

Migrant Workers in Fife - Survey 2007

What this is about

A Fife multi-agency working group commissioned this survey to gather information about migrant workers living and working in Fife. It will help providers of services to gain a better understanding of these workers' needs and aspirations, and to consider the policy implications for service planning and delivery. It involved face-to-face interviews with 904 migrant workers.

Key points

- Most migrant workers have had more than one job since coming to Scotland, and work in each for less than three months. Most are involved in factory/process work, predominantly in food processing
- The majority work at least a 35 hour week, five days per week, within five miles of where they live, and earn the minimum wage. One in four have not registered with the Workers Registration Schemeⁱ, and 13% don't have a National Insurance Number (NINo)ⁱⁱ
- Most have moved directly to Scotland from their home country, and have lived in Scotland for less than one year. Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes are the most popular places to live, and they have tended to live with their partner or family in accommodation for less than three months
- Renting from a private landlord is the most popular form of living, and they usually pay between £150-200 per month. Just under half don't have a written tenancy agreement
- The majority of migrant workers have not used public services. For those that have, satisfaction was highest for buses, banks, childcare, education, and English language support. Respondents said Opportunity Centres were the most helpful of all services
- Around one half have either a degree or under-graduate qualification, but most don't make any use of them in their current job, and most employers don't recognise their qualifications
- Most have only basic English language skills, but don't attend classes due to hours of work. Most employers don't provide assistance
- Integration into the workplace and treatment from co-workers had gone well. People where they lived had treated them well also, but there is little evidence of integration into the local community
- Most plan to stay in Fife for more than two years
- Main reasons for coming to Fife/Scotland include the higher wages, better living standards, and because friends or family are already here
- Since coming to Scotland, around one in four had experienced verbal abuse. 5% had been subjected to physical abuse
- Most respondents are aged 25-34, male, single, and are from Poland.

Background and context

The Migrant Workers Group, a Fife multi agency working group, agreed that a study should be carried out into migrant workers issues in Fife. The main target group for “migrant workers” for this study was people from the eight countries that joined the European Union in May 2004 (A8 Countries), i.e. Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The study did however include a few migrant workers from countries other than A8 countries.

In order to assist the main service providing agencies in Fife with a better understanding of migrant worker’s characteristics and needs, the survey concentrated on three main objectives –

- ⊙ Quantify the demographic characteristics of migrant workers in Fife, and where possible, identify future trends
- ⊙ Determine the key issues affecting migrant workers including – employment, accommodation, health, education, qualifications, training, and integration within communities
- ⊙ Understand the reasons for coming to live and work in Fife, and future aspirations

The survey did not, however, attempt to quantify the actual number of migrant workers living or working in Fife. This task has proved particularly difficult for many authorities within the UK, and there are a number of official government sources of information available for this purpose, albeit with inherent limitations. Further analysis of this survey data will include comparisons with official government sources of information on migrant workers, in an attempt to estimate migrant worker numbers in Fife.

Research detail - what we found

The following bullet points list the key findings from the survey, grouped under the headings used in the questionnaire:

Your Work

- ⊙ Over 90% of migrant workers are currently in paid work
- ⊙ Around one half said that their current job was not their first since coming to work in Scotland, and around one third said that they had had two previous jobs
- ⊙ Nearly two thirds said that they had found their first job in Scotland after arriving here
- ⊙ Around one third said that they had found their current job themselves, and a further half had found it through a friend or family member
- ⊙ The most common type of job was a factory/process worker, accounting for over 40% of all jobs. A further 18% were employed in construction type jobs

- ⊙ One quarter had jobs in Food Processing, and a further 18% in the Construction industry
- ⊙ Nearly 30% had worked in their current job for less than 3 months. Only 7% had worked in their current job for more than 2 years
- ⊙ Nearly two-thirds work between 35-40 hours per week, and a further quarter work more than 40 hours per week
- ⊙ Two thirds work 5 days per week, and a further 20% work 6 days per week
- ⊙ Just under one quarter have not registered with the Workers Registration Scheme. Over 90% do not have a Residence Registration Certificate, or a Seasonal Agricultural Work Permit
- ⊙ 13% do not have a National Insurance Number
- ⊙ 16% have no contract of employment from their employer, and 6% do not get a pay slip
- ⊙ The most common rate of pay is £5.35-£5.99 per hour (£5.35 was the adult minimum wage at the time the survey was carried out), and accounted for 56% of all jobs
- ⊙ Nearly half travel 5 miles or less to their place of work
- ⊙ For people that work outside of Fife, nearly one-third work in Edinburgh, and a further 16% work in Perth
- ⊙ Only 18% of employers provide transport for migrant workers. The most common transport was car, van or lorry (70%). 18% travelled on foot

