

Latin Americans in Southwark: Service access and provision



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Executive summary

Southwark is a central London borough characterised by considerable linguistic and ethnic diversity. The population in the borough has varying degrees of service entitlement, different needs and expectations of services and how they are delivered, and different degrees of visibility to service providers.

Southwark seeks to support and develop greater community resilience and independence among its residents. To support this aim, the research report focuses on the barriers to service access experienced by Latin American residents in Southwark. It is based on Census analysis and qualitative interviews and workshops with service providers in the third and the public sector across the borough.

Latin Americans constitute a recent and growing migrant community in London with considerable internal diversity, including in country of origin, 'passport nationality', languages spoken (mainly Spanish and Portuguese), and migration trajectories and legal status. The 2011 Census counted about 8,000 Latin America-born residents in Southwark, constituting just under three per cent of the total population in Southwark, or eight per cent of Southwark residents who were born outside of the UK. A proportion of the community comprise especially vulnerable groups, including trafficked women, women on spousal visas, and families with no recourse to public funds.

Latin Americans contribute significantly to the borough, economically, socially, and culturally, and Southwark has developed constructive relationships with community organisations, and was the first London borough to recognise Latin Americans as an ethnic community.

The Council and local service providers have made good use of existing staff language and cultural resources to reach out to Latin Americans. Notwithstanding, Latin Americans continue to face considerable structural barriers to accessing services, including: language and cultural barriers; employment-related barriers; barriers to accessing affordable and good quality housing; barriers to schooling and education; and health service barriers. These are accentuated by central government cuts in funding to local authorities, restructuring of services, stratification of immigration statuses and entitlement, and Census 'invisibility'.

Recommendations

- Southwark has a number of 'hidden communities' who are especially vulnerable, including some Latin Americans. To ensure that vulnerable individuals and groups are supported to develop resilience, continue working with community groups around issues identified in the report;
- Continue to facilitate use of staff and volunteer language and cultural resources;
- Where possible, support training and outreach efforts, especially where these aim to combine language and rights / entitlements teaching;
- Letters and written information is not always the most effective medium for reaching all sectors of the community: consider also where appropriate using community media, and reaching out via libraries and other trusted services;
- Facilitate fora that bring service providers from different areas of provision together to reflect on challenges and issues, and to share good practice initiatives across service areas;
- Work with GP practices and health practitioners in general to ensure accessibility in this crucial area.

Introduction

Global cities like London are increasingly characterised by the ‘super-diversity’ and ‘thrown-togetherness’ of their residents, referring not only to increased ethnic diversity, but also to a range of additional interacting variables, including country of origin, language, religion, migration channel and immigration status, as well as distinct gender, age, and generational profiles of different migrant groups.¹ These ‘new’ differences interact with growing socio-economic inequality and with ‘old’ ethnic diversity to create complex patterns of diversity and vulnerability.

The impact of new diversity is particularly felt at the local authority and neighbourhood level and poses challenges to planning and delivering services, especially in a period of central government funding cuts to local authorities. In this context, Southwark seeks to support and develop greater community resilience and independence among its residents. New migrant groups may experience particular vulnerabilities and face distinct barriers to accessing services, originally set up to serve more stable and settled groups of residents.

This research report focuses on the challenges and barriers to service access experienced by Latin American residents in Southwark. Latin Americans are a relatively new migrant group in London, and Southwark has become a hub for this growing community. Latin Americans contribute palpably and visibly to Southwark, and the borough is frequently host to cultural events and festivals with a Latin American flavour.

The report firstly provides a brief profile of Latin American residents in Southwark. It then describes and analyses the multiple and interacting challenges faced by Latin Americans in accessing services, and provides examples of measures that service providers have taken to facilitate access for the community. Finally, the report makes recommendations to service providers and planners on how to support and facilitate resilience, which will also be relevant for other new and growing migrant groups in Southwark and elsewhere.

Research methods

The report is based on a series of qualitative interviews and workshops with service providers in the third and the public sector across the borough, supported and facilitated by Southwark Council and the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS). All efforts were made to be as inclusive as possible within the time and resource constraints of the project.

A separate report analyses specially commissioned Census tables to give a detailed overview of the Latin American population in Southwark at the time of the most recent Census (2011), see Anna Krausova, ‘*Latin Americans in Southwark: A Census Analysis Report*’. All references to Census data in this report refer to the Census Analysis Report.

Appendix 1 and 2 provide further details.

The Southwark context

Southwark is a central London borough and, like the rest of London, has in the past twenty years seen an increase in the non-UK born share of residents and a diversification of countries of origin of its residents. As a result, the borough is today characterised by considerable and growing linguistic and

¹ (Berg, Gidley, & Sigona, 2015; Massey, 2005; Poppleton, Hitchcock, Lymperopoulou, Simmons, & Gillespie, 2013; Vertovec, 2007).

ethnic diversity, and represents a typical site of urban 'super-diversity'.² The borough's overall population is growing amid high levels of deprivation and high population density.³ While social housing estates in Southwark have relatively stable white British and minority ethnic settlements, the private rented sector is characterised by considerable residential churn.

Northern parts of the borough are within walking distance of the City and centres of financial, political, and cultural power. This proximity, in combination with wider economic and social trends, including regeneration, means that the socio-economic profile of residents is changing with more professional, managerial and relatively affluent people moving in.⁴ As a result, the borough is increasingly marked by stark and visible juxtapositions of wealth and deprivation among its diverse residents.

