

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH WITH INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS IN NORTHUMBERLAND

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Executive summary

This research was commissioned by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership. It forms part of a programme of research being carried out by Northumberland County Council's InfoNet into issues relating to migrant communities. It was carried out by an independent research organisation, Barefoot Research and Evaluation. The objective of this research was to provide an assessment of the perceptions of migrant communities' about living and working in Northumberland.

A total of 88 migrants were interviewed over two months (October and November 2008), predominantly in focus groups but also using semi-structured individual interviews. All those interviewed either lived or worked in Northumberland.

The research makes the following key findings, all of which are expanded upon in the main body of the report:

- The demographics of migrants varied and included: families who had migrated to find employment and a new life; women and men who had met and married a resident of the county, either overseas or in Northumberland; young people (mostly Polish) who had come to the area to find employment and travel with no intention of staying; and the traditional view of the migrant worker, someone (usually male) who left their family (usually in Poland) to find work and send home money.
- The majority of migrants interviewed arrived between 2004 and 2008, with a peak in 2006 and a subsequent decline thereafter.
- Most migrants came directly to Northumberland, with most of those remaining in their first town of arrival. There has been some limited internal movements and some movements from outside of the county.
- More migrants intend to stay, with the reasons for staying related either to having family living here or a job. The main reasons why migrants left were because they missed their families or they lost their jobs.

- Members of the same country of origin provide the main social function in terms of friendship, support and information. The support covers all aspects of a migrant's life, from finding a job, accommodation, knowledge and access to services, transport and money.
- There were many things that people liked about living in Northumberland, including the people, the countryside and the peace and quiet.
- Whilst the good nature of people from Northumberland was commented upon by most migrants, there was little significant mixing between many migrant and resident communities. One migrant illustrated the views of many by saying "*we have good relations but we don't mix much*".
- A recurrent theme which was raised in relation to community safety was fear of young people congregating in groups, particularly those who were seen to be drinking alcohol, reflecting the same concerns as those held by resident communities.
- The majority of migrants reported no problems accessing the services that they needed. Migrants received information about services and how to access them from two main sources: either the existing migrant community; or from their spouses (particularly if married to a local resident).
- Migrants have different English competency levels, from none, to conversational, to advanced, with the majority on the lower levels and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) was by far the biggest need that was expressed. The lack of ESOL provision masks three other significant related problems of finding other jobs if made redundant, career progression and integrating with resident communities.
- The research indicated a strong link between the level of English of the individual migrant and the reaction to them in the workplace and in wider society. One respondent reported "*others [migrants] who have a bad time ... their English is poor ... not treated with respect, they are miserable*".

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This research was commissioned by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP). It forms part of a programme of research¹ being carried out by Northumberland County Council's InfoNet into issues relating to migrant communities.

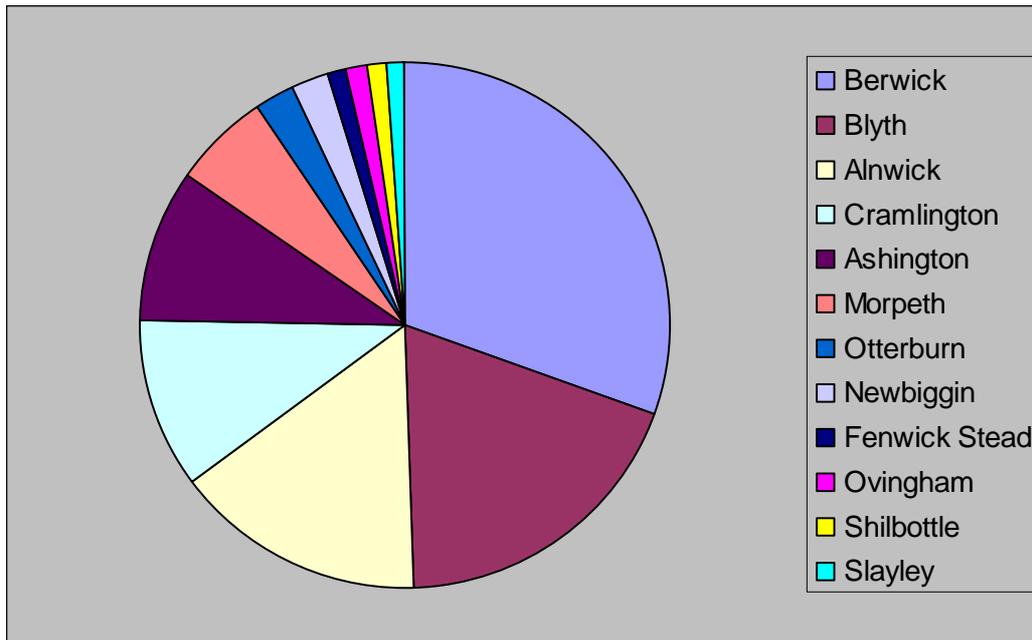
The objective of this research was to provide an assessment of the perceptions of migrant communities' about living and working in Northumberland.

1.2 Methodology

A total of 88 migrants were interviewed over two months (October and November 2008), predominantly in focus groups but also using semi-structured individual interviews (a copy of the interview guide is contained in appendix one). These migrants lived throughout Northumberland, as can be seen from the following graph.

Graph 1.1 Town or village of residence

¹ Current resources of this programme can be found on www.nsp.org.uk/page.asp?id=660.



As can be seen, most interviewees (n=26) came from Berwick upon Tweed, followed by Blyth (n=16), Alnwick (n=13), Cramlington (n=9), Ashington (n=8) and Morpeth (n=5). The remainder live in other areas across the length and breadth of the county.

We contacted migrants using a range of approaches including:

- A professionally designed advert (see appendix two) which was distributed to a range of people and organisations including amongst migrants, libraries, voluntary sector organisations, health professionals, colleges and others. The advert was also posted on Barefoot Research and Evaluation’s website. Migrants were invited to text ‘talk’ to the researcher’s mobile number and they were phoned back and an appointment made.
- An advert in Polish (see appendix three) was placed on a local polish website². The text for this advert was supplied to Polnews’ webmaster³ who translated it and placed it on their site.
- Contacting employers who were known (or suspected) to employ migrant workers.

² POLNEWS - Website for Poles in the North East including Newcastle, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Sunderland www.polnews.co.uk.

³ Thanks to Ryszard Piecuch for his help.

- Contacts provided to us by organisations in the process of ‘snowballing’, i.e. when we came into contact with organisations across the county we asked ‘are there any other people or organisations who may come into contact with migrant workers?’.
- There were two key organisations that provided access to a significant number of migrants, including Northumberland College who provided contacts with migrant workers who were part of their literacy courses and the Citizens Advice Bureau in Berwick who supported the North Northumberland Migrant Workers Group.

