

Moving On: Reconnecting Frequent Movers



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On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

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SECTION 1:

Introduction and background

Frequent Moving and disadvantage

- 1.1 On the whole, population mobility is desirable and positive, contributing to economic prosperity, regeneration and a flexible labour market. But for some disadvantaged people, mobility can be less positive, damaging life chances and causing or compounding social exclusion.
- 1.2 The SEU's *Breaking the Cycle* report (2004) took stock of the Government's progress in tackling social exclusion and highlighted unstable accommodation as a barrier to people making improvements in other areas of their lives. It recognised that, for some, making and maintaining contact with key services, such as school or a GP, is a lesser priority than finding suitable accommodation.¹
- 1.3 The specific impact of high mobility in creating and compounding exclusion has not previously been explored. This report aims to put frequent moving on the policy map, raising awareness of mobility as an important but previously unexplored driver of disadvantage.
- 1.4 It is hoped that policy makers and service providers, particularly those at local and regional levels, will use this analysis to help plan and deliver better services for people who are mobile. Local responses to this issue are particularly important – the vast majority of the services that might address the needs of frequent movers are commissioned by local authorities and must be developed within this local context.

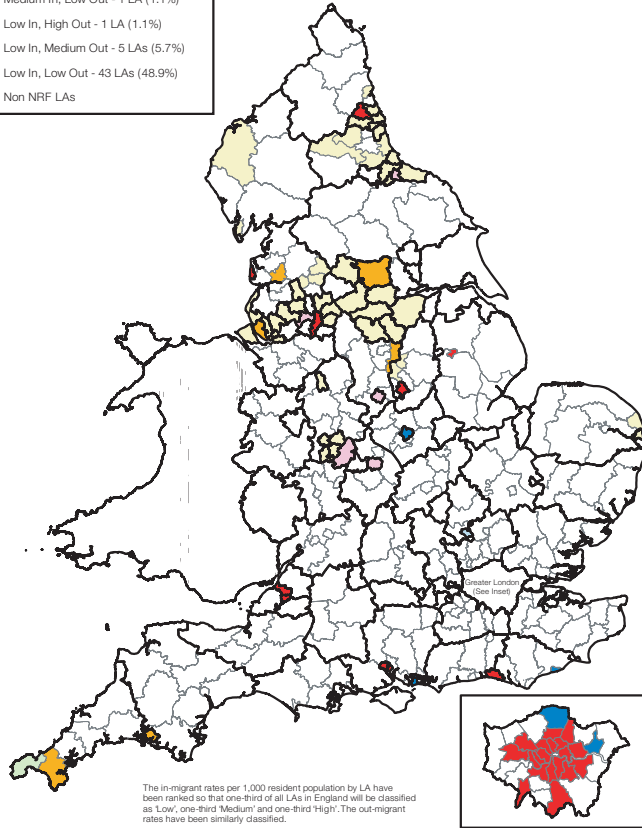
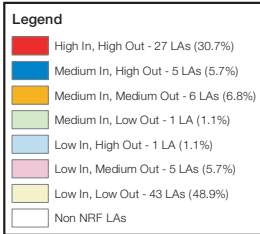
- 1.5 Though this report was developed with exclusion in mind, its potential benefits could apply to whole communities. Through its analysis of the ways in which vulnerable people could be supported, this work aims to contribute towards the long-term aims of reversing the effects of exclusion as well as promoting self-reliance and reinforcing individual rights, responsibilities and respect for those we live alongside.
- 1.6 Only where people feel confident, safe and supported are they empowered to come together with others in their neighbourhood to work together to build trust, shared values and agreed norms of respect for their community. Furthermore, if those who move into an area are responsible for anti-social behaviour and crime, they must be treated in the same way as every other person and be held accountable.
- 1.7 In common with other people and groups, frequent movers must accept the responsibility that comes along with their right to access the help and support they need. All of the analysis on how to improve services for frequent movers must be viewed in this context.

Available Evidence

- 1.8 From the available data on mobility, we know that there are varying levels of mobility in deprived areas, with population churn being either relatively stagnant or particularly high.

