



# Planning for more people

Overall, the UK's population is growing and ageing. This poses a challenge for planners and decision-makers dealing with the corresponding increased demand for services, infrastructure and housing. This briefing paper draws on findings from ESPON, a European research programme<sup>1</sup>, to identify some of the issues arising, implications for practice and further research needed to stimulate debate.

## Who should read this?

Planners and decision-makers interested in planning for population change, economic growth, housing and health and well-being.

## Key messages for policy and practice

### Integrating our communities

- Decision-makers should support the provision of more local services and amenities to encourage people to stay in the local area and ensure equal access to services.
- Planners should aim to develop inclusive, sustainable neighbourhoods that are well connected to transportation, health, social and cultural services that empower people and encourage interaction.

### Promoting economic growth

- Decision-makers should create clear visions and strategies to identify emerging sectors and new opportunities, business clusters and networks in the local economy (including the potential of environmental technologies and renewable energy).

- Decision-makers need to work with the public and private sector to ensure that employees have the option of working beyond 65 – offering flexible working, on-going training and home working.

### Providing housing and local services

- Planners should aim to plan and deliver housing where it is needed. They should encourage different types of housing options to suit a changing demographic profile – for example bungalows, conversions and mixed-use working and living.
- Decision-makers should aim to deliver environments that encourage better health, for example by giving residents greater choice of travel options, exercise-friendly environments and access to health services.

### Caring for an ageing population

- Planners should encourage housing development and associated infrastructure which caters for the needs of particular groups such as the elderly. This may involve adapting housing, improving transportation links or 're-densifying' towns and cities.
- They should also support local health strategies by working closely with public health bodies and health organisations to help improve health and social well-being locally beyond traditional provision.

<sup>1</sup> This briefing is largely based on the ESPON project, DEMIFER. Information and maps stemming from the ESPON Programme presented in this leaflet do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

## The issues

Between 1991 and 2010, natural change (births and deaths) and net migration contributed equally to population growth.<sup>2</sup> However, recently released figures show that, in 2012, there was a net increase of 176,000 long-term migrants to the UK<sup>3</sup> and projections up to 2035 suggest that net migration will account for over two-thirds of total population growth.<sup>4</sup> This is likely to have implications for:

- **The UK's demographic profile**

The size, structure and geographic distribution of the UK's population is increasingly varied and dynamic, making social integration a challenge. Local service providers need to reflect differing needs in delivering schools, care for the elderly and health services.

- **Economic growth**

A rise in working age migrants is likely to increase the supply of labour, generate economic growth and help to sustain local services in the medium term. However, these gains may be eroded as the expanding population places additional pressure on these services which may be unsustainable in the longer term.

- **The amount and type of housing required**

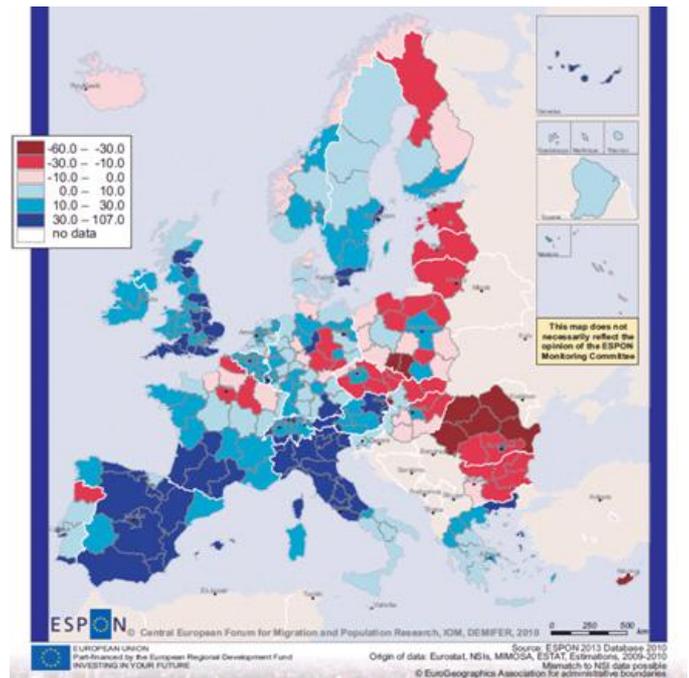
Data show that between 300,000 and 330,000 new homes may be needed each year to cope with the recent under-supply of housing accommodate the growing number of households in Britain.<sup>5</sup> Planning for and delivering the right type of housing will also be important: foreign-born residents are more likely to rent than buy, while the ageing population will need a suitable housing mix to accommodate it.

