

UNION MODERNISATION FUND

BERR

Department for Business
Enterprise & Regulatory Reform

**BAKERS FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS'
UNION (BFAWU) – UMF MEMBERSHIP
DIVERSITY PROJECT**

CASE STUDY

Bakers Food and Allied Workers' Union – UMF membership diversity project

Introduction

In March 2006, with Union Modernisation Fund (UMF) backing, the Bakers Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) began a research project that would help them formulate a membership development strategy, focusing specifically on the needs of migrant workers. A parallel project, Membership and Communications Systems, looked at an IT-based membership system. Synergies between the two projects have added value to each: the Systems project has helped overcome information provision to tackle ethnicity barriers; and the overlap has also highlighted the need for a translation service. Information on the Systems project will form part of the Leeds University Business School report, which will be available on the UMF page on the BERR website.

The union asked The Campaign Company, a communications agency specialising in community engagement, to provide support through project management and delivery. Results will lead to considerable benefits for the union, its members and potential members, as BFAWU General Secretary, Joe Marino, explains:

'It's been an extremely exciting project for us. The UMF funding has given us the finance and the focus to take forward improvements quickly and professionally, which would otherwise have taken us years.

'We can see the benefits, both for now and the future. We've already been able to apply what we've learned around the UK. In Leicester, South Wales and Manchester, for example, they've been able to build even stronger international links with migrant communities than they'd had before. We have built a link with the Polish food workers, for instance, who are circulating our information to their members and families so they have a contact here should they want to find work in the UK or Ireland – which is of huge benefit both to prospective employees and to employers and the union in the UK. It means that migrant workers have the basic information they need in advance, are already familiar with any potential pitfalls and know where to go for advice once they arrive.

Benefits of the Diversity project:

- Insight into an important sector of members and potential members
- Data collected that will inform future union and employer policy
- Links built both nationally and internationally – fast and professionally
- Pathways built to union support for current and future workers
- Employers engaged and included consistently

'The project has also given us an insight into what other organisations have been doing and helped us build links with them. We've had tremendous support from our employers and have been able to disseminate what we've learned to all affiliates through the General Federation of Trade Unions.'

Background

The food manufacturing industry has for many years been one of the most ethnically diverse sectors in the UK workforce. But since 1 May 2004 and the entry of ten states into the EU, there has been a further change in its profile. The accession states (the A8) have replaced the traditional sources of migrant labour – the countries of the Asian sub continent. It's estimated that since 2004 more than half a million workers from accession states have come to the UK.

Migrant workers and the UK

- Economic migration has grown significantly in the past few years.
- The ten accession states joining the EU have had a huge impact on this growth.

- Although London and the south east remain the most popular destinations, the sheer numbers of migrant workers arriving in the UK means that people are travelling further afield to find jobs.
- The majority of migrant workers are young (under 29 years old).
- In the UK, over 80% of A8 workers are paid £4.50-£6.00 an hour, which is 63% of average UK hourly wages.

Why the Diversity project?

BFAWU was hearing a lot of anecdotal evidence about workplaces in the industry seeing huge growth in numbers of migrant workers, which was causing a range of issues and problems. Kathryn Upton of The Campaign Company takes up the story:

'There was a particular challenge in that, despite real hardship in some cases, these workers simply weren't getting involved in the union and, with additional language barriers, were often hard to reach. The union wanted to get a handle on what exactly was going on and what they could do to provide a more relevant service for these people.'

The Diversity project had four distinct elements:

- **Research**

The research comprised:

- **desk-based research to look at diversity in the workplace**, including meeting representatives from organisations such as Regional Development Agencies and voluntary organisations;

- **focus groups and in-depth interviews** with stakeholders, employers, and organisations working on related issues, such as diversity, the food manufacturing sector and community integration;
- a **language survey in the workplace**, circulated to union branches.

● **Testing recommendations**

The main themes and ideas that came up from focus groups and interviews were tested in the two final discussion groups of the project.

● **Awareness training**

A diversity awareness training module was designed and delivered to BFAWU employees.

● **Evaluation and recommendations**

The feedback from the research was analysed and recommendations made for future action.

