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The Social Impacts of Using Eastern EU Migrant Workers

In May 2004, eight Eastern European nations joined the EU and the UK was one of the few countries to give their citizens free access to the labour market. This research paper looks at the main social impacts of using EU Migrant Workers and using four case studies based on immigrant worker experiences in North East England, Southampton, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

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INTRODUCTION

Labour migration is essential to sustain both economic growth and the quality of life in the UK. At present there is not just a shortage of skills, but the lack of the number of people to do the work that is available. Economic migrants are vital, filling some of the skill shortages in the UK, both at lower and higher levels, that inhibit the growth of individual businesses and overall productivity. The UK has more than half a million unfilled vacancies in key sectors such as construction, services and ICT.

Between May 2004 and June 2006 447,000 people from the Accession Eight¹ registered to work in the UK. By far and away the largest group of people coming to the UK has been the 264,560 Polish workers. They make up six out of every 10 Eastern European workers in Britain.

THE BENEFITS OF USING MIGRANT WORKERS

The most obvious benefit of using migrant workers in the filling of skill shortages, but they also ensure diversity and help to improve corporate social responsibility.

Providing skills

Skills are essential to productivity and profitability. For UK businesses to compete in an increasingly global marketplace, the workforce must be equipped with the skills to produce high quality goods and services. Migrant workers help to fill existing skill shortages in all sectors of the economy. A research study from the Home office shows that the top five occupation groups, for EU workers between May 2004 to June 2006, were Administration, Business & Management (34%), Hospitality & Catering (21%), Agriculture (12%), Manufacturing (7%), and Food, Fish and Meat processing (5%)².

Ensuring diversity

Constantly changing demographics mean that organisations need to ensure that they recruit and retain from a wide talent pool if they are to serve the needs of their clients and communities successfully. Businesses that identify closely with their customer base will be able to segment and target different groups more effectively, provide more accurate means of communicating with their target audience and improve customer service. Products and services can also be more effectively marketed when businesses are aware of different customers' requirements³. This requires effective diversity policies.

Organisations keen to attract talented workers want to be seen as an 'employer of choice', and diversity is a key part of this. Employing migrant workers is one way in which organisations can increase the diversity of its employees. There is growing evidence those organisations that operate best practice Human Resources policies around diversity tend to perform better.

¹ The eight nations given unfettered access to the UK's jobs market in May 2004 were the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

² Source from Home Office Accession Monitoring Report May 2004-June 2006.

³ CRE Good Practice Report - "The economic case for racial equality"
http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/www_economiccase.html#five

Working environments where staff fear discrimination will tend to have higher levels of absenteeism, which affects productivity and competitiveness. Staff turnover may also be high, which significantly increases business overheads.

The potential benefits of diversity include more satisfied customers, improved product and service delivery and increased sales.

IMPROVING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

There is growing evidence that an organisation's ethical reputation and commitment to corporate social responsibility can tangibly affect its attractiveness as an employer. This covers a wide spectrum of business activities and includes things like people policies, investment and payment practice and environmental policies.

Graduates and other employees value a commitment to corporate social responsibility when looking for jobs and will assess potential employers on their policies. Many organisations are recognising the importance of not just having good employment policies, but also having ethical procurement policies to help ensure that organisations supplying them have responsible employment practices.

Recent studies suggest that 'intangibles' such as brand, reputation and ethical policies affect up to 30% of investors' assessment of the value of an organisation. The joint Future Foundation / Work Foundation research reported that 20% of employees found employers with a positive socially responsible image more attractive.

CASE STUDY 1: EU MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND

The Construction Sector

The construction sector is one of the key industries in Europe and one its biggest employers with a long history of sector migration at European. In the UK a recent project (PEMINT)⁴ identified that the construction sector has a long-standing reliance on a 'reserve army' of relatively cheap foreign labour. Importantly the UK sector, compared to its European counterparts, is difficult to regulate with self-employment common, alongside the employment of people for 'cash in hand'. This and large numbers of subcontract arrangements, allows companies or individuals to easily set-up businesses in the sector.

⁴ The PEMINT project (2001-2004) was funded under the EU 5th framework Programme and investigated the recruitment decisions of companies in the sector. Its main findings can be found in Organisational Recruitment and Patterns of Migration: Interdependencies in an Integrating Europe, special issue of IMIS-Beitrage edited by Michael Bommers, Kirsten Hoesch, Uwe Hunger and Holger Kolb, 25, December 2004.

