

# Myths about Immigration Project

Midlothian Migrants: Fears and Facts

February 2014

Midlothian People's Equality Group



Photos by Sandra Gordon and Evgeniya Kochkina

## **1. Introduction**

The Myths about Immigration project grew from a discussion in the Midlothian People's Equality Group about people from Eastern and Central Europe coming to live in Scotland in large numbers. Some members expressed concern that this would affect jobs, wages and the availability of housing. Group members' knowledge of this issue came mainly from anecdote and newspapers rather than robust research. We decided to investigate further to see if we could separate myth from reality. Discussion in the group also highlighted that most of the members had migrants in their families who had either moved to settle in Scotland or more commonly moved from Scotland to settle elsewhere in the world. A key element of our research then would be to highlight the common ground between Scots migrants across the world and migrants who come to Scotland.

## **2. Midlothian People's Equality Group**

The Midlothian People's Equality Group (MPEG) was started in the autumn of 2010 with a small group of local community activists aiming to bring local people together across equalities issues to explore common ground and provide a platform for learning about and highlighting equalities issues. In the process the group would aim to tackle local discrimination and influence service provision. MPEG was formally launched in March 2011 at Midlothian's first Wellbeing Mela organised by MPEG members in collaboration with workers and volunteers from Health in Mind and the See Me Campaign. In keeping with MPEG's aims the Myths about Migration project would aim to disseminate any knowledge gained to challenge myths and stereotypes about migration amongst the wider Midlothian public.

## **3. Funding**



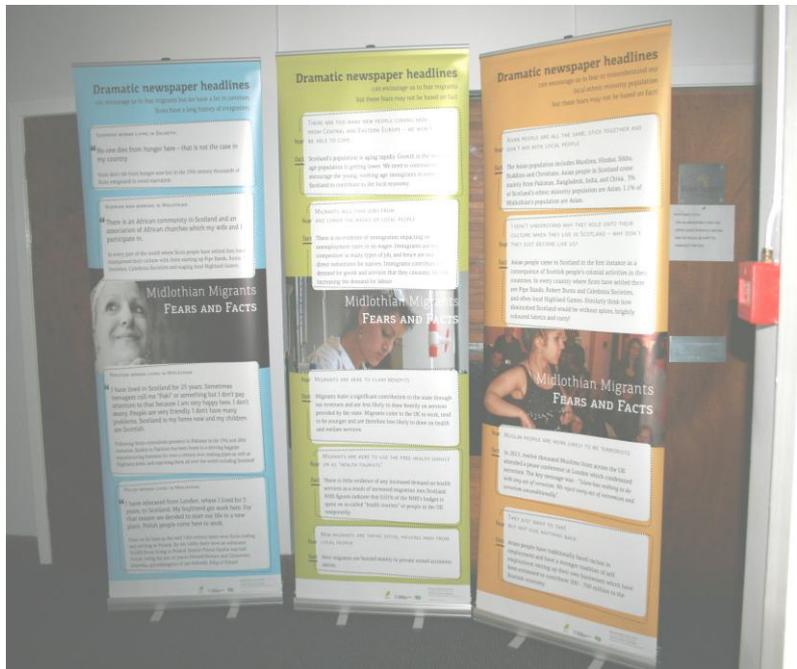
At the time the Group were considering this project local police were highlighting a spike in hate crime particularly towards Asian shopkeepers at point of sale. The Community Safety Partnership had resources for local projects that might tackle this issue. We successfully applied for funding for a Challenging Myths about Immigration project which would enable us to research the issue, produce leaflets and banners to disseminate information and host an event.

## **4. Research**

Members of the group gathered secondary information on Immigration from government, local authority and third sector websites which provided up to date figures, research and analysis. Members of the group also engaged in interviews with a sample of local

immigrants, living and working in Midlothian. MPEG had also made a film exploring equalities issues including the theme of immigration. They held a workshop at their 2012 AGM which explored immigration issues with members of the invited audience.

## 5. Compiling the leaflets and the exhibition



Three leaflets and three banners were drafted by Margaret Petrie and designed by Evgeniya Kochkina from MPEG in consultation with all members of the group. One green leaflet and banner focuses on dealing with myths and stereotypes related to new migrants from the so called A8 countries from Eastern and Central Europe; a second orange leaflet and banner focuses on myths

and stereotypes related to Asian communities in Scotland; and the final leaflet focuses on Scots history as migrants settling in other countries. This exhibition would tour libraries in Midlothian with the aim of educating the wider public in Midlothian.

## 6. *The One Scotland, Many Cultures: a Celebration for Midlothian People Event*

Part of the funding applied for included resources to stage an event to raise awareness of the contribution of Migrant communities to Midlothian and celebrate the diversity of cultures living in Midlothian. To do this Midlothian People's Equality Group (MPEG) collaborated with Migrant Voices and Edinburgh and Lothian Regional Equality Council (ELREC). Migrant Voices, based in Glasgow, had also developed an *Engaging Pictures* exhibition which captures the stories and roles of migrants in Scotland which included Sir Geoff Palmer a resident of Penicuik originally from Jamaica. This exhibition was brought to Dalkeith Arts Centre from Glasgow to be displayed in addition to MPEG's banners and leaflets, as part of an evening of music, dance and a short talk by Geoff Palmer.

Approximately 70 people attended during the early evening event and included council staff, fire and police representatives, local people and representatives from multi-cultural organisations who had travelled out to Dalkeith from Edinburgh.



Members of MPEG were involved in the catering for the event; serving teas and coffees; registering people as they arrived; hosting as mistress of ceremonies introducing acts, speakers and so on; welcoming people and clearing up.

People were encouraged by MPEG members to write down their responses to the evening and the exhibition, 31 people responded and the replies were overwhelmingly positive both in relation to learning people would take away and the overall experience. For example replies included: "I thought it was very well organised and for real people," "Entertaining and culturally embracing," "It was nice I had a good time," "Wonderful," "Fantastic," "Got to experience different cultures," "Learned about different cultures," "Learned that there is still some evidence of racial discrimination in UK and how migrants have grown up here against these challenges," "learned that music, poetry and dance can cross all cultures," "Great work, well done to all those involved," "It's been packed with info and interesting facts," "I met some great people and made some nice connections," "Learned about the long history of migrants to and from Scotland," "Loved the ambience of the presentations – great performers,"

Brilliant and lovely to see in Midlothian'

