

遷移,融會,凝聚:新華人移民在倫敦



Shaping the future for London's Chinese community: A research based policy briefing





London, W1D 5BW

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Authors:

Dr. Robin Pharoah
and
Steve Lau

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Overview

This briefing represents a shortened version of the more comprehensive research report “New Chinese migrants in London: Migration, Integration and Cohesion” published by the Chinese in Britain Forum, ESRO and the London School of Economics, with support from the Big Lottery Fund. It was designed to provide a useful overview of the issues and challenges facing policy-makers concerned with social or community cohesion and the need to encourage integration amongst London’s (and Britain’s) new migrant populations.

Chinese migrants who have arrived in Britain over the last couple of decades represent a distinct population with its own characteristics and needs. Despite their increasing number and significance, they are amongst the most invisible of London’s ethnic minority populations. Policy documents and government studies of integration and cohesion have largely overlooked their needs and issues, leaving the path clear for others to exploit and take advantage of their plight. New research shows that lack of access to information and advice combined with issues over legal status, poor English language skills, community divisions, and a lack of funding and capacity within the existing infrastructure of Chinese community organisations, have meant that new Chinese migrants also find it difficult to access the services they desperately need.

We suggest that the best way of addressing the needs of new Chinese migrants is by overcoming developing divisions in the Chinese population of London and supporting efforts by the settled Chinese community to reach out to the newer arrivals. We conclude with a series of recommendations aimed at promoting and developing ways of creating greater cohesion and integration, that draw on the resources and successes of London’s existing Chinese community. We also call on both central and local government to provide support to any initiatives and innovations that seek to deliver these much-needed services to new Chinese migrants.

Structure of the this briefing

This briefing raises and discusses a number of the policy themes that emerged from the research. A summary of the key research findings is contained in an appendix at the end of the briefing.



London, SE17 1JL

Foreword

In June of 2000, 58 Chinese people, 54 men and 4 women, died of mass suffocation in the back of a lorry as it was carried on a cross channel ferry. They died attempting to enter the UK illegally. So the issue of Chinese migration to the UK was firmly brought to the attention of the British public.

Media attention focused on the 'snakeheads' who trafficked these people, placing the blame on unscrupulous criminals whose only intent was to exploit for profit. Yet seldom are issues so simple. Yes, the journey which was to end so tragically was organized by criminal gangs, and yes, profit was the motivation. However the context to this tragedy including China's economic reforms, British immigration policy, and a employment market in the UK which was ready and willing to employ such people in a wide range of business sectors, all play a part in the story.

Just how widespread Chinese migrant workers had become in Britain's grey economy was highlighted by a second tragedy of national significance when, in early February 2004, 21 Chinese workers drowned in rising tides in the perilous waters of Morecombe Bay, dubbed by the Chinese press as the 'Devil's Beach'.

Such high profile events are a double-edged sword. They raise the profile of the plight of those who come to Britain with dreams of getting rich by working hard, and the reality of their lives once they arrive...if they arrive. Yet let us not forget the impact this

has upon a community which shuns publicity, and whose proudest claims to their life in Britain relate to law abiding citizenship. Indeed, on the ornamental arches in London's Chinatown are inscribed the words "The Chinese will uphold honesty and good public order." These events cause embarrassment to many in the Chinese community, and the personal tragedies often become lost in a cultural paradigm which instinctively denounces activities which are seen to be illegal. This was summed up in a Chinese newspaper which said of the Morecombe Bay tragedy, "Their complete disregard for national laws and international repercussions has not only brought harm to the country's prestige, but has also thrown away their own lives".

Yet for the majority of Britain's Chinese, there was a journey, a point of arrival and the challenges of life in a new country. The motivation for those who came in the past will vary little from those who are arriving today. The benefits of previous Chinese migration to the UK is clear, from food to feng shui, medicine to martial arts. The latest migrants bring challenges, but undoubtedly, as history tells us, will also bring great benefits. I commend this report to you, and hope it will challenge the Chinese community, politicians and policy makers to address the issues facing new Chinese migrants to Britain.

Steve Lau
Chair
Chinese in Britain Forum



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London, NW2 6NL

The changing face of London's Chinese community

When history paints broad-brush differences between the last century and this one, it looks likely that the changing role of China on the world stage will be one of the key themes. Such changes are also affecting the nature of London's Chinese population. New kinds of Chinese migrant, people with newfound freedoms, ambitions and/or passports, are coming to Britain to work, to study and to live. They are bringing with them new languages, new histories, new ideas, and of course, new problems. And they are transforming the character of the most recognisable aspects of Chinese life in London.

Changes in places like Chinatown, in the kitchens of takeaways and restaurants, in the aisles of Chinese supermarkets and in the languages and topics of Chinese conversations, are happening quickly. At the present time, London's Chinese population seems to be in a period of transition that began as far back as the 1970's (Pieke, 2004) when sources of Chinese migrants to the UK ceased to be solely Hong Kong and South East Asia, and started to include the provinces of the Chinese mainland itself. The numbers of these 'new migrants' in London are certainly now high enough to mean that they cannot anymore be seen as a curious minority. They may already make up the majority of Chinese living in London.

This research that lies behind this briefing, was about these 'new Chinese migrants', specifically the ones who live and work in London. It

was the culmination of an ambitious research project that aimed to reveal the realities of their lives. There were explorations of their living conditions, their hopes and aspirations, their economic activities, their problems and needs and their ways of meeting them. There was examination of the ways in which they engage with British life and institutions and their ability to integrate and get by. And, importantly for those concerned with cohesion and integration, their relationship with the settled Chinese population in London and the existing infrastructure of Chinese institutions was also looked at. Above all there was an attempt to bring everything to life with real stories of real people.

