



March 2008

**SUPPORTING
MIGRANT WORKERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES
AND DEVELOPING
COMMUNITY WITH
THEM:**

**An Engagement Guide for
Local Churches and
Churches Together Groups**

If you would like to discuss any of the suggestions in this booklet or be put in touch with those local Church groups who have already been engaged with projects with migrant workers around the county, please contact:

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Resource Suggestions

- The excellent information booklet for migrant workers ***Welcome to Cumbria*** produced by Cumbria County Council, the text of which is in Polish, Czech, Lithuanian and English. Available free from Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service: 01229 894401
- www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus
Lists publications that include skills for life.
- English for Speakers of other Languages Courses (ESOL).
- Card clocks, flashcards and charts (colours, days of the week, months of the year, numbers, etc): available through Cumbria Supplies catalogues and Early Learning Centre shops.
- Books, story sacks etc. can sometimes be borrowed from local schools and libraries.
- Bookshops are usually happy to advise.
- Phonics resources (particularly useful when working with children):
www.channel4.com/lostforwords
www.jollylearning.co.uk/jp.htm
- Lectionary readings downloadable in various languages: www.virc.at

Useful Contacts

Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service (part of Cumbria County Council) 01229 894401

Patricia Bell, Diversity Advisor, Cumbria Constabulary 01768 867826

Eden Rural Foyer drop-in 07748 615652

Maryport (library drop-in) 07753 747463

Windermere (library drop-in) 07962 104231

Libraries: Phone numbers are listed in the telephone directory.

People

Write for advice from those who have pioneered existing initiatives:

Sister Angela and Sister Joseph, Convent of Mercy, Kirkby Street, Maryport, CA15 6EX

Ms Rebecca Stanley, Flat 2, 20 Warwick Square, Carlisle, CA1 1LA

Father Jerome Ainsworth, St Catherine, Drovers Lane, Penrith, CA11 9EL

Polish Masses

Fr Mariam Jachym, a Polish priest based in Lancaster, says mass on a monthly basis in Carlisle, Kendal, Penrith and Windermere. A second Polish priest is due to arrive in Lancaster Diocese in 2008 to serve Cumbria alone, which should allow an expansion the availability of services in Polish. Enquiries to: 01524 39820.

Introduction

Migrant workers and their families are now living throughout Cumbria, although they still form only about 1% of the total workforce of the county.

Churches Together in Cumbria believes it to be very important that the local church communities around the county provide a warm welcome and practical support to these new residents in our county.

For many migrant workers English is not their first language. Although there are courses available at some local colleges and other institutions, such as libraries, for learning basic English (ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages), recent changes in funding mean that these courses are no longer free to all migrant workers and their families and some cannot afford to pay the fees. The courses will only run if sufficient numbers are able to attend every week and some courses have ended because of low attendance on some weeks. This attendance pattern does not reflect a lack of demand, which is very high, but an inability for some migrant workers to commit to the same time each week due to shift patterns.

Both single workers and families may suffer from isolation, particularly when language is a barrier and where there are few people from the same country of origin living and working in that part of the county. Lack of language skills makes it difficult for some migrant workers to integrate either in the workplace or in the community. Misunderstanding and a lack of welcome by host communities can also be an issue.

Migrant workers often welcome advice and practical information about living in Cumbria, for example regarding health, accommodation and transport systems. In a series of quality of life interviews with migrant workers, commissioned by Voluntary Action Cumbria and conducted during 2007, interviewees specifically identified the Church as somewhere they would like to be able to turn to for general advice and information support.

Churches Together in Cumbria is aware that a number of local Churches Together groups and church communities around the county have initiated various successful forums through which migrant workers and their families can be supported, and cohesion and new friendships be thereby developed within the whole community.

The aim of this booklet is to outline some of the initiatives that have been established and to inspire other local Churches Together groups to develop similar ventures appropriate to their own local circumstances.

Tips for avoiding potential pitfalls

- What works in one location won't necessarily work in another. Research the local need and tailor your approach to fit.
- Do not assume that all migrant workers in your local area are from one nationality or have a single first language or single religious affiliation (e.g. Roman Catholic).
- Groups from different nationalities and first languages will not necessarily mix socially.
- Not all migrant workers will be religious. To reach as widely as possible into the migrant worker community, social events will be needed. Publicity should be displayed beyond the local churches, for example in hotels and pubs.
- If you are going to undertake language teaching, it is helpful to assess and discuss the language levels of individuals before you start. A one size fits all programme will not meet everyone's needs. To enable progress, individual teaching programmes are best.
- Remember that what local churches can provide is not formal education – these courses are not certificated.
- Be aware of accents on resource CDs.