Diversity in Southwark: More than 120 languages are spoken in Southwark; about one in ten households have no members with English as their first language; three quarters of reception-age children in the borough are from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Fully 39 per cent of its residents (an estimated 113,667 people) were born outside of the UK and more than half of all live births in the borough in 2011 were to foreign-born mothers. New and growing demographic groups in the UK including 'white other' and 'mixed' ethnicities, and African and Latin American ethnicities represent a relatively larger share of Southwark's population compared to the national average.⁵

To sum up, the population in the borough is fluid and stratified and consists of many small and internally differentiated groups with varying degrees of service entitlement, different needs and expectations of services and how they are delivered, and different degrees of visibility to service providers. In these respects, the Southwark context is similar to that of other central London boroughs, constituting both a dynamic and a challenging environment in which to plan and deliver services to residents.

The remainder of the report will focus on barriers to service access for Latin American residents in Southwark specifically, but the issues discussed and the recommendations to address them will be applicable to other groups as well.

Latin Americans in Southwark

Latin Americans constitute a recent and growing migrant community in the UK and London with considerable internal diversity, including in country of origin, 'passport nationality', languages spoken (mainly Spanish and Portuguese), and migration trajectories and legal status.⁶ Degrees of entitlement to services and vulnerability vary considerably between those with EU vs. those with Latin American passports, but European passport-holders often face similar difficulties to Latin American passport-holders in terms of employment and language barriers, and recognition of qualifications as discussed below. A proportion of the community comprise especially vulnerable groups, including trafficked women, women on spousal visas, and families with no recourse to public funds.⁷

² On population growth, see Next Steps on Developing Long Term Plans for the Delivery of New Council Homes, 22 July 2014, paragraph 98. On the role of international migration as share of the population in Southwark, see The Migration Observatory London Census Profile: <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/london-census-profile>. See also Poppleton et al. (2013).

³ The borough is one of the twelve most deprived in London, while also being home to many affluent residents, see Key Southwark Housing Data January 2013.

⁴ See <http://www.economist.com/blogs/blighty/2013/09/mapping-gentrification>.

⁵ Refer to Census analysis report & Census 2011. See also Hidden Communities reports.

⁶ See (McIlwaine, 2007; McIlwaine, Cock, & Linneker, 2011; Però, 2008; Román-Velázquez, 1999)

⁷ As evidenced in the range of users seen by LAWRS and IRMO. See also (McIlwaine, 2015).

What the 2011 Census tells us and what it cannot tell us

'Latin American' was not included as an ethnic group in the Census, and because Latin Americans in the borough come from many different countries each representing only a small proportion of the total population, they are to a degree, like other new and internally diverse migrant groups, 'invisible' in the census as a group, constituting Southwark's 'hidden communities'.⁸ There are indications of their presence in the Census in the fact that Spanish appears as the second most spoken language in Southwark by those residents who *mainly* spoke another language than English (but not all Latin Americans are Spanish-speakers). The invisibility of Latin Americans in the Census is further compounded by the sizeable proportion who have migrated to Southwark via other European countries, and therefore often hold EU passports; for census purposes they would count only as European nationals. In the context of this report, the country of birth measure therefore gives a more accurate picture of the Latin American population than nationality does, but even so the actual number of Latin Americans living in Southwark is likely to be higher than the Census suggests.⁹ Acknowledging the difficulties in estimating the size of the Latin American community in the UK as a whole, the total Latin American population in London has been estimated as 113,578 including irregular migrants and second generation Latin Americans. This means that the Latin American community in London is about the same size as the Polish and ethnic Chinese communities.¹⁰

In Southwark specifically, the Census counted about 8,000 Latin America-born residents in Southwark, with Colombia and Brazil-born residents representing approximately half of the total between them (2,268 and 2,036 residents respectively), and Ecuador and Bolivia being the other main countries of origin (982 and 831 residents respectively). The overall Latin American-born population constituted just under three per cent of the total population in Southwark, or eight per cent of the Southwark residents who were born outside of the UK.

Does the Census have 100% coverage? The purpose of the census is to provide a count of people and households along with their characteristics. However, the census does not have 100 per cent coverage as some people and households are inevitably missed, and the extent of undercounting is likely to be concentrated among certain groups based on their characteristics; those without a fixed address or migrants without status are likely to be under-counted.

Service providers were generally well aware of the difficulties of estimating the true size of the community, including also complexities related to citizenship and belonging:

I notice that many Latin Americans say that they are Spanish. This could be for many reasons, they could feel identified with Spanish culture after living there for so many years, they might also have the perception that if they do not say that they are from Spain they might not be able to access some services. I am mentioning this because it can have an impact on the counting of the Latin Americans in Southwark (English for Action).

All service providers interviewed for the report agreed that they see more Latin American service users now than they did a few years ago, but whether this reflects that the community is growing or increasing its visibility, or both, is difficult to establish:

⁸ Families and hardship in new and established communities in Southwark (Pharoah & Hopwood, 2013).

⁹ For more detail and discussion please see the Census Analysis Report. For pioneering work to estimate the size of the Latin American population in London, and description of the living and working conditions of Latin Americans, see (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

¹⁰ (McIlwaine, 2015; McIlwaine et al., 2011).

I have been working in Southwark for 15 years [and] ... in the last 5 years the numbers [of Latin Americans] have increased tremendously, and with this, their needs for information and advice. ... The characteristics of the community have changed too. Five years ago, we used to see more people who came directly from Latin America ... [but] most of the Latin Americans who have arrived in the last 5 years have an EU passport. This difference in immigration status has an impact on what welfare benefits the community can access; those who have EU passports have more entitlements than those who do not, and they become more noticeable to services because they are requesting these entitlements (GM, Advising London).