The research showed that new Chinese migrants face various issues:

- Poverty
- Poor living conditions
- Exploitation
- Family separation
- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Language
- Poor access to services

Some of the realities presented may challenge the assumptions of policy-makers in local and central government. They may also challenge the assumptions of certain parts of the Chinese community itself. And they will certainly challenge some of the existing orthodoxies that surround discussion of immigration, integration and cohesion. We hope however that our research increases understanding for all of those who have an interest in shaping the future of the Chinese community in London.

Chinese migration and social cohesion

Although the research did not set out solely to address impact of Chinese immigration on social or community cohesion, the findings have clear significance for policy discussions around social cohesion. Immigration of any kind is often seen as being a central 'problem' for achieving goals of social cohesion. As Hickman et al.'s study of immigration and cohesion published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hickman, 2008) says: "The main debate [about the impact of immigration] lies in two areas: the impact of immigration on social cohesion because of what is perceived as the disruptive effects of increased ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity; and the pressure of immigration on public service provision and housing". They refer here to the public debate over immigration and the twin themes of integration and public provision.

The Department of Communities and Local Government defines 'community cohesion' as being based on 'three foundations' (taken from Communities and Local Government website November, 2009):

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

And 'three key ways of living together':

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging

- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

These definitions seem to come broadly from the work done on defining the term by Cantle et al. in a report commissioned in the wake of outbreaks of violence in Britain's Northern towns in 2001. Because migration brings diversity of views and aspiration, migrants are perceived as having a sense of belonging and identity based on cultural and religious values or languages that are not necessarily shared with existing populations.

In view of this potential conflict between the aims of social cohesion and the uncomfortable reality that migrants bring difference, much of the language of 'cohesion' policy has focused on the need for 'integration', that is to say, the need for migrants to 'integrate' into British life. It follows from this, that British life itself needs a coherent set of values around which both migrants and the settled population can cohere. Most often, these values are talked of in terms of citizenship, belonging and a shared sense of British identity or, 'Britishness' (Zetter et al, 2006).

There is an inherent tension, as Zetter et al. notes, between these loftier, goals like 'British identity' and 'citizenship', and the means by which social or community cohesion is promoted on the ground. The report by

the Commission on Integration and Cohesion “Our Shared Future” (2007) makes it very clear that the actual stuff of cohesion happens at a local level within local communities, even if it later knits together to form a utopian whole. The opening paragraphs for example, imagine the ideal community of 2020:

“Imagine the open communities of 2020 ... thriving and prosperous places where people from all different backgrounds are equal, and where everyone matters – whether old or young, settled or new, Black or White. There are local places where all groups feel that they are treated fairly, and that they have a responsibility to others that transcends the differences between them. Places where people are not fearful of meeting their neighbours, and where they don’t see individual differences as a barrier to the success of the whole community.

Imagine the local towns and villages where shared spaces – parks, community centres, villages and estates – are a reflection of what binds people together. Where people have been inspired to get out and work together to solve problems – regenerating their physical spaces, or bringing young people together for shared activities that have resulted in a strong civic spirit.”

The official government response to the commission’s re-

port was to confirm this commitment to building social cohesion at a local level: “At the heart of government’s approach to cohesion, like the Commission’s, is the principle that cohesion is something that can only be understood and built locally” (2008). The problem here is with the lack of a clear link between fostering local identities or local senses of belonging, and the subsequent emergence of a sense of national citizenship. And whilst a commitment to ‘local’ cohesion is clearly driven by a desire to recognise the diversity of different local situations, the challenge of bringing these all these together to form a shared national identity that sits neatly on top of these differences, is enormous.

Finally, there is a specific theme that emerges constantly in policy discussions about cohesion, and which arises perhaps directly from the purpose of Cattle’s original report: violence and extremism. Often without explicitly saying so, government documents imply that without cohesion, there is a greater chance of extremism and violence emerging from either the extremist ideologies of migrant/ethnic others, or the unfounded fears and reactions of the settled. For example, in the Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) the government says: “Experience has shown that violent extremism can emerge from even the most cohesive communities, but that extremist messages are less likely to find support in this environment. So work to build cohesion can help pre-

vent violent extremism [...].” Cantle’s report discusses this more in terms of ‘cultural backgrounds’ living ‘parallel lives’ is used to suggest that: “There is little wonder that the ignorance about each others’ communities can easily grow into fear; especially where this is exploited by extremist groups determined to undermine community harmony and foster divisions” (Cantle, 2001).

It is perhaps ironic then, that for all the desire for social cohesion to address the issues raised by diversity and difference, much of the rhetoric of social cohesion uses terms like ‘migrant’, or ‘people from different cultural backgrounds’ and ‘communities’, in ways that paper over those very same cultural differences. Little attempt is made to address the fact that different types of ‘migrant’ or ‘community’ may have different needs, or approach ideas like ‘belonging’ and ‘cohesion’ in different ways. Are we to assume, for example, that a Palestinian refugee will understand a concept like ‘citizenship’ in the same way as an undocumented Chinese migrant understands it? And this is before we even consider the possibility that neither understands it in the same way as those who are part of the settled, white and black British population.

In many ways the findings in the research challenge the very concepts upon which discussions of social cohesion are constructed. Chinese migrants are often either ignored or invisible within communities and seem to fall into the gaps of discussions around social cohesion. London’s new Chinese migrants, for example,

are often isolated or ‘segregated’, living and working almost exclusively with other Chinese migrants. Yet at the same time, they seem to have given rise to very little in the way of hand-wringing or demonising media reports that address those characteristics supposed to be caused by this ‘lack of social cohesion’; violence, extremism, segregation, faith identity, inequality etc.

In other words, new Chinese migrants ought to be a concern for those attempting to create social cohesion, but because they are not associated with the actual ‘problems’ that lack of integration is supposed to cause, they are largely forgotten.