Living Arrangements and Accommodation

- ⊙ Over 90% moved directly from their home country to Scotland
- ⊙ Only 17% have lived in Scotland for more than 2 years
- ⊙ 41% live in Kirkcaldy, and a further 30% live in Glenrothes
- ⊙ Over one-third have lived in their current accommodation for less than 3 months, and just over half are living with a partner or other family member
- ⊙ For the 10% of respondents that don't live in a house or flat, over half live in a shared room with non-family members, although 90% said that their accommodation was not overcrowded
- ⊙ Nearly 80% rent their accommodation from a private landlord, and only just over 3% rent from either Fife Council, or a Housing Association
- ⊙ Monthly rents range from less than £50 to over £2,000, with the most common amount (33%) being between £150-£200
- ⊙ 43% do not have a written tenancy agreement for their accommodation
- ⊙ 95% said that they did not have a problem in finding a place to live

Health and Welfare

- ⊙ 56% of people have not registered with a GP practice in Fife, 91% have not registered with a dentist, and 84% have not used a hospital

Education/Training and Qualifications

- ⊙ Nearly 30% have a university degree, and a further 22% have an under-graduate level qualification. Less than two percent gained these qualifications in a country other than their own
- ⊙ The most common job or profession that people were qualified to work in, was as an Economist or Mechanic
- ⊙ Over 70% make no use of their qualifications or skills in their current job
- ⊙ The most popular jobs that people said they would like to work in, in the future, were in the medical professions, or be self employed
- ⊙ 45% said employers in this country did not recognise their qualifications at all
- ⊙ Over half said that their English language skills were “enough to communicate”, and only 11% said that they were very good
- ⊙ 82% do not attend English classes, mostly because of working hours
- ⊙ Only 2% of employers provide English classes. Only 1% provide paid time off to attend English classes. Just under 10% provide unpaid time off to attend

Access to Services

- ⊙ Over 90% had not used or had not needed to use housing advice services
- ⊙ Of those using housing advice related services, Fife Council (26%) was the most used. Nearly one-third of users rated this service poor or very poor
- ⊙ Over 90% have not used medical/health advice services. Of those that used this service, “hospital” (33%) was the most used, and of these people, only 14% said that the service was poor or very poor
- ⊙ Just under 90% had not used transport related advice services. For those that had, “Stagecoach”, and “bus driver” were the most popular (63%). Nearly 90% rated their advice either good or very good
- ⊙ 37% had used financial related advice services. The most popular provider was “a bank” (75%). 90% rated this service good or very good
- ⊙ Only 4% of people had used childcare advice related services. The most popular providers were “childminder in a private nursery” (23%) and “health visitor” (23%). 85% rated their advice as good or very good
- ⊙ Just over 7% had used a school education advice related service. The most popular provider was “Opportunity Centre” (24%). 87% rated this advice good or very good
- ⊙ 15% of people had used an English language support advice related service. The most popular providers were “Opportunity Centre” (27%) and “Adam Smith College” (20%). 83% rated this advice good or very good
- ⊙ Less than 1% of people had used social work related advice services. The most popular provider was, surprisingly, “HM Customs and Revenues” (25%). 71% rated this advice as good or very good
- ⊙ The organisation or group reported as most helpful overall was “Opportunity Centre” (27%)

How people have treated you

- ⊙ Nearly 80% of people said that they had integrated into the workforce fairly or very well, and co-workers where they worked, treated them fairly or very well
- ⊙ Nearly 80% of people felt that local people where they lived, treated them fairly or very well, although this reduced to 57% for how well they had integrated into the local community

Future Plans

- ⊙ Nearly one-quarter of people are planning to stay in their current job and accommodation “Indefinitely”, However, almost 20% are only planning to stay less than three months
- ⊙ More than one-third of people plan to stay in the town or area where they live “Indefinitely”
- ⊙ Nearly 40% of people are planning to stay in Fife, and in Scotland “Indefinitely”
- ⊙ A little over half of people said that since coming to Scotland, family and friends had shown an interest in coming to Fife, or Scotland to live and work

Reasons for coming to Scotland

- ⊙ The main reasons for wanting to leave their country were low paid work and living standards
- ⊙ The main reasons for coming to live and work in Scotland was because of the high pay levels, and because friends/family members were already here.