We made significant efforts (series of phone calls and emails) to contact migrants throughout Northumberland, many of which resulted in no contacts being made (particularly in west and north west Northumberland). This was because migrants had moved on, were no longer employed in those areas or who simply did not wish to be contacted.

We gained access to most migrants through Northumberland College’s English Language service in Alnwick, Ashington, Blyth and Slaley (the latter is outreach service now discontinued) and the Berwick Migrant Support Group. Other migrants interviewed made contact with us through our adverts, were directed to us or identified by professionals or were contacted through their employers.

A research incentive of £15 was offered to participants as a means of attracting migrants and encouraging them to take part. English did not prove to be a problem when interviewing migrants, either because groups or individuals had good enough English or there were migrants (especially Polish) who could translate for others in the group who had little English. Attention was paid by the researcher not to allow that translator to dominate or talk for others. The use of such a person did not prove problematic.

It should be noted that this piece of research entailed detailed discussions with groups and individuals. We consider that the findings that have been produced here are indicative of those amongst the migrant worker population across Northumberland. We believe that the proportions of migrants interviewed generally represent the population as a whole (i.e. highest numbers of Polish and a range of other nationalities from across the world with significant though small minorities of Filipino and Thai people).

The methodology is based on grounded theory as a data gathering approach, i.e. we let the results (with regards to accessing migrants and in lines of questioning) continually direct the research process. If we found one particular avenue that yielded good results, we followed that route until it no longer produced results and then we followed another.

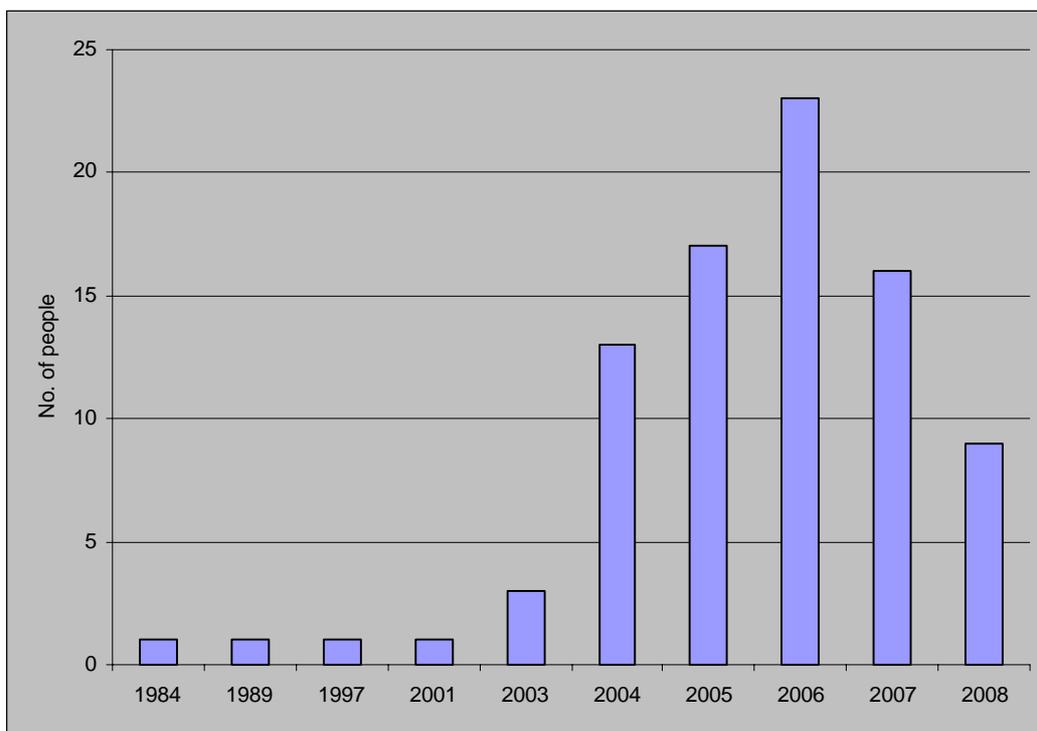
2.0 Findings

The findings from the research are presented in the following sections and the demographics of the migrants interviewed are presented in appendix four.

2.1 Arrival and departure

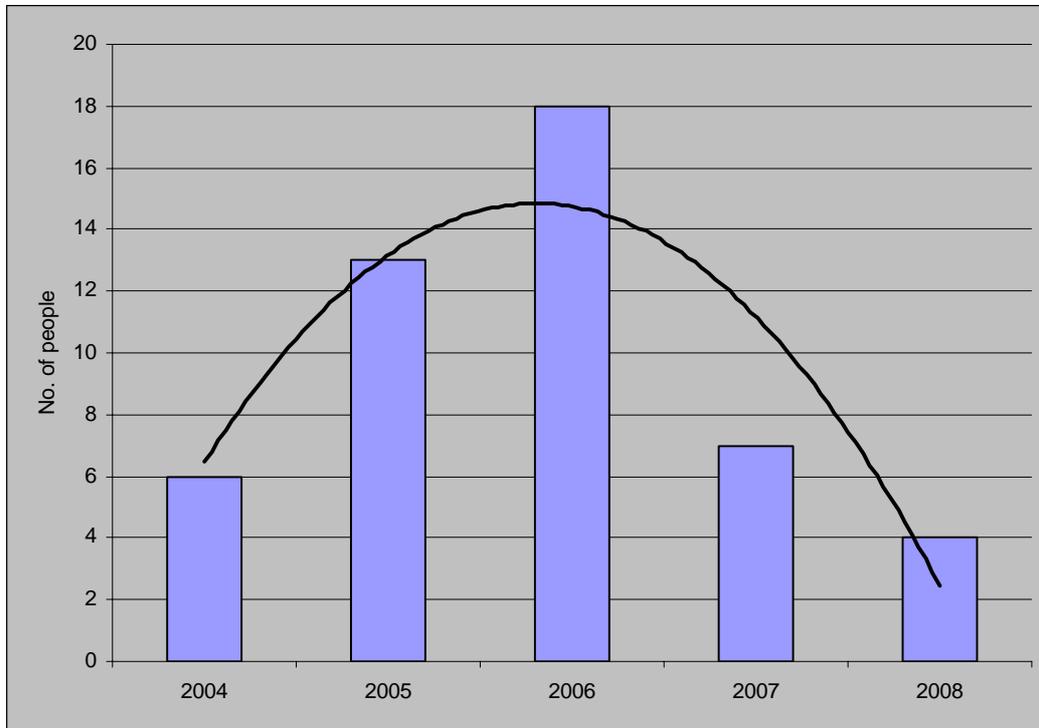
The majority of migrants interviewed arrived between 2004 and 2008, with a peak in 2006 (graph 2.1). Because the Polish were the most numerous group we also looked specifically at their times of arrival.