Migrant Workers experiences in the North East Construction Sector

It has been estimated that the North East construction sector employs approximately 104,800 people⁵ and that by 2010 this will rise to 111,800 with a consequential number of key issues for the sector. These issues include outflow from the sector, which will not be met by new inflow leaving a number of recruitment problems. The sector itself is also identified as the most insular in England with a high level of interregional mobility⁶.

Using a questionnaire and action research approach the project identified seven main areas for concern for migrant workers in the sector.

- Accommodation: a number of workers were living in low standard property owned by employers, with some workers sleeping on the floor.
- Bank Accounts: many workers identified that they could not get bank accounts because employers would not provide appropriate information including rent books and letters to confirm employment.
- Conditions of employment: the project uncovered a number of issues in this area including migrant workers not receiving wage slips or having contracts of employment. Many were working below the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT) negotiated sector rates and was in need of assistance.
- Employer hostility: two employers in particular were openly hostile to migrant workers and the project team, with violence used in both cases. In one case this led to a walk out of Polish workers with UCATT able to negotiate a satisfactory return to work.
- Language: the issue of language has been a factor throughout the project but communication with migrant workers has been enabled through the use of interpreters at appropriate times.
- Prejudice: migrant workers spoken to have found the indigenous workforce receptive to their problems, although the team are aware that this situation may deteriorate as more workers come to the region.
- Wages: have been a key issue throughout the project with a number of migrant workers spoken to earning below the national minimum wage. UCATT have negotiated better rates and the situation is improving.

ORGANISING MIGRANT WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION

The organising strategy used for this project has involved three key areas.

- UCATT: providing a presence. Consisted of the union visiting sites where migrant workers were based and beginning to breakdown barriers to engagement with the migrant workers encountered. In particular a recently appointed UCATT development officer has played a leading role in this acting as a contact for migrant works.
- Site and other meetings: has involved site meetings with teams of Poles in which the union case was put to migrant workers and they in turn expressed

⁵ Portes, J. and French, S. (2005) The impact of free movement of workers from central and eastern Europe on the UK labour market: Early evidence, Department for Work and Pensions working paper 18, 2005.

⁶ IFF Research (2005) Workforce Mobility and Skills in the UK Construction Sector (North East Report), research report for ConstructionSkills, Department of Trade and Industry and ECITB, IFF Research Ltd, February 2005.

their concerns about their current conditions. Other focused meetings have been conducted including a successful mass meeting of some 65 Polish workers.

- Development migrant worker trust: this has proved the most difficult part of the project and was ably assisted by a national organiser from the Polish trade union Solidarnosc.

Migrant workers, particularly Eastern EU migrants, are likely to be an increasing part of UK life for the foreseeable future. Given this there are a number of key issues that are transferable to other union migrant worker recruitment campaigns. There are, though, issues with regard to the sustainability of membership, in particular the processing of migrant worker membership, which is being delayed due to a lack of bank accounts. More importantly many migrant workers in construction in the North East appear to be returning home and this is an issue that will require careful consideration.

CASE STUDY 2: EAST EUROPEAN NATIONALS LIVING IN SOUTHAMPTON⁷

Southampton appears to be a very popular location amongst the new east EU national's (A8) population, particularly with young poles. This may in part be due to the fact that the City has an established Polish community who came here after the 2nd World War. The City has also received a few East European asylum seekers during and after the communist times. The 2001 Census recorded 835 east European nationals living in Southampton, of which 271 were Polish. Since May 2004 the East European, and particularly the Polish population is known to have grown rapidly, sparking wide spread interest in the local media. However, it has been difficult to approximate the increase in the city's population. Various groups have their own judgment estimating the new migrant population within a range from a few thousand to as many as 25,000 people.

THE SURVEY OF LOCAL EAST EUROPEAN POPULATION

In August 2006 the City Council's Communities team commissioned a small piece of research with East European migrants to help better understand certain issues such as employment, housing, education, health and social inclusion. The research involved interviews with 75 primarily Polish migrants, and was conducted by the EU Welcome project. The key findings were as follow:

Employment Conditions

Most of the interviewed people had worked in Southampton for longer than a year. They worked in many different occupations, ranging from unskilled (warehouse, cleaning, packing) to semi skilled (admin, bakery, carpenter, mechanic) and skilled (bank staff, dentist, lecturer).