Figure 1: Population turnover for 88 local authorities receiving NRF mid-2003 to mid-2004

Migration Rates per 1,000 resident population for In and Out Internal and International Migrants classified as Low, Medium or High



NRF All Ages 88.mxd

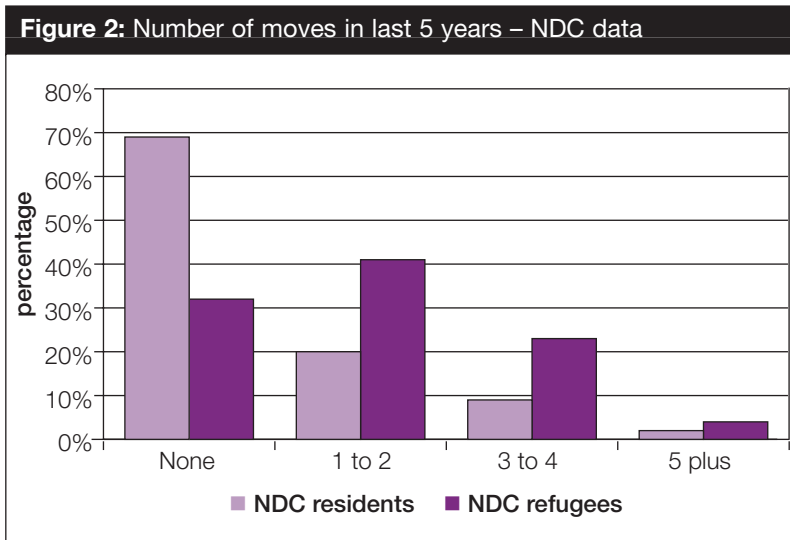
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- at one end of the spectrum there are areas of low population mobility – this may be a result of, and also contribute to, less dynamic local economies but;
- at the other end of the scale, a significant minority of areas (27) have high population turnover, with the highest rates most common in London boroughs.

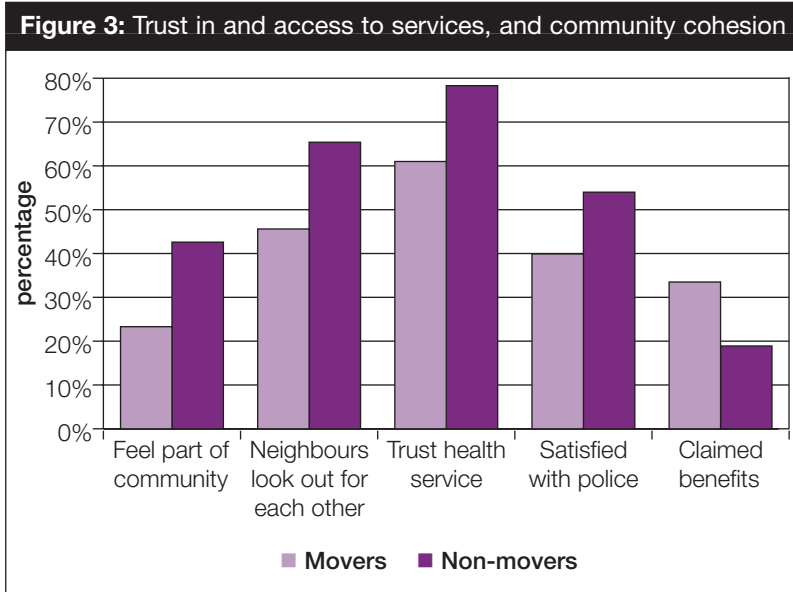
1.9 Whilst this gives an indication about the levels of mobility in areas of deprivation, we do not know how many of these moves were repeat or frequent moves or how many were problematic.

1.10 New Deal for Communities (NDC) data tells us slightly more and indicates a stronger link between disadvantage and frequent moving. The following graph shows that:

- Almost one in ten NDC residents are frequent movers – 9.7% have moved 3 times in the last 5 years.
- Over 27% of NDC residents have applied for refugee status since arriving in UK.
- Of these, 23% have moved 3 or 4 times – over 4% have moved more than 5 times in 5 years.



1.11 NDC data also gives an indication of some of the effects frequent moving can have on those who move and shows that, for some, moving can result in reduced social capital and poorer perception of services.



Data Source: New Deal for Communities survey, MORI, 2004

1.12 This shows us that, in comparison to non movers, frequent movers:

- Feel less like part of the community;
- Feel less like they are in a place where neighbours look out for each other;
- Feel less trusting of health services;
- Feel less satisfied with the police; and
- Are more likely to depend on benefits.²

SECTION 2:

Data on frequent moving

2.1 Whilst the data set out in Section 1 does tell us about some of the effects of mobility, it does not give us a full picture. Limited data is collected about mobility making it difficult to quantify or fully understand the problem and research has concluded that more and better data should be collected to enable analysis of the patterns of movement among different sub-groups.³ The gaps in our understanding of the scale of frequent moving and the long-term effects of mobility form a barrier to our ability to develop appropriate and well-evidenced policy responses.

