

The Unmet Needs of Migrant Communities From Europe:

A working paper

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Background

Over the last ten years the number of inhabitants in Bristol who were not born in the UK has risen to more than 67,000 or 15% of the population. A very significant element of this has been the arrival of migrant workers from countries in Central and Eastern Europe which joined the EU in 2004 with two further countries joining (Bulgaria / Romania) in 2007. The largest component of this were people from Poland with an estimated 15,000 residents of Polish origin now living in the city. There are also numbers from Latvia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic and Romania. Within Bristol, many migrant workers live in Lawrence Hill, Easton, Ashley and also Lockleaze, Avonmouth Cabot, St George and other areas with cheaper private rented properties. Whilst many are young and single seeing

their stay as temporary, increasingly individuals have settled and have children at city schools.

They tend to be young with 70% under 35 and well educated with 60% having a university or college qualification but many working in occupations well below their capability, working in sectors such as manufacturing, transport and distribution, office and administrative work, retail, hospitality and leisure and social care. Many of these workers are women working in retail, hospitality and social care. Often work in these sectors is precarious with low pay, little social protection and job security. Of course some highly qualified workers from Eastern Europe are also playing significant roles in growth sectors such as business services, finance, health care and tech.

ACH / Himilo deliver training, career advice, job search and employment advice to people from refugee and migrant communities, including direct working with employers. We also assist small businesses from refugee / migrant communities. **However, the numbers engaged from migrant communities from EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe has been very low.** BRR give humanitarian support, legal advice, information on benefits and public services to asylum seekers and refugees including those with no recourse to public funds. But have not as yet regarded migrants from Central and Eastern Europe has been very low. BRR give humanitarian support, legal advice, information on benefits and public services to asylum seekers and refugees including those with no recourse to public funds. **But have not as yet regarded migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (or elsewhere) as part of their target client group.**

Local data is very limited but at a national level, EEA (a wider group including more affluent member states) migrants included more than 25% not in housing in a decent state of repair, 30% could not save regularly and 35% were struggling financially. A study of a small number of polish migrant workers in Bristol revealed the health implications of precarious work undertaken by many. **Such workers will be vulnerable to changes in demand or restructuring of sectors and individual businesses with those laid off not eligible for benefits and so likely to lose their accommodation and be unable to return home.**

Over 3m people have now applied to and had their application concluded to the EU Settled Status scheme. However, it is im-

possible to predict how many have not applied. It is understood that approximately 40 individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) have been accommodated by Bristol City Council as part of the Government's "Everybody In" programme and that some of these are EU nationals who may not have applied to the scheme. Although the Council are talking to the refugee sector about the Refused Asylum Seekers accommodated as part of "Everybody In", **we are concerned as to whether these other individuals have the same level of advocacy and support and are being referred appropriately for specialist legal advice, information and support.**

Bristol City Council has advised us that they believe there are a handful of young people in their care who should apply to the EU settled status scheme. This compares to the city of Leeds, a similar size to Bristol, where Social Services have identified around 70 young people in their care who should apply. **This, along with other factors, raises concerns about the robustness of Bristol City Council's processes for identifying these individuals.**

Capacity

There are a wide range of organisations and networks at national level covering representation and lobbying, support, culture and business. Locally the Polish Catholic Church on Cheltenham Rd plays an important role and there is also the Anglo Polish Association for Bristol and SW and the Polish Club. There are also formal and informal business support networks and locally. Business network meetings are also held from time to time.

What is needed

The Polish community and indeed residents from EU10 and EU 2 member states **comprise a very significant element of the population of Bristol and make a major contribution to the economy.** They will have faced a number of challenges making their lives here uncertain including the general impact of austerity, Brexit with related proposed changes to the immigration system and most recently the Covid-19 crisis. In general these communities seem to have only integrated to a limited extent with cultural, social, civic and political processes and networks.

Firstly, is there a wider need to encourage greater engagement from these communities within Bristol to ensure greater integration and to ensure their voice is heard at community and individual level and needs are met. Here there is a need to map and engage with Polish community organisations and networks, to identify any gaps and to explore mechanisms for improved engagement and communication.

Secondly we need to ensure that the skills and experience available from these communities are used to the maximum benefit of the economy and to the satisfaction of the individuals concerned. There is evidence that many are working in jobs below their level of capability and small businesses lack capacity to fully utilise the entrepreneurial talent available. This reflects lack of resources, social capital and lack of access to wider social networks as well as lack of engagement with key agencies. Support in relation to careers

advice, training, accessing employment in growth sectors as well as small business support should be better targeted at this group.

Also, the cumulative impact of sudden changes to the economy and labour market and key sectors such as leisure, transport and retail **will have posed the threat of destitution for many in precarious work and with little or no savings, insecure housing and often no recourse to public funds.** We need to focus and target advice and support for those from those communities who experience impoverishment and destitution or at risk of it. This is needed not only for humanitarian and human rights reasons but also to reduce the long term impact on public spending which will increase where early support is not provided.

Finally, those who are not currently economically active and may be seen currently as a drain on the public purse **need proper support and advice to explore their options and achieve their potential.** For those accommodated as part of the “Everybody In” programme, there is a need for legal advice to ensure that they understand and secure their immigration status and the implications of their status on accessing the labour force and welfare benefits. For those the Council holds corporate parenting responsibilities, those in care, those leaving care, and those under the support of Adult Social care, equally there is a need to ensure support is provided to access EU settled status as a gateway to future economic activity.