In fact, despite being quite a large, and in many ways conspicuous, population in London as a whole (due, in no small part, to Chinatown and Chinese restaurants and take-aways), Chinese migrants are very poorly understood and very poorly represented in the large-scale reports, studies and surveys that address issues of social cohesion. For example, in the Commission for Integration and Cohesion’s report cited above, there is one, single, oblique reference made to a stereotype of Chinese takeaways. In the government’s “Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: A third progress report on the Government’s strategy for race equality and community cohesion” (2009) there are references made to the fact that Chinese pupils tend to do well at school, which perhaps helps to foster the myth that the Chinese community is relatively problem free. And there is a paragraph referring to the govern-

ment's support of Min Quan, a group that assists Chinese victims of racial harassment and violence. The same paragraph appears (verbatim) in another government report produced in March of 2009 "Managing the impacts of migration: Improvements and innovations".

Members of Min Quan, a small organisation, were involved in the research for this briefing. At the time of writing (only a few months after the government publications were published) Min Quan faces closure due to lack of funding support.

Similarly, as we shall see, even when 'Chinese' are represented in such surveys as the Labour Force Survey or Census, there is good reason not to trust the figures as being in any way representative of the population as a whole. Chinese people, especially those who have arrived more recently, can be notoriously difficult to include in survey data for several reasons. Language barriers, issues with legal status, a certain cultural insularity and complex living arrangements can all mean that accurate surveying of the Chinese population, in London or Britain, is difficult, to say the least (ESRO, 2007).

In the Citizenship Survey, a key tool in the measurement and monitoring of social cohesion, there is a category called "Chinese/Other" which makes the specifically Chinese experience of social cohesion even less legible: Though what little we can pick up from the survey shows that this group is particularly disengaged in terms of taking part in local 'civic life' and is

likely to feel the least empowered in terms of making a difference to local policy.

Of course, there are questions about what constitutes 'local' or 'community' when it comes to London's Chinese population anyway. Many of those new Chinese migrants interviewed during research were unable to describe by name, the place in which they lived. They pointed to stations on tube maps, wrote post-codes or gave rough approximations of areas. It is very unclear that any questions asked about 'where they lived' or 'their community' would elicit responses relevant to the borders of London Borough Councils for example. Furthermore, although the population has a focal point in Chinatown it is relatively dispersed around London. More than one of our respondents described going about their lives, not in a geographic community as such, but in a transport corridor between where they lived and where they worked. Their social world was almost entirely based within this corridor and was, in most cases, entirely Chinese. And even resting on the idea of a 'Chinese community' is problematic, given the division between the older settled Chinese population and the new migrants who are the subject of this briefing.

Not all of these complications are unique to the Chinese. A lot of recent discussions and policy initiatives recognise, for example, that arbitrary, race-based or country-based ascriptions of identity may not be as important as religious or faith-based identity markers. Furthermore, there

have been calls recently by the Communities Secretary John Denham for faith-based groups and institutions to help to: "overcome social division and promote cohesion". Discussions of Chinese faith however, would lead us nowhere. Suffice it to say that faith-based groups and a shift in emphasis to faith or religion as an identity-marker are not likely to increase recognition of the Chinese population.

It is no surprise then, that the particular experiences of new Chinese migrants remain relatively unexplored. Chinese community organisations have attempted to conduct small-scale surveys of the needs of Chinese populations in particular regions (Chinese Community Centre 2005; London Chinese Community Network 2005, n.d.; Tran 2006 etc). Some of these studies have included the perspectives of new migrants as well as members of the more settled Chinese community, but they remain small and localised. In fact, most local organisations would not have enough funding to explore these possibilities.

To date, academic studies have been limited to Pieke's long-term research project on Fujianese migration to Europe (Pieke, 2002, 2004a, 2004b), Luk's (2008) investigation of the social geography of Chinese migration to the UK and work by Lam (2009) and Sales et al (2009) on new Chinese migrants in London. Based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork, Pieke's (2004b) study provides in-depth analysis of the social settings in China from which migrants depart for Europe, as well as details of migrants' lives in the UK. However, other

evidence suggests that the situation of Chinese migrants in the UK has already changed in the decade since Pieke and colleagues conducted their fieldwork in 1999-2001.

And so we have a paradoxical group: the 'New Chinese Migrants'. A 'community' that is very possibly the least integrated and least understood of all of London's different ethnic groups; one that is very isolated from, and excluded from, mainstream British society. It is a population with few who speak English and even fewer who would understand concepts such as 'Britishness'. But it is also a community that is not seen as being a problem, and is therefore often ignored or overlooked. As a result Chinese community organisations suffer from a lack of financial support, both from the Chinese business community and from local and central government. All of this raises serious questions about what we mean by 'social cohesion' and whether its attendant policies and initiatives are equally applicable and effective for all.

Changing Chinese, changing contexts, changing communities

Our research uncovered a range of issues facing new Chinese migrants living in London: These range from the debts and losses of migration, the dangers of job searching, loneliness, isolation, fears about legal status, poverty and overcrowding, and exploitation. It shows the ways in which people seek to overcome these problems and the struggles they have in accessing services and gaining access to quality information. In this conclusion we focus on the future.

What will all this mean for London's Chinese community. How will it adapt and change in response. Will London's Chinese community, so long dominated by Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong and ethnic Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore, become a Mandarin speaking community dominated by migrants from the Chinese mainland? Will the new migrants be as successful as the old in terms of finding an economic niche in British society? Will there be two different Chinese communities? Or three? Or more?

The fact that we don't know the answers to these questions suggests that we are still in a period of transition. But decisions made now with regard to policy, provision and integration, by those within the Chinese community and policy-makers without, are likely to be ones that lay the foundations, and determine the prospects, for London's Chinese population in the future.

The research shows that the differences in origin and background between the new Chinese migrants discussed in this briefing and the older settled Chinese community in London. Crudely speaking, one could divide the old community and the new Migrants by language. The older settled community tends to be Cantonese speaking and mainly from Hong Kong, Malaysia or Singapore, whilst the newer migrants tend to be Mandarin speaking, and from the Chinese mainland provinces. Such a distinction is admittedly crude; there were for example, many Cantonese speakers from the Chinese mainland

in the research. However the distinction can be useful in terms of thinking of the sharp divide between the existing Chinese infrastructure and the newer Chinese arrivals.

