review of gov't statutory duties as took place in 2011 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7541/1934356.pdf

An overtly Centralist Localism is not necessarily a negative for migrant integration if the policy levers accompanying it are enabling. This was demonstrated by New Labour's Localism and also the Centralist structure of the VPRS which many local authorities feel has helped integration for other migrants in their localities.

- A set of standardised local area indicators for migrant integration should be created so that mainstreaming does not mean that inequalities are invisibilised and migrant cohorts excluded. These indicators should not be onerous for local authorities to collect or should be financed at central government level so that this is not an additional burden placed on local authorities.
- Local authorities should consider embedding members of the DWP within resettlement teams as those local authorities with existing cross departmental structures as a result of the troubled families programme seemed to have less difficulty transitioning to resettlement. Perhaps such structures should be

considered on a permanent basis. Multi-agency partnerships have proven highly effective under the VPRS and should be encouraged.

Limitations of research

One limitation identified early on within the research design was the breadth of topics covered. The whole policy approach necessarily meant covering an extremely wide body of legislation and policy areas. Whilst significant efforts were made to go into as much detail as possible, any one of these areas covered could have been a PhD topic of study in itself. Consequently, there is a danger that not enough detail was gone into. Nevertheless, a key contribution to knowledge that this thesis set out to demonstrate, is that unless the totality of policies impacting upon migrant integration are taken into account, the overall picture for migrant integration is obscured. Consequently, efforts were made to mitigate against the danger of the breadth of the topic as much as possible, through access to primary sources such as the participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and in the selection of secondary sources which synthesised a wide range of stakeholder input (such as NAO or ICIBI reports).

Another limitation of the study is that it does not include primary research with Home Office staff or with migrants themselves. This was again identified early on as a limitation within the research design, however, the breadth of the research was already a large feat to cover and limitations have to be set in order to ensure that the research remains focused. This thesis set out to shed light on the local government - migration nexus, thus it was important that the principal focus remain at local authority level. The opportunity to research the region wide experience of SE local authorities facilitating migrant integration, including witnessing the introduction and establishment of the VPRS was judged to be the most significant contribution to new knowledge I could provide within this thesis.

Equally, another challenge which could be levelled at this thesis is that it only focused on one region rather than taking a national approach. Again, this would have extended the breadth of the topic to a level which would have provided even less detail and would likely have obscured some of the local level learning which had resulted from the participant observation. Equally, so little had been done on the SE that it merited a case study approach.

Future research avenues

During the course of this research several avenues meriting further research were identified, namely:

1. How does the experience of local authorities engaging on the Afghan Resettlement Schemes compare to the VPRS and what lessons can be learnt from this comparison for migrant integration?

Research into this area would enable a number of interesting points of comparison helping to shed light on aspects such as: how windows of public support for resettlement can best be galvanised, what can be learnt from the different intra-ministerial working groups created for these two forms of resettlement, how is housing the key to unlocking support for resettling refugees and asylum seekers.

2. Did local authorities with prior experience of running the 'Troubled Families' programme find introducing and delivering the VRPS easier than authorities without this experience, and if so what does this mean about optimum departmental structures for facilitating migrant integration?

Research findings from the semi-structured interviews indicated that local authorities who had previous experience of running the Troubled Families programme found transitioning to the VPRS easier than those without. This was due to the fact that the Troubled Families programme had established joined up structures for working with the DWP (in some cases DWP staff were seconded within the local authority), and also had case worker support for vulnerable families. Consequently, the additional assistance needed to help VPRS families navigate the UK benefit system was already in place. The Troubled Families programme is thus potentially another example of how in contrast to hyper-individualist neo-liberal thinking, targeted assistance can improve outcomes, such as earlier transition into employment and fewer families becoming destitute.

3. Did the VPRS increase the volume of local authority access to social housing?

As stated in Chapter 5, feedback from the semi-structured interviews and the participant observation indicate that in many areas, the VPRS may have led to an increase in access to social housing for local authorities. Researching this properly would need FOIs and quantitative research. This research may only be relevant for the SE where property prices are so high that participation on the scheme in some areas was dependent upon accommodation offers from philanthropic landlords. Nevertheless, the very existence of philanthropic landlords is an interesting, compelling and novel area of research which to date, has not been explored.

4. What impact did the VPRS have upon the understanding of what is needed to facilitate migrant integration within the Home Office?

This research would be difficult to operationalise due to issues of confidentiality and access to very busy members of Home Office staff. Nevertheless, if it were permitted, the results would be likely be illuminating as to what form of cross departmental working can work best to facilitate migrant integration.

5. What lessons could be learnt from applying a power lens framework, similar to that used within this thesis, to the 2019 Conservative Government's August 2020 decision to decentralise Coronavirus test and trace responsibilities to local government?

The Coronavirus pandemic has seen many of the same issues arise with regard to the balance of powers between central and local government as were covered within this thesis, including similar neo-liberal restructuring in terms of the share of contracts which have been awarded to private large multinationals like Serco. Taking a power lens to the policy levers which accompanied the Coronavirus Act 2020 and, in particular, the August 2020 designation of test and trace as a local government responsibility would provide insight into the overall demands being placed on local authorities and whether they are adequately equipped to manage these additional responsibilities.

This thesis was ambitious in many respects. Firstly, it set itself the ambitious task of mapping the policy levers of all policies impacting upon local authorities and their ability

to facilitate migrant integration between 2010-2018. Secondly, in addition to this policy analysis, it undertook participant observation as well as semi structured interviews to try to ensure as much as possible that the impacts of the policy levers were impacting upon the ground. The scale of the task may well be a contributing factor for why such research had not been undertaken previously as this research is not easily replicable outside of the relative freedom of a PhD. Nonetheless, it was needed to demonstrate why academia needs to move away from policy frame analysis and also why it is crucial to move away from a simplistic understanding of integration policy. Understanding the aggregate demand placed on local authorities is imperative going forward if local authorities are to avoid going into administration and if their role as a parallel welfare state is to be questioned. It is hoped that this thesis may have assisted in demonstrating such need.

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