Housing & Health Services

The survey found that accommodation was not generally provided by the employer, and is usually shared rather than self-contained. The level of awareness of any advice agencies that would help with accommodation concerns is low, only 11% said they know where they could find some help. The location is considered less

⁷ Source from Southampton City Council Report, February 2007.

favorable the further from the city centre it is, especially when coming to the centre involves passing the Itchen Bridge. Some complained about the noise and dirty and dangerous areas. Others indicated that the house they live in is overcrowded, in poor condition and the rent is too high. As far as medical services are concerned 95% indicated that they knew where they could seek help if they had a health problem. More than 86% were registered with a local GP, however less than a third were registered with a dentist.

Integration and Cohesion

The majority of the respondents felt welcomed in the UK (64%) but some said they faced some discrimination. The most common form of discrimination reported is verbal abuse which may take place in pubs, at college, at work or on the street.

Other single mentions of perceived discrimination are such as not being allowed to speak Polish at work, patients refusing to be treated by a Polish nurse, and being threatened. One said they lose employment if they asked the manager about the right to have a break. The Polish describe their relationship with the rest of the Polish community as generally good. However answers vary from very positive, when people say they have many Polish friends, to comments that Poles do not have many Polish friends. The relations with other communities are also generally described as positive/good. Some perceive it as interesting to live in a multicultural city such as Southampton and some Poles say they have friends among the Asians. Most of the comments suggested that people accept the different communities as long as they are accepted themselves, and are not a subject of discrimination. There were a few negative comments about the behaviors of other ethnic minorities, and a very small number of respondents had particular issues with black and ethnic minority groups.

Priorities for New Services

When asked what new service they would like to see in Southampton, Polish mentioned the following:

- Flights to Poland from Southampton Airport
- More information in Polish language/easier access to information in Polish
- More places at the Polish school
- More information on education for adults and children
- More hours for the learning support assistants for children
- A social club/meeting place for the Polish, a sports centre
- Legal/tax/insurance advice
- More books in Polish in libraries
- Polish newspaper

DISCUSSIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH THE EAST EUROPEAN POPULATION

To gain a further understanding of the issues facing East European migrants within Southampton, during November 2006 the City Council commissioned a market research company to conduct interviews with 14 individuals. These were people who deal with the Eastern Europeans living in the city on a daily and weekly basis. The key findings were as follows:

General Information

In general it was found that migrants workers came to Southampton to work or to find work. Other responses included:

- Economic reasons – wages in Poland are a fifth of what they earn here
- To get a decent job – better themselves (educated Poles)
- An adventure
- To work for a short time to make money to send back to Poland or earn enough so can set themselves up in business when they return to Poland
- It is cheaper to come to the UK than other parts of Poland
- England is the second best place to go (after USA)

From the survey it was found that people choose Southampton because:

- They know someone here already
- Southampton is perceived as a clean, green city
- It is smaller than London but close by
- There is a perception that Southampton has good jobs and accommodation
- There is a mild climate.

Employment

The new EU migrant workers often undertake employment in a whole range of unskilled work, e.g. in factories, agriculture, hotels, flower picking, security, restaurants, on building sites, yet most of them are qualified to do other jobs. Some are considering setting up their own businesses utilising the skills that they have such as mechanic, baker or importing goods from Eastern Europe. Those workers who in addition to employment get their accommodation from the same agency are put to live in “12 in a 3 bed house”. It is also perceived that the new workers are exploited more when there are no unions and that a slow process of undercutting of wages is taking place (“Know of agency in Southampton paying EU migrants £3 or less an hour”). It is therefore vital that the hourly rates are protected. In the long term, once those who now take any job mastered the language, driven by their aspirations will be competing for the better jobs. This may be an issue in the future

Usage of local services

The survey identified that there are many public services that are currently used by the East European migrants. They vary from those related to their employment rights to those that help improve their family life. The services include English speaking courses, tax advice, medical services, welfare benefit advice, schools/nursery for children, family planning/contraception or computers available in the library.

Information & Advice

The help and advice to East European migrants available in the city may be divided into:

- Help and advice to those who just arrived-these include information on how to get work and place to live and information on National Insurance number. Further information covers registration with a doctor, surgery or health centre information, meaning of specific symbols, how to get translation services if there is a need to go to hospital, information on places where one can get advice on various issues, information on driving a car in the UK, Polish car or insurance, what to do in a case of an unwanted pregnancy, where to go if one is being exploited at work, what to do in a case of sickness or when one loses their job and how to open a bank account.
- Those who are more established, the more established can get advice on mortgages or buy a house, how to get and set up internet, information on tax,

council housing, childcare, pregnancy, divorce, information on the English education system including when children start education and Catholic school fee paying and information on setting up own business (tax, VAT, importing or exporting).