However, awareness of the Latin American presence is not even across all services. E.g., a mental health professional and council officers working in mental health expressed concern about mental health services not being sufficiently aware of the community.

Age and educational qualifications profiles, and household characteristics

Latin American residents in Southwark are overwhelmingly of working age (up to 97 per cent for some national groups). Bolivia- and Ecuador-born residents additionally have an above-average share of under-16 year olds. This points to either families from these countries being more likely to migrate together, or Bolivian and Ecuadorean children and adolescents undertaking migration on their own. By contrast, Southwark residents born in Argentina, Chile, and Peru are more likely to be over the age of 59, most likely reflecting that residents from these countries have lived in the UK longer, and are now ageing. In any case, there is a population of Latin America-born children and young people in the borough, and as discussed below, they often face particular challenges in accessing schooling and education.

Many Latin Americans arrive in the UK with qualifications, but, partly because of the language barrier, they are often unable to find employment to match. Argentina-, Mexico-, Venezuela- and Chile-born Southwark residents differ from other Latin American-born residents by their level of higher education. Ecuador-, Bolivia- and Colombia-born residents by contrast have a relatively lower rate of higher education.

Overall, of the 7,558 Latin American-born residents aged 16 and over in 2011, 30 per cent held some type of secondary school or similar qualification (including GCSEs, A-levels and apprenticeships), 32 per cent were educated to degree level or higher, 30 per cent held other types of qualifications (including overseas qualifications of unknown level), and the rest (14 per cent) held no qualifications. Overall, Latin Americans born in South American countries were more likely to be unqualified and in particular less likely to have a higher education qualification than those born in Central America or the Caribbean. Most starkly, while 31 per cent of residents born in South America living in Southwark has a university degree or similar qualification, this stood at 62 per cent for residents born in Central America. This implies that there are important differences between the reasons for and experiences of migration within the Latin American community in Southwark (for more detail, see Census Analysis Report). Unfortunately, the Census does not include information of the particular types of qualifications held.

As a group, Latin Americans are heavily concentrated in the cleaning sector, where they often work for sub-contractors and multinationals cleaning offices and commercial and public buildings. Cleaning work is generally poorly paid and has unsocial working hours, which have important consequences for the opportunities for Latin Americans to participate fully in community life and learn English.¹¹

¹¹ E.g., 80 per cent of IRMO's users work in cleaning jobs. Other studies have also noted the concentration of Latin Americans in the cleaning sector despite relatively high levels of qualifications (McIlwaine, 2007; Però, 2008).

Notwithstanding these considerable barriers, service providers agreed that it is relatively easy to engage Latin Americans.

Overall, Latin American households in Southwark tend to be larger than the overall average for the borough, and many families live in over-crowded conditions, known to affect children's educational attainment in a negative way (see also 'Access to schooling and education' below). Like other new migrant groups, Latin Americans are attracted to Southwark because of its central location and the availability of cheap – but sometimes sub-standard – housing in the private rented sector. This is somewhat paradoxical because there is also an overall housing shortage in the borough.¹²

Ethnic recognition

Southwark Council has developed good relationships with the community and was the first local authority to give ethnic recognition to Latin Americans following a successful campaign by community groups. Following Southwark's lead, other London boroughs including Lambeth, Hackney, and Islington have followed suit. Service providers agree that ethnic recognition has led to increased visibility and awareness of the Latin American presence in London, and that this has had a positive effect on community initiatives:

I think the [ethnic] recognition has had an impact. ... This might mean that the local authority is paying attention to the Latin Americans and their needs for this type of services, which might not have happened without the official recognition ... For example, in the business sector, Southwark Council funded the creation of Latin Elephant, which is a project to give voice to the Latin American businesses in the area. So, I think there is an impact. ... However, we still need to work on having more tangible impacts from the recognition of the Latin Americans in Southwark (GM, Advising London).

Given the likelihood of significant undercounting in the Census, ethnic recognition is especially important, and will over time help Southwark and community groups to establish a more accurate profile of the Latin American population in the borough and its needs. It is therefore important that ethnic monitoring forms for all services across the borough include Latin American as a category, and that information from the forms is systematically gathered.

The Elephant and Castle area: a hub for Latin Americans

The Latin American presence in Southwark has been growing since the early 1990s, and the Elephant and Castle area in particular has a lively cluster of Latin American cafes, restaurants, and shops, attracting Latin Americans from across London and regionally for shopping and leisure: an audit in the area in late 2014 found approximately 80 Latin American-owned shops and businesses.¹³ The area is also host to cultural events with a Latin flavour, including the *Carnaval del pueblo*, which was established by pioneer migrants and hosted in Southwark because of the council's community engagement initiatives and openness to hosting the event:

Back in the 1990s, all the London boroughs told me they didn't want to host a Latin American carnival because they didn't have any Latin American residents, only Southwark was interested. ... Lots of the cafes and businesses in the Elephant and Castle area were kick-started by the carnival. ... The council has always been very supportive of everything we do, and we have

¹² Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043, available here:

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/4180/southwark_housing_strategy_to_2043.

¹³ (Román-Velázquez, 2014; Social Life, 2015). See also <http://latinelephant.org/>.

shown the economic impact ... we can get businesses going, it's about the local economy. When we started we didn't think about it in terms of 'entrepreneurship', we were just doing things. ... It has been an empowering experience, and people can actually make a living out of it. [NR, Carnaval del Pueblo]

To tell the story of Latin Americans in Southwark is therefore also partly to tell a story of effective community engagement.¹⁴

To sum up, Latin Americans are a diverse and growing migrant group in Southwark, who have over the years engaged constructively with the council via campaigns for ethnic recognition, and via cultural and economic contributions to the borough. There is widespread consensus among service providers that Latin Americans often seem to find it harder than other migrant groups to have their service needs met, whether because of specific access issues, language and cultural barriers, or because the community is growing faster than services can respond.