- **Demand for health and social care**

The ageing population will mean that more people will require pensions for longer.

Furthermore, the number of people in residential care homes is projected to increase by 10% from 2007-2017. Health care costs may reach 8.8% of GDP by 2062, while spending on state pensions is set to rise to 8.4% of GDP.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1. Impact of migration on population 2050<sup>7</sup>



The map shows that, across Europe, projected migration levels are likely to vary.

In some areas (largely Eastern regions), negative net migration will lead to a decline in the population, and may exacerbate regional disparities in GDP, access to health and quality of social care.

The UK is projected to experience positive net migration, with East and South West England gaining the most.

This is likely to increase the labour force and has the potential to generate economic growth. However, it will also bring challenges – for instance increased pressure on the issues outlined in this briefing.

<sup>2</sup> Migration Observatory, Impact of Migration on UK Population Growth, January 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics, Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, August 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Migration Observatory, Impact of Migration on UK Population Growth, January 2012.

<sup>5</sup> RIBA, The Future Homes Commission – Building the homes and communities Britain needs, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Office for Budget Responsibility, Fiscal Sustainability Report, July 2013.

<sup>7</sup> ESPON DEMIFER project, Final Report, September 2010.

## Policy considerations

### Integrating our communities

Changes in the population age structure will affect the character and make-up of neighbourhoods and communities: Figures 2 and 3 show how different London's demographic profile is from the rest of England.

Though beneficial in labour supply terms, international migration can be a challenge for social cohesion – almost 50% of the UK's international migrants live in London<sup>8</sup>, while in Bradford, 44% of primary school children's first language is not English.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 2. England's population profile, 2006<sup>10</sup>

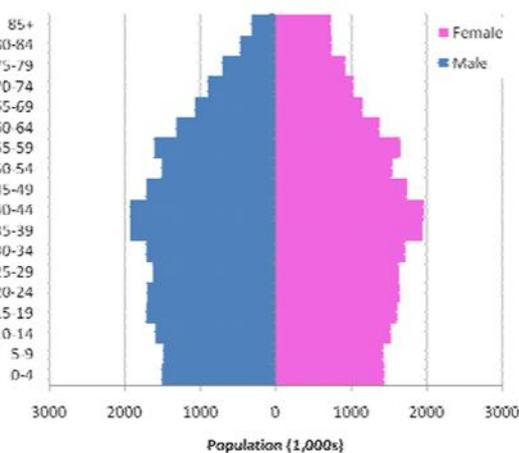
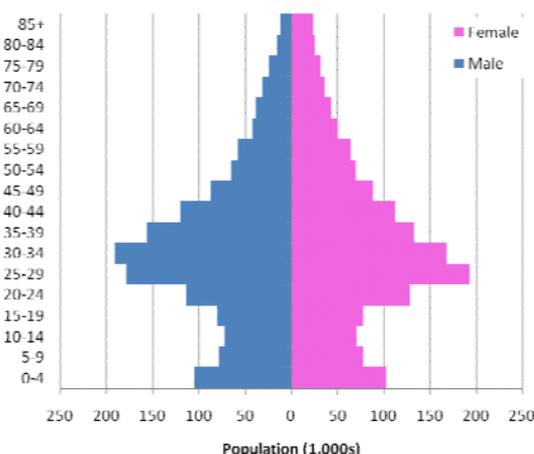


Figure 3. Inner London's population profile, 2006



<sup>8</sup> Migration Observatory, Migrants in London Policy Challenges, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Migration Yorkshire, Bradford Local Migration Profile, June 2013.

<sup>10</sup> ESPON DEMIFER project London Case Study, September 2010.