Concerns

The most critical issue is the language barrier. The professionals consider that English speaking courses should be easily accessible. Some of the new comers see an opportunity to make quick money and undertake illegal activity (sex traffic, crime, drugs) ("If things go bad it's a slippery slope. They turn to drink. Cannot go back because of pride, better to be homeless here than in Poland"). There is a danger that the criminal or illegal element will result in ruining their reputation.

Community Cohesion

The general perceptions from the survey were that:

- Whilst local businesses encourage Polish workers to fill the jobs UK residents do not want. There might also be some friction with other established minority groups. One of the interviewees says that Polish workers are preferred over other minority groups for there is a perception that they are hard working.
- Businesses want migrant workers to feel welcome, as they do not want the tension, Middle class people (in Southampton) are more tolerant of Poles than other people,
- As Poles are 'white' they are probably more accepted than other minority groups,
- There is an undercurrent of racism within Southampton, particularly among the working classes.
- Southampton is perceived as a welcoming place by Poles themselves.

IMPACT ON LOCAL SERVICES

In order to assess the impact of A8 nationals on services delivered by Southampton City Council, the project approached each section and asked for perceptions. The majority of the information received was anecdotal, as many services are not currently recording precise information.

Education

The nationality of Southampton's school pupils has been recorded since last year, the first results were calculated using information data already held on pupils by the school. In 2006 there were 27,784 school pupils in Southampton of which 1.1% came from A8 countries. Of the 305 from A8 countries, 283 are from Poland, the majority of which are of primary school age.

Health

The majority of health information is only available to 2001 Census standard definitions. Across Southampton birth rates appear to be increasing by about 5% per year and anecdotal reports from practice staff and social services interpreters say that they are seeing a high number of eastern Europeans pregnant women particularly in the Shirley area.

Community Safety

The Hampshire Constabulary Chief Inspector Tim Ashman responded that there are inherent risks in quoting raw crime figures in the context of migrant communities when there is uncertainty over actual population figures of such groups. Quoting raw crime data in this context can be damaging to communities in respect of public perceptions concerning the level of criminality that exists within them. For this reason, the police are extremely cautious about the use of crime data in this context. Quoting raw data of police recorded crime can also be misleading as certain minority communities are less likely than other groups to report crime to the police. The reasons for this are varied and include language barriers, cultural mistrust of enforcement agencies or simply a lack of understanding about how the criminal justice system works. British Crime Survey data can serve as a useful comparison to police recorded crime but it uses different parameters and may miss a proportion of people from migrant communities. Consequently it is difficult to assess whether the new immigrant communities have had any impact on community safety.

Housing

Information from housing suggests a steady increase in the numbers of Polish people applying for accommodation. Whether this is because of the increase in numbers of Polish people or because of more awareness is hard to say. Between 2004 and November 2006 there were 224 applications of which 128 were approved under the Home bid Scheme, approximately 1% of the total. To date nine of these approved Polish applicants have been housed under this scheme, all of which underwent the normal process. It appears that all these families bid on the less attractive properties to secure a home.

Employment

There are two important aspects around the impact of East European migrants on employment and public services. Firstly, whether East Europeans are employees within local public services, and secondly whether they seek advice or guidance on gaining employment. Southampton City Council itself does not record the precise ethnicity of its new employees. However HR do record "other white" as a ethnic category and based on surnames it is estimated that of the 59 people employed on a permanent basis between January 2004 and January 2007 approximately 39% may come from A8 countries. Because of similar classification issues the local hospitals were unable to provide and information on the number of East Europeans employed with them. Restrictions around benefits mean that many East Europeans are not in contact with the local Job Centre Plus, and accordingly they have been unable to provide any data around East European migrants seeking advice. However, the Wheatsheaf Trust, a local charity who provides employment related information, advice and guidance through a network of Employment Access Centres registered 118 Polish clients between 2005 and 2006. This represented 8% of the total registrations. The Wheatsheaf Trust has noticed that many of these clients are highly skilled and willing to work for low wages. Over 70% have level 3 or above qualifications and the majority are aged 25 or under.

English Language Courses

Many Polish feel their lack of English skills let them down when accessing services and they feel that more needs to be done to encourage language skills. There are at least seven bodies running English language classes in Southampton and they run many different courses of different skill levels and frequencies At any one time approximately 300 people are using community ESOL courses of which about 150 are migrant workers.

