



CASE STUDY: COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership supports Shetland Islands Council to use Migration Policy Toolkit

BACKGROUND

The Shetland Islands have an ageing and declining population. The Council was keen to promote Shetland as a place to live and work and decided that their Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) for 2011/12 should focus on the key purpose of maintaining the number of economically active people in Shetland. With this in mind, it was agreed that the Migration Policy Toolkit would be a useful resource to assist in developing the draft SOA to ensure that it maintained its focus on the key purpose. Shetland therefore became one of the first local authorities to pilot the Toolkit and take this work forward.

The programme of support provided by CSMP took place between November 2010 and January 2011 at the same time as council officers were working to finalise the 2011/12 SOA. There was a commitment from all community planning partners that service delivery would be focused on the achievement of the outcomes set out in the SOA and on the delivery of its key purpose. This provided a positive context in which CSMP was able to work with colleagues from both the Council and the Community Planning Partnership.

WHAT WE DID

The support programme began with research and analysis of Shetland's demographic situation and their existing initiatives around attracting migrants, as well as consideration of how the key purpose of the SOA should be framed. CSMP then agreed a series of sessions with the Council which would take place during a three day visit to the Islands in January 2011, which would be delivered in person over the course of a week. CSMP spent three days working with senior officers from across Council and the Community Planning Partnership in January 2011. The sessions included an impact assessment of the actions within the SOA as a means of ascertaining the extent to which they would deliver on the key purpose. The Toolkit was also used to consider additional actions which could contribute towards delivering the key purpose, either in the coming year or in the longer term. A teleconference with staff from the General Register Office for Scotland also took place to discuss Shetland's data needs and the possibility of using administrative data to better understand their population.

Shetland Fact File

- ◆ Declining population – population of 22,210 in 2009 but this is expected to fall to 20,338 in 2033.
- ◆ Ageing population –over 65s made up 16.5% of the population in 2008, but this is expected to more than double to 33.5% in 2033.
- ◆ Around one-third of the population lives in the main town of Lerwick.
- ◆ Local government is the main employer. There is no coherent private sector, although private enterprise is encouraged.
- ◆ There is a need to maintain the economically active population to ensure that key services are delivered.
- ◆ Shetland is marketed as a unique place to visit, live and work.

The sessions culminated in a meeting on the third day with Heads of Service and the Vice-Convenor and Spokesperson for Economic Development, to consider the findings from the previous two days and agree the next steps. There was agreement that in order to meet the key purpose, strong civic leadership would be vital. It would also be crucial to have an understanding of the types of migrants that they would wish to attract, and to have the right infrastructure in place to deal with any resultant population growth.

OUTCOMES

The support programme which CSMP provided to Shetland Island Council helped them to focus on a range of strengths that they can build upon as they seek to grow their economically active population. These include their unique natural environment and culture, a welcoming community and an excellent marketing team who promote Shetland as a place to live and work.

The impact assessment focused on the SOA's ability to deliver on the key purpose and confirmed that the activities identified for 2010/11 would contribute to delivering the key purpose to some extent. Some additional operational actions emerged from the workshops which individual officers committed to taking forward themselves. A number of strategic action points were also identified which would help to refine and strengthen Shetland's key purpose. These are now being taken forward by the Council and are as follows:

1. The need for better information about how Shetland's population is likely to change into the future in order to inform planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ CSMP facilitated meetings with the General Register Office for Scotland who provided the council with projections of what is likely to happen to Shetland's population between now and 2033. ◆ Shetland are now using resources from St Andrews University to support a Scenario Planning process , which includes find out the implications of different rates of migration on their population.
2. The need to be clearer about who Shetland is trying to attract, and which skills would be useful to the local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shetland has an excellent marketing resource – Promote Shetland – but needs to be clearer about who they are trying to attract in order to make best use of this resource. The workshops were the first step in articulating this and officers will now seek political direction.
3. The need to be clear about Shetland's economic direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Officers felt that further political direction is required regarding the extent to which officers can invest in infrastructure to encourage people to settle in Shetland. This political dialogue is now being undertaken by the Council and partner organisations as part of the Scenario Planning process, to develop a new Community Plan.
4. The need to promote a welcoming atmosphere to new migrants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shetland is developing a Welcome Pack for new migrants which will provide information on the island and available services. The pack will be hosted on the www.shetland.org website. ◆ Training will be provided to front-line staff in order to develop their understanding migration, its importance to Shetland and their role in promoting it. ◆ The importance of political leadership from Councillors and Community Councillors was recognised and will be developed.
5. The need to prevent and tackle exploitation of migrants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ CSMP facilitated contact between Shetland an UK Border Agency to help ensure that potential exploitation of migrants on the island can be dealt with effectively.

FORWARD PLANNING

The importance of effective forward planning was one of the key issues that emerged from discussions. The right infrastructure needs to be in place if population growth is to be achieved, but there is a value judgement to be made regarding how much should be invested in the infrastructure.

In addition, the whole population has a role to play in the promotion of Shetland as a place to live and work. Giving visitors a positive experience means that they are more likely to want to return.

All officers who attended the sessions were committed to ensuring that Shetland successfully delivers on their SOA and CSMP will continue to keep in touch with the Council to keep up to date with progress in this regard.

