

Equality of Opportunity Committee

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Issues affecting migrant workers in Wales
Submission by Careers Wales companies

Purpose

This paper has been jointly prepared by the six Careers Wales companies following a request to contribute evidence to an inquiry by the Equality of Opportunity Committee of the National Assembly of Wales into "migrant workers, their families and the communities in which they work."

Background

Careers Wales is the national brand under which six regional companies provide free, impartial careers information, advice and guidance on learning and employment to young people and adults. The companies also play a key role in facilitating links between education and business to help young people find out about and prepare for the world of work. Our work contributes to the Welsh Assembly Government's Lifelong Learning Agenda encouraging people from all walks of life to engage in learning, skills and career development. Working in partnership with a wide range of organisations and developing programmes to encourage social inclusion are vital elements of our work.

Careers companies have found that estimates of the number of migrant workers and their families settling in Wales are difficult to obtain as the information seems to be available only through oblique methods. The Workers Registration Scheme, for example, gives an indication of trends in Unitary Authorities but cannot capture information about the families of clients or the outward migration of people who initially register and return to their country of origin. Some Unitary Authorities have made estimates of the movement of people into their area but at present there are no formal mechanisms for sharing this information.

All careers companies have reported working with migrant workers and their families and at present this work is managed within existing budgets. Some areas have experienced fairly substantial migration. In Llanelli, for example, it is estimated that 2,000 Polish people are living in the area although only a small proportion have visited the local careers centre in the town. In Gwent, a BBC Wales studio is situated next to Newport Careers Centre and this venue is often used by migrant workers to access the internet. BBC staff have signposted clients to the careers centre for careers advice and information and in particular help with completing CVs. As a result the centre has seen numerous clients from the new accession countries.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number and origin of migrant workers and their families accessing services offered by Careers Wales as current management information systems are not set up to provide this information and the reporting structure to the Welsh Assembly Government does not require this breakdown. At present we record the ethnic origin of a client but not their nationality. The classification of ethnic origin for a Polish client for example is "White - Other" or White -European." The former classification is also likely to be the same if the client was from Australia whilst the latter could include individuals from Iceland to Greece. Most" "Careers Wales companies, however, can report on the first language of clients receiving a service. The following table, for example, gives a breakdown of the first language of adults accessing services provided by Careers Wales North West for the year 1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008:

Abrabeg	3
Bengaleg	6
English	2,662
Daneg	2
Hindi	1
Ieithoedd eraill	2
Iseldireg	1

Koreaidd	1
Portiwgaleg	6
Pwyleg	9
Saesneg	5,687
Sbaeneg	2
Swahili	2
Tagalog (Ynysoedd y Phillipine)	9
Tsieiëeg	11
Tyrceg	3
Walloon (Gwlad Belg)	1
Total	8,408

In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan for the same period, the first language of 509 adults known not to be English or Welsh accessing guidance services provided by the company totalled 37 different languages. In addition from July 2007, the Cardiff Careers Centre has recorded a total of 97 enquiries from adults from other European Union countries visiting the centre to request vacancy information. Seventy-eight of these visitors were from Poland.

It is generally known that the majority of migrant workers in Wales tend to be young adults. Those with families may not have brought their children with them, or if they have, the children are usually of primary school age. It is not known how many of these families will remain in Wales in the foreseeable future but it is possible that there will be a gradual increase in the demand for Careers Wales services from the children of migrant workers as they progress into secondary school. In Llanelli, the local Catholic secondary school has seen reasonable numbers of children from migrant families with 50 children enrolling in the last two years. These children are starting to become involved in Careers Wales activities although relatively few have reached Year 11 as yet. The school has appointed Polish speaking support workers to help fast track the learning of English and Welsh.

In Mid Glamorgan and Powys there has also been an increase in the number of children where English or Welsh is not their first language. In the Bridgend area alone there are 200 children who fall into this category. Catholic schools in the area have seen an increase in children of Polish or Filipino background.

In Cardiff, children of secondary school age whose first language is not English or Welsh are placed with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) at Fitzalan High School and Cathays High School in the city. There they are able to develop their language skills and have access to the National Curriculum until they can be fully integrated into mainstream education. The link careers advisers for the schools make use of interpreters at EMAS to talk to young people at the unit about their career ideas. Peer interpreters are also sometimes used. Next steps in terms of career planning for many of the students will be to improve their English and they will often remain with EMAS for further support or move to local ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision at Coleg Glan Hafren, the local college of further education, if they are over 16.