Harassment

- ⊙ Around one-quarter of people said that they had experienced verbal abuse, and 5% had experienced physical abuse as a result of their ethnic background or nationality

About you

- ⊙ 57% of respondents were male. Just over half were aged 25-34. with one-third aged 16-24
- ⊙ 95% were Polish, and 2% were from the Czech Republic
- ⊙ Nearly 60% were single, and one-third were married
- ⊙ Around 10% had pre and primary school age children. 3% had secondary age children
- ⊙ Only 2% had dependant adults living with them. 1% considered themselves to be disabled
- ⊙ Nearly 100% said that they were “Other White” ethnic category

Conclusions

While more detailed analysis is needed, this paper identifies a number of emerging issues with potential policy implications for the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Around one fifth of migrant workers in Fife intend to live and work here for a relatively short period of time (less than three months). This group is made up mainly of mobile, relatively young, single, male workers. As a result, this may present particular difficulties in the short term for service providers. It may also explain why so many do not take English classes, even though most only have a basic understanding of English language. However, there is, potentially, a much greater number (around 60%), that intend to stay “indefinitely” in Fife. More than half also said that their friends and family had expressed an interest in coming to Fife. This presents a different set of issues for Fife’s service providers including, healthcare, schools, opportunities centres and job centres, English language providers, housing, etc.

A high proportion of migrant workers do not register with any of the official government recording procedures, such as the Workers Registration Scheme. This will continue to present problems for gaining an accurate picture, at the local and national levels, on migrant worker numbers.

Nearly half of migrant workers do not have a written tenancy agreement for accommodation that they live in. This may be due to the relatively short periods of time that many stay in their accommodation, however, it does raise concerns about potential tenancy problems that may arise with private landlords.

In terms of education and qualifications, most migrant workers are highly educated, but make little or no use of their skills or knowledge in their current jobs. This results in migrant workers working in jobs that are unfulfilling for them, and suggests a waste of potential talent that could be better used.

Although migrant workers seem to integrate into their work environment fairly well, this does not apply to the same extent in their local community. This is particularly apparent where there is quite a high level of verbal abuse experienced by them, due to their nationality.

About the study

The Migrant Workers Survey was carried out in August/September 2007. Without a conventional database, the study used a “snowball” sample method to recruit respondents through personal contact and place of work, and who then took part in face-to-face interviews. The interviews were carried out by a team from the Fife Polish Association at people’s place of work, shopping centres, churches, and other social gatherings across Fife. The team achieved 904 valid responses.

Due to the sensitive and complex nature of gathering information from non-English speaking people, the Migrant Workers Group agreed with the Fife Polish Association to undertake the survey. As well as the language problem, the Group felt that potential respondents would be more comfortable providing information to someone from a similar country and background.

One of the main problems in this type of study is that the target population is unknown. As a result, this method cannot provide a representative sample in the scientific sense. However, it is a reasonable approach given the nature of the subject group. Another limitation with this study was that because members of the Polish Association carried out the survey, it did tend to favour Polish speaking respondents. Comparisons with Workers Registration Scheme figures for Fife show a slightly lower percentage for Polish workers compared with this study. However, the survey results show that migrant workers from other A8 countries appear to share similar experiences as those from Poland. The results also do not reflect the views of migrant workers not reached through the team's networks or employers.

How to get more in depth analysis

A series of targeted analyses will be undertaken, focusing on particular issues or functional areas, for example, accommodation or work related issues. Suggestions for further analysis are welcome.

Contacts

For further copies of this survey please go to -

www.fifedirect.org.uk/migrantsurvey

For further information, please contact Andrew Ballingall, on 08451555555 440890 or by email Andrew.ballingall@fife.gov.uk

ⁱ The Worker Registration Scheme began in May 2004, and provides information supplied by citizens from eight of the countries who joined the European Union when they obtain a job in the UK. These countries are often referred to as the eight accession states, or A8. For more details on the scheme go to www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

ⁱⁱ National Insurance Numbers (NINo) Allocations are required for employment/self-employment purposes or to claim benefits and tax credits. Overseas nationals entering the UK apply to their local Jobcentre Plus office for a NINo. For more information go to www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/nino_allocations.asp

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