Forward Planning

- ◆ Having the right infrastructure in place is crucial before seeking to grow the population.
- ◆ Small infrastructure changes have the potential to have a significant impact.
- ◆ However, there is great difficulty in planning based on what you hope will happen.
- ◆ There is a need for robust demographic modelling to understand future needs and demands.
- ◆ Engagement with both the private and voluntary sectors is crucial.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Officers in Shetland are innovative and are keen to learn from other countries that have a similar remote rural profile.

For example, the Transport Service is currently undertaking a case study on a remote part of Sweden to gain an understanding of how the transport system works there. They are particularly interested in the notion of having one stop meeting points that assist in bringing the community together. These are single points where people can go to not only get the bus, but also pick up prescriptions, meet friends, have a coffee and visit the café.

A case study on the Faroe Islands has also been developed to learn how they grew their population by 10,000 over a ten year period. Given the geographical landscape and remote location of the Faroes, it is likely that a variety of important lessons can be learned and transferred to a Shetland context.

MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

THE KEY THEMES

In order to take a more focussed approach to what has to be done to deliver on the key purpose as well as to instigate a fuller discussion, the officers involved in the workshops were split into breakout groups relevant to their areas of expertise to consider the following themes: community cohesion, growing the population, health & social care and housing, transport & childcare. It was agreed that education and employment would be considered at a later date to ensure the appropriate people could contribute to these themes.

The box below briefly details the main links between reaching the key aim of the SOA and the associated work-streams.

Community Cohesion – Community is particularly important in Shetland, so it is crucial that migrants are integrated into the community and are able to take part in shared experiences.

Education – ESOL provision links in closely to building community relations.

Employment – A crucial factor when making a decision to settle in an area.

Growing your Population – Shetland has an ageing and declining population so it is vital that the number of economically active people is maintained to ensure a sustainable workforce for the future.

Health and Social Care – Importance of keeping people healthy and reducing the number of people who are off sick and not in employment.

Housing, Transport and Childcare – The necessity of having the right infrastructure in place, ensuring you have the housing at the right price and in the right location, along with the availability of transport and childcare to ensure that people are able to go out to work.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first workshop encouraged council staff and their community planning partners to consider how migrants can play a role in maintaining the economically active population throughout Shetland. Three main points emerged from initial discussions on attracting migrants to Shetland:

The group agreed that they wanted to be able to encourage people to stay on a permanent or long term basis instead of just temporarily. They also felt that the definition of 'migrant' should be wide, and should include people from elsewhere in the UK including people who have previously migrated away from Shetland.

They felt that more work needs to be done to understand the pull and push factors that make people want to come to or leave Shetland. This could be ascertained by interviewing migrants currently living on the Islands.

There is a need to identify the significant points in people's lives when they are more likely to settle somewhere (for example, people with young kids are less likely to uproot and leave) and why settlement there is particularly attractive.

WHAT WE LEARNED - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A number of key areas for development began to develop through our discussions in the workshops:

Demographics

Better information on demographics is required. This can be bolstered through a number of untapped data sources that can assist in providing a more in depth understanding of the demographic situation. For instance, key agencies such as Promote Shetland, and council departments such as HR and Adult Learning, have regular contact with migrants and are well placed to gather information in this regard such as HR departments, Promote Shetland and Adult Learning. However, there are still gaps in the data that is available; for instance there is a lack of information on outward migration from Shetland. It can therefore be difficult to get a full understanding of the population.

It is vital to have a clear and widely understood definition of the term migrant. Following discussions it was agreed that migrant defines anyone who comes to Shetland, including returnees. It is also important to define the type of migrant in terms of the skills gaps that they may be filling, for example in the health sector.

A framework should be established to ensure consistent information on what issues are key to peoples decisions to stay in Shetland.

Targeting

Shetland needs to think about who it is they want to attract and why. Once this has been established a more targeted approach can be developed to encourage these people to come to Shetland. There is an opportunity here to work closely with migrants of a similar profile who have already settled in Shetland to learn from their experience.

(Economic) Direction

There is a need to ensure that the right infrastructure is in place before starting to target groups of people. Skills gaps should also be identified as a means of targeting.

Communication

Strong civic leadership is key to ensuring that the positive messages about the benefits of migration are disseminated, as well as more general messages promoting Shetland as a place to live and work. Councillors and community councillors should be kept informed of issues that migrants may face as well as problems that occur within existing communities.

However, it is not only elected members and senior managers who have a role to play in this regard. Frontline staff should receive training on migration to understand its importance to Shetland, and on means of promoting Shetland more broadly. This could also be incorporated into equality and diversity training. Reception staff are perfectly positioned to liaise with visitors and it was suggested that they should receive more in depth training.

There was agreement that all sources of public relations should be used as a resource, from taxi drivers to bed and breakfast owners. They are well placed to strike up conversations and ensure that people leave Shetland wanting to come back again.

The welcome pack is a crucial resource in getting people involved and integrated into the community. The welcome pack should also be provided for English speaking migrants too, to help them integrate into community life whilst also including a section on getting involved in the community with details about what's on in the community centre, the hall committee, local shops and pubs.

Relevant parties such as Promote Shetland, the Economic Development Unit, the Policy Unit and Adult Learning should work to develop an online resource to provide information on 'now you're here' as part of www.shetland.org

Exploitation

There is a requirement to engage with UK Border Agency on a more regular basis due anecdotal evidence of exploitation. There is also an opportunity here to work more with community planning partners.

For more information on this case study or to request copies of the materials used please contact Laura Jamieson (laura@cosla.gov.uk) or Mhoraig Green (mhoraig@cosla.gov.uk).