Access to and provision of services for Latin Americans in Southwark

Like most other recent migrant groups, Latin Americans face multiple and interrelated barriers to accessing services, including: language and cultural barriers; employment-related barriers; barriers to accessing affordable and good quality housing; barriers to schooling and education; and health service barriers.¹⁵ Service providers generally had a nuanced understanding of the barriers their clients faced and discussed them within the wider socio-economic context of other service users, migrant or otherwise, and a complex and changing bureaucratic system.

Some barriers that Latin American residents face are specifically related to their status as a recent non-Commonwealth immigrant group with a poor grasp of English (similar to Chinese immigrants), some are shared with other recent migrant groups including those who do speak English (e.g., those from Anglophone African countries), and others again are shared by all those who work in low-pay and precarious jobs, migrants or not. Some barriers are further complicated by gender and immigration status. Community groups and service providers expressed concerns regarding the vulnerabilities of some Latin Americans, while also praising them as a group for their resilience, strong work ethic, and levels of community support.

Language and cultural barriers and the need for 'literacy in how the system works'

Like other recent non-Commonwealth migrants to the UK, many Latin Americans do not speak English on arrival, and this makes it difficult to access jobs outside of cleaning, and to participate fully in wider society.¹⁶ Because Latin Americans often work almost exclusively with other Latin Americans in cleaning jobs, they are not picking up more than very rudimentary English in their workplaces. Not speaking English also puts Latin Americans at a distinct disadvantage for engaging with the council and other service providers. Unsurprisingly therefore, the language barrier was identified by all service providers as highly significant, and was also reflected in demand for the Council's translation service in

¹⁴ There is some uncertainty over the future of Latin American businesses in the area as the regeneration process proceeds.

¹⁵ For Latin Americans in London specifically, see also (Carlisle, 2006; McIlwaine et al., 2011).

¹⁶ Several studies of Latin Americans in London discuss the language barrier in depth, see e.g. (Carlisle, 2006; Granada, 2013; McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 35).

2014-15, where Spanish accounted for 17.7 per cent of all face-to-face translation requests and 39.1 per cent of requests via telephone, a far higher number of requests than any other languages.¹⁷

Latin Americans in many respects have the same needs as other Southwark residents, including advice and services relating to benefits, debts, housing, immigration, and employment, but the language barrier means that they face greater difficulties in accessing appropriate support. Advice via word of mouth and a strong internal support structure within the Latin American community mitigates the impact of this, but word of mouth does not always convey the complexity of rules and entitlements for individuals.

Recognising the language barrier, many service providers have made creative use of staff and volunteer language skills to reach out to Latin Americans. Those who offer services in Spanish have seen a considerable surge in demand especially in the past 3-5 years. Latin Americans themselves also mobilise considerable agency and resilience, and are quick to access services when language is not a barrier. They often use a 'trial and error' approach, i.e. asking for support in accessing other services as well, sometimes leading to service provider saturation as illustrated here:

CT, LAWRS: [Latin Americans] attend all services where Spanish is spoken, and try to see where they can get the help they need. This causes saturation of the accessible services for needs that might be out of the area of expertise of that service.

CN, East St Library: Latin Americans come to this library because a friend has told them that there is someone who speaks Spanish and helps with information, so they feel confident coming to a person that will speak in Spanish with them, someone who understands their needs. ... Sometimes the library becomes like a GP surgery. ... They come for any kind of thing, how to enrol their children into school, looking for English classes, benefits, how to register to vote, anything, you name it. It is like a focal point for the community. ... It would seem that the Latin Americans do not have many places that cover their needs for information and support. ... They are new in the UK and they have no knowledge of how things work in the UK. ... They are missing information or places to go.

Many service providers emphasised that the language barrier was linked to an overall poor understanding of 'how things work':

MW, Pembroke House: Latin Americans need basic literacy in how the system works, more signposting to services, and training in how to make basic telephone calls to the council.

SC, CAB: You can send out letters, like the council does, but they are very difficult to understand if you don't understand and read English. Translating alone is not going to help, it's also about context: these are complex issues. You need to sit with people and explain in their own language.

As well as lacking a 'basic literacy' in how the system works, service providers also commented that Latin Americans tend not to expect much of public services in terms of entitlements. If they are at all able to get by and manage, they prefer not to claim any benefits, including working tax credit and child benefit.

Linking language teaching at affordable rates and at times when Latin Americans are able to go to classes with training in basic rights and entitlements, and how to access services can therefore be doubly effective. E.g., UNISON, recognising the importance of language skills for their members, offers free English language classes on Saturdays, including free child care. The classes also include basic employment rights education. Blackfriars is exploring innovative ways of reaching Latin Americans,

¹⁷ Data supplied by Southwark Council.

including via employers and GP practices that have Latin Americans among their patients. The idea is to provide the classes in accessible venues, and to combine language teaching with teaching basic rights and information about life in the UK, and how to engage with services. Classes given via employers could lead to recognised qualifications, e.g. in food hygiene; classes in GP practices could focus on health issues and accessing health services, so employers and GP practices would benefit too.

To sum up, language barriers to accessing services are closely linked to wider issues of inclusion and engagement and solutions will need to address these wider issues holistically if they are to be effective. As the next section details, the characteristics of jobs in cleaning and hospitality make it particularly difficult for Latin Americans to improve their English language skills.

