

# case study 1

Migrant workers in Boston, Lincolnshire

## Lincolnshire, East Midlands

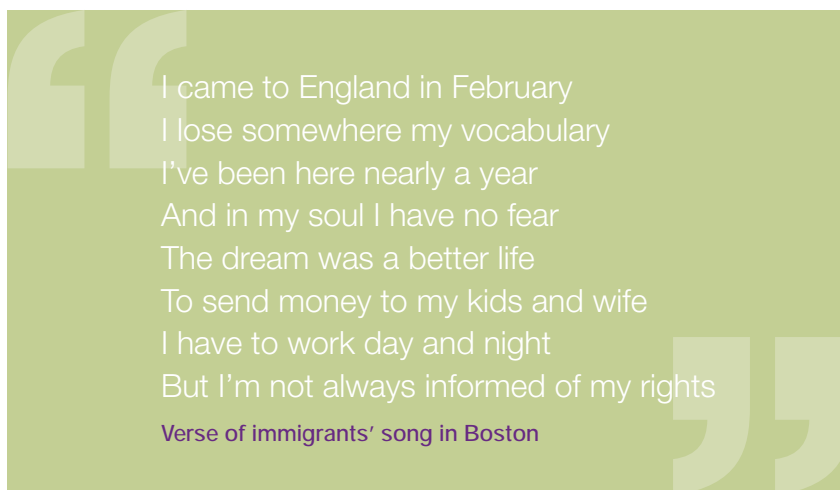
In addition to building citizenship capacity through workshops and seminars and supporting learning, this hub has developed expertise in working with migrant agricultural workers in this region, an extremely vulnerable group, with particular barriers due to language issues and shift working. Based in the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network hosted by the University of Lincoln, this hub works in partnership with a diversity of voluntary sector project managers, Integration Lincolnshire, the local Crime Reduction and Disorder Partnership, Local Education Authorities, Boston College and the Church of England.

(ALAC National Evaluation)

## What citizenship means for migrant workers & host communities

### Immigrant & Seasonal workers

Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC has supported a space for informal learning for adults recently arrived in the UK to work and also for those providing employment and services for this new workforce.



From the perspective of citizenship those arriving in the UK have a complex identity. For example, legal seasonal and migrant workers are eligible to vote in local elections provided a period of residency can be proven, but there are barriers to creating such a democratic identity, including challenges in accessing accommodation, financial services and other contacts with the UK establishment. Beyond the legal eligibility, there are gaps in community education about rights and responsibilities - gaps to be found within both new and established communities, which can be addressed in whole or in part by structured or informal learning processes.

Finally, if people are to become active citizens there is a need to tackle wider issues of social exclusion through learning.

Barriers to engagement need to be overcome, for example by connecting people and providing feedback that participation can actively alter their experience of life in the UK. The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC project has worked with groups of service providers and migrant workers to increase their understanding of these issues and their competence to find ways to address them and engage more actively in shaping their civil environments.



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This has been a practical, sustained engagement focussing on providing participants space to reflect and reorganise themselves and their activities.

ALAC Lincolnshire/ East Midlands has supported the ability of key community leaders to observe their own actions (through meetings and workshops) and has provided an exciting learning environment for a group of migrant workers. There they meet college tutors, university facilitators and music tutors to improve their own ability to articulate and influence their social experience. Meetings have sought to explore issues of citizenship, experiences of being migrant workers, access to local provision and services, ways to strengthen communities and community provision and aspirations for the future. Some members of the group have serious language barriers - something that has hindered basic communications, let alone active citizenship. It was in response to this problem that language tuition was organised at the Boston College and that music was used to facilitate reflective learning in citizenship. These two activities have proved to be powerful vehicles to engage them with service providers and other members of the community, enhancing their sense of belonging and citizenship.

This group has met over the past year at the Boston College and also at the University of Lincoln. The University of Lincoln has facilitated aspects of the process and Boston College has run the language course, organised through ALAC, in response to the learning needs articulated by the group. Transport has been provided and the timing chosen to help shift workers, but all the same the demands of work for this group have meant participants have been challenged to come to each session.

Despite this, enthusiasm has been high and participants have asked to bring along other friends in similar circumstances.

Issues of importance identified include housing, employment, access to health and other services, acting within the law and the relationship to the authorities/institutions, the building of cohesion with existing communities and the creation of relaxed and happy places to live and work.

As an example of the importance of increasing the viability of networks through the ALAC hub, exploring this theme has generated new connections between individuals and organisations. The migrant workers theme in ALAC connected learners both in migrant worker groups and in service provision. The project has also supported reflective practices of local project managers and community workers and has had impacts further afield.



### Approaches to Good Practices:

- Letting the learners identify their biggest barriers to learning
- Being imaginative in overcoming barriers to learning - for example using music for those who struggle with the language
- Allowing the participants' circumstances to dictate the time of all activities
- Providing transport to activities to encourage participation
- Providing language tuition which is engaging, participative and tailored to the individuals' needs
- Drawing out from the learners their current issues and allowing the group to brainstorm solutions
- Combining formal learning methods (classroom tuition) with more innovative techniques (workshops and learning through music)