There are several key reasons why current surveys do not tend to capture data on frequent moving:

- 2.2 Most surveys do not ask questions that can capture data about frequent moving – the most commonly asked questions only tell us about the moves made in the previous year.
- 2.3 The majority of data sources are cross-sectional surveys rather than longitudinal studies that follow individuals over time.
- 2.4 Previous longitudinal surveys, such as the British Household Panel Study, suffer from too small sample sizes for sub-group analysis.
- 2.5 Surveys tracking households by their address are inherently more likely to lose highly mobile people from the sample over time.
- 2.6 Disadvantaged people in general and frequent movers in particular, are likely to be under represented in surveys such as the census (frequent moving makes it more difficult to include them). People living in temporary accommodation, communal establishments or living as part of other people's households are also less likely to be included.

2.7 Despite recognition that area turnover can contribute to downward pressure on disadvantaged areas, mobility is not currently a measurable dimension of area level disadvantage.⁴

2.8 **By remedying these information gaps, service providers could:**

- take account of the needs of frequent movers and plan strategically to meet them;
- target and deliver resources more effectively so that frequent moving does not compound disadvantage;
- minimise difficulties in meeting targets when working with clients who have moved before outcomes are achieved;
- track vulnerable people or those at risk, for example, those on the child protection register.

SECTION 3:

Drivers and barriers

Drivers of frequent moving

- 3.1 A wide variety of people move frequently, for a host of different reasons. This means that a variety of service responses will be necessary to address their very different and complex needs. The following are the most common reasons why people move frequently:
- 3.2 **Escaping** – Many people move in order to leave problems behind. A study of young people in Leeds found that their history of unsettled accommodation began with running away from the parental home to escape conflict or abuse.⁵ In a survey of New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas, those who had moved five or more times in five years, were more likely than others to report being victims of violent attack, vandalism or burglary.⁶
- 3.3 **Being moved by authorities** – Sometimes people are moved by authorities. Whilst these agencies have valid and important reasons for moving people and groups, forced movement can have an adverse impact on those affected, who can include children in local authority care, many of whom experience change in their care placement.⁷
- 3.4 **Problems finding settled accommodation** – Frequent moving is, for many people, a result of difficulties in securing a settled home. These can result from structural factors such as a shortage of affordable housing, which is reflected in the increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation over recent years. The rising figures partly reflect policies to extend the definition of vulnerability, so that more people are entitled to local authority help. Numbers have now dropped to under 100,000 for the last two quarters and we are continuing to work to reduce the

numbers of families living in temporary accommodation while waiting for settled housing.⁸

- 3.5 **Employment or cultural reasons/an attempt to improve their lives** – Some people move frequently as a way of life and much of this movement is geared towards employment opportunities. Others may move to make a new start but find it more difficult than they expected to settle in a new area.

Barriers to finding settled accommodation

- 3.6 Some disadvantaged people who move frequently do not do so purely from choice and would prefer a stable home. Helping people who want to settle is one way of interrupting the cycle of frequent moving that can damage life chances. There are various reasons why people who want to settle can find it difficult to do so.
- 3.7 **Those seeking settled accommodation can find there are a number of barriers to finding it.**
- They may be unable to raise enough money for deposits or rent in advance that are required for renting in the private sector.
 - Some local authorities have lengthy processing times for housing benefit claims, which can make securing accommodation difficult for those needing financial assistance.
 - Some local authorities require prospective tenants in hostels to have a local connection and be able to prove this. Many frequent movers either lack a connection with a particular area, or find it hard to prove such a connection.

3.8 **Once people have found accommodation, some may need ongoing support to help them manage and sustain a tenancy.**

- If people have behavioural problems or face a crisis and are unable to access support, their behaviour may jeopardise their tenancy and place them at risk of eviction.
- These problems can result in anti-social behaviour which may impact upon the wider community or lead to abandoned tenancies and those who cannot sustain their tenancies are at risk of entering a cycle of repeat homelessness, which is costly for local authorities as well as individuals.