Research

The research focused on the challenges of the 150,000 migrant workers in food manufacturing workplaces who have arrived here from the A8 countries. Increased reliance on recruiting from overseas has had an impact on local employment markets. In the past, for instance, local people could reasonably expect to find seasonal work, but that's no longer always the case. The attractions to employers of using recruitment agencies, an increase in the use of short-term contracts, high turnover of workers and the willingness of many Eastern Europeans to work longer hours to maximise their earnings are all having an impact on the established employment markets.

There are more details of research methodology and findings in Appendix 1. Briefly, findings included:

- in some locations, documents are being **translated into community languages, links developed** with community groups, and members from different nationalities acting as **points of contact** between the union and other people from their national group;
- the **Union Learning Fund** is a popular way for people to improve language skills;
- **other unions** have useful projects, such as setting up a migration unit;
- unions are **forging links** with local communities to address tensions; and building links with communities in **workers' home countries**.

'One union member from Latvia has been working in a factory for a couple of years. A year ago, his wife was dismissed from the same factory without any reason being given. However, it did not occur to either of them to approach the union for help, partly because they were not fully aware of the services that the union provided.'

Kathryn Upton

- There's a growing recognition about the importance of **understanding culture, gender issues and the problems migrant workers face** when they want to settle in the UK. There's more information about other projects in 'Useful sources of information' on page 15.

- **Poor language standards** are often a problem. Although access to **English classes** was identified as a benefit of union membership, shift work often made it difficult to attend classes. Those with better language skills were often willing to be ‘mentor’ or ‘supporter’ for their particular language group.
- **In-depth interviews** revealed evidence of poor pay and conditions; no awareness or attitudinal training on diversity issues; and no way of making the most of the qualifications of migrant workers.

Diversity awareness training for staff and key activists

The diversity awareness training was designed as an informal interactive training module based around small, hands-on group exercises and discussions.

Its aims were to explore:

- understanding of diversity and equality, their relevance at work and beyond;
- the development of perceptions and their impact;
- how to improve how we work together;
- guidance on how to manage the above, including organisational and legal responsibilities.

‘It was a very difficult problem to move along – these people aren’t called ‘hard to reach’ for nothing! They were particularly difficult to get hold of; and once we’d made contact there was often a basic lack of comprehension of how the project was relevant to them: questions about the union to a Kurdish refugee in Preston don’t

necessarily strike a chord. So we had to be flexible in our approach. We’re very pleased with the results.’

Kathryn Upton

Kathryn Upton explains:

‘There seemed to be no similar training that was relevant to the people we needed it for. Our members tend to come from the shop floor. I wanted to make them aware of the issues but also to share what we have in common, to celebrate our similarities. At the same time, the training needed to be suitable for officers and staff to deliver to lay members wherever they go. We came up with two programmes: one taking a day and another just a couple of hours – very informal and interactive.’

Recommendations

The project has proved a great success, achieving the objectives it set at the outset. The research confirmed that the food manufacturing sector is extremely diverse in terms of nationalities, languages and ethnic groups – and that organising and including these workers in the union and the wider workplace is challenging. Bearing in mind that the basic challenge – as with any new group of potential members – is one of traditional trade union organisation, The Campaign Company made the following recommendations, which are also likely to be relevant to other unions with migrant workers and others whose first language isn’t English:

Communications

- **Translation**

Key documents need to be provided in translation, although it would often be

prohibitively expensive to provide translation in every language spoken in a workplace.

People were most interested in receiving information on:

- the general benefits of union membership – with an emphasis on the independence of British trade unions;
- legal benefits;
- subscriptions and what the money is used for;
- names and contact numbers of Branch officers in their specific workplace;
- basic employment rights and terms and conditions (for example the right to written details of employment within six weeks);
- agency and temporary workers' eligibility for BFAWU membership;
- the BFAWU accident form, translated into the target languages.

'BFAWU has an excellent record in providing training through its ULF projects, and language classes will be a vital element in the development of a member support strategy.'

Kathryn Upton

● **Notice boards**

Notice boards, still a basic communication tool in the workplace, can be a cost effective way of reaching the target groups. A notice board 'pack', produced regularly to encourage branch reps to refresh notice boards regularly, could include:

- a poster with a simple message in the priority languages, designed and supplied to branches;
- a checklist of basic items that can be displayed on a notice board.

