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

Ian Fitzgerald
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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 –
  - WRS more A8s registered in North than London & SE North East
    5,720 Poles
  - 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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