Employment-related barriers

All service providers commented that Latin Americans are hard-working, that the vast majority are in employment, and that they often find jobs through word of mouth. However without English language skills, it is difficult for Latin Americans to find jobs that match their qualifications:

AP, JCP/DWP: Latin Americans are very good at getting jobs quickly. Approximately 80 per cent of Latin Americans of working age are in employment, and on Spanish or Portuguese passports.¹⁸ But there is a big issue of why they work below their qualifications, including in cleaning and hospitality. They work, earn their salaries, pay their taxes; they are entitled to be here, but we are losing something – they have qualifications that are not being used. Employers like Latin American workers: they work hard, and they have a good attitude for customer service, which is important especially for those working in the hospitality sector.

Service providers commented that the cleaning sector, which provides jobs for many Latin Americans, is largely unregulated. Service users at legal advice clinics present with issues of retention of payment, non-payment of wages, pay below minimum wage, unfair dismissal, non-payment of sick pay, issues regarding holiday entitlements, and discrimination.¹⁹

Because so many Latin Americans work in low-pay jobs, they often have to combine several jobs with different employers in order to get by, which can have an impact on entitlements. In some cases, the threshold for accessing services is set in such a way that Latin Americans are simply unable to access them. E.g., most Latin Americans are in employment, and do not receive income-related benefits (although some may be entitled to it), and are therefore not considered a ‘priority group’, therefore they do not qualify for ESOL language classes.²⁰ However, their pay is often so low that they cannot afford to pay for classes at market rates. Many thus experience downward social mobility and find themselves trapped in low-paying jobs despite qualifications from home. In turn, fragmented, unsociable, and unpredictable hours make it difficult for them to attend language classes regularly and to participate fully in community life.²¹ To illustrate, split work shifts can make it difficult for Latin American parents to be fully involved in their children’s education as observed by a teacher interviewed for the report.

¹⁸ This observation is supported by the *No Longer Invisible* report, the most comprehensive study of Latin Americans in London (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

¹⁹ See also *The Invisible workforce: Employment practices in the cleaning sector* (Equality and human rights commission, 2014).

²⁰ For discussion, see (Granada, 2013, p. chapter 5).

²¹ See also (Carlisle, 2006; Granada, 2013; McIlwaine et al., 2011).

To sum up, it is important that language classes are made affordable and accessible for Latin Americans and other groups working in low-pay jobs at unsociable hours. This would support communities and families and ensure that the wider society benefits from the skills and talents of Latin Americans.

Housing

Service providers widely agreed that access to housing is a serious concern for Latin Americans in the borough as it is for other groups too. There is a significant shortage of affordable housing in Southwark, reflecting a London-wide problem. Notwithstanding, the borough has a niche market of relatively cheap private housing, some of it of sub-standard quality, and sometimes operated by rogue landlords, and it is in this section of the housing market that many Latin Americans and other recent migrant groups find themselves.²² Latin Americans are also attracted to Southwark because they have friends and family members living in the borough, and because of the Latin American shops and services in the Elephant and Castle area. However, the language barrier, low incomes, and, in some cases, insufficient understanding of the system, puts many Latin Americans in vulnerable positions vis-à-vis private landlords.

IRMO: Abuses by landlords and agencies affect everyone in London, but especially recently arrived immigrants. Many live in extremely over-crowded conditions, e.g. a whole family in one room, sharing toilet and kitchen with other families.

It is well established that poor and substandard housing affects children and the disabled especially, with potentially long-term adverse effects on health, well-being, and educational attainment, and service providers were acutely aware of this.²³

SC, CAB: Housing is a particular problem [for Latin Americans in Southwark]. There are issues of substandard private rented accommodation and overcrowding; housing that is unsafe in terms of fire hazards, dampness, and electrical wiring. People move from one substandard accommodation to another.

The detailed census analysis supports the observation about over-crowding, although it is likely to under-report the true scale of the problem. According to the Census, the majority of residents in Southwark lived in 1-2 person households (63 per cent), with another 29 per cent in 3-4 person households and only eight per cent in household with more than five members. However, when looking at Latin American households in particular, the picture is quite different. Of Latin American households, only 47 per cent lived in smaller (1-2 person) households, while 14 per cent lived in households with five or more members, but there is substantial variations between different Latin American groups. E.g., a third (33 per cent) of households with a Bolivia-born reference person and a quarter (24 per cent) of Ecuadorean-headed households had five or more members. Yet it is difficult for Latin American residents to access better quality accommodation:

English for Action: The current renting requirements leave people without options. [Landlords] request a deposit, at least one month of rent, and agency fees. For many people these are really high costs. ... Also, this type of living brings a lot abuse from landlords. There are many people

²² See (Pharoah & Hopwood, 2013). Across the UK as a whole, recent migrants are overwhelmingly living in private rented accommodation. Private lettings are often informal, sometimes without legal agreements, and some involve illegally converted outbuildings or obliging people to share with strangers. See <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2012/what-is-the-evidence-about-migrant-living-conditions-in-the-private-rented-sector-and-how-could-they-be-improved/>. At the time of writing, Southwark is about to launch a publicity campaign aimed at private landlords to register for the council licencing schemes, there will be a 20% discount for landlords applying before the end of June 2016.

²³ (Harker & Shelter, 2006).

who have been evicted without previous notice. ... If tenants request help in this area, the landlords then start threats and harassment for people to leave their places. ... There does not seem to be a service tackling this issue at any level.