3.9 **Before providing a settled home, local authorities may move families several times.⁹**

- Victims of domestic violence may be compelled to move for their own safety to a refuge or into other temporary accommodation. Victims can become trapped in a cycle of frequent moving, being pursued by the perpetrator and then returning to where the violence occurred.
- For Gypsies and Travellers, difficulties in finding an authorised site or obtaining planning permission to develop land they have bought means they are often evicted from unauthorised encampments or developments. There are valid and important reasons why authorities move Gypsies and Travellers who are camping in areas where they are not authorised to do so. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is working with local areas to develop more sites, but until these are in place issues around unauthorised camping will continue.

Access to services

- 3.10 Frequent movers face similar barriers to accessing services that other disadvantaged people face. However, these problems are magnified for frequent movers because each move from one place to another can mean starting again in negotiating access. This research has found that frequent movers who want or need to reconnect with services can face any of the following problems:
- 3.11 **Lack of knowledge about services that are available/how to find them** – Service deliverers have referred to problems around lack of awareness of the help available.¹⁰
- 3.12 **Difficulties in accessing a number of services and being unable to link them without help** – Services are generally designed to deal with a single or limited range of issues but a significant number of disadvantaged people have complex and multiple needs. For those with complex needs, it can be especially difficult to access the whole raft of services they need in order to make real changes to their lives.
- 3.13 **Finding that there are not enough services in an area, due to tight resources or unforeseen demand** – Service provision varies between areas. Some areas have a shortage of services, such as those providing primary healthcare.
- 3.14 **Finding it hard to trust services because of personal problems or previous experiences** – Vulnerable groups tend to engage more readily with certain types of service provider, particularly those in the voluntary and community sectors.¹¹ Their services can often be more flexible than statutory services in terms of their remit and can provide a welcome ‘bridge’ to statutory services to overcome the difficulties some vulnerable people have in trusting people they see as official.¹²

SECTION 4:

Impacts of frequent moving

Impact on service providers

- 4.1 Frequent moving can pose particular challenges for those providing services. Most services are designed to be delivered within a geographical area and few are set up with mobility in mind. When people move frequently from one area to another, their ability to connect with services can be limited.
- 4.2 Service providers highlighted the fact that a lack of data impacted negatively on their ability to provide services for frequent movers (this is covered in the previous section). Other key issues include.
- 4.3 **Records transfer and continuity of care** – Service providers have talked about the difficulties they can have when providing services to clients without knowing about their full background or service histories and noted that when people move, their records often follow them slowly if at all. For example, hospitals currently hold millions of paper records that have to be manually retrieved and primary care records have to be physically transferred when a patient registers with a new GP practice. These records cannot be quickly transferred, which means that healthcare workers may treat people without access to their full medical records.
- 4.4 **Funding** – Flexible funding streams are essential to allow organisations to take account of mobility in delivering services. In the majority of cases, funding does not follow people across boundaries and this can make it difficult for services to respond to the needs of people in their area.
- 4.5 **Local and regional responses** – The role of local government is crucial in helping to embed frequent moving into strategies and practitioners have highlighted the need for local areas to address issues in their area in their own way. Local authorities with high

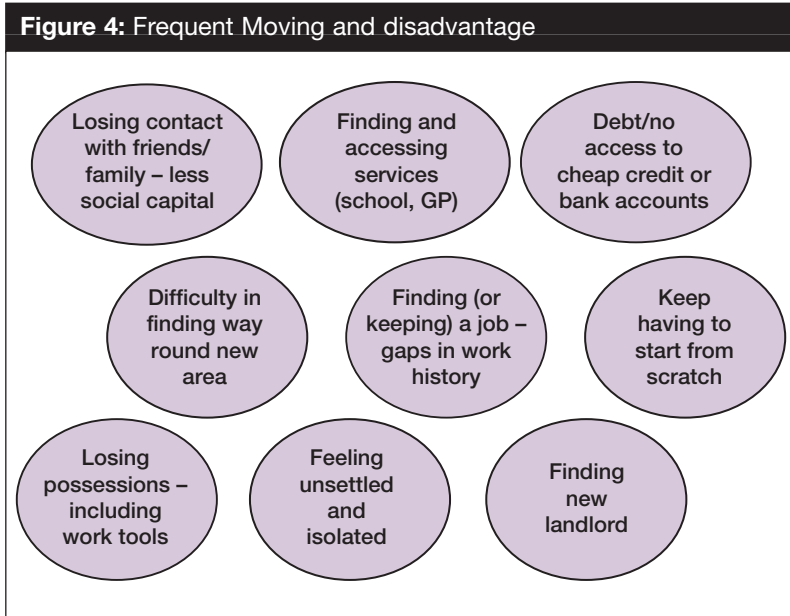
levels of population mobility could include planning for mobile groups in their service planning strategies and negotiate targets around delivering co-ordinated services for frequent movers and other disadvantaged groups, based on an awareness of the local context.