Amongst those interviewed, it is also becoming apparent that differences are being drawn between two more sub-groups of Chinese migrants: those from the North of China, and those from Fujian. There is even some suggestion that those from the North-East of China (Ch. Dong Bei) could be a distinct group in London as well. In practice some of these distinctions do not hold up. They seem to be based much more on assumptions about education (or level of civility) and language rather than strict adherence to geographic boundaries and loyalties. Certainly however, the sheer number of Fujianese migrants means that they are increasingly seen, both by themselves and others, as a coherent community within London's Chinese population.

We could also suggest that there is another distinct group of Chinese migrants comprised of those who are here to study. These younger Chinese migrants, able to communicate with each other in Mandarin, may be more agnostic as to origin and their lives are not as entwined with those of other Chinese migrants as other different types of Chinese migrant are with each other. Their opportunities, and hence expectations, are higher than many others.

And yet another distinction might be drawn between those who are documented and have rights and

visas, and those who are without. Our figures suggest that in recent times, this distinction has begun to align with the division between students and non-students. This may suggest that it is becoming increasingly difficult for economic migrants to obtain legitimate documentation in China to come to the UK to work, or that these new Chinese migrants are finding that the easiest way to come to the UK is as a student; and are finding new ways to do it.

These different distinctions are recognised by new migrants themselves, and increasingly job opportunities, opportunities to build social networks and the ability to build a social life in London are seen as being influenced by them.

The other thing is that I mentioned earlier about clubs. Lots of foreign people in London have their own social clubs. Even the Fujianese have their own. But people like us, those from Beijing and Shanghai [...] are yet to have our own club.

- Ding Hui, female, forties

It is we Chinese people killing each other among ourselves. In particular those from [place name mentioned in relation to some specific landlords who she felt had cheated her out of money]. They shouldn't have done this to us. Earlier I thought the Cantonese and the Fujianese were like this; but I don't feel that the Fujianese are so bad. The Fujianese may not be so well educated; they may

seem a bit boorish when they speak; but at least they are not like those from...[etc]

- Zhao Zao, female, fifties

That's right... Most of the illegal deeds are done by the Fujianese. We Northerners.... the majority of the Northern are law abiding; we are keen in finding permanently work; our aim is to improve the situation that our family (in China) is in, give support to our children... that is our aim...

- Ma Rong, male, thirties

Some of these comments may make uncomfortable reading for those within the Chinese community, but as yet they should not be seen as anything more than what they are; individual perceptions. Others speak more about a Chinese culture in which people help each other and hands of friendship are extended across boundaries

Well. I didn't have any close friends here. But since we are all Chinese and we are living outside China, we feel the need to help each other. If I met someone strange to me needing my help, I'll also help if I am able to.[...] I feel that Chinese living abroad are all keen to help each other.[...] Through the help of fellow-countrymen... Chinese friends recommended me [to an employer]...

- Wang Shu Jie, male, fifties

Since most of the bosses who employed us are from Hong

Kong and speak Cantonese, we slowly pick up some Cantonese. Some Hong Kong Chinese can also speak a bit of Mandarin, so in the beginning we communicated in Mandarin with them. But when they spoke with their friends in Cantonese, we could also pick up some from there. We watched a bit of [Hong Kong] TV programme, too. That helped us to learn Cantonese. So sometimes when we began to work for a Hong Kong employer, we might speak Mandarin with them; later as time went by, we'd switch to Cantonese.

- Chen Liang, male, thirties

This diversification of the Chinese community, then, is not yet fixed. Many of the distinctions seem fluid. Students, for example, could come from any part of China; and research respondents reported being treated kindly by those from different regions as well as badly by those from the same region. At the time of research, London's Chinese population still seems to be in a state of flux. The new migrants we studied have not yet settled, or formed permanent divisions. It is also worth noting that in China, whilst there are real cultural and linguistic differences between people from different parts of the country, such divisions can often be glossed by an overarching nationalist rhetoric that can be found in local and national media, coming from officials and indeed in ordinary people's constructions of their own 'Chineseness'. In other words, this particular division of migrants into different

groups, to some extent is a migrant phenomenon, manifesting in a unique way in London. It comes about perhaps as a result of the struggle for jobs, for better living conditions and for access to services and opportunities.

In this period of flux and change however, those who lead are likely to be the ones who will shape the future of the Chinese population in London. Will we be talking of different Chinese communities, speaking different languages? Will the new migrants settle and be as successful as those who preceded them? Will the new migrants find a way of integrating into British life? And which influences will shape the future of the community? Will it be the existing Chinese community organisations? Or the existing Chinese business infrastructure? Will it be policy makers at local or central government level?

There are those that are already trying to influence the direction the Chinese community takes. There are those who have already found ways of engaging the new Chinese migrants: The ubiquitous 'agents' who both help and exploit those who are vulnerable and looking for work, and the betting companies and gambling shops that have opened shiny new fronts in Chinatown. Neither perhaps is the most desirable way of meeting new migrant needs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations and innovations were developed over the course of two, daylong workshops, with delegates from a number of different Chinese organisations. ESRO

put together a programme designed to present research findings and allow participants to consider a range of options for how to cope with some of the problems that are faced by new Chinese migrants. The proposals and recommendations outlined below are a product then, of Chinese community organisations themselves. They are aimed at anyone and everyone who might be interested in understanding the needs of new Chinese migrants and concerned with shaping the future of the Chinese population in London.

We hope that this briefing, and the research it highlights, can be used as a tool to justify, with evidence, the measures proposed here and that we have gone a long way toward addressing the information gap that shrouds the realities and needs of Chinese migrants in London, and indeed the UK. For those who are concerned with social or community cohesion, and the integration of new migrants into British society, we urge that these recommendations are taken seriously.