● **Newsletters**

A short newsletter in the appropriate language (more likely to be read than 'The Foodworker'), developed as part of on going communications strategy.

● **Website**

All the resources mentioned above could be translated into the priority languages and made available on the website. More languages than those listed above could be used, since the main cost would be in the translation and printing costs would be minimised.

● **Targeted information**

The new IT-based membership system, developed through a parallel UMF project, will mean that more comprehensive data can be gathered on members, so that the union can be more responsive to particular needs. For instance, the union will be able to pull up details of all Poles living in the North West, or Lithuanians in Peterborough. Armed with that information, it's a short step to producing targeted materials that are appropriate and relevant to each group. But because this data isn't available right away, the recommendation is that the union commission external support to gather additional data on gender, ethnicity and language to populate the new membership system.

● **Membership benefits**

Union membership brings with it access to many excellent services from external providers. There was great interest in these benefits – but very little initial awareness or understanding of them. So where the services are delivered by external providers, discussions could be held with them, using the union's purchasing power to ask that they provide publicity and other relevant materials in the priority languages.

‘Again and again we were told that the best way to involve people is through word of mouth. But there was evident apprehension about being asked to take on a full steward’s role. A buddy role would fit the bill. In several instances managers already recognise buddies and rely on them to communicate with colleagues. We believe it would encourage more people to participate and take on this role if it were valued and recognised by managers and the union alike.’

Kathryn Upton

Approach to temporary workers

The challenges of diversity, language barriers and temporary (usually agency) workers are interlinked. Agency workers are in workplaces in increasing numbers. If the union is committed to including these new groups and developing services for them, a strategic and pragmatic approach to the whole issue needs to be developed, including:

● Developing agreements with agencies

Agreements with agencies could deliver great benefits to the union and workforce – and some working relationships with agencies are already being developed. The recommendation is to:

- map agencies operating within the sector;
- open discussions with target agencies to develop recognition agreements.

● Collecting subscriptions

Agencies do not operate ‘check off’. Although this issue would be included in any agency/union agreements, this will take time. Meanwhile, there could be:

- a system of subscription collection by direct debit, set up as soon as possible;
- a specific application form for members who will pay by direct debit, produced in the key languages.

● Rule book benefits

Some union rule book benefits depend on a period of continuous membership. But for many members and potential members on temporary contracts this is difficult to achieve. To recruit people on temporary contracts, it’s important to give a clear and positive signal that union services and benefits are available regardless of the status of the individual contract, so it’s recommended that membership benefits are reviewed in recognition of this change in the membership profile.

Building participation and improving services

The research showed that people were willing to be more involved in the union, given the right support.

● Workplace ‘buddy’ scheme

- A **new role**, or workplace ‘buddy’, could be developed at local level – a contact and mentor for colleagues of the same nationality or who speak the same language. This new position should be clearly identified and supported within the union structure.
- A **job description** should be drafted to include communications, consultation and recruitment – but not representation.
- Buddies would not be required to attend steward training courses but a short **briefing module** could explain their role. Where possible, **recognition of the role** should be raised with local management. Financial compensation for time put in will be expected in many cases, so a **system of reimbursement** of costs should be set up as part of the scheme.

- The **buddy network** will take time to develop – and a lot will depend on regional organisers in briefing and supporting members in the new role. A small working party of regional organisers could identify pilot buddy schemes in a few workplaces. Unions could minimise costs by using telephone conferences and email groups. Objectives could include developing a briefing module and identifying ways to support new activists in their role.

● **Awareness training**

Tensions in the workplace undoubtedly exist. People are often working in stressful conditions, with constant change being thrust upon them, and as a result have little sense of being in control or knowing what's happening around them. This is partly due to current instabilities in the food manufacturing sector, but it's exacerbated by the changing profile of the workplace – and that's set to continue. The research found that, unsurprisingly, people find it easier to form relationships with people they can talk to, so tend to keep to their own language groups.

The diversity awareness training module developed and delivered to BFAWU employees was very successful and there was a positive response when similar training was suggested for workplaces in discussion groups. Employers also showed interest (budgets allowing) in the idea of joint workplace level training. So it was recommended that:

- the union look at the delivery of jointly supported awareness training with employers;
- a training module (based on the one designed for this project) is included in the union's ongoing activist training programme.

