Are we meeting the challenges of an age of a super-diverse society?

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Migration and super diverse societies are the new reality of the developed. The major issue is not whether or not we should be tough on migration, because we now have tough controls in place, but how we can better integrate the widely diverse communities resident in the UK. Whilst no one knows the precise numbers of new migrants that have come to live in the UK, we do know that that they have arrived from every country in the world.

Over the past decade the UK, like many other EU countries, has entered an era of super-diversity. New migrants display multiple variables of difference in terms of ethnicity, age and gender profiles, as well as immigration status, and associated rights and entitlements.

The onset of super-diversity, with its fragmented and transient new migrant populations, challenges traditional multicultural models of welfare provision originally based upon providing for large and geographically contained clusters of post-colonial migrants for whom it was possible to offer ethnically sensitive services.

These challenges come at a time when migration has become one of the hottest political topics, the ideal of multiculturalism is being questioned, and funds available for ethnically specific services are decreasing.
The job of ensuring effective service provision for all has never been harder, with basic information lacking about who is out there, what their needs are, and how those needs might be met. At the same time while it has been recognised that new migration brings skills and labour that will be critical to economic recovery, there is evidence that pressures on services have increased in areas experiencing the arrival of large numbers of newcomers.

For new migrants themselves there are already signs of increasing levels of social exclusion as they experience high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, low levels of educational attainment and poor health outcomes.
To help meet the challenges of social welfare provision in this new era of migration, changes are needed in both design and delivery of services to enable the needs of a super-diverse population to be met more effectively. Without adaptation we risk failing deprived areas, and the many established communities who live in them, and ensuring the exclusion of new arrivals from both welfare and ultimately wider society.

A number of research projects currently being undertaken at the Institute of Applied Social Studies look at access to welfare in super-diverse areas, explore the challenges faced by providers, and the ways in which systems might be adapted to reduce pressure on services and improve outcomes.

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For further details see **www.iass.bham.ac.uk/staff/phillimore.shtml**

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