



Edge Hill University

Migrant Workers in Cumbria Research Findings and Calls to Action

April 2008



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**This Project is supported by DEFRA
Cumbria County Council and Voluntary Action Cumbria**

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This report, and the research publications on which it is based, can be downloaded from VAC's website using the following link

www.ruralcumbria.ork.uk/migrantworkers.html

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1 Background

During 2007 the Centre for Local Policy Studies, Edge Hill University was commissioned by Voluntary Action Cumbria, in collaboration with Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership, to undertake quantitative and qualitative research concerning migrant workers in Cumbria. In response to the phenomenon of an increase in the number of migrant workers, especially from the A8 accession countries of Eastern Europe¹, we wished to better understand in quantitative terms:

- where workers were coming from,
- where they were based in Cumbria, and
- the types of work that they are engaged in.

Qualitatively we wished to better understand:

- The views of Cumbrian employers about their new workforce
- How information and advice is currently being provided to migrant workers, and especially
- The day to day experience on migrant workers themselves.

The results of our research have been published in two reports:

- Mapping of Advice and Support Needs in Cumbria for Migrant Workers – June 2007
- Migrant Workers Research – Quality of Life Interviews – October 2007

In completing and publishing this research those involved have been impressed by the level of interest that has been shown both by local authorities and the media in our conclusions. We have ourselves been struck by some of the challenges that migrants have faced and especially the apparent level of discrimination and mistreatment that has been experienced in both a work and a social context. For these reasons we wished to go further than the simple publication of research findings and broad conclusions and try to stimulate effective responses to the challenges that we have seen.

This is the purpose of this third paper in the series. It offers a **summary** of the research findings and from these offers what we hope are clearly articulated **Calls to Action** which challenge a broad cross-section of partners to take appropriate action.

Through the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership we have sought to check and moderate both our conclusions and the calls to action, seeking the greatest value and impact from this work.

In the course of undertaking this research we contacted 28 staff from 11 advice agencies (based in different geographical locations), 24 employers, and 101 migrant workers (38 in relation to 'Advice and Support' and 63 in relation to 'Quality of Life'). We also spoke to members of the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership (a cross-section of agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors).

The findings that we present and the actions that we call for in response to these are based upon the factual information that we gathered and the personal experiences of those people that we interviewed. Through publication of this paper we hope not only to raise awareness of the challenges faced by migrant workers but also to prompt actions that will improve the quality of life of all minorities in Cumbria.

2 Key Facts

This section summarises our main quantitative findings and highlights variations in profile between three broad geographical divisions of Cumbria (viz: Carlisle, East comprising Eden and South Lakeland; and West including Allerdale, Barrow and Copeland) reflecting the fact that throughout our programme we sought geographical coverage.

From the figures provided by the Department of Works and Pensions there were 1,840 EU nationals in Cumbria who registered for a National Insurance Number (NINO) in 2005-2006.

The Polish group is the largest (1,200) and is dispersed fairly evenly through the county with the largest concentrations being in Carlisle (380), and South Lakeland (370). This is followed by those

¹ Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

from the Republic of Slovakia (230). This group is mainly in South Lakeland (70), Allerdale and Carlisle (60 each). The third largest group is from the Republic of Lithuania (180) with the largest group in Allerdale area. People from the Czech Republic form a smaller group (120) and small numbers fairly evenly dispersed throughout the county.

Registrations under the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) record 2,311 registrations during the period 2004 – 2006. (This is higher than the number of NINO registrations however while not all workers seek NINO registration the WRS figures include an element of double counting because of multiple registrations of some individuals. Neither count can therefore be regarded as definitive.)

Post Code analysis of workers registered through the WRS reflected a similar pattern of dispersion.

The main sectors in which migrant workers are employed are those for which little if any qualification is required:

- Sector 13 – hotels (various occupations), and catering
- Sector 15 – factory work/process operatives

In geographic terms, a higher proportion of migrant workers in Carlisle and the West are employed in Sector 15 while in East Cumbria a majority are employed in Sector 13

Most migrant workers fall within the 18 – 25 age group but there are numbers of older migrant workers, some with families.

While many migrant workers plan to return home at some stage, a significant proportion of those interviewed expressed a desire to stay in Cumbria.

Some migrant workers are accompanied by families that include school age children.

3 A Positive Experience

Both migrants coming into Cumbria and those who employ them have found the experience to be largely a positive one. Here we present comments made during the course of our interview programme in the words of the people themselves.