Working in a school which is the first point of entry for students with little or no English has resource implications. Careers advisers linked to EMAS units in Cardiff, for example, have to adapt group work materials intended for mainstream students and tend to see students in groups at the units three or four times during the year compared to seeing mainstream students only once a year. Career interviews through interpreters take longer with the client trying to fully explain their needs and the careers adviser taking time to answer so that he or she is fully understood. Sometimes it is necessary to explain things in several different ways. Students may have no contextual frame of reference; the education system is different to their home country and they may need in depth explanation of the qualification framework and career progression.

In addition to young people in full time education, endeavours are also made by careers companies to ensure that parents receive

information in their chosen language. In Cardiff there are approximately 604 young people in secondary school or who have left full time education and are under the age of 18 who have accessed services and advised that English or Welsh is not the first language spoken at home with a total of twenty eight different languages spoken. All careers companies have access to professional translators to translate written materials as required. In Cardiff, for example, literature sent to parents of students in Years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 is made available upon request in four ethnic minority languages including Bengali, Gujarati, Somali and Urdu. Requests for translation into other languages are also usually agreed where budgets allow. Moving Forward Plans produced by careers advisers to summarise a young person's career ideas along with the advice and guidance given are all produced in the first language of the home if the young person wishes for a copy to be sent to his/her parents/carers.

In North East Wales, young people and their parents who indicate that English or Welsh is not their first language are contacted prior to them starting Year 11 to enquire if they need translation or interpretation services to enable them to access their entitlement to information, advice and guidance. The company makes use of interpreters in the school setting to aid understanding in the guidance interview. During the period 1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008 eight Moving Forward Plans were produced for young people from migrant families by Careers Wales North East in languages other than Welsh or English with the cost of translation being approximately £100 per plan.

In Mid Glamorgan and Powys the most common requests for translation of Moving Forward Plans are for translations into Polish and Portuguese.

In North West Wales, Careers Wales has translated the company's information leaflet into six minority languages in accordance with statistical data provided by the North Wales Race Equality Network. The languages include Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Chinese, Polish and Portuguese.

Careers advisers working in colleges of further education are also involved in working with young people and adults who have moved to Wales. Many languages are spoken at Coleg Glan Hafren in Cardiff, for example, although Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Somali, Arabic, Farsi and French are the most common with Polish, Czech and Slovak increasing. These students will access careers company services by attending group sessions with a careers adviser at the college. They may also be referred to an adviser by a college tutor or the College's International Office. In some cases they are referred by friends. Those students with only a basic command of English follow ESOL courses. There are also students who follow English for International Students (EIS). The latter tend to be students who have graduated with higher qualifications in their home countries and are attending college to improve their English. Many are also in full time or part time employment although usually not in occupations commensurate with their qualifications because of their lack of English.

Coleg Llandrillo in North West Wales has initiated a course aimed specifically at workers from overseas called the British Regional Information Training Scheme (BRITS). The purpose of the course is to assist workers in the hospitality and tourism industries in North Wales to settle into both a new working and living environment.

All careers companies report that they have seen an increase in the number of adults accessing careers services whose English is an additional language. Some companies subscribe to Language Line which provides telephone interpreting services to help advisers communicate with limited English speaking clients. This enables advisers to hold conversations with clients when they call into careers centres. Other companies make arrangements for local interpreters to attend interviews. Callers to the learndirect advice line, which is managed by Careers Wales in Wales, are referred to learndirect in England where lines are available for individuals to speak to advisers in eight different languages including Gujarati, Punjabi, Somali, Syleti, Urdu, Farsi, Polish and French. They may also be referred to local careers companies for assistance. Referrals by the advice line to both of these services are negligible.

In addition to providing services at careers centres, advisers across Wales also visit outreach centres such as community and enterprise centres and Jobcentre Plus to ensure services are accessible to all sections of the community. Partnership working with local organisations is essential to our work. In Cardiff, for example, Careers Wales has made efforts to network with the Polish community based in the city. Advisers have attended meetings at Polish House (Dom Polanski) to provide information about services available. Polish House is a meeting house in Cardiff where members of the Polish community can meet and receive informal support helping new arrivals to settle in Cardiff. Strong links have also been developed with Polish staff from Race Equality First which works directly with migrant workers. In Llanelli, work is taking place with the Polish Advice Centre to help migrants produce CVs and application forms which fit more closely with the expectations of local employers. In Mid Glamorgan and Powys, Careers Wales has strong links with Valleys Race Equality Council (VALREC) and in Gwent the careers company has developed partnerships with several agencies working in Newport where black minority ethnic and migrant workers are living to enable individuals to access services.