Policy recommendations

1. Continuous funding, new funding, core funding

If the Chinese community and its various organisations are going to address the many and complex needs of new Chinese migrants, there needs to be a recognition that they are not going to be able to do so with existing levels of funding and support. Even if community organisations

became successful in their outreach programmes (proposed below) the sheer number of new migrants and the level of need, is so great, that existing services would be swamped.

Currently, Chinese community associations in certain London boroughs receive no funding at all from their borough councils. Those that do are often dealing with relatively small amounts of money that is earmarked for very specific purposes. Even organisations such as Min Quan, which receive central government recognition for their work, can struggle to secure ongoing funding. Many Chinese organisations, some of which provided valuable services and research, are now little more than names and websites. They lie dormant without any funding provision.

Both central government funding streams and local government funding streams have been hard to come by, and competition for small pots has left Chinese organisations disunited.

Whilst it is important for the Chinese community to continue to lobby central and local government bodies on the issues presented in the research and to call for funding, we call on both local and central government departments and bodies directly, to take seriously the findings presented here and consider providing support in the form of funds to Chinese community organisations and initiatives that aim to directly address the needs of Chinese migrants in London.

2. Consideration of policies affecting migrants

There needs to be an active and robust exchange of ideas between the Chinese community and policy-makers. Whilst calling for amnesties, or the regularisation of undocumented migrants may be beyond the cope of this research, the report does raise significant questions around the allocation of funds used to promote social cohesion. It also raises the question of whether some policies regarding restrictions on access to services help or hinder the ability for new Chinese migrants to maximise their contribution to the British economy. The exploitation of undocumented migrant workers for examples, not only prevents migrants from achieving their ambitions, and returning home or starting businesses, it also prevents migrants from working through a formal payroll and contributing to the tax base.

Restrictions on, for example, access to healthcare and to language courses, and to legal advice and to job-centres, whilst all having justification, also push undocumented new Chinese migrants into the hands of unscrupulous agents and lawyers, prevent them from learning English and create a network of ill-health. Similarly, requirements and restrictions on funding to Chinese organisations that want to address the problems of new Chinese migrants, simply discourages those Chinese organisations from providing services, and helps to perpetuate the problems described here.

Service development

1. The establishment of a Chinese umbrella organisation

As in any community, the Chinese community and its organisations are home to different and competing interests, different politics and rival agendas. These differences are important as they represent different interests within the community. However, when it comes to the issue of lobbying for funding and innovating new services to deal with the problems of new Chinese migrants, there needs to be a central and neutral hub to coordinate these efforts.

Such an umbrella organisation needs to be seen to be neutral as to the various political issues that can divide the community. This organisation can act as an honest broker, holding meetings and forums which all are able to attend.

The organisation would serve three purposes: 1) It would create an inclusive network for the Chinese community in which information and ideas can be shared quickly between organisations and service providers 2) It would act as a forum for the development of over-arching strategic principles or aims for the future delivery of services to the changing Chinese community 3) It would act as the public face of efforts to promote and maintain the stability and success of London's (and Britain's) Chinese community.

2. The establishment of a national database of Chinese services and organisations

Though there are many directories of Chinese service providers, few of them outline exactly what services are provided and to whom. Furthermore, given the often precarious nature of the funding which gives life to some of these services, directories often contain information about organisations that no longer exist. Because of this, there is no reliable, central source of information to which Chinese service providers can turn to get advice or make referrals when dealing with new Chinese migrants. A long-term goal of such a database would be to build a searchable online resource for both migrants and service providers alike.

The success of such a project would depend upon the ability of its creators to maintain the database over time, and would therefore require a long-term plan for any funding provided to set it up, and a sustainable business plan for the future.

3. The creation of a national information and advice telephone line for Chinese migrants

The creation of a national helpline has a number of advantages over the traditional model of disseminating information through Chinese community centres, when dealing with new Chinese migrants.

- Information can be given anonymously, without migrants having to give their names or details
- A phone number is easier to publicise than a list of services

- A small number of staff, or volunteers are needed to maintain a round-the-clock service
- A telephone service can be accessed from anywhere
- Telephone staff can be trained to provide a dedicated service of providing information and advice

4. English language training

A number of suggestions for how to develop the provision of language training for new Chinese migrants were developed during the course of our workshops. The suggestions below address the issue of learning English, with mind to migrant fears of going to formal courses, the lack of time in the day in which migrants have to formally study English and the perceived restrictions on providing services to certain types of migrant.

- The continuation of free English language courses for asylum seekers and refugees
- Workplace English: Many Chinese migrants work in Chinese businesses in which the use of Chinese languages is ubiquitous. Employers could be encouraged to promote the use of the English language through signage, or periods of the day or spaces in which English is used.
- Employers could be encouraged to incentivise English learning amongst staff
- Chinese community centres could provide language exchange courses or groups, in which English speakers can learn Chinese in exchange for Chinese language lessons
- The removal of funding and statutory restrictions on who may attend English courses aimed at Chinese migrants

5. Creation of a Chinese Volunteering database

There are existing volunteering databases and skills bases in the UK. These services could be replicated or adapted to serve as a resource for community organisations and to provide opportunities to settled Chinese, Chinese students or new migrants themselves to work with new Chinese migrants.

6. Development of a communications and outreach strategy

A strategy needs to be developed by and for Chinese community organisations to enable effective communication of information and services to the different networks of new Chinese migrants.

The research is unequivocal that the two most prevalent sources of information about services, among new Chinese migrants was first through friends, and second through Chinese media (primarily newspapers and Chinese radio stations). Council information, leaflets and the internet were very rarely used.

A relatively small piece of communications research could be undertaken which aimed to develop a best-practice out-reach and communications guide for Chinese and local government organisations.

