Polish workers in the North: Still in need of information?

Ian Fitzgerald
(University of Northumbria)
What does he know?

• Specific TUC projects (four);
• Working with business helping the Poles;
• Community engagement
• ESRC funded project on Polish migration;

This process has involved:

• Key respondent communication (interviews, discussions meetings)
  - Project based (over 60 respondents – local & regional; & national and international ‘actors’);
  - And longer term.
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Extent and Issues

• Polish migration constitutes largest ever in-migration to UK (Salt and Millar 2006);

• Concern at national and local level on actual figures –

  Ø WRS more A8s registered in North than London & SE North East
    5,720 Poles

  Ø NiNO registrations indicate 7,340 Poles (56 countries in 2002 now 72)

• Ubiquitous – Poles in particular low paid sectors but widely dispersed in many sectors and workplaces;

• Transient – cheap transport; agency influence.
Polish economic migrants?

“they are different from the post-war generation of Poles, these are clearly economic migrants”

• Goes much deeper than this –
  ➢ International movement;
  ➢ Labour market differences such as those here for seasonal or on short-term basis;
  ➢ Temporary nature of much work;
  ➢ Inter-regional movement in UK;
  ➢ Transported to work, sometimes over long distances;
  ➢ People settling? – Polish & Catholic schools x 4 – libraries Polish language books – Polish ‘locations’
The need for information

“we need to give Polish & other migrants as much information as possible to make them aware of their rights”

• Early firefighting with information as the key;

• Informational needs change and develop;

• Governmental Commission on Integration and Cohesion identify information as key driver of integration;

• A8 migrant workers not aware of immigration status!
Information initiatives

Welcome packs:

• Recommendation that Communities & Local Government develop a sample welcome pack – best practice (CI&C)
Information initiatives

The web:

- Citizens Signpost Service - EU website aimed at EU citizens with mobility problems in European Internal Market;
- EURES – EU job shop
- Working in the UK – UK government
- WorkSmart – TUC site
- CAB/Solidarnosc/TUC – joint Polish site
- Federation of Poles in Great Britain – Polish umbrella organisation
- Migrant Workers North West – RDA/employer/trade union
- Barnsley/Bradford councils – Welcome to in Polish
- Polish administered/language websites
Information initiatives

Drop-in centres/sessions:

• Developed following early engagements;

• Developed as means to engage – locations already existing;

• Penrith (Cumbria) – local Police/local council
  
  ➢ Poles already using housing foyer for free internet access
  
  ➢ Police funded web based forum
  
  ➢ Local council provide advice surgeries
Information initiatives

Telephone helplines:

• Telephone Helplines Association – non-profit helplines;

• East Riding of Yorkshire Council –
  ➢ Talkback service 3-way Polish translation (only for council services);

• TUC WorkSmart helpline – in English

Issues:

Cost for both provider and Polish worker;

Languages to translate?
Information initiatives

Sum-up:

• Overall growing amount of information – search Google
  ➢ Differing layers European, national, regional, local;

• Why are Poles still asking for information? –
  ➢ Translation/interpretation
  ➢ Focus and locations – access routes
  ➢ multi-entry points (transport) – speed of movement
  ➢ Control of agencies and some poor employers;

• Once here dispersal into communities.
Polish community engagement

• Workplace
  - Lack of trade unions – employer support – trust of Poles;

• Traditional and long established networks? –
  - The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB) – electronic & hardback booklet in Polish (100,000 distributed);
    - The Catholic church – at least 68 churches in UK (5+ in region)
      - In Hull, church, local authority & Polish consulate – range of info areas;

• Locations and events -
  - Community centres, libraries, church premises, etc.
  - Multi-agency sessions, single agency (e.g. trade union)
Polish community engagement

• Locations and events (cont) -

  - Some reports of these developing to more permanent regular sessions or organised on a drop-in basis;

    ‘Sessions should be help and advice drop-in sessions’ (Leeds Polish community activist)

    ‘…the Bradford resource centre is ideal. The approaches used have been excellent and very welcoming.’ (Bradford ZPWB representative)

    ‘…very difficult to get people to come now; they believe that they will be able to do is tell people about their problems but they will not get answers.’ (Hull Polish community activist)
Polish community engagement

• Polish Internet -
  
  - Poland significant increase in the use of ‘new technology’;
  
  - Polish workers using internet to communicate with home/book tickets;
  
  - 35/40 Polish language/administered web pages (6 North east)
    
      • Often important information on these (e.g. forums for discussions of work and other issues)
      
      • UK businesses using these to advertise (EasyJet)
Polish community engagement

• Issues -

  ➢ Polish worker trust;

  ➢ Changing informational needs – who’s job?

  ➢ Time and resources, very difficult to sustain’.

• Co-ordination and collaboration the key?
Strategic approaches?

• Employer -

  ➢ North East bus companies (Arriva & Go Ahead Northern)

    • First Group (North West) 1st employer to sign up to the NWNW employers code

  ➢ Evidence of direct employer engagement with Polish community activists to help with newly employed Polish workers. Information provision one of the objectives;

  ➢ Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) employers role in English language training regards integration, in supporting community engagement by their staff;
Strategic approaches

- Businesses/NGOs/-
  - Rift work with construction unions to provide a range of services to Polish workers. Including assisting with NINos and WRS registration;
  - Sunrise Solutions labour agency with bakers union, information and audited accommodation provided;
  - Solicitors and other organisations to provide drop-in sessions;
  - Keystone Development Trust (Norfolk) – collaborates with range of organisations (e.g. information drop-in service run by volunteers & part-time staff)
  - Selby Together – collaboration between churches, NGOs local councils, health trusts, emergency services etc.
Strategic approaches

• Local council (important contact point for Poles) -
  - Department of Communities and Local Government (New European Migration) –
    • Should seek to work with chamber of commerce, federation of small businesses & CBI + large employers of eastern Europeans + migrant groups, TUs and NGOs to identify rouge employers raise awareness of minimum standards.
  - Newcastle City Council working with NEPCO (projects develop a welcome pack)
  - Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council - multi-agency event (2006)

• RDAs – (developing strategies around migrant workers)
Contact details

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