Careers Wales also provide services via www.careerswales.com. During the period 1st April 2007 -31st March 2008, 3,411 visits to the Careers Wales website were recorded from countries within the European Union out of a total of 12, 917 visits from countries across the world excluding the United Kingdom.

Careers companies across Wales report that ESOL provision is limited in their area and language barriers can hinder the progress of migrant workers in accessing services. In some cases it is known that rather than wait for ESOL courses to become available some have attended Basic Skills courses in order to attain English language skills.

From our experience many migrant workers take up low skilled, low paid jobs which may be casual, seasonal or temporary work. Migrant workers can be found in the catering and hospitality industry, the tourism and leisure sectors, agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, warehousing, retailing and the care sector. These sectors are experiencing labour and skills shortages driven by perceptions of menial work for low wages, involving unsocial hours and offering only part time or temporary opportunities. There is some anecdotal evidence that in some cases migrants are taking jobs that have previously been offered to low skilled or economically inactive adults.

However it is not always clear whether the local population would have taken the jobs on offer in the first place. Some employers have had difficulty recruiting staff in the past and have turned to recruiting migrant workers to fill these gaps. Many of the main employers throughout Gwynedd and Anglesey, for example, employ migrant workers and are generally pleased with the staff they have recruited as they are eager to work, attend the workplace on time and want to work hard to support their families back home.

Some employers in Wales provide their migrant workers with accommodation. One well known holiday park in Gwynedd, for example, provides on site accommodation to its numerous migrant workers. It would appear that in some cases migrant workers do not need to access support organisations to find housing or employment as these are likely to have been arranged before the migrant workers leaves for the UK. In North West Wales, for example, some employers do not advertise their vacancies locally but will always have a number of migrant workers working for them for some months with accommodation provided who will return to their home countries followed by more another group of workers arriving to create a continuous supply of willing labour.

In our experience some migrant workers are highly qualified and highly skilled and often possess a range of range of qualifications. Often the equivalent qualification in the UK is lower, for example, a Masters Degree in their own country might be the equivalent to a Higher National Diploma in the UK. Although our information is somewhat anecdotal there are indications however, that significant numbers of migrant workers come to Wales with qualifications above NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. They comment particularly on the lack of ESOL courses that are available to provide professional and technical vocabulary. Once their English has improved these workers will then be looking to move into areas of work linked to their skills and experience, accessing administrative and call centre jobs for example in Cardiff. Careers companies can help by accessing the NARIC database which provides comparisons of both academic and vocational qualifications across the world. The performance of workers in comparison with nationals is generally perceived as being very good.

In some instances careers companies have been able to help place migrant workers into employment. In Cardiff, for example, a young person was referred to Cardiff careers centre by Race Equality First. With support from staff at the careers centre she applied for an opportunity advertised at the Centre by a local employer and was successful with her application.

In Gwent, the careers company has helped migrant workers facing redundancy. It was identified that some redundant migrant workers at LG Electronics in Newport were in need of extra tuition in English to help them to obtain alternative employment. Coleg Gwent were then brought in to provide a course which focused on workplace related English language development.

Recommendations

Careers Wales would welcome more accurate information about the actual numbers of migrant workers and their families across Wales. Although this is difficult to obtain, this information would help careers companies plan their provision according to the level of need for careers services in their local areas. The Welsh Assembly Government should take this into account when planning budgets.

Information about the rights of migrant workers and the services available to support them should be more readily available for those working with this group as well as for migrants themselves.

Access to English language tuition for adults and other relevant work related subjects such as IT should be improved ensuring provision is available all year round rather than tied to the academic year. English language provision for migrant workers should also be available in the workplace with some employers.

Partnerships between relevant organisations involved in supporting migrant workers should be further developed to ensure a co-ordinated approach in supporting migrant workers and their families.

Initiatives to integrate the host and migrant population should be considered.

Careers companies will review their Equal Opportunities Policies to ensure migrant workers and their families are able to access information, advice and guidance on careers, education and training. With a standstill budget over the next three years this will put increasing pressure on other service areas.

Careers Wales will continue to provide training to raise awareness of the cultural differences and barriers often experienced by people from diverse communities.