7. Active recruitment of Mandarin speakers

Chinese organisations are encouraged to take seriously their responsibility to deal with all parts of London's (and Britain's growing Chinese population). In order to do this, there

needs to be an active drive to recruit Mandarin speaking staff in order to begin to create an environment in which Mandarin speaking Chinese migrants feel welcome.

8. Census drive

Chinese community leaders and front-line staff are well aware of the lack of political engagement amongst even the long-term settled British Chinese population. Lack of political engagement is perhaps beyond the scope of this report. However, one consequence of choosing not to deal with bureaucracy and national services, is that the Chinese population is under-represented in official statistics.

In 2011 the National Census will take place. For the first time this census will try to capture a snapshot of everybody who is in the country. Census returns in London are often marked by their lack of response. Westminster, for example, in which Chinatown is situated, has the lowest Census response rate in the UK.

Chinese community organisations are encouraged to create a census drive designed to raise the response rate in the Chinese population. Local councils too have a vested interest in helping Chinese community organisations to do this. Local councils can be lobbied to employ Chinese-speaking census enumerators, which will provide employment to Chinese, and help to gain a more accurate picture of the number of Chinese people living in London.

A better understanding of the scale of the Chinese community in London is



London, NW1 7SS

likely to be a powerful tool for lobbying central and local government for funds and on policy issues.

9. Innovative training programmes / Best-practice data-base

One London Chinese community centre has had the idea of providing training in social care (with accreditation) to Chinese speakers in order to create a pool of Chinese speaking carers able to serve the ageing population of Chinese migrants in London.

This innovative idea has several benefits: 1) It connects the new and old Chinese migrants 2) It provides training and employment to those who need it most 3) It provides a solution to what is likely to be a growing question of how to provide care to elderly Chinese.

Best practice ideas like this need to be shared more widely throughout the Chinese communities. Chinese organisations should be encouraged to share knowledge of innovations and best-practice between themselves.

Research recommendation

1. Further research into specific aspects of new Chinese migrant lives

Research into the specific nature of things like violence and exploitation, informal economies, social networks, reasons for leaving China, the role Chinese churches, the effects of gambling, sharing of information etc. should be supported and encouraged

in order to better understand the Britain Chinese population and make appropriate policies aimed at social cohesion.

End piece

At the end of the face-to-face survey, respondents were asked to provide a single piece of advice to Chinese who may be considering coming to the UK. Most of the advice they proffered, centred on the idea of making sure that migrants should have established friends and networks in the UK before making the trip, on learning English, on having realistic expectations, on avoiding 'snake-heads', on getting a student visa etc. Respondents also sounded warnings that it will be impossible to make money that new migrants will live as 'ghosts', ignored by everybody and with no status at all. Many simply talked of the whole experience of migrating to and living in the UK as being demoralising, and depressing.

Perhaps most tellingly of all, one fifth of those interviewed issued the same exact piece of advice: "Don't come." This advice came from all kinds of respondents, including the wealthier students that universities and policy-makers alike are so keen to attract.

There will be many people in Britain who will be glad to hear that kind of advice being given, but the considered reality is that it leaves us with some uncomfortable questions. Given the extent to which the advice Chinese migrants give to each other constitutes a warning about how difficult life in London is, how confident

can we be that London is succeeding as a place in which there are equal opportunities for all and the idealistic goals of social cohesion and integration are being met? It should also give us pause for thought when we consider the messages that are going back to China from the Chinese that are living and working here. Is the message that Britain wants to send to Chinese people: "Don't come"?

The research has shown that this new community is a long way from achieving the three foundations of community cohesion, set out by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) in 2009, that people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, know their rights and responsibilities, and trust one another and local institutions to act fairly. Policy makers need to address the development of an environment and services for these people that will enable them to make the best possible contribution to society.

In the foreword to this report Steve Lau reminds us of the contribution that Chinese migrants have made to British and London life. In the context of China's growing influence in the world, this report should both remind of the richness, ingenuity and indefatigable spirit that Chinese migrants have, and caution against ignoring their plight.

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Appendix: Research Summary

This section presents a summary of the findings presented in the larger research report. It provides an overview of the evidence base for the policy recommendations and innovations we suggest in the final section. Research methods

The research undertaken to compile this report encompassed several different strands and methods:

- A desk-based review of the relevant academic and policy literature
- A face-to-face survey with 177 Chinese migrants from all over London
- 30 in-depth interviews
- 5 ethnographic case studies
- 2 workshops with community leaders and frontline service workers from London's Chinese community

Facts about the 177 survey respondents:

- 84% came from mainland Chinese provinces
- Of those from the mainland, 42% came from one province: Fujian. Others came from all over the Chinese mainland
- 83% were under 40 years old
- 95% of those surveyed could speak Mandarin, 40% spoke Fujianese dialects and only 38% spoke Cantonese (the traditional language of London's Chinese population). Most respondents could speak more than one Chinese dialect
- 86% had arrived in the UK since 2005
- Half of those surveyed were men, and half women
- 30% were students or held post-study work visas

- Just under 50% held documentation allowing them to live, work or stay in the UK. The remaining 50% did not
- Population

Getting a firm handle on London's Chinese population can be difficult. The 2001 census is now somewhat out of date and may well not have been very reliable as a guide to the Chinese population in the first place (ESRO, 2007). Furthermore, different kinds of surveying and population estimation methods lead to different estimates of the size of the Chinese population. And, as if this didn't make the problem difficult enough, there is also the fact that when it comes to measuring the number of undocumented Chinese we are largely in the dark. In 2009, London's Chinese population could be as large as 250,000. It could be greater still and as many as half of this number could be undocumented.