Service providers suggested that some Latin Americans may be living in irregularly sub-let council flats, without realising that it is illegal. Service providers also reported a low take-up of housing benefits among Latin American service users who are entitled to it, again suggesting the need for engagement and education around life in the UK.

Some service providers found that recent migrants have been adversely affected by the requirement that landlords check the immigration status of tenants. Because of the complexity of the requirement, landlords prefer to turn away migrants rather than risk being fined. The Council's social housing letting policy requiring 5 years' residence to qualify for social housing, will particularly affect recent migrants, while language and cultural issues mean that many recent migrants are not aware of benefits rights and entitlements.

Initiatives to register private landlords and to require minimum standards would be welcomed by providers, but it is also necessary to carefully consider and monitor the potentially adverse effects on the most vulnerable with the lowest ability to pay, including recent migrants, people with disabilities and low-income families with young children, who may be pushed even further into a niche market of unregulated private lettings.

Gender specific challenges

Overall, the Latin American population in Southwark has a fairly equal gender split, with 50.3 per cent male and 49.7 per cent female residents, which is presentative of the total population of Southwark, which as of 2011 was 49.5 per cent male and 50.5 per cent female. However, some national groups are skewed: 54 per cent of Brazil-born and 56 per cent of Chile-born residents in Southwark were male in 2011. By contrast, 57 per cent of Peru-born residents in the borough were female.

Service providers agreed that women tend to be more affected by the language barrier than men, suggesting that services targeted at women and children should be especially encouraged to include Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking staff and volunteers.

Services supporting women affected by domestic violence reported a number of culturally embedded barriers for Latin American women in addition to the language barrier. These included a lack of trust in the police and authorities more generally, making women reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence, and a 'normalisation' of gender-based violence in intimate relationships:

Solace: There is a high need for information, especially around healthy relationships. It has been my experience that there are many Latin American women who can't recognise when they are in a violent or coercive relationship ... it has become a normalised way of interaction between the couple and family. This is also relevant because I had some cases where the social circle was very harsh and made the women feel guilty as if they had done something very wrong by denouncing their aggressive partner. ... Many women still only depend on their friends' advice to make decisions due to their lack of interaction with other parts of the community, including services. ... They endure these situations because many of them come from hard or socially insecure situations in their home countries. Therefore, many of them see living like that as a norm, even when they are in countries where they don't necessarily need to live like that. This also impedes them from accessing the right help.

Thus, women can become trapped in violent relationships because language and cultural barriers make it difficult for them to seek support in a socially legitimate manner, suggesting a need for culturally sensitive service outreach, and the need to support community-based groups that can reach vulnerable women. Just like for other groups, the availability of affordable and accessible housing is important to enable women to leave abusive relationships.

Access to schooling and education

Latin American community groups were concerned about the difficulties faced by many of their users in accessing schooling for their children. A number of contributory factors are at play, including lack of information for parents about the in-year admissions process, clearly related to language and related barriers described above.

Community groups agreed that there has been an increase in families arriving and waiting for school places, and that some schools are reluctant to take children who do not speak English because of a lack of resources. Council staff commented that Spanish is one of the better languages to have in Southwark because many schools provide it already, and so Spanish-speaking pupils are relatively easy to place, except in years 10 and 11 when schools are under pressure to produce good GCSE results, although schools can apply for exemption so that the results of newly arrived EAL children are not counted towards the overall school results. Southwark's In-Year Admissions team have developed clear processes to find school places for newly arrived children and young people through a Fair Access Protocol, which means that all schools know what other schools are doing and understand the need to pull their weight. It can however be difficult to place children on visitor visas, and schools have different policies vis-à-vis this group.

As with other services, a major stumbling block for parents is insufficient English and a lack of awareness of how the system works:

English for Action: There is a lack of information around education, many parents are not aware of the education system and they send their children to classes without really knowing what the levels, exams, or steps are.

LAWRS, IRMO and other community groups work with the council's schools admissions team, helping newly arrived migrant children access schools, and provide much needed translation and orientation on procedures. Together, LAWRS and Southwark have produced a Spanish-language schools leaflet for parents specifically for Southwark (*Manual Educación*), and there is clearly a need for up-to-date and detailed information as well as support for families and young people when they arrive in Southwark.

Once children are enrolled in schools, there are issues around language: learning English to a sufficient level in time for key assessments such as GCSEs, as well as maintaining a good level of written and spoken Spanish or Portuguese. This is how a secondary school teacher explained the situation in his boys-only school, which has a relatively high proportion of Latin American children:

Some families arrive here and the boys come to school in 1-2 weeks, but some have been out of school for up to a year. The Latino boys we see are mainly here as a result of secondary migration from Spain, but some come direct from [Latin America]. ... Parents often don't realise the importance of GCSEs, e.g. 15-year-olds might not be able to speak English well enough to be able to get good grades. ... There's a lot of ignorance about how things work. Parents say they come here to give their children a better future, but the rupture and upheaval of migrating has a negative effect on the children.

Many Latin American families resident in Southwark were separated at some point, e.g. because parents migrated from Latin America to Spain and left the children in Latin America while they were trying to create stable conditions in Spain. In some cases, children were only reunited with their parents several years later and the experience was then repeated when parents migrated from Spain to the UK. Many children and adolescents of Latin American parentage therefore arrive at schools in Southwark with a history of family instability and separation. This is how the teacher quoted above described the children he works with:

Many have self-esteem issues so it is not good to put them in a lower grade for academic reasons. Many kids don't want to be here, they miss their friends, school, the weather, the food. They might have been born in Spain or spent most of their childhood there, they can't speak the language here. ... In classes they tend to be placid, passive, as if they want to be invisible. ... The 'Spanish' kids [i.e. of Latin American parentage, but who have migrated to Southwark from Spain] are very resentful of having to learn another language. It reflects that they don't want to be here. Direct migrant kids make a big effort to learn the language.

