Work with the New Polish Migrant Community in Leeds

A Case Study has been produced setting out the background and response by the council and other agencies to the inward migration of Polish citizens to Leeds since the EU enlargement in 2004. The full Case Study is available from LCC Regeneration Service.

The Case Study documents:
- the chronology of engagement with the new Polish citizens from July 2006 to date
- the emerging issues as individuals experience, needs and expectations change as time passes after first arriving
- the growing programme of interventions that need to be in place to respond to new waves of migrants and settlers
- the key elements for, and barriers to, success

The work with the new Polish community is:
- providing a template or framework for work and interventions with other new migrant communities.
- informing the development of strategy and action in response to new migrants

Chronology of engagement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>The established Polish community made contact with the police and council to ask for help in managing a range of issues affecting new migrants.</td>
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<td>July 2006</td>
<td>A general meeting with new migrants took place at the Polish Catholic Centre, attended by representatives from various agencies and large numbers of new migrants.</td>
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<td>July 2006</td>
<td>The Regeneration Service forms a Polish Task group to address longer term issues and begins to meet monthly. A Polish volunteer accepts an invitation to become a member of the group.</td>
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<td>August 2006</td>
<td>A New Migrants Information point is set up at the Polish Centre – where a key range of information is made available in Polish.</td>
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<td>August 2006</td>
<td>Police began a regular contact point at the Polish Catholic Centre to build relations and hold surgeries.</td>
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<td>March 2007</td>
<td>A Private Sector Housing information session was delivered at the Centre by Environmental Health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2007</td>
<td>A Jobs and Benefits information session was delivered at the Centre by Job Centre Plus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2007</td>
<td>Social Housing and Early Years information sessions are to be delivered at the Centre by ALMO and Children’s Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2007/08</td>
<td>Health and Education information sessions will be delivered</td>
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Further details on the information sessions above can be found in the Case Study.
All of the Information Sessions have taken place at the Polish Catholic Centre on a Sunday after the church service, attracting up to 200 people each time. Interpreters from the Polish community have assisted at events and information given out by service providers has been in English and Polish.

**Emerging Issues**
Information and other support has been developed to assist in the cycle of arrival, settlement, independence and integration. As the needs and expectations of new migrants change over time, the interventions that were designed, took this into account. For new arrivals the main issues were:

- Housing
- Benefits
- Health
- Advice
- Employment
- Registering for work
- Crime and the law
- Driving

New arrivals wanted to know where and how to find out more about these issues. As some of the rights of migrants and level of access to services is dependent on length of stay, the type of information people need alters as their residence lengthens and their plans and expectations change.

For example, the majority of new arrivals tend to live in private rented accommodation as they don’t have access to social housing until they have been here, employed, for one year. Few can afford to buy their own properties. Private rented accommodation is expensive compared to social housing rents so moving from the private sector into the social sector is an aspiration for some. Many are moving on to buy houses as quickly as they can and once they decide they are settling.

**Key elements for success:**

- The initial contacts and ongoing relationship with the new Polish community has been facilitated through the established Polish community infrastructure.
- The established infrastructure in the Polish community has also initiated a wide range of interventions to meet the needs of the new communities e.g. language classes, organising events and activities to integrate the new community members into the established Polish community and the wider community.
- Agencies have being willing to work flexibly – in time / location / venue – to meet the community’s, not service needs.
- Maintaining a two-way information flow, from the new community to agencies and back to the new community, enables timely, accurate information to be shared.
- Other models to support the integration of new migrants have been implemented, including work with the Kurdish community, initiated by East AMT.
Barriers to success:

- Other new migrant communities do not necessarily have the established community infrastructure to support their transition, establishment and integration.
- There is no overarching strategy to ensure that new communities are supported to develop the capacity and infrastructure to engage effectively with the institutions that are responsible for understanding their needs and experience as citizens of the district, e.g. existing Infrastructure Support Organisations are not required to target new migrant communities as a focus for development work.

Forward Plan:

Continue working with the Polish community to:

- maintain links between the community and the public agencies, during this period of rapid change
- complete the development of a programme of Interventions and information to meet the needs of new migrants through the cycle of arrival, settling and integration.

Other responses to New European Migration by LCC and partners:

- Since this work was initiated a Cross Sector New Migrants Research Task Group has been convened by the Council and is undertaking a range of work to understand better the demographics, experience, aspirations and impact of new migrants in Leeds. This group is liaising closely with colleagues working regionally.
- The Services of the Council are responding to the emerging challenges and opportunities of this new wave of migration.
- The LCC Stronger Communities Outcome Group is taking a strategic lead on New Migrant community issues in the Council
- A Welcome to Leeds website is in development and will be launched in early 2008, including key information for new citizens to Leeds and frontline staff. At the same time a New Migrants Welcome and Rights poster, to aid staff in frontline services will be published.
- A Council Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry into New Migration is commencing in December 2007, expected to complete in Spring 2008.

The work with the Polish community is informing the understanding and emerging approach.

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