Employers

“They work better, they are more patient and they value their work”

“They are reliable, polite. They do a full day’s work for a full day’s pay. Their reputation precedes them”

“(Eden is) virtually an area of no unemployment and therefore they are a necessary addition to the labour market. They are very reliable, conscientious and diligent in their approach to work. (We have) No significant disciplinary issues with any of them”

“People need to wake up to why people are coming here and why employers are using them. (We) need some publicity to demystify the myth that migrant workers are taking our jobs.”

“Here on time. Doesn’t moan about what he has been asked to do.”

“They have proven to be reliable, punctual, hardworking and very pleasant people.”

“Work ethic is superb and they are hard working. Do not complain about working unsociable hours. “They are also prepared to work on a short-term contract basis whereas a British (person) would prefer longer term employment and less likely to work unsociable hours”

“Penrith has a low unemployment percentage with some 4 – 5 major employers who all require staff. For a number of years we had issues filling vacancies that we had within our organisation. We now have a larger pool of people from which we can attract to our vacancies.”

“Turn up for work. Happy to do the work they are given. They are there at the start time. Not dashing to go home.”

“Willing to work long hours.”

“Hardworking, well qualified.”

“The biggest advantage is regarding the flexibility and the amount of hours they want to work. They are here and want to work to earn the money. As the work has its peaks and troughs they can fit in. Very skilled workers, fully qualified in their own country and well trained. Positive attitude to work. Learning and improving own skills.”

Migrant Workers

“All is right.”

“England is better than Poland. Because in Poland we pay a lot of tax. In this country tax is better. In Poland we pay 50% tax. Wages are better here. In Cumbria is very clean. Poland city is very dirty with litter. People in Cumbria very friendly.”

“Cumbria is a very beautiful place. In Poland you don’t have the same as mountains and lakes in the same place. Also people are very nice and friendly. Landlord is very good. No problems.”

“Cumbria is a nice place where to work. There is a lot of jobs available and you can work how many hours you want.”

“Here is very nice and beautiful place for work. Also and not hard. The most of times is a pleasure.”

“Good work cooperation.”

“I would like to say I am lucky to be a part of this community.”

“I am happy.”

“Just I like it here. I love Keswick. I like everything. I like views. I like people.”

“I am happy living in Cumbria because I like people here – smiling. They are friendly. I like my work. I like the laws in this country that everybody keeps to the law.”

“Working and living in England has given me much experience eg working with people from different walks of life. Made me ask questions about myself and the person I want to be.”

4 Key Findings and Calls for Action

While our interviewees identified much that is positive about the influx of migrants into Cumbria we also identified a variety of issues and challenges that are faced both by migrant workers and those that advise and support them. The following section summarises these under five themes. Against each we have set out **calls for action** that challenge key participants to address the issues we identify.

1 Advice and support needs

- Migrant workers need significant support and in particular ready access to advice on employment, benefits, housing, health care, education and learning English.
- Language barriers and working hours can make it difficult for migrant workers to access some key sources of advice.
- There is a great variation in the extent to which employers are able to meet the advice and support needs of their migrant workforce.
- Because of barriers of time, language and poor social networks, migrant workers may be over-dependent on employers for advice and information.
- There are a number of networks and organisations through which Information and advice could be better distributed (e.g. internet, cyber cafes, churches, multicultural centres, the Polish Multicultural Centre in Penrith and the Polish Forum which has over 300 registered users).
- Local Authorities and Agencies are involved in a range of good quality but uncoordinated work to deliver advice to migrant workers.

Call to Action One:

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|---|---|
| <p>a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We call upon Local Authorities, Employers and other statutory agencies to collaborate in order to provide easier access to impartial advice and information including by:</i> <i>- Signposting to impartial sources of advice and information</i> <i>- Extending the availability of own language advice materials</i> <i>- Using the internet as a tool for providing access to information outside normal working hours</i> <i>- Collaborating with cyber cafes, churches, multi-cultural centres etc. to deliver advice and information in ways that meet user's needs.</i> <p>b)</p> | <p><i>We call upon Local Authorities, Employers and other statutory agencies to collaborate in order to provide easier access to impartial advice and information including by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Signposting to impartial sources of advice and information</i> <i>- Extending the availability of own language advice materials</i> <i>- Using the internet as a tool for providing access to information outside normal working hours</i> <i>- Collaborating with cyber cafes, churches, multi-cultural centres etc. to deliver advice and information in ways that meet user's needs.</i> <p><i>We call upon Local Authorities and Advice agencies to adopt a strategic partnership approach to the provision quality advice and information, including consideration of 'one stop shop' provision.</i></p> |
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2 Community integration