Ideas that may help develop your own local initiative

- Diversity of approach – set up a programme that suits your situation; play to your strengths.
- Contact other agencies in the area – find out what others are already providing; don't tread on toes, but work together to meet a need.
- Avoid an expectation of regular time commitment from migrant workers – it may be patchy for very good reason (work schedules, family commitments etc).
- One-to-one contact is often most helpful in language work. A pool of volunteers is needed, with a rota system if possible, so as not to over-commit individuals.
- Be flexible – even a formal teaching approach will need to accommodate clients that come and go.
- Trained teachers are not necessarily required to help with English language development.
- Volunteers to provide refreshments, child care, listening skills, reading support, etc are all very valuable; seek a diversity of talent.
- This community building and support work is enriching – you gain more than you give.
- Church-led initiatives do not replace statutory and voluntary sector advisory bodies, but should support and partner these.
- It is vital to be child friendly.
- Empower people – this does not mean doing everything for them.
- Social events are valuable to overcome isolation and provide opportunities for different communities, including UK nationals, to mix together, have fun, build mutual understanding and share cultural treasures, culinary delights etc.
- Contacts can be made through Polish and English masses at many Roman Catholic churches.
- Expect the unexpected!

Existing Initiatives

Ambleside

Developed by Churches Together in Ambleside. The planning group included two Polish migrant workers. At their suggestion, engagement has focussed on social networking.

Three successful International Evenings: For the first two of these catering was provided by the organisers, but for the third publicity material invited attendees to bring food and drink from their own national tradition to share. A local church member encouraged migrant workers in his own hotel to use the hotel's kitchen facilities to prepare food typical of their home countries. The events have also included music and Polish dancing. Each event was held on a weekday evening, following consultation with migrant workers who indicated that their shift patterns made weekends difficult. The events ran for about 3 hours so that workers with different shift patterns were able to attend at least part. The International Evenings were widely publicised, with colourful posters displayed in hotels and bars, resulting in good attendance with a different group of people at each. Posters were designed with a common house style featuring various national flags.

Ecumenical worship: For the last two years *Carols by Candlelight* has included the traditional readings by migrant workers in their own language with the English translation projected using Powerpoint. All have been invited to say the Lord's Prayer together but in their own language.

More than 150 copies of the **County Council multilingual booklet *Welcome to Cumbria*** have been distributed to migrant workers living in the area. Churches Together in Ambleside are now working with Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service to look at the possibility of setting up a fortnightly **drop-in** centre for migrant workers in a central local church.

Carlisle

Developed through Churches Together in Carlisle.

An informal, socially orientated initiative predominantly incorporating a non – formal teaching route with a very flexible approach to meeting migrant workers' needs. Support is largely given through conversation over coffee and in other social gatherings. The primary language focus is on spoken communication. The programme stemmed from an initial meeting of interested volunteers from churches across the city. Individual churches from various denominations have subsequently developed their own programmes and run with them in various ways. Volunteers are from a variety of backgrounds. All were asked to note the diversity of what they could offer to the project when they first registered their interest. The programmes developed use the various skills that were offered, including: time, working with children, specific interests, teaching and other experience, and venues in which groups could meet. The support and friendship groups meet in a variety of locations and homes at varying times to suit both migrant workers and volunteers. Support is given for practical tasks. These include the completion of application forms, work agency advice, access to nursery provision etc. A variety of regular activities have also developed, for example swimming. Church volunteers have found that this socially based initiative has enabled networking for migrant workers, word of mouth contacts and the different activity groups to be accessed by a variety of cultures. Real friendships have resulted in a number of cases.

Our Lady and St Joseph (Roman Catholic) is one of Carlisle's largest churches. The number of Polish worshippers has grown significantly. A **Polish mass** is held monthly, and the congregations of the English and Polish services now interact socially between these masses. The church now provides two popular **English language classes** a week; on Monday morning and Wednesday evening.

Maryport

Developed by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, together with Our Lady and St Patrick Roman Catholic Church.

A fairly structured teaching model. Weekly Saturday afternoon classes run between 3pm and 5pm (or longer!). They use the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) materials as a tool rather than a directive. The programme has been developed according to local need, with the ESOL material tailored to this. Resources are obtained from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The local library has been very helpful, providing story books and story sacks on long term loan. The local schools are also happy to lend resources. Six volunteers run this programme. Blocks of teaching are planned for a half term. Volunteers share the planning work on a rota basis and meet together termly or as the need arises.

Penrith

Developed by St Catherine Roman Catholic Church.

3 - 5 volunteers from the parish run a weekly informal gathering, '**Conversational English**', at the Rectory at 5pm each Sunday evening. Volunteers and migrant workers, predominantly from the Polish community, chat together. It appears that many of these migrants have found work together, e.g. at Greggs Bakery, and so have limited chances in their working or social lives to speak English on an informal conversational level. Numbers of migrant workers attending each week vary greatly. Most of these also attend worship at the church. There is a **Polish mass** on the fourth Sunday evening of every month at 7pm, usually attended by 35-45 people, and with nearly 100 attending at Christmas. The **church newsletter** always includes a Polish language section including a warm welcome and information about services and 'Conversational English'. The scripture texts are printed in Polish at every service.