Library Service

Southampton Central library has recently acquired a collection of 392 Polish books which have been issued 2,749 times.

City Council

Play services has reported that over the last 12 to 18 months a large increase in the number of Polish children who are using the play scheme in Newtown and also coming in for advice but they do not have any firm numbers.

Waste Collection

Southampton operates a twin bin system with a blue top bin for recycling. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some members of A8 community are not fully complying with the recycling / material separation requirements.

Environmental Health

Recent contact with environmental health has revealed concerns over A8 nationals understanding of health and safety information in manual employment particularly in catering, production lines and on construction sites. Many of the A8 people have received no training and are unaware of their or the employers responsibilities. Environmental Health are currently assessing the situation and considering providing some information in Polish to make people aware of their responsibilities.

CASE STUDY 3: EU MIGRANT WORKERS IN IRELAND

In recent years Ireland has undergone dramatic change in relation to the composition of its workforce. It is no longer a country of net emigration but is now instead a country of net immigration. Ireland saw the largest share of European migrant workers: 3.8% of its total work force.

According to SIPTU (the biggest Irish trade union) report, many construction workers from Poland work for a Polish company in Ireland and have complained that the company was not paying them the minimum wage. Some of them were promised a contract when they started working, but after a few weeks, the employer refused to sign. The workers were fired and could not claim money, since they had no proof that they had been working. The trade union tries to inform migrant workers about their rights, distributing leaflets in eleven languages at construction sites with an overview of minimum wages per speciality. It also takes on cases of individual workers. The trade union are often the only line of defence of the migrant workers, but cases of exploitation are manifold.

The Trade unionists and social workers claim that the Irish government has failed to inform migrant workers about their rights upon arrival. So the employment and education department, FAS (Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority), has launched an information campaign towards migrant workers.

FAS has made leaflets and DVDs in all the languages of the new EU member states, informing people before coming about the labour market and about life in Ireland. They also warn that without knowing English, it will be difficult to find a job.

SIPTU has recently welcomed two non-binding rulings from the European Court of Justice which were marginally in favour of trade unions campaigning against the use of lower paid labour, often from the new member states of Eastern Europe⁸.

One case involves a group of Latvian workers brought in to renovate a school in Sweden at half the rate of pay of their Swedish counterparts. The opinion found that the Swedish trade union at the centre of the dispute was entitled to insist that the Latvian company providing the workers sign up to the same wage agreement that governed Swedish construction workers. The Advocate General argued, however, that this right had to be proportionate and in the public interest.

CASE STUDY 4: EU MIGRANT WORKERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Over the past few years, Northern Ireland has played host to a growing number of migrant workers, particularly from the eight eastern European countries. According to a Home Office report, at March 2007, there were more than 20,000 migrant workers from Eastern EU countries⁹.

The EU migrant workers face acute problems if they leave or lose their jobs. There are strict regulations regarding eligibility for both government assistance with emergency rehousing and Housing Benefits. Many migrant workers are ineligible for a variety of reasons. Technically, this means they are also ineligible for any temporary hostel accommodation provided by the voluntary sector, if hostel places are subsidised by the government.

The scale of the problem is illustrated by the fact that the Simon Community Northern Ireland received requests to accommodate more than 50 homeless migrant workers in 2004/05¹⁰.

Indeed given the language difficulties and other problems in obtaining information on sources of emergency help encountered by many migrant workers, it seems likely that other migrants in Northern Ireland became homeless during this period, but simply ended up sleeping rough.

Unlike their counterparts from the 'older' EU countries, many Eastern EU nationals are not entitled to government assistance with emergency rehousing or to Housing Benefit if they are not working. The Simon Community was able to accommodate some of these individuals. However, it drew on its own financial reserves to provide this accommodation. It would not be sustainable for the Simon Community to offer such support, without government subsidy, on a much wider scale.

While many migrant workers come over to Northern Ireland by themselves, some bring their families. This poses a challenge for schools and teachers. But it can also provide a valuable opportunity to enhance inclusiveness by the fact that more than 1000 non-English speaking pupils have arrived in schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area since last September¹¹. In the previous academic year, the

⁸ Source from Irish News 23 May 2007.

⁹ Source from Border&Immigration Agency, Accession Monitoring Report A8 Countries May 2004-March 2007.

¹⁰ Source from Migrant workers in Northern Ireland. A policy paper from Concordia.