To sum up, the council has established a good precedent in working with community groups to disseminate much-needed information in community languages, and in making access procedures transparent. However, there are continuing issues around ensuring sufficient EAL provision at key 'pinch points'. As well as the language barrier and the challenge of providing up-to-date and accurate information in an area where policies change frequently, access to schools is also dependent on immigration status discussed below.

Immigration status

Immigration status was seen as a major issue for Latin Americans in Southwark by many service providers, who cited an unmet need for affordable, reliable and accurate immigration advice. A recurrent problem, well-known to the council, is sub-standard immigration 'advisors'.

CAB: People pay for sub-standard immigration advice. ... There is a real crisis in access to good quality, affordable immigration advice. ... I have fears about people paying for poor quality immigration advice, it's often people from within the communities who are exploiting people.

The issue needs to be understood in the context of increasingly complex immigration legislation and a proliferation of immigration statuses with different levels of entitlements. In the words of a legal advisor with over ten years' experience in the field, the differentiation in entitlements for different kinds of benefit has become 'extremely and unbelievably complicated' with distinctions between EU and non-EU nationals complicated by non-EU residents who are married to EU nationals or whose children have EU or UK citizenship.

Related to the general lack of understanding of how 'the system' works, many residents who seek legal advice are not able to document the length of their residence in the UK, needed to prove their entitlement; they may have moved and changed job many times, they may have multiple employers and their income may go up and down from week to week. Many service users have not kept pay slips and tenancy agreements going back 5-8 years, or may have been paid cash in hand and/or rented without contracts without realising that this would have an impact on their entitlements in the future, and in any case having little power to change their situation.

A particular issue of concern for immigration advisors, is family reunification cases. As recounted above, many Latin Americans who arrive in London have left family behind in either their country of origin or in another European country, often Spain, and hope to reunite with their family once they have established themselves. Given their concentration in low-pay and part-time jobs, they have been

especially affected by the threshold of a minimum annual salary of £18,000 from a sole employer to be entitled to family reunion.

Health

It is well documented that migrants face multiple barriers to accessing health care, including language barriers and restricted interpretation services, inhospitable and sometimes hostile GP surgery staff, and cultural insensitivity among some frontline service providers. Depending on immigration status, some migrants have been required to pay for some health services since October 2014, creating barriers especially for pregnant women and mothers with young children. Confusion and lack of knowledge among both health providers and migrants around entitlement to some types of care particularly for undocumented migrants and migrants with uncertain immigration status (incl. visa over-stayers, refused asylum seekers, those who have been trafficked into the UK, and spousal migrants escaping domestic violence), mean that migrants are not always able to access the care they need.²⁴

In the context of this report more specifically, several service providers pointed out that Latin Americans, like other recent migrant groups, do not always understand or know about the full range of services offered by GPs, or appreciate the difference between primary and secondary care providers. The many and frequent changes in entitlements make word of mouth particularly unreliable, and many Latin Americans therefore do not understand or know what their entitlements are, or how to access care. There is especially a need for effective pathways to secondary health care, including mental health services.

Healthwatch Southwark reported that one of the priorities for the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is to change attitudes about how people use services, but expressed concern that if a large community such as the Latin Americans do not know what the changes are, attitudes are unlikely to change.

In a focus group for Latin American women, conducted by LAWRS and Healthwatch Southwark, participants felt that health professionals do not have sufficient cultural knowledge about the Latin American community. The same focus group also identified challenges in registering with GP surgeries, difficulties in making appointments, and in accessing interpretation services, and negative attitudes from GP surgery staff. In addition, women explained that some GP surgeries ask for passports when registering people. Participants reported that they use private healthcare in addition to or instead of NHS services that they may be entitled to.²⁵

Several service providers mentioned that mental health issues are stigmatised among Latin Americans. They suggested that there is a need for more awareness about this, at both individual and community level, including more engagement efforts to reach individuals and families needing mental health care and services. A member of the Psychology and Psychotherapy Diversity group within the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust explained:

Clearly the services are not growing as fast as the Latin American population. My knowledge of the Latin American community could be summarised to the extent that we – the mental health

²⁴ See (Jayaweera, 2014, pp. 5-6).

²⁵ See 'Community Focus Group with Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) Findings & Recommendations', July 2014, <http://healthwatchsouthwark.co.uk/reports>. Healthwatch Southwark has since brought up the issue with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and reported a tangible effort to stop it. For example, the CCG has been sending information to GPs to let them know that it is not necessary to ask for passports in order to register people. See also 'Latin Americans: a case for better access to sexual health services', March 2014, <http://www.clauk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CLAUK-and-NAZ-Latin-Americans-a-case-for-better-access.pdf>.

services – should be seeing more with the numbers of Latin Americans in our catchment area, but for some reason we are not. I have made a personal commitment to understand why not. ... Language is an important barrier, but I think there is more an issue of a lack of proper and effective outreach and engagement efforts from the mental health services. ... We need a type of outreach that helps people trust the services. ... From my conversations, it has been obvious that the Latin Americans do not know how to access secondary services such as mental health services. These are reached through GP referrals, but most Latin Americans do not know how to access them and professionals working with them are not clear about the referral path either.