Graph 2.1 Year arrived: all migrants



Graph 2.2 shows the year arrived for Polish migrants and it not surprisingly echoes the previous graph. We can see that the numbers of Polish people arriving into Northumberland increases rapidly from 2004 to 2006 and declines more rapidly from 2006 to 2008. This pattern agrees with other county data (see InfoNet series) which suggests a peak of in migration in 2006 and a significant decline since then.

Graph 2.2 Year arrived: Polish migrants



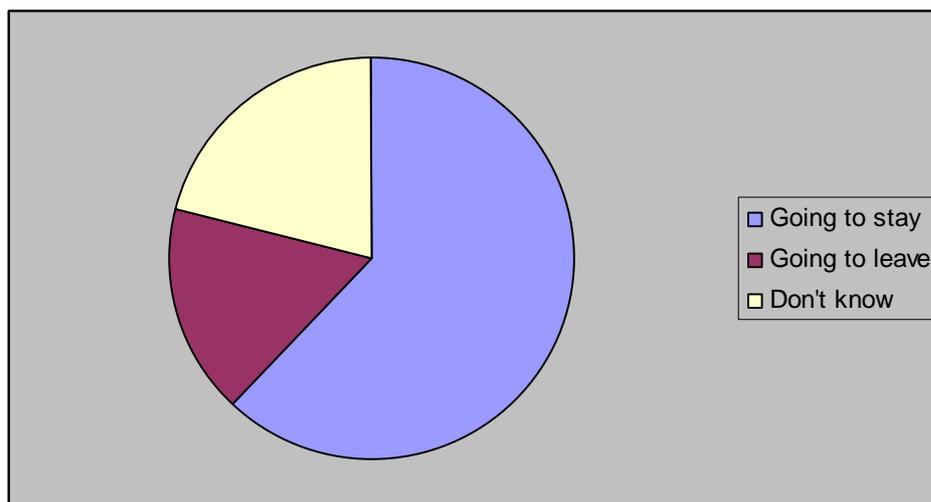
It was reported by Polish migrants that communities in Northumberland, e.g. groups living in Berwick or Blyth, often came from one town or village in Poland. This was said to be true about communities in Seahouses and Alnwick and may be the case elsewhere. It was said that first one or two people came from one town followed by others then more as friends passed the word. This means that many Polish communities in Northumberland are immediately 'mature', in that there are existing social links with associated histories, bonds and mutual obligations. This implies that in relation to social networks these communities have a strength and depth.

The majority of migrants came directly to Northumberland, with most of those remaining in their first town of arrival. There has been some limited internal movements and some movements from outside of the county, e.g. migrants arriving in Edinburgh then moving to Berwick. However, the latter examples are few. The direct arrival to Northumberland is related to existing communities (see paragraph above) and employment.

In relation to whether migrants intended to stay or leave, graph 2.3 shows that more migrants intend to stay (n=47) compared to those who said they intended to leave (n=12). The reasons for staying related either to having family living here (i.e. husbands, wives and children) or a job, or in some cases both. The main reasons why migrants left were because they missed their families or they lost their jobs. One respondent in Alnwick illustrated this by saying *“ten people have gone back [in the last year] ‘cos they’ve lost their job or they miss family”*.

When asked about migrant trends, there were inconclusive responses which ranged from *“every year somebody coming and somebody going”* to *“many not coming now”*.

Graph 2.3 Stay or leave



Employment was the most significant issue which Polish people said affected their decision to stay or leave (i.e. those in the 'don't know' category). One respondent illustrated this by saying *“if I loose my job I go home, if the jobs stays, I stay”*.

Another migrant illustrated the strong links between employment, level of English and the likelihood of a return home: *“if you got job for long time then [you] lose it but don't have English then go back to Poland”*.

On the basis of graphs 2.2 and 2.3 we can conclude that the numbers of new Polish migrants has significantly decreased but most of those that are already here will stay.

When asked why they wanted to stay, a common reaction from Polish migrants was that “*life is easy here*”. Another common theme was a better life for children, for example one Thai migrant stated “*my daughter’s life here is better*”.

2.2 Living and accommodation

Table 2.1 shows where migrants who were interviewed live. As can be seen, the towns with the highest concentrations of migrants are Berwick, Blyth, Alnwick, Cramlington and Ashington.

Table 2.1 Area of residence: all migrants

Town/village	Number
Berwick	26
Blyth	16
Alnwick	13
Cramlington	9
Ashington	8
Morpeth	5
Otterburn	3
Newbiggin	2
Fenwick Stead	1
Middlesbrough	1
Newcastle	1
Ovingham	1
Shilbottle	1
Slayley	1

Again, because the Polish numbers were such a high proportion of total numbers interviewed, we have presented the findings specifically for the Polish migrants (table 2.2). We see that although similar they are not the same with the noticeable difference of Blyth, which is a town where other nationalities live as well as Polish. Table 2.2 shows that the areas in the county with highest populations of Polish people (based on our research) are Berwick, Alnwick, Cramlington, Ashington and Blyth.

Table 2.2 Area of residence: Polish migrants

Town/village	Number
Berwick	26
Alnwick	10
Cramlington	5
Ashington	4
Blyth	2

Slayley	1
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The tenure of housing amongst migrants varied across home owner, rented accommodation or council house. The majority of migrants lived in rented accommodation, particularly Polish people, although there were some in this group who lived in council properties (no evidence was found of home ownership amongst all Polish families). Home ownership was common amongst those migrants who were married to a resident, although this was not exclusive and there were examples of rented and council housing.

Amongst the Polish people interviewed, it was stated that single people often found difficulty in finding rented accommodation, principally because English landlords were reluctant to rent to this group. It was reported that Polish families had less of a difficulty finding a rental property. This echoes the rented market for English residents, i.e. landlords are happy to rent to families but reluctant to rent to single men in groups.

2.3 Work, employment and money

Table 2.3 shows the range of occupations of migrants who were interviewed. What is noteworthy is the range of jobs that migrants fill. As can be seen housewife, cleaner and operator (of machinery, on a production line or similar) are the most common jobs. The high numbers of housewives reflects both a high number of migrants interviewed who have married local residents either on arrival in Northumberland or when overseas and a high number of people who came over to the county with their families (particularly Polish). There were seven migrants who were unemployed, who were mostly female, married to a resident or older with non-dependent children.

Table 2.3 Occupation: all migrants

Occupation	Number
housewife	11
cleaner	10
operator	7
unemployed	7

care worker	4
professional	3
fitter	3
shop assistant	3
student	3
baker	2
chef	2
driver	2
engineer	2
health worker	2
joiner	2
retired	2
au pair	1
B&B	1
bar worker	1
barber	1
drummer	1
hairdresser	1
kitchen porter	1
labourer	1
lecturer	1
librarian	1
nurse	1
sales assistant	1
scientist	1
seamstress	1
waitress	1

A total of 25 migrants interviewed possess a relevant qualification to their current position. Only six migrants interviewed are working well below what they are qualified to do. These

include accountants, dental nurses, managers, nursery nurse and a physiotherapist who are predominantly working as cleaners.