- Estimates suggest that number of people born in China now living in London could be anywhere between 100,000 and 300,000
- In 2009 there could be as many as 60,000 Chinese students in British universities
- Asylum seekers make up a relatively small part of the Chinese population in London and the UK. Only 2100 applications were made in 2007, 1860 of these were refused

Legacy and longing

There are many reasons for Chinese people to consider migrating to the UK. The majority of migrants would be classified 'economic migrants', but

this designation can hide the complexities beneath. There can be little doubt that most who come, come with at least the idea of making money and forging a new, more lucrative and more fulfilling, life. This is part of the 'longing' referred to in the chapter title. Individual stories however, are always more complicated. They often involve elements of both 'push' and 'pull'. Circumstances in China can 'push' people to look for a way out, and fantasies of wealth and exoticism in the UK can 'pull' people towards the migration option.

The act of migration however, also creates its own legacies and debts, both emotional and material. People, places and things may be left behind physically but the emotional legacies of separation are carried to the UK. The financial cost of migration may also be high and can leave migrants with debts large enough that they structure and determine the choices and options they have when they are in the UK. Along with the confrontation between lofty expectations and the harsh reality of London life, this can mean that many end up staying far longer than they had planned. These are not simple stories of leaving one life and finding a new one, these are stories of a journey, from one place to another, in which the past continues to exert its influence on the present. The needs and aspirations of new Chinese migrants are as much a product of their lives in China and their means of migration, as they are of the conditions they find in the UK.

Survey findings: Reasons for coming to London

- Most of those who had not come to the UK to study, had come to the UK to engage in employment or business (58%). For undocumented migrants the proportion was higher (78%).
- 85% of students had come primarily to study at university, 9% had come to join family. Of those without student visas, 21% had come to the UK in the hope of studying at some point
- There were only a small number of asylum seekers (9) and even fewer had been granted 'indefinite leave to remain' (3).

Survey findings: Families and separation

Many new Chinese migrants have been separated from family members.

- Excluding students, 50% were married and 53% had children
- Between a third and a half of married Chinese migrants had left their spouse in China
- 64% of those migrants who had children, had at least one child who was living in China. This figure rises to 78% amongst undocumented migrants

Survey findings: Plans for the future

- 67% said that they were planning to settle indefinitely or were 'not sure' about their future plans. This figure rose to 79% for those who were undocumented
- 78% of those who had arrived before 2007, were unsure about their future in the UK or planned to settle indefinitely.

- For those who had arrived since 2007, only 50% were unsure, 50% planned to stay for 5 years or less - 71% of those who had arrived before 2007 had changed the planned length of their stay. Only 37% of those who arrived after 2007 had changed their plans. The research suggests that the longer a migrant stays in the UK, the more likely they are to change their plans. Most often, this involves staying for longer. Making money; making lives

For most new Chinese migrants, the differences in the reasons for coming to the UK often manifest in the same way, a need to make money. Although a great many of those we talked to aspired, one day, to be able to go back to China. Few wanted to do so with empty hands or without having achieved 'success' in the UK. And for most, the measurement of success was financial.

Even among those for whom life in London had become unbearable, there was often a palpable desire to stay nonetheless. Some feared 'losing face'. For many Chinese people, the fear of 'losing face' can be a powerful driver of decisions. Put simply, 'losing face' means being shamed. To go back to China with nothing would be to mark oneself as a failure, and to suffer a fall in reputation. This drop in social standing would also be felt keenly inside, as an acute embarrassment. Avoiding losing face can be a powerful motivation. For others of course, there is the fact that they simply owe too much money, and fear the consequences of not repay-

ing, both in terms of the potential for recrimination and in terms of a loss of face.

I wouldn't want to go back unless I made a success in this country. Even if that means my hair turns all white.

- Li Yan

Many come without plans or a specific job and would simply try to 'make money' in any way they could. The idea reflects a growing trend amongst new Chinese migrants, to take short-term economic opportunities, often outside of the traditional catering businesses and often in ways that would lie outside of formal business or employment contracts; such as street-selling or even prostitution. They will also seek work from 'agents' – many of whom can be unscrupulous and are more than willing to take advantage of those with little knowledge of Britain..

In order to make money though, migrants must find work of some kind. Traditionally Chinese migrants have been associated with jobs in the restaurant and take-away industry and indeed a great many new migrants are employed in these businesses. They are willing to work long hours for relatively low pay and can help to drive profits for the business owners. In our sample, a great many of those who specified their place of work did indicate that they were working as chefs or waitresses in Chinese restaurants. Some also worked in fast-food outlets of other kinds. It is perhaps surprising then that, of the

120 people in the survey who specified the nature of their work, only 30% (36) said that they worked in restaurants or takeaways. This is still a large proportion. It compares with the 4.6% of the total London workforce employed in the hotel and restaurant sector. What is interesting however, is the sheer variety of things that new Chinese migrants are now doing in London. Some of the other types of work represented in the survey were: Selling DVD's, cleaning, nannying, factory labour, engineering, web-design, data-analysis, construction, nursing, housewife, retail, carpentry, advertising, construction, journalism, travel agency, martial arts coaching and one who said that he sells fish-balls.

Of course building a life with stability is easier for those who have skills, and correct documents than for those without. Undocumented migrants tend to suffer from being exploited more than their documented counterparts but both are often victims of exploitation; working long-hours for low-pay. A 2004 economic study of Chinatown (Page Reference & Partnership Solutions, 2004) found that documented workers in the Chinese restaurants earned an average of £3.40 per hour while undocumented workers earned an average of £2.50 per hour, both far lower than the national minimum wage.

