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The contribution of migrants

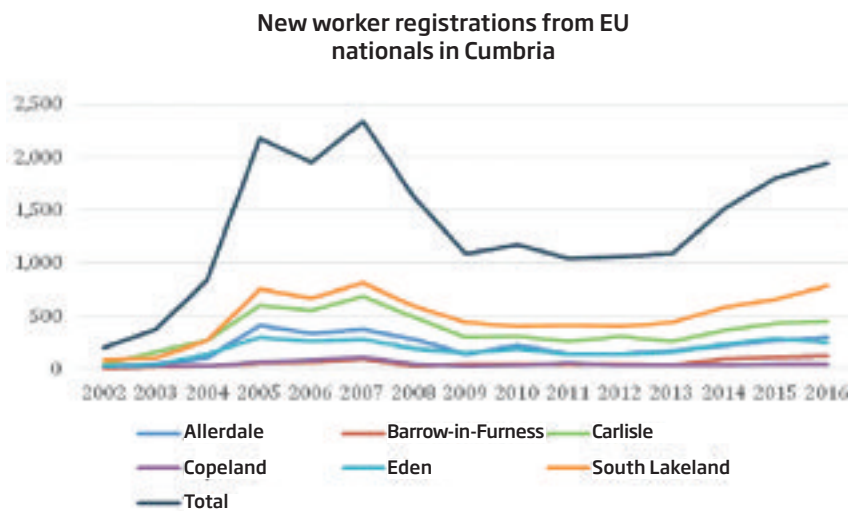


Professor Frank Peck of the University of Cumbria's Centre for Regional Economic Development writes for in-Cumbria on the big issues of the day and the economic data behind them. This month, EU migrant workers in Cumbria

In the Brexit debate, much has been said about the significance of migrant labour for businesses across the UK and concerns have been expressed surrounding this source of workers in future. In Cumbria, the county's industrial structure shows an obvious dependence on some of those sectors that are known to be more reliant on EU migrant workers.

National data for 2015 shows that the share of UK workforce accounted for by EU migrants is above the UK average (6.6 per cent) in accommodation & food (13 per cent), manufacturing (10 per cent), general administration (10 per cent) and transport/storage (8 per cent) which are all significant sectors of employment in Cumbria.

While there is still no accurate data on the number of EU migrants at local levels, we do know the number of new entrants to the labour market in Cumbria from data on registrations for National Insurance (NINOs) provided by the UK Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This shows us the number of new registration involving EU nationals living at an address in Cumbria at the time of registration.



Source: NINo (National Insurance number) registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK; Department for Work and Pensions. Thanks to Ginny Murphy, Cumbria Observatory, for assistance in analysing this data.

This data is not ideal – we do not know if these workers remain in Cumbria, subsequently move to other parts of the UK or return home. Equally, it is possible that EU migrants registered in other areas of the UK subsequently move to Cumbria. However, at least this provides an indication of the overall scale of movement.

The data shows clear patterns of change over time related to EU expansion. There was a rapid rise after 2004 coinciding with the accession of new member states in Eastern Europe in May 2004 including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Baltic States. A further peak occurred in 2007 following accession of Bulgaria and Romania. The rate of new registration fell between 2007 and 2009 but has since risen but more slowly. In the peak year of 2007 there were 2,335 registrations and in 2016, the figure was just under 1,941.

While we do not have detailed data on business dependence on this source of labour across different sectors and skills categories in Cumbria, the evidence available suggests that EU migrants make an important contribution to the Cumbrian labour market and some employers will have invested much resource in their training and development. It is likely that retention of existing EU migrants in the workforce will be an important consideration for many firms in the county as the UK enters negotiation with the EU on Brexit.

INDUSTRY GROUP	SHARE OF WORKERS IN INDUSTRY WHO WERE BORN IN EU	SHARE OF EU BORN WHO ARE WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY
Manufacturing	10%	15%
Wholesale/retail	6%	12%
Health/social work	5%	11%
Accommodation/food service	13%	10%
Construction	7%	8%
Education	5%	7%
Admin and support	10%	7%
Professional/scientific	6%	7%
Transport/storage	8%	6%
Information/communication	7%	4%
Financial/insurance	6%	4%
Public admin/defence	3%	3%
Total	6.6%	100%

Source: Migration Observatory, Oxford University; data reported on "The UK in an Changing Europe" <http://ukandeu.ac.uk/fact-figures/where-do-eu-migrants-in-the-uk-work/>