A total of 37 of migrants are working with no qualifications. The remainder are either housewives or unemployed without qualifications (with the exception of one unemployed Indian solicitor).

When we look at the Polish group, we see that similar to the global figure, a total of 13 are qualified to do their current job and 17 have no qualifications. What is different in the Polish group is the scale of under employment (i.e. people working well below what they are qualified to do), which represents only five of the total. Bearing in mind other anecdotal information, this proportion may reflect the situation amongst Polish workers across the county.

Table 2.4 shows the towns or villages where all migrants work and table 2.5 shows where only the Polish migrants interviewed work.

Table 2.4 Location of work: all migrants

Town/village	Number
Morpeth	9
Berwick	8
Duns	8
Alnwick	7
Blyth	7
Ashington	6
Cramlington	5
Goswick	2
Bedlington	1
Haggerston	1
Rennington	1
Rothbury	1
Shilbottle	1
Slayley	1
Tweedmouth	1
Wallsend	1
Wooler	1
Wooperton	1

Table 2.5 Location of work: Polish migrants

Town/village	Number
Berwick	8
Duns	8
Alnwick	5
Ashington	3
Cramlington	2
Morpeth	2
Bedlington	1
Goswick	1
Haggerston	1
Rennington	1
Rothbury	1
Slayley	1
Tweedmouth	1
Wooperton	1

When we asked how did you find a job, responses varied. Many Polish migrants found their jobs in Poland through an agency, many others were told by friends and family already living in the county that their places of work were taking Polish people on and so they consequently made the trip and others came here without work and found it on arrival. Existing migrant communities of the same nationality played an important role in securing jobs for incoming migrants, both in terms of communicating with people in host countries that jobs were available and in supporting them on first arrival (e.g. proving accommodation and helping them find their way around).

We asked about income levels in Northumberland compared to Poland. There were differences, with some migrants saying that they would earn around £250 in Poland doing a job that they were qualified to do (generally clerical professional) whereas they were earning up to £1000 and more per month here doing unskilled labour. Others however stated that the money they earned was similar (these tended to be skilled manual). When asked what

the incentive was for the latter group, they stated easier jobs, better conditions, earlier finishing. Also consumable goods were more affordable here compared to Poland.

Remittances to families in the countries of origin are widespread amongst migrants interviewed but levels vary. Some migrants sent home 20 percent of their earnings each month, others sent home money when asked or on special occasions, e.g. for school fees for a family member, at a time of sickness or family emergency or at Christmas. Others again sent home nothing. It is difficult to identify a pattern to remittances; in some cases those sending home regular money were lone men whose families were in Poland for example, but there were also examples of entire families sending money back to their extended families on a regular basis. Much seemed to depend on individual circumstance.

In terms of how people sent money home, several migrants from outside Europe sent money via Western Union Transfer, some Polish people deposited money in the Nat West bank which had a sister bank (PKO) in Poland and others either gave money to a friend to give to people back home or took money back home themselves when they visited.

The problems at work are covered in the section *social experiences at work*. There were additional problems identified, in one case relating to ESOL provision in the workplace. At one employer there was a commitment from senior management to release the Polish staff for one hour paid time a week to undertake ESOL classes. Although some employees took up this offer (i.e. the more empowered staff, with better positions and better English), other people on 'lower' jobs did not. It was felt that this was a result of lower managers not allowing their Polish subordinates to take up the classes because of workload. It was reported that because of their lack of English, they did not understand the process.

Reactions to work in this country from Polish migrants were interesting. Most felt that work in the UK was easy and many were frustrated that they were not allowed to work on the weekends.

During the research, we interviewed under half a dozen migrants who had lost their jobs whilst in Northumberland. These workers reported that finding a job was extremely difficult if they did not have good English. However, this lack of English was not reported as a problem

by other Polish migrants who were employed. One migrant stated “*can work without English*”. This is an important point which reinforces the need for English language amongst migrants: whilst in current places of work, English may not be necessary as other migrant workers can translate, or people work from plans (e.g. in engineering companies) but, if that job is lost, finding another with no English is almost impossible.

2.4 Support and social networks

The dominant finding regarding social networks was that members of the same country in the first instance provide the main social function in terms of friendship, support and information. The situation is more problematic for migrants who do not have a community to arrive into and therefore lack the important first level of support and information. One migrant from Chile reflected this, “*when I got here nobody told me this is this and that is that*”.

The support provided by existing migrant communities is a consistent theme throughout the research and is covered in other sections of this report (see sections on arrival and departure and access to services and information). One migrant stated “*we know that our friends and even not friends will help each other ... if they are from the same country*” and another said “*Polish people help each other*”. This ‘help’ covers all aspects of a migrant’s life, from finding a job, accommodation, knowledge and access to services, transport, money and other things.

In cases where people of the same nationality are few, far between or non-existent, then other migrants commonly provided such a role. These are often ‘found’ at local English classes. However, there are other migrants in ones or twos who have no support network and for them the sense of isolation is high

There are also those migrants who are married to British nationals and in those cases the social support and community is predominantly provided by the husband or the wife’s existing networks (mainly of English people).

2.5 Reactions to Northumberland and the host community

There were many things that people interviewed said they liked about living in Northumberland, including the people, the countryside and the peace and quiet. There were other aspects which people appreciated which related more to the United Kingdom, for example the laws and services. A selection of comments included:

- *“Northumberland is quiet, nice place, not too busy ... I like the countryside”.*
- *“The sea is close”.*
- *“The beautiful seasons”.*
- *“Rules are very nice ... respect human rights”.*
- *“I like money, beautiful country, learning English ... good people.*
- *“Likes job, people, countryside, shops, school ... don’t like weather, food”.*

Almost all migrants stated that Northumberland residents were welcoming and helpful. A common comment was *“people are very nice”*.

A theme that does emerge from the research is the unfamiliarity of people from Northumberland with people from other nationalities. This is highlighted by one migrant who has lived in the county for 17 years, *“Northumberland people are generally very friendly, easy to chat to but they are not familiar with people from other countries ... after 17 years in the village people still ask me where am I from”*.

There was one exception to this, where certain limited sections of the community were reported to be hostile to migrants, commonly younger people. One Thai migrant said *“Some people are OK, some don’t respect”* and another said *“Blyth is not ready for foreigners ... not accepted ... they are less educated and harsh”*. Other migrants interviewed in Blyth

concluded with these feelings and continued “*teenagers say something not very nice ... very delinquent ... need more control*”. Another said “*Blyth after five o’clock not safe*”.

Despite a level of hostility to migrants in Blyth, people interviewed did report that life was generally good and it was identified that older people were very welcoming. One migrant stated that in Blyth the “*older generation are friendly ... very kind*” and that life was “*generally peaceful*”.