● **Officers' training**

Union officers felt that their knowledge of the backgrounds of these new members and potential members was often sketchy. One union provided useful briefings for officers to give an overview of the politics, history, economics and geography of relevant countries. A programme of training modules for employees would improve their understanding of the backgrounds and contexts of the members it's trying to reach.

● **Monitoring participation**

Progress in improving union participation needs to be monitored regularly and consistently. It's an issue that needs to be driven from the top and reinforced constantly if it's to be embedded in the union, so:

- the need to monitor and profile the union membership should be included in training for branch secretaries;
- the requirement to develop a membership profile and monitor participation on an ongoing basis should be included in the roll-out programme for the new membership system;
- a monitoring form should be designed and provided to officers for use at every opportunity;
- delegates to Conference should be asked to complete a monitoring form, included in conference folders.

● **Career opportunities**

There are many well-qualified people in the UK, particularly from Eastern Europe, with valuable experience and skills, working in jobs that don't make best use of the qualifications they have worked so hard for in their home countries. There are many examples of transferable skills not being used, often due to language barriers and workers' willingness to take whatever work they can find. What's more, many people

are told by employers that their qualifications 'don't count' in the UK.

Some British Asian workers don't feel their experience is valuable or qualifies them for promotion – despite their obvious ability and knowledge. Asian women in particular were found to be reluctant to apply for supervisory posts – in one group giving the reason as, 'People like us don't do those jobs.'

It's recommended that the union:

- establish workforce profiling with employers at all levels;
- develop advice and guidance on transferability of educational, professional and trade qualifications;
- develop a career development package including:
 - assertiveness training;
 - help with CVs and application forms.

● **Temporary contracts**

One of the biggest problems for people on temporary contracts is renting accommodation. Letting agencies and landlords are understandably often unwilling to take on tenants who can't demonstrate that they have a permanent job. The researchers heard of cases of real hardship, and some examples of outright exploitation arising from this problem. Their recommendation is to develop and implement a strategy of securing permanent contracts for migrant workers, for example, after a maximum specified time in the workplace. Although this would be challenging, it would be a positive and popular demonstration of the union's commitment to providing support for members and potential members in this situation.

● **Financial services**

Without an address and proof of residence – such as utility bills – many workers find it difficult to open a bank account. The union needs to review financial services available to members and explore ways of alleviating the potential problems rising from temporary contracts of employment with external providers.

Developing links

● **Building links in the wider community**

There's a perception of migrant workers as young, single people, here to earn money for a relatively short time. But many of them see their future here in the UK and are either here with their families or planning to bring their families to the UK as soon as possible. These are people more likely to have links with their own community or faith groups outside the workplace. They are also keen to access information about issues such as schools, health services and housing.

Many organisations are providing a range of comprehensive and valuable services already – for example, there are many excellent 'welcome packs'.

Other channels of communication include specific language or community newspapers, which would provide an excellent medium to publicise the union and the benefits of membership.

Local community and faith groups also provide a ready made channel of communication. Even something as simple as a poster on a church notice board could reach new people and raise the union's profile.

Much of this will need to be carried out by regional officers and organisers. It's clear that there's a wealth of material available that could be used by the union at little or no cost. Recommendations include:

- bringing in language skills where needed at local level;
- regional organisers could map local community groups and identify target areas to develop relationships, and identify services provided in the area by local authorities, CABs, Regional Development Agencies and other bodies;
- a national database of the services and support available could be developed and maintained;
- a union 'In case of emergency' card could be produced in key languages for distribution to members, including contact details of friends to help with translations, union and legal contact numbers. This has the added benefit of being an immediately identifiable service from the union.

Working with employers

Employers have generally responded positively to the suggestion of possible joint working. The following issues could be raised with a group of employers to develop a shared strategy:

- awareness training at workplace level;
- workforce profiling;
- recognition of 'buddy' scheme;
- recognition of overseas qualifications;
- improved access to ESOL classes;
- development of a 'Good Employment' Code of Practice;
- improved communications at site level to include input from the union.