Similarly, London's high population churn and large proportion of residents aged 20-40 can present integration problems. Policy and practice will need to focus on ensuring integrated and socially cohesive neighbourhoods with appropriate facilities and infrastructure. But improving the provision of information on arrival to an area, such as advice on accessing health care and education and job seeking, is one way of improving integration and reducing marginalisation amongst different demographic or ethnic groups.

### Promoting economic growth

The UK's growing proportion of older people will place additional pressure on the working age population. The ageing society will mean that migration will become an increasingly important source of labour for the UK economy. If managed well, this can provide an opportunity to expand the labour force and boost economic growth.

However, reliance on an increasing population alone to drive economic growth is not the answer, and increases in labour productivity will be necessary to compensate for the ageing labour force. Technological innovations and organisational changes are difficult to predict, therefore policy and practice will need to focus on strengthening local economies in the context of a changing population.

### Providing housing and local services

A growing population places additional pressure on the environment, infrastructure and housing. However, population growth can also help to maintain local amenities and public services. Decision-makers will need to think spatially about demand for housing and services, since population patterns vary throughout the UK - although the ESPON project, DEMIFER, shows a clear trend for migration from less to more prosperous areas.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ESPON DEMIFER project, Final Report, September 2010.



In Leeds, natural change (births and deaths) is the main driver of population growth, although international migration is increasingly a factor.<sup>12</sup> The DEMIFER project found that Leeds's growing population has put a strain on the capacity of its road network and housing supply. In response, decision-makers have adopted a spatially integrated approach, placing Leeds within a wider city region. This has allowed enhancements to public transport infrastructure and the affordable housing market.<sup>13</sup>

### Caring for an ageing population

On average, the UK's population is becoming older and living healthier for longer, and by 2030 there will be 101% more people over the age of 85 in England than in 2010.<sup>14</sup> This will place yet more pressure on health and care services. Recently released funding for the development of suitable homes for the elderly (affordable supportive housing) will go some way to meeting the housing needs of the ageing population in England<sup>15</sup>, but more must be done to ensure that the growing need for social care is met.

Better information on pension projections and costs of health and social care would help individuals plan for retirement more effectively, but more fundamentally, a change in attitudes and behaviour is needed to address 'cliff-edge' retirement.<sup>16</sup> Localised strategies for providing necessary health and social care can help places to prepare for the challenges ahead.

### Areas for further research

There is considerable debate around the impacts of population growth – particularly its effect on the economy, with some research pointing towards the benefits of an increasing supply of labour and others warning of the pressure on resources. Further research in this

area is needed to provide decision-makers with a robust evidence base on which to formulate policies and plans.

What is more certain is that population growth in the long term is not sustainable. While in the short and medium term an increase in working age migrants will help to off-set some of the hindrances of an ageing society, ultimately it is likely to only exacerbate the problem.

Research into alternative models for growth is needed, as well as reliable data on the demand for services such as health care and education. This will allow decision-makers to plan effectively for the future, and ensure that needs are met.

### Further information

Useful resources on the issues raised in this briefing can be found on the following sites:

ESPON DEMIFER project – [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Men u\\_AppliedResearch/demifer.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Men u_AppliedResearch/demifer.html)

Office for National Statistics – [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)  
Health and Social Care Information Centre – <http://www.hscic.gov.uk>

The Migration Observatory – <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk>

Forum for the Future – [www.forumforthefuture.org](http://www.forumforthefuture.org)

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- Spatial thinking in policy making;
- Future proofing society;
- Urbanisation and health;
- Economic growth and enterprise; and
- Spatial governance.

More information on these and other projects can be found here:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/research/>.

<sup>12</sup> Migration Yorkshire, Leeds Local Migration Profile, June 2013.

<sup>13</sup> ESPON DEMIFER project West Yorkshire Case Study, September 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Central Government written evidence submitted to the Select Committee on Public Services and Demographic Change, Ready for Change Report, March 2013.

<sup>15</sup> New housing to help older and disabled people to live independently, Department of Health July 2013.

<sup>16</sup> New housing to help older and disabled people to live independently, Department of Health July 2013.