- Limited language skills can restrict opportunities for social activity for some migrant workers.
- There are good examples from across Cumbria of churches, the police and Local Authorities working to break down barriers and create opportunities for people from different cultures to come together.
- Community relations would be improved if there was better awareness of different cultures across Cumbria.
- The critical economic contribution made by migrant workers to Cumbria's prosperity is warmly recognised by employers - *"the local staff recognise that if it weren't for these (migrant) workers, I wouldn't be able to keep our doors open"*

Call to Action Two:

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|-------------------------------|--|
| <p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p> | <p><i>We call upon the Media to proactively seek for and report on the positive contribution that migrant workers make to the society and economy of the county.</i></p> <p><i>We call upon Local Authorities and the Voluntary and Faith sectors to take positive action to include migrant communities in the activities of community-based forums and other social opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>We call upon Children and Young Peoples services to address the particular support needs of children, both migrants and local, in promoting equality and integration.</i></p> |
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3 Discrimination

- A concerning proportion of migrant workers (20% of those interviewed) have experienced discrimination.
- Many migrant workers have experienced rude or threatening behaviour from members of the public in the street or in social situations.
- In employment there are instances of unfair practice in relation to overtime pay, leave, training opportunities.
- Most of the people interviewed were on the minimum wage, but they were not – in all cases – being paid the over-time rate for the job.
- Awareness of individual rights is limited by language barriers.
- Very often skills did not match the jobs and there is a lack of awareness of the relative value of foreign qualifications.
- Some migrant workers have been excluded from work-based social activity by their English workmates.
- Some migrant workers live on poor quality or overcrowded accommodation. This may be provided by their employer and rent deducted direct from pay, making the migrant worker likely to become homeless should their employment cease.

- Some employers regard their migrant workforce as an asset and intend investing in their training and development.

Call to Action Three:

- a) *We call upon Cumbria Constabulary to continue monitoring community tensions and race/hate crime and to share this information with partner agencies through the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership.*
- b) *We call upon all partners (private, public and third sector) to monitor race/hate incidents by nationality of migrant workers, alongside ethnicity, in order to get a true reflection of issues faced by migrant workers and their needs.*
- h) *We call upon all partners (public, private and third sector) to develop a co-ordinated approach to the investigation of claims of discrimination.*
- c) *We call upon the owners and managers of licensed premises to challenge racially motivated incidents on their premises.*
- d) *We call upon Local Authorities and Agencies to provide clear advice to employers concerning employment best practice.*
- e) *We call upon employers to promote the positive inclusion of migrant workers in workplace-related social activities.*
- f) *We call upon partners to collaborate with educational institutions to provide English language classes at times and in places that meet the needs of migrant workers and for employers to encourage the attendance of their employees at such classes.*
- g) *We call upon Cumbria Constabulary to collaborate with foreign national police forces in tackling cross-border criminal activity that affects migrants.*

4 Farming

- We believe that there are only limited numbers of migrant workers employed in agriculture in Cumbria. However, because of their working situation such workers are particularly isolated from sources of support and advice.
- In order to ensure that the workers on the farm have access to general information and advice some work needs to be done to access the farming community through employer networks (Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Business Development Officer), and Parish Councils.

Call to Action Four:

- a) *We call upon public sector agencies and other agencies such as NFU to:*
 - *undertake further research into the area of employment of migrant workers in agriculture*
 - *collaborate in enabling access to impartial sources of advice and information*

5 Housing

- Most of the migrant workers in the service industry are in tied accommodation. Although this has advantages, such as minimising travel costs, it may mean that workers are reliant on their employer for providing meals, and they could be paying higher rates for the type of accommodation they are in.
- During the course of our interviews we identified cases of migrant workers occupying unsuitable and/or over crowded accommodation.
- Some interviewees are interested in purchasing their own property and settling in Cumbria.

Call to Action Five:

- a) *We call upon local authorities and housing agencies to monitor the housing issues faced by migrant workers and to address poor conditions and discriminatory practice.*

5 Good Practice

There is, of course, a great deal that has been done and continues to be done to help welcome and support new migrants coming into Cumbria, and to speed their integration into local communities. The following brief items mention just a handful of the examples of good practice that we have encountered in the course of our research and that we would commend to partners.