Building links in other countries

There's no doubt that many people arrive in the UK with few support systems and little idea of where to look for help and advice. The researchers didn't encounter anyone who had been active in a trade union in their

home country. Any strategy to raise the profile of trade unions and establish them as reference points for help and advice in countries of origin will need to take this into account. But developing links with overseas trade unions to publicise the support available from trade unions in the UK is an obvious initiative. In the first instance, it seems sensible to focus on trade unions in the EU Accession states (the A8). It may be that this would be more cost effective for the union if they were approached through the TUC rather than on an individual union basis. It would also be useful to provide leaflets in the workplace for workers who are already here to pick up and give to families and friends planning to move to the UK. TCC recommends:

- immediate contact made with sister unions in Poland;
- the union to discuss wider overseas initiatives with the TUC;
- eastern European trade unions targeted as the initial priority;
- a short leaflet produced in the priority Eastern European languages and made available in workplaces.

Organising strategy

Responding to the needs of the diverse workplace is ultimately an organising challenge. None of the above recommendations will improve involvement and participation in the union or workplace in isolation. They need to be part of a structured and managed development strategy that's implemented across the union. Much of the work must be done at regional or local level. Regional Officers and Organisers will need to be proactive in areas they have perhaps not been involved in previously. And they will need to have clear objectives and be given support and guidance. Recommendations include:

- an appropriate training module designed for all paid officers;
- systems set in place for regular reporting and monitoring local initiatives;
- an action plan with agreed objectives, to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.

Looking forward

BFAWU is already making headway on the recommendations and a small working group has been established to move them forward. A sister trade union has been contacted in Poland, key languages have been identified for producing publications and a buddy network is well on its way.

The project has also been useful for learning lessons such as:

- being able to respond to the unexpected;
- being realistic about what can be achieved – and what to expect from members;
- being flexible;
- asking members what they think;
- most employers welcome the chance to be involved in a project.

For more information about the Diversity project, contact Kathryn Upton, The Campaign Company, on 0208 688 0650 or email Kathryn@thecampaigncompany.co.uk

'The UMF funding has really kick started us and has meant we've been able to build strong links quickly and professionally than would otherwise have been possible.'

Joe Marino, General Secretary, BFAWU

Appendix 1 – Research

Research

Initially the project was to have centred around employees whose first language wasn't English. But as the research phase progressed, it became increasingly difficult to separate out the barriers faced by employees who had English as a second language from those faced by the latest generation of migrant workers to the UK, most of them from Eastern Europe (the A8). So the research began to focus particularly on the challenges of the 150,000 migrant workers in food manufacturing workplaces who have arrived here from the A8 countries, rather than simply on language barriers.

Increased reliance on recruiting from overseas has had an impact on local employment markets. In the past, for instance, local people could reasonably expect to find seasonal work, but that's no longer always the case. The attractions, to employers, of using recruitment agencies, an increase in the use of short-term contracts, high turnover of workers and the willingness of many Eastern Europeans to work longer hours to maximise their earnings are all having an impact on the established employment markets.

Benchmarking – what's happening elsewhere

The Campaign Company looked at the range of initiatives to support and organise migrant workers across BFAWU and found several successful approaches that provide valuable lessons for the development of future strategies within the union.

- **Documents in translation**

At local level the researchers saw leaflets being translated, links being developed with community groups and members from different nationalities acting as points of

contact between the union and other people from their national group.

- **Union Learning Fund**

The Union Learning Fund is also a big attraction for people who are not confident speaking English, including Eastern Europeans. Learning reps in some branches are being approached for the first time by Eastern Europeans who want to know more about the learning programmes on offer.

- **Other unions**

Other unions have some useful projects. For instance, T&G used UMF funding to set up a migration unit, as a result of which many Eastern Europeans are now actively seeking union membership. The TUC and Compas (the Centre on Migration Policy and Study) have worked together on a project relating to Polish and Lithuanian workers and the opportunities and challenges for trades unions; and the TUC has developed useful training material that challenges entrenched attitudes to migrant workers. Non trade union organisations, such as local authorities, Regional Development Agencies and voluntary organisations, have done interesting work in this area as well.

- **Forging links**

Unions are also looking at branching out from their traditional roles in the workplace, recognising the need to forge links with local communities in an attempt to address tensions rising out of increased migration. This involves engaging with community and voluntary organisations, faith groups and churches.