There were several reports of racism experienced by migrants when they visited Newcastle. One migrant said “*young people shouting racist in Newcastle, not in Northumberland*”.

2.6 Social life and socialising

Whilst the good nature of people from Northumberland was commented upon by most migrants, it would seem from the research that there was little significant mixing between many migrant and resident communities. One migrant illustrated the views of many by saying “*we have good relations but we don’t mix much*”.

However, there were different levels of socialising in existence that was expressed by the range of migrants interviewed. For example, migrants who married English people socialised with them and their family and resident friends. Many Polish migrant communities on the other hand only socialised with Polish people, as did other nationalities, for example, the Filipino community. Other migrants, depending on the individual, said that they socialise with both other migrants and the host community.

There was a particular sense of isolation expressed by other migrants, who commonly only numbered one or two from their host countries. Such examples included an Iraqi, a Hungarian, Czech, Bangladeshi and others who stated that they felt isolated.

Having school age children helped certain migrants socialise as their children would be invited to school friends’ houses for tea and parties. However, other migrants expressed their feelings of isolation in the school yard as other mothers would congregate in groups

which they felt excluded them. The findings indicate that Polish migrants find it easier to socialise in the school yard compared to black or Asian migrants.

The lack of 'mixing' with the host community was partly attributed to a lack of opportunity and partly because of cultural differences. To illustrate these points, one migrant said "*Asian people don't like to go out and spend money. We want a place where we can go and drink juice ... where no drunk people*" and "*in another country people are more welcome ... here it's difficult to make friends, English people don't know how*".

Indeed, there were many feelings of an inability to mix on a more fundamental level with residents; to become friends. Again, much of the lack of mixing was attributed to cultural differences, i.e. people from overseas tending to be more open and demonstrative than English people. Many migrants were reticent about attempting to mix, which was reported to be a result of fear of how well they will be welcomed, i.e. that they would receive a 'cold shoulder'. One migrant illustrated this by saying "*better if we don't speak to them [residents] then they think we don't speak English*".

This reinforced the tendency of migrants to mix only with their own or other migrant communities. One family stated "*we feel much safer mixing with foreigners ... you don't know how they [British people] will react to things*". One young migrant who was at college said they associate with other foreign nationals, including African and Polish. Another migrant said "*Lithuanian goes to Polish for help, Thais mix with Filipino*".

2.7 Social experiences at work

There were a few comments from migrants interviewed about negative reactions to them in the workplace. There were reports of work colleagues being disparaging and disrespectful in their behaviour towards migrants. One respondent stated "*some Polish people are treated quite badly*", another said "*they're bad to me at work*" and another reported "*boss didn't like Poles speaking Polish*". In some cases it was expressed that managers considered them able and willing to do any job that is asked of them; even dirty, monotonous and strenuous jobs. There were other, more severe reports of anti-migrant sentiments and in one case a Polish woman was reported to be verbally abused and physically assaulted at a works' night out. However, to counter these incidences, there are other reported examples of good

experiences at work. One worker, who had entered a place of work as a kitchen hand, had asked the management for other jobs to do. This migrant eventually worked in the estates management department of a luxury hotel in the county and was “*highly appreciated by the team ... he’s treat well, with a lot of respect ... his English is good*”.

Other positive reported examples include English colleagues helping migrants with day-to-day practicalities such as setting up an electricity account and help with rubbish collection. However, it is noted that these responses tended to come from those migrants who were in ‘higher’ jobs, e.g. skilled manual or professional clerical.

2.8 Children

We received many reports of satisfaction of children’s services and many praised the quality and availability of such services. This ranged from the appreciation of national provision, such as Child Benefits, to local specific reports of friendly and helpful teachers at schools. One Polish migrant reported “*my three year old is in Wansbeck school, they helped him and me ... very good*”. There were other more general comments about the appreciation of the education system, such as “*education is very good ... children like [sic]*”.

We also conducted one focus group with school age children between 10 and 14 years old. These children had arrived between 2007 and 2008 and were in local primary and middle schools. All of the children said they liked it in school, they had lots of English friends and they all liked their teachers. When asked what they liked in school, one replied “*art, maths, everything!*”. When asked how many friends they had, all of them said about 10 each. Some of the children with better English said that they sometimes helped in school translating for other Polish children with poor English.

When asked what other things they liked or liked doing they said “*like shopping and sport but don’t like the food, we miss sausage and beans [!]*”. When asked what would make their lives better in Northumberland, they said they would like to go to a Polish ‘cultural’ school on the weekend (a place where Polish would be taught and have lessons in Polish).

The said that they missed their homes and family but they phoned home regularly. All of them also visited their families back home with their parents and travelled back up to three times a year (corresponding with school holidays). They also said that their grandparents and other family members also visited them.

There were some isolated reports of the bullying of Polish students who attend a middle school in the north of the county.

2.9 Community and personal safety

A recurrent theme which was raised in relation to safety was fear of young people congregating in groups, particularly those who were seen to be drinking alcohol. These reflect the same concerns as those held by resident communities. One migrant in Blyth stated *“sometimes I don’t feel secure at night ... groups of young people”*.

There were several reports of racist incidents all perpetrated by young people, including local boys harassing Polish boys in Alnwick and a Chinese woman had a packet of crisps thrust in her face in Newbiggin.

Some migrants interviewed took remedial steps to increase their security. One migrant said that they collected their son and daughter in winter by car from the bus stop in Blyth town so they do not have to walk home on their own.

2.10 Access to services and information

The majority of migrants interviewed reported no problems accessing the services that they needed. Migrants received information about services and how to access them from two main sources: either the existing migrant community; or from their spouses (particularly if married to a local). As detailed in the section on support and social networks, the existing community provided most support, including accompanying new migrants to places such as the bank or council offices to translate for them and show them where to go. However, a consistent theme in this research is the isolation experienced by migrants who may only

number one to a few, who do not have the community backup. One migrant stated "*at the beginning I didn't know about rights, breaks, minimum wage ... nobody told us*".

Most migrants interviewed had registered with a GP and none had problems with council services or health services. Indeed, the health service was mentioned by many to be very good, for example, one migrant stated "*midwives are good at hospital*". However, those older Polish migrants (particularly female) with no English said they had problems with translation at the doctors. It was reported directly by migrants interviewed (which reinforced findings from elsewhere) that they took other friends or family (children) to translate for them which was often inappropriate.

Libraries were reported by some migrants to be valuable and used services especially for books, DVDs and the use of the Internet. However, these comments were by no means universal and indicated that library usage was limited only to certain migrants who knew about the service. Some migrants interviewed knew about and used the CAB, but many others did not.

There were isolated reports of problems with particular services, for example: one woman had struggled getting access to medicine for a long running complaint of her son; another woman had initial difficulties in finding pre-school places for her three year old; and there were a few reports of unsatisfactory responses from the Police when they were called to incidents. There were a few comments about services which, because they were free at the point of service, they experienced a wait (e.g. doctors and hospital appointments). This was in contrast to the situation in their home country as most services were paid for and were provided immediately.