Own Language Advice

Cumbria County Council has produced (2007) an excellent multi-language advice booklet which signposts workers to key sources of information, advice and support. This has been widely circulated and very well received by migrant workers themselves. However, there are opportunities to further widen the distribution which need to be developed and there may be scope for better strategic collaboration to build upon this strong foundation.

Translation

While our study has been underway, Cumbria County Council has recruited and trained a group of translators who are now available to support migrants in need of this service.

Scrutiny

Carlisle City Council has undertaken a thoughtful enquiry into the problems and needs of migrant workers in its locality, taking evidence from a variety of sources. It is now considering how it can contribute to addressing the issues and needs that it identified.

Community Integration

In Maryport an employer arranged for the Mayor and for representatives of the police force to meet migrant workers, both welcoming them to the area and helping to break down some of the barriers that exist with authority figures because of the differing cultural background in parts of Eastern Europe.

6 Comments and suggestions from Migrant Workers

The following are verbatim comments recorded during our interviews with migrant workers. They reflect the real experience of the individuals themselves, expressed in their own terms.

"To have more patience with our English. Thank you for your interest. I enjoyed this questionnaire."

"I would like to be a member of a multicultural football game."

"More drop-in Centres. Cheap accommodation for migrant workers. More information in Polish language."

"Social accommodations for migrants and multicultural advice offices would be a good point."

"I am looking for new opportunities, education."

"I think from my point of view Sometime can be better with their employees, but I'm happy at least because I've meet a lot of people and my boyfriend.... is really good."

"Improve my English."

"There is probably nothing that can be done about it, but I just wish people were less nasty on Polish. Its really annoying at times when everybody is being judges as somebody who is only here for money – coz I'm not. Transport – horrible, too expensive, not often enough, takes too much time."

"This place make me boring (bored) but I have reasons to be here and I can not complain. We travel by bus or by taxi from hotel to Keswick."

"Information should/could be provided through the company you start work at or agencies you get the job through, the first person you talk to in the UK or before getting to the UK should give you the INFO."

"We travel usually by bus or if it is not too far we walk."

"I think we need help. Sometimes we need company that will be able to help with everything because for me was hard to sometimes that you must look for everything in different place."

"Multicultural office for advice."

"All is right."

"I would like to have possibility rent a translator."

"I like being in England but I miss my family."

"Stop discrimination."

"More offices for migrant workers."

"Love the UK. But still miss home. Have learnt English thank you."

"Thanks for the interest. I enjoyed this questionnaire. I would like to see more activities together with English people."

"English people don't like too many Polish people. Saturday night after drink could be problem."

"All is right."

"More events for migrant workers. Multicultural exchange today was a fantastic idea."

"I am happy because I have new family in England, good friends and I hope I will have a happy life. I married three weeks and my husband England man and we work together."

"It is good to have you come out to see us and get our views in Cumbria and hope that it will help us a lot more and also any others who are yet to come here to work or stay."

7 Concluding Remarks

There is growing evidence from a variety of sources that migrant workers are making a positive contribution to Cumbria's economy and its social diversity.

However, migrant workers face a range of social and workplace discrimination, difficulty in accessing advice and information, housing problems, and limited opportunities to improve their language skills.

As well as meeting the advice and support needs of migrant workers we must help their integration into the host community without resentment or jealousy from either side.

As our Calls for Action show, concerted action by a variety of participants is needed if these issues are to be effectively addressed

The recently published report from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, "Our shared future" (13th June 2007), advocates: "think local solutions to local problems." This message resonates closely with the results of our own research. viz, find out what is happening locally, where the gaps are and how those gaps can be filled. The report also highlights the possible community tensions in rural areas.

We encourage partners to frame work around migrant workers within a wider and holistic approach to equality in Cumbria, and to utilise tools such as Equality Impact Assessments and The Equality Standard and Framework to ensure the delivery of fair services and cultural change within organisations.

"Migrant workers are an asset to every country where they bring their labour. Let us give them the dignity they deserve as human beings and the respect they deserve as workers."

Juan Somavia, Director General of the ILO.

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant

Cumbria County Council

Voluntary Action Cumbria

Centre for Local Policy Studies - Edge Hill University

Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership
April 2008

Published by:

Voluntary Action Cumbria

Registered Office:

The Old Stables, Redhills, Penrith CA11 0DT

Registered in England:

Charity No: 1080875

Company No: 3957858

