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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 –
 - 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

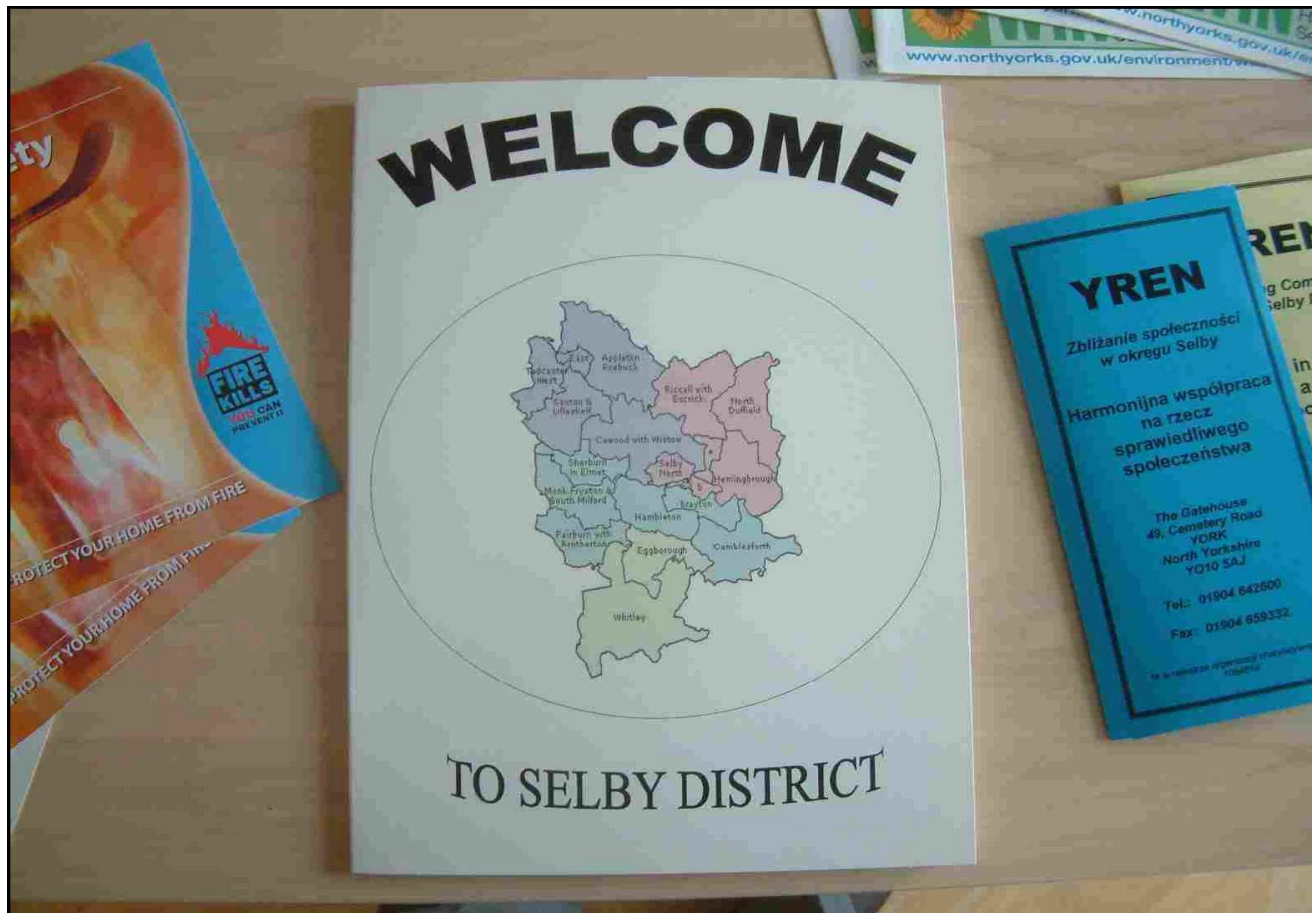
“we need to give Polish & other migrants as much information as possible to make them aware of their rights”

- 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)

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