Survey findings: Work and employment

- One third of respondents worked in the catering industry
- 60% were in formal employment

and of those, 69% were in full-time employment. Men were more likely to be working full-time (77%) than women (59%)

- A significant minority of the respondents were engaged in informal types of employment such as DVD selling or prostitution
- Undocumented migrants were 4 times more likely to be job-seeking than documented migrants

Lived realities: loneliness and exploitation

The reality of living in London for most new Chinese migrants is that life is harsh. They often live in cramped conditions, working long hours for low pay. They are lonely and isolated. They are separated from family and have few close friends. Undocumented migrants may suffer from huge debts associated with the ways that they came to the UK,

Journalist Hsao-Hung Pai has highlighted the exploitation of undocumented Chinese migrants in the UK, through undercover investigation in workplaces ranging from restaurants and food-packing factories to brothels and vegetable farms (Pai 2008a). The perilous situation of these clandestine workers was further highlighted by the death of 23 Chinese cockle-pickers at Morecambe Bay in 2004, including two who were gangmasters. One response to the tragedy was the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act of 2004 which saw the creation in 2005 of a Gangmasters Licensing Authority to regulate those who supply labour or use workers to provide services

in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, shellfish gathering and food processing and packaging.

Of course not all exploitation ends in such tragedy. Often it can simply be designed to eke a little more work from, and pay a little less money to, migrants. This kind of exploitation is not disastrous but can take its toll on the mental well-being of those who suffer. Wen Ji's husband provides one stark example of this but many of our respondents described London as a demoralising place to try and live and work in.

Findings: Living conditions

- Chinese migrants were living in households with an average size of 5.4. The national average is 2.4. Official figures about Chinese living in Britain, place the figure at 2.9. New Chinese migrants are likely to be living in cramped and over-crowded conditions. For undocumented workers the average household size was 6.6.

- 45% of Chinese migrants lived in houses with more than 6 people, 23% with more than 8 and 13% with more than 10.

- 65% of the sample said they lived with people other than family members and a further 16% said that they lived with other whole families.

Integration and segregation in London

If the research in this report is going to have any impact on policy-makers and leaders of London's Chinese community, then it must address those aspects of new Chinese mi-

grants' lives in London that speak to the issues of integration and 'community cohesion'. There are two clear ways of looking at these issues. The first is to think about the quality of life, and equality of opportunity issues that 'community cohesion' policies are supposed to address, and the second is to look at the degree to which new Chinese migrants can be described as 'integrated' within society. In doing so, we can also examine the barriers to integration and opportunity.

Beyond these two questions, we should also consider what might be going on beyond the policy radar. If new Chinese migrants are finding it difficult to 'integrate' or to become part of existing communities, then should we begin to consider whether the situation at the moment is closer to 'segregation' than 'integration'? And if so, what does this mean for policy makers, local governments, and the Chinese community in London?

I've been here a few years, and have yet to understand much about the society in great detail. I don't speak English and don't read English; when I go out I just buy some vegetable, I just buy something to eat, or I just buy some stuff for daily use: I'd come back home straight away after buying the stuff I need. I don't see much about the society such as the leisure activities. I certainly don't visit the gambling places; we are working people and we don't visit such places. We come here to work

and earn cash, we are not here as tourists; we are not here for sightseeing. We don't visit the places where you have to spend lots of money.

Basically apart from working we don't go anywhere else. We go [to the market] and buy some vegetables and come home to cook dinner. After dinner we'd take a rest. There is basically no entertainment for us. [...] Basically I won't go anywhere that I don't like, right? But for those places that I want to go, I might not be able to go, right? Because our status is different. We are in a different situation, right? That's why there is no question of what you like most or what you don't like to do. Here we are, those who are at the lowest level of society. You basically have no right to discuss that kind of question. Right?

- Li Hong, male, forties

Often unable to communicate and unable to understand British society, new Chinese migrants live lives that are entirely separate from British life. Chinese migrants live largely Chinese lives. They interact mainly with Chinese people, shop and work in Chinese businesses, eat Chinese food and speak and learn Chinese languages. They do not integrate in any meaningful way with other parts of British society.

Survey findings: English language skills

- 88% of undocumented migrants say

they have little or no English language skills

- 68% of all migrants claimed to have little or no English language skills
- Most of those who did claim to have English skills were students. But even then only 63% of student claimed to have 'conversational' or 'fluent' English language skills, raising questions about the ability of many to follow English university courses.

There are also divisions within the Chinese population, especially between the older settled migrants who are largely Cantonese speaking and the newer Mandarin speaking mainland Chinese migrants.

The major effect of all this separation is the subsequent lack of support that is available to new migrants. The research examined the extent to which new Chinese migrants find help and support from within and without the Chinese community. The research asked to what extent existing services (public and Chinese) meet the needs of new Chinese migrants. The results of our survey give us some headline findings that are highly significant. New Chinese migrants are using very few public services other than health-care and even fewer of the services offered by existing Chinese associations.

Survey findings: Use of Public services

- 34% of new Chinese migrants claimed to have used a hospital and 42% had seen a doctor
- Only 2 people (1%) had made use of public housing services

- Only 7 people (4%) had made use of benefits agencies
- 3% had made use of public schools
- 3% had used social services
- 10% of Chinese migrants had sought help from job-centres
- More women (75%) had used services than men (51%)

The most common reasons given for not using public services were: 'lack of information' (35%), 'not needed' (20%), 'not entitled' (17%) and 'no time' (10%)

Survey findings: Use of Chinese community organisations

- Only 22% of those surveyed had used services provided by Chinese community organisations
- 75% of those surveyed said that they lacked information about Chinese community organisations and the services they provided
- Most use of services came through recommendations from friends and from advertisements in free Chinese newspapers and other Chinese media, such as community radio

Demand for services was high. The services that migrants said they most wanted to see in Chinese community organisations were:

- Immigration advice 49%
- Legal Advice 48%
- Employment advice 38%
- English classes 22%

For the most part though, the main source of support for the vast majority of those we worked with and interviewed, were the networks of friends that they could build. The stronger the

community they could tap in to, the more they were able to find trusted routes into jobs, or find support in hours of need.

...you visit the places where most Chinese people gather, such as Chinatown and so on, and you communicate with people and look for friends...

- anonymous

Of course, this means that needs remain largely unknown by wider society or policy makers and continue to go unaddressed by public or community services. This leaves new Chinese migrants ever more vulnerable to exploitation.