The same health professional made the observation that community groups do a lot of work with their users, have good cultural knowledge and are trusted by their communities. However, there is a limit to their capacity, e.g. concerning severe cases of mental ill health. There is therefore a need for ‘a bridge’ between community groups and NHS mental health services. A good example would be the midwifery service, which runs a group for Spanish-speaking mothers, convened by two Latin American midwives. Another potential bridge could be provided by some of the qualified mental health practitioners among the Latin American population in Southwark who currently do not work in their professions, if training and guidance to practice in the UK could be extended to them.

As for other migrant groups and the population at large, health and wellbeing are related to socio-economic conditions; over-crowded accommodation, social isolation, poverty, work schedules and work stress, are all known to contribute to ill-health, including mental ill health.²⁶

²⁶ (Jayaweera, 2014).

Conclusion

Latin Americans face considerable structural barriers to accessing services; these are accentuated by central government cuts in funding to local authorities, restructuring of services, stratification of immigration statuses and entitlement, and Census 'invisibility'. Notwithstanding, Latin Americans contribute significantly to the borough, economically, socially, and culturally.

Southwark Council has developed good and constructive working relationships with community organisations including pioneering ethnic recognition, and frequently hosts events of a Latin American character. Other positive steps include the schools admissions leaflet written in collaboration with community groups. The Council and local service providers have made innovative and creative use of existing staff resources (especially in terms of language and cultural skills) to reach out to Latin Americans across the borough. These successful engagement initiatives have in some cases led to service saturation in some areas highlighting the need for accessibility across all services, including health services that were seen as especially difficult for Latin Americans to access.

Significant barriers to full inclusion remain, including especially language, employment, housing, and gender-related barriers. Some parts of the Latin American community are especially vulnerable, including women, children and young people, those with precarious immigration status, and those with mental health issues.

Recommendations

- Southwark has a number of 'hidden communities' who are especially vulnerable, including some Latin Americans. To ensure that vulnerable individuals and groups are supported to develop resilience, continue working with community groups around issues identified in the report. Community groups have the capacity to reach otherwise hard-to-reach groups, and understand cultural and other barriers for engagement;
- Continue to facilitate use of staff and volunteer language and cultural resources;
- Where possible, support training and outreach efforts, especially where these aim to combine language and rights / entitlements teaching. Such initiatives have the potential to build resilience and service cultural competence needed for effective engagement;
- Letters and written information is not always the most effective medium for reaching all sectors of the community: consider also where appropriate using community media incl. radio stations and community groups, and reaching out via libraries and other services that Latin Americans already access and trust;
- Facilitate fora that bring service providers from different areas of provision together to reflect on challenges and issues, and to share good practice initiatives across service areas;
- Work with GP practices and health practitioners in general to ensure accessibility in this crucial area.

Appendix 1: About the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship

Funded by an Impact Accelerator Award from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), *Servicing Super-Diversity* fostered knowledge exchange between the London Borough of Southwark (Southwark) and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, through a fellowship for Dr Mette Louise Berg (now at UCL). The fellowship included two interlinked, collaborative projects, including stakeholder and user engagement, review of existing literature, working and policy documents, and fieldwork. Specifically, *Servicing Super-Diversity* saw the placement of Berg within Southwark on a 50% full-time equivalent basis October 2014 – June 2015. Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) was a partner with regard to project 2 on Latin Americans in Southwark.

Research undertaken for this report specifically was underpinned by three overarching aims:

1. To seek ways of ensuring that super-diversity does not bring new forms of exclusion and inequality in service provision;
2. To generate insights of use to Southwark, as well as to other local councils across the UK and Europe;
3. To refine existing social science understandings of urban diversity, especially the ways in which high churn and migration-driven diversity interact with austerity and welfare reform.

The fellowship grew organically from COMPAS's and Berg's existing contact with Southwark and LAWRS. Specifically, Berg has conducted research in the Elephant and Castle area since May 2013 on Welfare, Neighbourhood and New Geographies of Diversity.

For more details, see:

http://www2.socsci.ox.ac.uk/knowledge_exchange/projects#Berg.

<http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/urbanchange/welfare-neighbourhood-and-new-geographies-of-diversity/>

Appendix 2: Organisations and individuals interviewed for the research

The research was conducted for and in collaboration with Southwark Council and Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS). The support of both was key in ensuring access to a large number of individuals and organisations.

All interviews and workshops were conducted by Mette Louise Berg (Knowledge Exchange Fellow, Oxford), Helen Laker (Southwark Council), and Cate Trejos (Latin American Women's Rights Service).

Southwark Council

A number of officers from Southwark Council contributed to the research either via individual interviews or participation in workshops. Efforts were made to include all services, and officers from the following areas participated: Children's and Adult's Services, Community Engagement, Corporate Strategy, Customer Service, Education, Housing, Improvement and Development, Mental Health, Public Health, Regeneration, Social Services, Young People's Services.

As well as interviews and workshops, the research also benefited from Berg's placement in Southwark and her chance to interact informally with council officers.

Third sector service providers

Most interviews with service providers took place face-to-face in the offices of the organisations and several involved more than one participant from the organisation. A few were conducted over the telephone.

Representative from the following organisations were interviewed:

Advising London, Age UK Southwark, Blackfriars Settlement, CAB, Cambridge House Law Centre, Carnaval del Pueblo, Coalition of Latin Americans UK (CLAUK), Department for Work and Pensions Job Centre Peckham, Draper's Hall T&RA, East St Library, English for Action, First Place Children's Centre, Healthwatch Southwark, IRMO Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation, Justice for cleaners, Latin American Disabled People's Project (LADPP), Latin American Recognition Campaign (LARC), Pembroke House, Solace, Southwark Carers, Southwark Works, St Thomas' School, Teléfono de la esperanza, Three cosas.

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