Impact on communities

- 4.6 In areas of high mobility, it can be difficult to create a cohesive community. When population turnover is high, the arrival of newcomers can:
- 4.7 **Create feelings of anxiety and have a de-stabilising effect on long term residents** – In some areas, more affluent members of a community tend to move out while disadvantaged people move in and the social mix and long-term sustainability of a community can be jeopardised.
- 4.8 **Cause fears that the community identity will change** – When new people move into an area the changes that take place can be worrying or frightening for residents and this can contribute to community divisions between ‘locals’ and ‘newcomers’.
- 4.9 **Give rise to perceptions of ‘special treatment’ for newcomers** – There is sometimes a perception among communities that certain groups of frequent movers get preferential treatment for services when this is often not the case.
- 4.10 **Lead to mixed feelings among communities about specialist services that may be offered** – When specialist services are offered, some may see it as unfair that scarce resources are diverted away from them and are likely to be concerned about the impact on local services, such as deteriorating school standards and more pressure on health services.

Impact on frequent movers

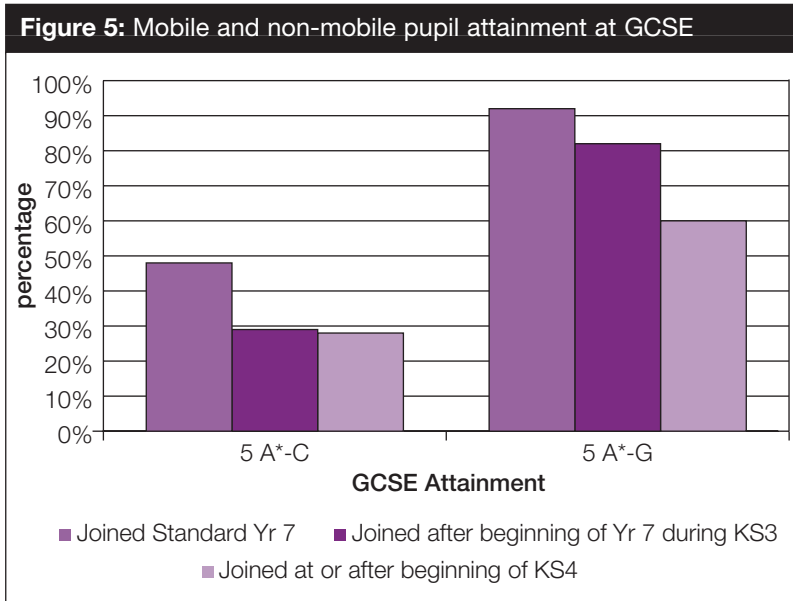
4.11 The SEU consultation asked respondents to describe the impact of mobility on those who move frequently, and the following issues were highlighted.¹³



4.12 In particular, education and health are 2 areas where the impacts of mobility are most keenly felt.

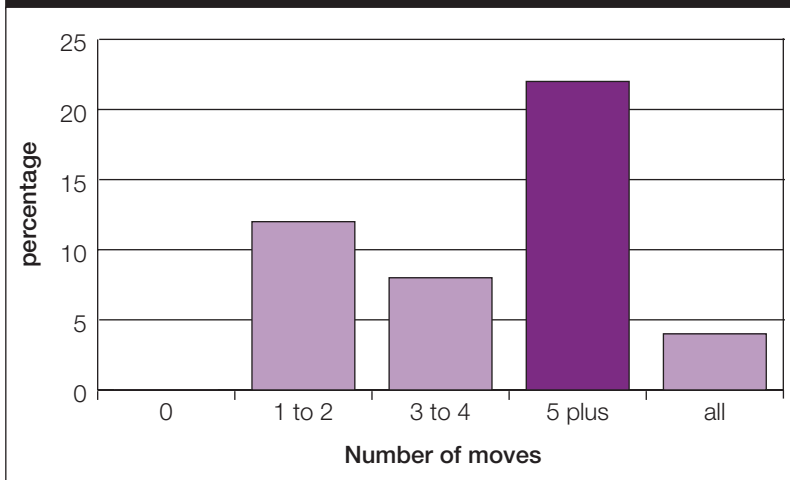
4.13 The evidence that mobility can have a negative effect on children's education is strong. There is a significant gap in attainment at key stage 4 (age 16) between mobile and non-mobile pupils.¹⁴