Several migrants commented on a generally held assumption that reflected the situation in their host country. Reflecting this, one migrant stated "*the assumption is if you want services, you need to pay for them*".

The two recurrent problems that people reported were access to dentists and access to housing with the latter particularly experienced by young, single males. Access to dentists was felt acutely as people found difficulty getting either an NHS or a private dentist and

many chose to wait to when they returned home to go to a dentist (one woman reported carrying out dentistry on herself).

The people attending the Berwick Migrants Group reported that the group provides all the information they need where previously they may have lacked some information.

When asked what they like to do in their free time, the common reaction was the same things as residents. For example, one migrant stated “*swimming, library, pub, normal things*”.

2.11 Learning and education

The migrants interviewed had different English competency levels, from none, to conversational, to advanced, with the majority on the lower levels and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) was by far the biggest need that was expressed by almost all those interviewed. Other key findings in relation to learning and education include:

- Many migrants, particularly some Polish (but also other nationalities) had almost no English despite having been in the county for many years. It was reported by several of those interviewed that if a Polish person worked in a business that employed many Polish people there was little need for them to learn English as there are already several Polish at that place of work who do speak English and can translate. As a result of often working long shifts it is not possible to access ESOL or English courses.
- Those migrants who belonged to an English class found out about the course either from friends or from a teacher at their child’s school and all highly valued the service (provided by Northumberland College), the social function it provided and the teacher. The latter played a particularly important role as a trusted and valued representative of the professional resident society and was an invaluable source of information.
- Many migrants reported that the extent of ESOL provision was very poor with only one or two classes a week, only in certain locations and often at times when it could not be

accessed, i.e. in work hours. It was also stated that there was no provision for entry level ESOL and that for many classes the fee was very high (£250) which made it prohibitive. One migrant reflected the former by saying "*there is nothing for beginners*".

- One migrant illustrated the strong links between employment, level of English and the likelihood of a return home: "*if you got job for long time then [you] lose it but don't have English then go back to Poland*". English not only had an impact on the return home but also on getting an initial job for some migrants and career progression. One migrant who worked as a part time drumming teacher said that they could not get another job because their English was not good enough.
- The research indicated a strong link between the level of English of the individual migrant and the reaction to them in the workplace and in wider society. . One respondent reported "*others [migrants] who have a bad time ... their English is poor ... not treated with respect, they are miserable*".

2.12 Transport and travel

In relation to transport, all migrants interviewed who used public transport found it straightforward to use, if expensive. Other migrants were car owners and others worked in walking distance to their places of work, so did not need a means of transport.

There was a significant amount of travel amongst migrants between Northumberland and their home countries, particularly amongst Europeans. Many Polish people commonly made two trips a year to Poland but others visited up to four times a year and these corresponded with school holidays or festivals (e.g. Easter and Christmas). There was also a corresponding flow of visitors to the migrants living in Northumberland in the form of friends and families. Again, these visitors were mostly from European migrants, many of which visited one or more times a year. However, non European friends and family also made the trip over to Northumberland though not as frequently.

There were many reported ways in which Polish migrants returned home including flying via: Edinburgh to Gdansk, Krakow, etc.; Glasgow to Berlin (several others were mentioned); and buses from Newcastle to Poland.

2.13 Faith and worship

There was evidence from the research that many migrants had the opportunity to worship in culturally relevant ways, with the main exception of Muslim migrants. There are a series of churches across the county which have sizeable Polish congregations and there is at least one Catholic Polish priest in Northumberland (Alnwick).

There is also a Filipino Baptist Church in Whitley Bay with a congregation of around 100 people which has a Filipino pastor.

There are at least two Buddhist temples in Northumberland (Hexham and Belsay) where it was reported by Thai migrants that they visited in religious festivals.

The worst provision was for the Islamic faith and Muslims that were interviewed all travelled to mosques in Newcastle (which has a total of 13 mosques) and said they were disappointed that they were unable to worship in Northumberland. Muslims also stated that they could not buy Halal meat in the county.

2.14 Problems

There were three main problems that were consistently expressed by people relating to their life as migrants living in Northumberland: a lack of ESOL provision; a lack of access to dentists; and lack of food ingredients.

Top of the list was the lack of available English classes. One Turkish migrant reflected the sentiments of the majority of migrants interviewed by saying "*my biggest problem is language but happy with everything else*". This was reiterated time and time again.

There were other problems that related to a lack of English provision such as problems with translation in health settings and in school.

Another common problem was access to dentists, with some migrants waiting until they went back to their host country to others who travelled to Newcastle to see a dentist.

The lack of specific food and ingredients was also mentioned. However, for Polish people this seemed to be improving slightly as it was pointed out that Morrisons sell Polish sausages and certain fishmongers would order carp for the traditional Christmas Eve dish. There are also Polish shops in Newcastle. The lack of specific foods was particularly felt as many migrants reported a dislike of English food. One migrant stated "*the food is quite horrible*".

There was a problem expressed by young migrants (particularly males) concerning finding accommodation. It was stated on several occasions that English landlords do not like to let their houses to groups of migrants, again particularly young and male. However, this reflects the situation with resident groups of young and single males.

There were some comments about the inability to translate qualifications gained overseas to equivalents in this country, particularly amongst those who were under employed.

Thai migrants had specific grievances with the visa system and the associated costs. One reported that she was told that she would have to pay to have her baby in this country and so decided to go back to Thailand to have her child.

3.0 Conclusion

It was initially anticipated that this would be a difficult research task and that finding and gaining access to migrants in Northumberland would be problematic. The researcher approached a key professional in the county and asked, 'how easy do you think it will be to access migrants in Northumberland?' and they replied "*it will be impossible*". However, gaining access to migrant workers proved to be very straightforward and the number of 88 migrants interviewed was quickly achieved. Many of the migrants were accessed via Northumberland College's English classes, others were accessed via the Berwick Migrant

Support Group and still others were contacted individually via other migrants, people responding to adverts and professionals referring people in ones and twos that they knew.

Indeed, we found the migrants we talked to very approachable, friendly and honest. They had no difficulty in expressing what their life was like in Northumberland and they were open to questions. It seems to be the case that migrant workers may not be so much of a hidden population after all.

One of the reasons of the hidden nature may be that they do not appear to have much contact with local services and so seem ultimately unknown. A reason behind this is the migrants' high levels of self-sufficiency, relying upon themselves and other migrant workers, predominantly but not exclusively, from their own country. This is their community where they seek support, advice and practical help. Indeed, there are several areas in Northumberland which echo communities in Poland, i.e. members of one Polish town or village community have all located in the same town in Northumberland and as such they have very strong communities.