- **Understanding different cultures**

There's a growing recognition that addressing language barriers is not enough on its own – there's also a need to understand culture and gender issues and the problems migrant workers face when they want to settle in the UK. Migrant workers often need advice on non-

workplace topics, such as education, housing and health.

There's more information in 'Useful sources of information' on page 15.

Interviews and discussion groups

The interviews and discussion groups – despite communication difficulties – were illuminating, as Kathy Upton of The Campaign Company reports:

'People told us a great deal about their experience of moving to the UK. In some instances this involved real difficulty and hardship. We spoke to a wide range of people, including men and women, members and non members, agency workers and permanent employees, as well as union reps and managers. We asked them about, for example, experiences of the workplace (when English wasn't their first language), and their perceptions of trade unions and union reps. The majority of agency workers spoken to were not union members. Many had thought it impossible to become a member unless they had a permanent contract. We asked where they would go for help if they had a problem at work, and how they would prefer to be contacted. We also found out whether they received information from their employer – and whether they could understand it!

'We found that a 'trade union' has different associations for different national groups. For workers from Eastern Europe, for example, the association was negative – a view that trade unions weren't independent from the government, that they were sometimes corrupt and self interested. This contrasted with a more positive response from workers from, for example,

India or Pakistan. For many, however, there was very little association at all – trade unions simply do not register as organisations relevant to the reality of their day-to-day lives. Certainly, many had no real idea of the help and support a union could provide. But for those who did, legal services and language courses were a priority.'

Findings included:

- **English classes**

Access to English classes was, not surprisingly, identified repeatedly as a benefit of union membership. But nevertheless, there were many examples of members attending language classes at their local colleges in their own time rather than taking advantage of the ULF agreement. One issue identified was that in some factories night shifts consist of a higher percentage of Eastern European workers, yet the fact that they are working at night makes it impossible for them to attend classes during the day. There was also confusion about whether non members could attend ULF classes.

- **Social networking**

It became clear that people who don't speak English well rely on their social networks at work for interaction and communication. Getting information to isolated groups in the workplace is a major challenge, particularly in conditions where the majority of the workforce doesn't speak English as a first language. Translations of key information, language specific sections in newsletters, and posters on the union notice boards in a range of languages were all seen as helpful. But again and again the comment was that a personal contact from someone speaking the relevant language would be the best approach.

- **Engaging with the community**

It was also suggested that the union should develop a profile outside the workplace. The Church is a focus for many Poles, for example, and this was identified as a channel through which the union could build relationships. Similarly, many new arrivals had found support through community links and organisations, where the union could also develop a presence, such as schools, or the CAB.

- **Linking abroad**

A further idea was that the union could develop a presence in the home countries, making contact with recruitment agencies and unions in Eastern Europe.

- **Union reps**

When it came to thinking about being a union rep, those with better language skills were often already informal representatives of their language groups and used to acting as intermediaries between different interests. Many wanted to know more about the union in general before committing to becoming more involved. Similarly, people wanted to know what it meant to be a rep, how much time was involved, and how it might affect their job security. There was feedback to suggest that some members would be willing to take on a role of 'mentor' or 'supporter' for their particular language group – but didn't want to commit to becoming a full steward. Again, the feedback was that a personal approach is the only way to get people to understand what they are being asked to do; nothing would get as good a response as a direct, personal approach.

- **Language training**

When they were asked about language training, everyone spoken to claimed to have been through a basic language test, but there were nevertheless people who spoke very little or no English. Low standards of English have caused a range of problems in

the workplace, from someone not understanding the fire regulations and remaining in the locker room when the factory had been evacuated, to issues about mistakes over use of the correct protective clothing. Everyone interviewed, though, had found a way to understand their contracts – and all showed a good understanding of rates of pay and conditions of service. They were also well aware of the need to keep a check on the hours they worked for overtime calculations – generally thanks to advice from colleagues.

In-depth interviews

- **Exploitation**

The in-depth interviews with identified stakeholders and employers looked at how easy it had been for workers to find employment in the UK – and there was evidence of considerable exploitation.