4.14 The following table shows that pupils who stay at the same school for all of their secondary education were much more likely to achieve 5 GCSE passes than those who joined later.¹⁵



Source: Dobson, J (2003, 2004)

- 4.15 Frequent moving can limit access to health services. For those already in poor health, problems can be compounded.
- 4.16 Data from the New Deal for Communities (NDC) household survey found that frequent movers were less likely to be registered with a GP practice.
- 4.17 The difference was most marked for those who moved very frequently; 8% of them were not registered with a GP practice, with the highest rate in London, where 22% were not registered. This may be because some GP practices are reluctant to take people in unstable housing onto their permanent lists.¹⁶

Figure 6: GP Non Registration by number of moves – London

Data Source: New Deal for Communities Survey, MORI, 2004

4.18 Frequent movers are likely to miss out not only on routine health care but also on preventive health services, such as routine screening. Immunisation rates provide one proxy measure of the extent to which frequent movers are ‘missing out’. A study of children in a women’s refuge found that three out of ten had failed to complete immunisation and 84% of children had incorrect immunisation records.¹⁷ This could mean that children from frequently moving households are more likely to contract vaccine-preventable diseases.

SECTION 5:

Conclusion and next steps

- 5.1 On the whole, population mobility is desirable and positive, but when people who are disadvantaged move frequently, this can compound their disadvantage. The primary purpose of this analysis is to put the concept of frequent moving as a driver of disadvantage on the policy map and to start a debate amongst service providers at national, regional and local levels about how best they can respond to the needs of those who are highly mobile.
- 5.2 A lack of data about mobility and its effects makes it difficult for universal evidence-based policy solutions to be developed. More data would help to provide a clearer understanding of the extent and impacts of frequent moving and enable services to plan more effectively to meet the needs of mobile groups.
- 5.3 In areas of high mobility, it can be difficult to create cohesive communities. When population turnover is high, the arrival of newcomers can have a destabilising effect on an area and create feelings of anxiety among residents. Clear understanding among all residents about their rights and responsibilities is essential in delivering a dynamic, prosperous and just society.
- 5.4 Improved access to services for people who move frequently could help those who would rather settle to do so successfully and interrupt the cycle of frequent moving that can damage life chances. This could also have the added benefits of reducing population turnover and contributing to creating sustainable and cohesive communities.
- 5.5 An overarching theme running through this analysis is the need to develop appropriate local responses to what is essentially a disparate and local problem. There is no one solution to the issues raised by high mobility. Local government have a crucial role in

helping to embed frequent moving into local strategies and to 'mobility proof' services through improving data collection about patterns of mobility and the outcomes of mobile groups and developing one stop shops and service navigation points to help those who are new to an area.

- 5.6 There are particular issues for London to address in this area, as mobility in the capital is particularly high. We have worked with key organisations such as the Greater London Authority and Association of London Government to investigate frequent moving in London. Lessons learnt from this work are also likely to be transferable to other areas with high mobility.
- 5.7 At national level, the Government is already putting measures in place to start to tackle some of the issues raised in this analysis. For example, cabinet committee MISC 31 has been established to develop the Government's strategy on data-sharing across the public sector, which will help improve the better management of information across administrative boundaries.
- 5.8 In addition, within the Department for Communities and Local Government:
- our strategy for preventing homelessness aims to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010;
 - our Supporting People programme has expanded housing related support services, which aim to help people develop the skills required to live independently;
 - we are evaluating and providing guidance on homelessness prevention schemes; and
 - our forthcoming review of the changing role and policy context for Local Regeneration Information Systems (established by English Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships to meet diverse local needs) will review such systems with a view to improving their effectiveness.

- 5.9 Through the forthcoming Local Government White Paper we will look to set out the role of local authorities and their partners in protecting equity and tackling disadvantage – and highlight the potential to adopt innovative new approaches such as digital inclusion. We will also explore through any revised guidance how Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements can help ensure the needs of frequent movers are effectively tackled.

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