This reliance may be viewed by some as introspection but we found a willingness and a desire in many migrants of better integrating with resident communities. However, the barriers of opportunity, venue and language have proved to be often too much. But this is encouraging as we see an intention and all we have to do is provide a space for that intention to happen.

In the following section, we are proposing three short project outlines, located in the north, the east and the south of the county. They are three different activities and are located in three very different situations: one with an established migrant group; a Polish mother and toddlers group; and a new organisation which wants to attract and develop a multi cultural client group.

Each project outline which requires further scoping but they address three of the major needs identified in this research, including:

- Social and service provision for existing migrant groups to further integrate people into mainstream Northumberland life and to improve community cohesion (Berwick upon Tweed);
- Conversational English provision for migrant families with children in local schools (or pre-school children who will enter local schools) who have no English (Alnwick);
- Provision of a multi-cultural meeting opportunity to reduce the isolation felt by many migrants, improve community cohesion and improve cultural understanding (Blyth Valley).

4.0 Short project outlines

Alnwick

Alnwick has a relatively large and diverse migrant worker population.

There is a mother and toddlers group which is attended by a number of Polish mothers. The group, called the Percy Bears Baby and Toddler Group is located in Percy Street Hall and is run by Alnwick Christian Brethren, an informal Christian fellowship. One of their aims is to meet community needs and they often work with other churches and social groups in the town to achieve this.

Out of a group of approximately 10 regular attendees, only two women have good English. It has already been identified by playgroup leaders through discussions with the group of mothers and confirmed by this research that there is a need for conversational English classes.

It is proposed that such conversational English classes take place in the form of a coffee morning with a crèche provided and led by an ESOL support worker or an ESOL teacher (the former would have lower associated costs). It was expressed by the group that such a conversation class should focus on informally developing the English language skills and not be classroom based, nor concentrate on a qualification.

Such a mini project would be low cost, incurring only tutor, venue hire, crèche and refreshment costs. Outcomes could be measured at regular intervals via a questionnaire which asked participants about English levels, types of communication and task (e.g. able to talk to a bank teller, on the phone to the council, etc.).

Berwick upon Tweed

Berwick CAB has been supporting migrant workers for several years and they have a dedicated support project funded by The Big Lottery. The CAB in partnership with a group of migrant workers (mostly Polish but also including Latvians and Portuguese) has formed

the Berwick Migrant Support Group. This group meets regularly on Wednesday and Friday evenings and are in the process of developing a portfolio of projects that they wish to implement.

This includes:

- A weekend Polish school for Polish children
- A percussion group for young people
- Film nights particularly focussing on international films
- Historic tours of Berwick and environs
- A drop-in for migrants

These expressed activities could form a portfolio of projects which contribute to several areas of need identified throughout this research, e.g. contributing to cultural understanding and integration. The cost of the activities listed above however varies, e.g. a film night is less expensive than a drop-in. This group is the most mature and strong group within Northumberland and there is space within the developing relationship to build links between resident and migrant communities.

Blyth Valley

Blyth was identified as an area having particular tensions between resident and migrant communities and one that has a relatively high migrant population. It was also identified that many migrants in Blyth Valley feel isolated and there are almost no opportunities to socialise either with other migrants or resident communities, other than those that currently exist (pubs and clubs) which are not accessible to many. Many migrants interviewed in Blyth Valley expressed a desire for a multi-cultural centre or a regular venue where people from all nationalities could go and meet.

The All Communities Together (ACT) group has recently been formed to cater for the needs of both foreign nationals and residents, specifically focussing on improving integration and improving community cohesion.

There is no apparent migrant group that currently exists and it is envisaged that a relatively protracted 'attraction and engagement' period is started, based around a weekly drop-in. It is proposed that this group is supported in its efforts with the funding of a regular weekly evening multi-cultural event to attract foreign nationals in the first instance. After possibly six months, depending on numbers, it may be possible to create the first formal multi-cultural event in Blyth.

Again, costs for this project would be reasonably low and would include venue hire, refreshments and advertising.

This is the most experimental of the three projects as there is no existing group. However, the research has established a need and the drop-in could effectively be promoted through the Northumberland College's ESOL service in Blyth.

Appendix one: Interview guide

Arrival and departure

When did you arrive?

Do you intend to stay? Why?

Do you intend to go? Why?

Living and accommodation

Where do you live?

What do you like about living here?

What don't you like?

Social life

Do you have many friends here?

Do you mix with the local community?

Do you help each other?

Who helps each other and how?

What are your experiences of people here?

Access to services and information

Which services do you access? Why?

Which services do you not access? Why?

Have you any particularly good or bad examples of services?

What services do you need but are not getting access to? Why?

What do you think of the council, Police, health service?

Do you have all the information you need?

What other types of information do you need?

How should this be presented?

Learning

Do you need to do any learning/education here?

Do you know where to go?

What would help you?

Health

How is your health?

Do you go to the doctors or the hospital? What is that like?

If you have specific problems do you know where to go?

Transport

Do you use public transport? What types? Where to and from?

Do you find it easy to use?

Do you use other means of transport? Which?

Was this easy to arrange?

Work and employment

What are your jobs?

Have you got any qualifications?

How did you find a job?

What types of jobs are available? Where?

How far do you have to travel to work?

How do you travel to work?

What are your biggest problems at work?

Money

Do you make enough money to live here?

Are you able to send any money back home? What proportion?

What happens if you need to borrow money?

Do you get into debt?

What are your biggest money worries?

Problems

What are your biggest problems?

How do you think these could be overcome?

Are there any small things we could do to make your lives better?

Where are you from?



Are you from Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal, South Africa or elsewhere... living or working in Northumberland?

Do you want £15?

We want to talk to you about what life is like in Northumberland.

Bring your friends or family and each person will get **£15** after taking part.

We can meet at a café or a local venue near you.

Text **'talk'** to **07813 789529** and I will ring you back or email barefoot@barefootresearch.org.uk



Barefoot
Research and Evaluation

The research is being carried out by Barefoot Research and Evaluation on behalf of Northumberland Strategic Partnership.
All information you provide will be kept confidential and names will not be disclosed to others.

Appendix three: Advert in Polish

Weź udział w wywiadzie i zarób 15 funtów!

Wpisał Northumberland Strategic Partnership

Poniedziałek, 13. Październik 2008 13:50



Organizacja Northumberland Strategic Partnership, która robi badania na temat życia obcokrajowców w hrabstwie Northumberland, chciałaby zaprosić wszystkich Polaków na wywiad. Każdej osobie, która z nami porozmawia zapłacimy 15 funtów!

Podczas spotkania chcielibyśmy zapytać się – jak Wam się tu żyje, jak się pracuje, co Wam się podoba a co nie, z czym macie największe problemy itp.