- **Employers**

Employers showed great interest in the project. Many companies are decentralised, with significant variation in HR policies and practices at local level, and there was a general feeling that more could be done to encourage integration. Otherwise the major problem identified was poor English.

- **Attitudinal training**

No employer interviewed provided any form of awareness or attitudinal training on diversity issues. Some were positive about the possibility, but felt that cost would always be an issue.

- **Qualifications**

There was recognition that the migrant workforce was in general better qualified than any of those they were working alongside. But few if any had a strategy to optimise this resource.

A language survey for members and non members

A language survey, produced in Polish, Turkish and Punjabi as well as English, was sent out to all union branches, asking branch secretaries to gather responses in each workplace. Face-to-face interviews by TCC field staff with language skills boosted the response.

• Languages spoken

The survey confirmed the multitude of languages spoken in different workplaces. Some workplaces had more than 40 languages spoken. Polish was the most widely spoken second language, followed by Gujerati, Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Urdu/Hindi and Punjabi.

• Written languages

A significant proportion of the workforce can read and write a second, or even third, language. For example a high number of Latvians, particularly the older generation, could speak and write in Russian. It is also common for people from the Asian sub continent to be fluent in other languages from that region.

• Experience and qualifications

Those interviewed had held a wide range of jobs before they came to the UK, including nursing, accountancy, mechanics, teaching and the hospitality industry. There were also graduates in economics, engineering and psychology.

Appendix 2 – Useful sources of information

The TUC and Compas briefing paper, Polish and Lithuanian Workers: Opportunities and Challenges for Trades Unions, is available on <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publications/papers/Forced%20Labour%20TUC%20Report.pdf>

'Refugees and other new migrants: a review of the evidence on successful approaches to integration' Edited by Sarah Spencer, Associate Director, COMPAS, University of Oxford

http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publications/Refugees_new_migrants.shtml

'Fair enough? Central and East European migrants in low-wage employment in the UK' eds Bridget Anderson, COMPAS, Martin Ruhs, COMPAS, Ben Rogaly, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Sarah Spencer, COMPAS. May 1st 2006.

<http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/changingstatus/Downloads/Fair%20enough%20paper%20-%201%20May%202006.pdf>

Migrant workers can obtain information on **accommodation** from a variety of sources, including by contacting the local council office for advice on hostels or bed and breakfast accommodation. Workers can also contact Shelter on freephone 0800 800 4444, or the Migrant Advisory and Advocacy Service on 020 8571 7950 who can advise on employment and housing rights.

The Equality Commission Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission Northern Ireland has produced 'Employing Migrant Workers – A Good Practice Guide for Employers for Promoting Equality of Opportunity'. It gives practical guidance on how best to comply with employer responsibilities under Northern Ireland's anti-discrimination laws in

their treatment of migrant workers. It may also be useful on the treatment of job applicants and employees from different ethnic groups, whether or not they are migrant workers.

The Equality Commission Northern Ireland's website: www.equalityni.org

META is a community organisation that provides a range of services to European economic migrants, helping them to settle in the UK on a sustainable basis. The Multilingual and European Thetford Association (META) was formed in summer 2005 and staff offer free employment and benefit support, and help dealing with the European consulates. People approach them from all over the country; they often have people arriving from London, Norwich, and Birmingham.

META also has a system that recognises people's qualifications, which helps prove their skills to prospective employers. The organisation can help find training courses as well as help people fill in child benefits and tax credits, and provide explanations on how the systems work.

Many **CAB** bureaux have recruited or trained specialist staff and volunteers with particular language skills, some drawn from the migrant worker population. Leaflets on rights and entitlements have been translated and some bureaux have set up special advice sessions for migrant workers.

East of England Development Agency

The EEDA is the lead Regional Development Agency on the issue of migrant workers. It has produced a comprehensive report, 'Migrant Workers in the East of England', a valuable examination of the profile of the migrant workforce in the area. The EEDA is leading a strategy to join up the many local initiatives.

New Links New Arrivals Partnership, Peterborough

The New Links New Arrivals Partnership is a partnership between the city council, health and police. Its whole mandate is to create links and bridges between communities on a sustainable level and to be the first stop for new arrivals to the city before they are directed to relevant services, each partnered with a mentor from the local community.