¹¹ Figure from Southern Education and Library Board.

number reported as having significant difficulty with English throughout Northern Ireland rose by 30% from 2,056 to 2,679¹².

Racial Discrimination enquiries on the increase in Northern Ireland

The number of people contacting the Equality Commission about racial discrimination or harassment has increased by 21% since between 2005 to 2006 from 199 to 242¹³. Here are some examples of good and bad practice.

- **An example of bad practice**

In December, 2005, JSD Recruitment Services was ordered to pay a total of £70,000 compensation to three Portuguese workers based in Dungannon. The Tribunal found that JSD Recruitment Service had racially discriminated against the workers. The Tribunal's Decision said that the workers were treated unfavourably compared to indigenous employees of the company where they were working; they were paid less, they were forced to work overtime, and their overtime rates were less than those received by colleagues from Northern Ireland¹⁴.

- **An example of good practice**

Northbrook Technology is a Northern Ireland-based software services provider. Approximately 100 of its 1500 employees are foreign nationals. Northbrook goes out of its way to ensure that its migrant workers receive full support.

"When we recruit workers from Poland, for example, we know the cost of coming to Northern Ireland can be prohibitive for them, as the average wage in that country is much lower than ours," says Jim Norris, Senior Human Resources Manager for Northbrook. "So we pay for their flights and provide them with accommodation for the first six months, the first month of which is free. We'll also help them to arrange bank accounts, to obtain their National Insurance number and to register under the Worker Registration Scheme."

The company has set up 'buddy group' so that migrant workers can get to know each other, and it holds English language improvement classes. Ongoing support and advice is also provided to the workers¹⁵.

"We appreciate that it can be very daunting for migrant workers when they arrive here," says Mr Norris. "So we do everything we can to support our overseas workers from the moment they arrive. We believe in valuing all our staff equally. It makes ethical sense, but it also makes business sense because workers who are treated well aren't tempted to go and get another job with a competitor."

These problems have been addressed by voluntary and community sector. For example, Business in Community has recently set up an online guide for employers in Northern Ireland on employing migrant workers¹⁶. For the past few years, the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme has been providing a support service to migrant workers in the Dungannon area¹⁷.

¹² Figure from Department for Education.

¹³ Source from Legal-Island.

¹⁴ Source from Legal-Island.

¹⁵ Source from Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland.

¹⁶ <http://guide2migrantworkers.org.uk/>

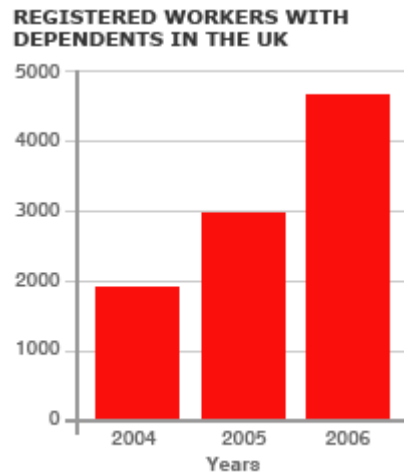
¹⁷ <http://www.stepni.org/>

Other organizations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Law Centre (NI), the House Rights Services, and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, also provide advice and support for migrant workers. However these very valuable initiatives are insufficient on their own.

OTHER SOCIAL IMPACTS OF USING EU MIGRANT WORKERS

This remains one of the most controversial areas of migrant working because it is very difficult to calculate the costs on the state compared with the benefits of taxes raised. A research study using Home Office figures on benefit take-up relating to the 447,000 registered workers suggests that the numbers who have sought benefits and housing support has been “low”¹⁸.

Over the two years, 5,943 people applied for Income Support and Jobseekers Allowance. Only 768 were deemed eligible for consideration. The figures also show a demographic shift taking place among the workers. The number of workers with children in the country has doubled since accession, albeit to less than 5,000 as of June 2006. This indicates that some workers who want to stay are probably bringing their families into the UK. Some 27,000 workers have been allowed to claim the basic universal Child Benefit (£17.45 for the first child). Furthermore, 14,000 workers were approved for Tax Credits, the system that recognises families in low-paid jobs.



SOURCE: Home Office/DWP

However, the take-up of council houses has been very small indeed, almost certainly reflecting how stringent the requirements are for getting onto the waiting list. As of June 2006, 110 council homes across England had been let to Accession Eight workers - representing 0.04% of the total number of available homes.

¹⁸ Source from BBC News.