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

Ian Fitzgerald
(University of Northumbria)

Knowledge base?

- 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.

What is known?

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 – Yorkshire & the Humber 40,000 + Poles
 - Nino registrations indicate 30,000 + Poles
- Ubiquitous – Poles in particular low paid sectors but widely dispersed in many sectors and workplaces;
- Transient – cheap transport; agency influence.

Poles 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?

The need for information

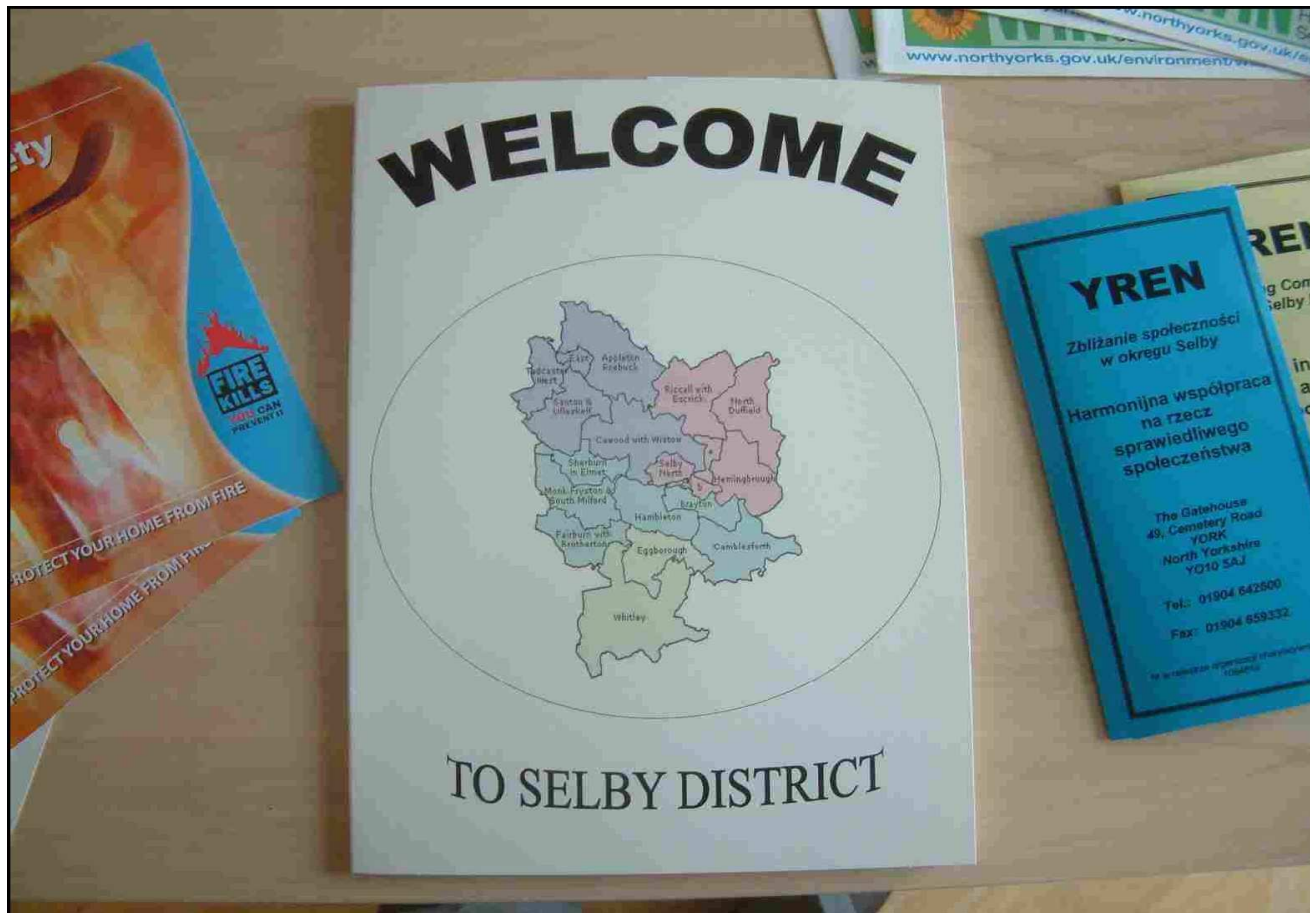
“we need to give Polish & other migrants as much information as possible to make them aware of their rights”

- 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
 - The focus and location of information – access routes
 - multi-entry points (transport) – speed of movement
 - Control of agencies and some poor employers;
- Once here dispersal into communities.

Where can I meet Polish people?

Engaging with the Polish community

1. Workplace

- Lack of trade unions – sometimes employer support – trust of Poles;

2. 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;

3. Locations and events -

- Community centres, libraries, church premises, etc.
- Multi-agency sessions, single agency (e.g. trade union)

Engaging with the Polish community

- 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)

Engaging with the Polish community

4. 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 (9 Y&H)
 - Often important information on these (e.g. forums for discussions of work and other issues)
 - UK businesses using these to advertise (EasyJet)

Engaging with the Polish community

- Issues -
 - Polish worker trust;
 - Changing informational needs – who's job?
 - Time and resources, very difficult to sustain'.
- Co-ordination and collaboration the key?

How and who has done this?

Strategic approaches?

- Employer -
 - Bus companies (Arriva, First Group & 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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