Z uwagi na to że badania dotyczą jedynie hrabstwa Northumberland, na wywiad możemy się jedynie umówić z osobami mieszkającymi albo pracującymi w tym regionie. Do regionu Northumberland należą m.i. miasta: Cramlington, Blyth, Hexham, Morpeth, Alnwick, Berwick, Amble, Bedlington, Belford, Corbridge, Haltwhistle, Newbiggin, Ponteland Rothbury, Seahouses, Seaton, Sluice.

Nie czekaj i już dziś przyjdź wraz przyjaciółmi lub rodziną na wywiad i każdy z Was otrzyma po 15 funtów! Na spotkanie możemy podjechać w wygodne dla Was miejsce – np. kawiarnia koło waszego domu.

Aby się umówić się na spotkanie wystarczy wysłać smsa z treścią „talk” na numer 07813 789529 lub email: barefoot@barefootresearch.org.uk

Appendix four: Demographics of migrants interviewed

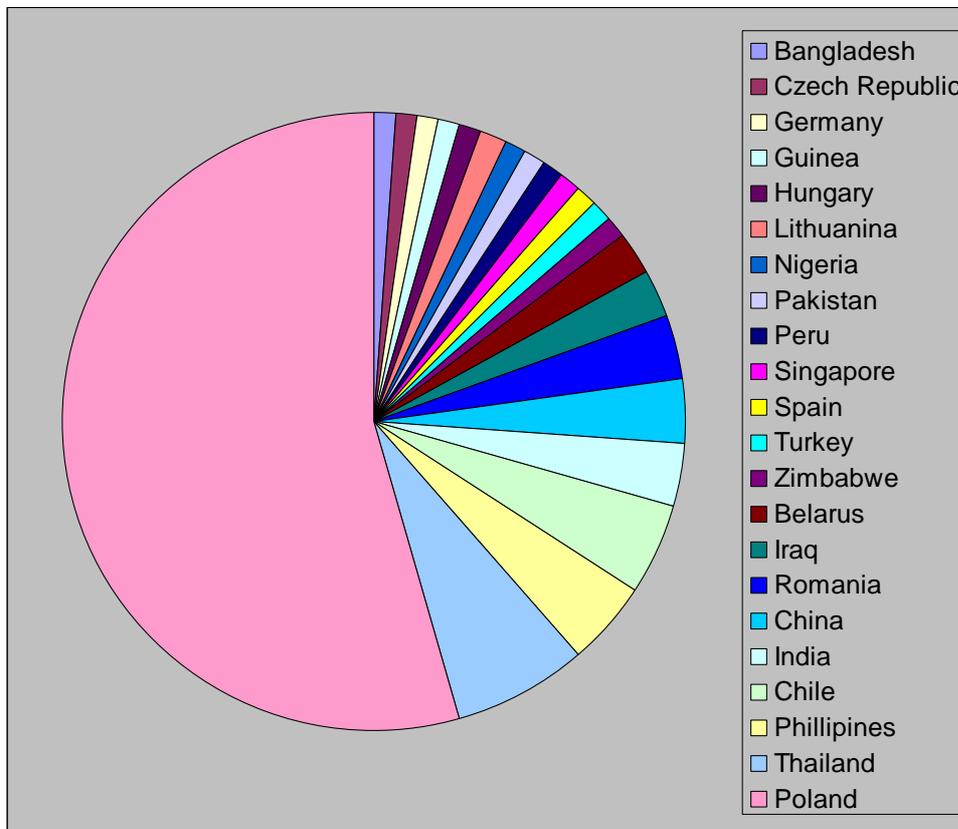
Characteristics of migrants

A total of 88 people were interviewed; 29 were male and 59 were female.

The characteristics of those interviewed varied widely and despite over half (n=48) of all those interviewed were from Poland, the characteristics within this group also varied; they were by no means a homogenous group.

Graph A.1 shows where the migrants interviewed for this research came from. As can be seen, they are dominated by Polish people with significant although small minorities of people from the Philippines and Thailand. What is remarkable is the number of countries from across the world where people come from to live and work in Northumberland.

Graph A.1 Country of origin



The demographics of migrants varied and included: families who had migrated to find employment and a new life; women and men who had met and married a resident of the county, either overseas or in Northumberland; young people (mostly Polish) who had come to the area to find employment and travel with no intention of staying; and the traditional view of the migrant worker, someone (usually male) who left their family (usually in Poland) to find work and send home money.

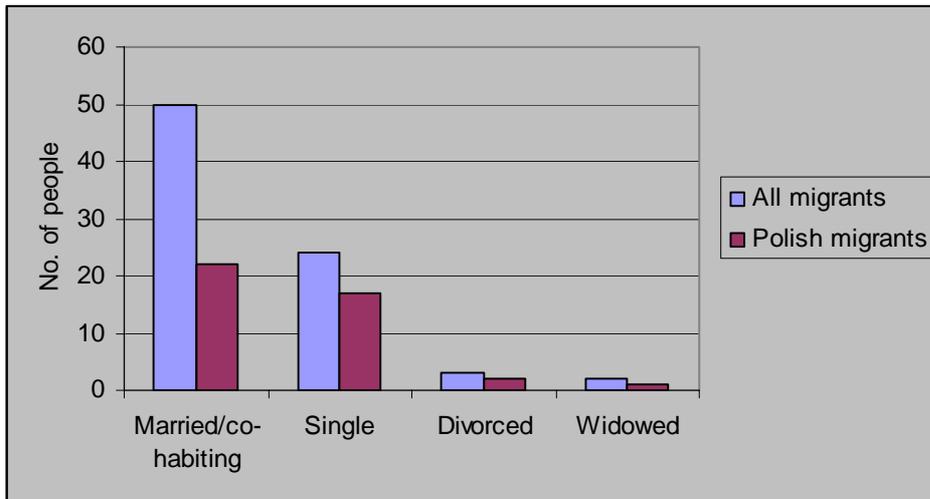
Graph A.2 shows that 53 people interviewed were either married or co-habiting. A total of three are divorced and two were widows (there were six children interviewed). A total of 24 were single.

All of the single people had no dependent children. Of those who were married or co-habiting, a total of 16 had one child, nine had two children, eight had three children, one family had four children and one had five. A total of 18 families had no dependent children, either they had no started a family or their children had grown up and moved away.

A total of 22 Polish people interviewed were either married or co-habiting. The remaining 29 were predominantly single with two who were divorced and one widow. Of those married, six people had one child, six people had two children and six people had three children. One of the married people had five children and one of the single people had two children.

A total of 26 migrants are living apart from their families. A total of seven are husbands who work away, with their families back in their countries of origin (these include five Polish people, one Iraqi and one Indian). The remaining 59 are here with their families.

Graph A.2 Marital status of migrants



Graph A.3 shows the range in the ages of migrants interviewed. As can be seen, there is a wide variety in the ages of migrants and what is particularly noteworthy is that the ages of, particularly Polish, migrants are not dominated by young people and have a range of ages.

Graph A.3 Ages of migrants

