



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal  
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Dydd Iau, 7 Chwefror 2008  
Thursday, 7 February 2008**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,  
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Janice Gregory	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lynne Neagle) Labour (substitute for Lynne Neagle)
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Maria Allen	Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Welsh Local Government Association
Naomi Alleyne	Cyfarwyddwr Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Director of Equalities and Social Justice, Welsh Local Government Association
Chris Burns	Prif Weithredwr Cynorthwyol (Polisi a Sylw i Gwsmeriaid) Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Focus and Policy), Carmarthenshire County Council
Alun Williams	Undeb Gweithwyr Siopau Dosbarthu a Gwaith Perthynol Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers

**Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol**  
**Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance**

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk
Denise Rogers	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.*

**Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro**  
**Election of Temporary Chair**

[1] **Mr Jackson:** Good morning. Welcome to the meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. Unfortunately, Ann Jones, the committee Chair, is unable to be here today. Therefore, under Standing Order No. 10.19, I call for nominations for a temporary Chair.

[2] **Bethan Jenkins:** I nominate Christine Chapman.

[3] **Mr Jackson:** Christine Chapman has been nominated. Is everyone happy for Christine to act as Chair? I see that you are. Thank you.

*Penodwyd Christine Chapman yn Gadeirydd dros dro.  
Christine Chapman was appointed temporary Chair.*

9.30 a.m.

### **Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[4] **Christine Chapman:** Welcome, everyone. I am not sure whether there is anyone in the public gallery yet, but I welcome anyone who is there. I remind everyone that headsets are available through which you can hear the simultaneous translation. If you have any difficulties, let us know and we will try to sort them out—I am sure that you are used to this by now. I ask you to ensure that your mobile phones, BlackBerrys and pagers are switched off, because they affect the sound.

[5] I have received some apologies. Janice Gregory is substituting for Lynne Neagle. I have also received apologies from Joyce Watson, Helen Mary Jones and Angela Burns. I know that the committee has written to Angela with our best wishes following her operation.

9.31 a.m.

### **Ymchwiliad i Weithwyr Mudol Inquiry into Migrant Workers**

[6] **Christine Chapman:** As you know, we are undertaking an inquiry into issues that affect migrant workers—I am looking forward to this very much. This is the first evidence session of the inquiry. A copy of the call for evidence is attached to your papers for information. So far, we have received 28 responses, which have been e-mailed to you as committee members.

[7] I wish to welcome Naomi Alleyne, Maria Allen and Chris Burns from the Welsh Local Government Association to the meeting this morning. You have sent us a paper. I would be grateful if you would introduce your paper for five to 10 minutes. I will then invite committee members to ask questions.

[8] **Ms Alleyne:** I will not take up too much of your time in introducing the paper as Members have seen a copy of it. It is probably best that we deal with some of the issues that we raise in the question session. As an introduction, I wish to say that virtually all authorities across Wales are experiencing the impact of migration to one extent or another. Some areas, such as Carmarthenshire, Wrexham, Cardiff and Newport, have higher levels of migration, but even some smaller villages and towns across Wales are experiencing migration. It is different from the experiences that they have had previously as it is a new phenomenon, and new issues are arising for local authorities. Some good work is being done across local government to ensure that the issues of migration are being managed at the local level. I am sure that you will hear more about that this morning.

[9] Some of the concerns that have been raised around the impact of migration relate to the impact on public services. At the moment, while we are aware of the impact across Wales, particularly in terms of education—Chris will share with us later some of the issues that are arising in Carmarthenshire in particular—we need to prepare for other issues in the future. So, while there has been an impact in terms of housing, but not in terms of social housing at the moment, we need to be aware of what will happen in the future. The paper that we have submitted and the paper that was submitted to Members on the form of the inquiry is very

clear that we do not have clear statistics on the number of migrant workers in Wales. While there is a national insurance number registration scheme and a workers' registration scheme, there are issues around the accuracy of those statistics. Also people move on to other areas, and we do not have the information about the flow of migrant workers across Wales. That has an impact as we are not able to plan effectively to ensure that public services are available and appropriate to meet the needs of migrant workers.

[10] In terms of the statistics, we do not have clear statistics about what the numbers are now, but it also about that churn. We cannot plan, and we are not sure what the trends are in the longer term. So, while some of the statistics reflect that a lot of the migrant workers may be single people, we are aware that, particularly from schools, more families and children are joining migrant workers who may have been here for a while. We do not know what the long-term trends may be, so we need to look at, not just the statistics that we have now, but also at what people's intentions are for the future, so that we can start to look at those longer-term trends.

[11] Some of the other issues that have arisen relate to social or community cohesion and how migrant workers are integrating and settling within local communities. In some areas, you have organisations, such as the Polish Mutual Association in Carmarthenshire, that are able to provide useful ongoing support to migrant workers. Flintshire County Council, through the community safety partnership, has established a drop-in facility for migrant workers, so that there is advice and information available. However, those sorts of facilities are not available across all parts of Wales. The diversity of the migrant workers who are arriving, and the different languages that people are speaking, does not make it easy in terms of interpretation and translation, and that then has an impact on community cohesion.

[12] I will finish my introduction there, because I think that the papers are clear in terms of the range of issues that arise. I am happy to have a discussion with Members through the questions and answers.

[13] **Christine Chapman:** First, I apologise for not mentioning Chris, who is from Carmarthenshire County Council. I have known Chris for many years.

[14] Thank you for that introduction. Janice will ask the first question.

[15] **Janice Gregory:** Good morning and thank you for a very well-thought-out paper. I am only substituting on this committee this morning, and I have just had a chance to scan the paper, because I am substituting at quite short notice.

[16] Your paper raises a huge number of issues that face local authorities now and in the future. I am interested in the comments about affordable housing, which is an issue facing Wales as a whole—and England and Scotland, but I am concerned about what is happening here. In my own constituency, even though it is a Valleys constituency, it is difficult to find any type of affordable housing, even something that needs refurbishment, and rented affordable housing is very difficult to pin down. With respect to that, how are your members planning to take this in? Another issue is schools, and you said, quite rightly, that we are not just getting single migrant workers now. Evidence shows that families are now coming to Wales. How will the local education authorities address this issue, especially in an area such as Newport, which you mentioned? Rosemarie Butler is always saying that in her constituency there are multiple first languages and the LEA and the schools have great difficulty in addressing that. They do that admirably, but they will now have an added element as well. What is the WLGA looking at to support the local authorities and the schools? I have many other questions, but I will leave it at that.

[17] **Ms Alleyne:** I will take the housing question and then pass over the question on

education to Chris. We all know about the crisis in affordable housing; there are a huge amount of issues there. However, some of the issues that arise in relation to migration and housing are mainly, at the moment, related to the private rental sector, such as the use of houses in multiple occupation, and there are real concerns about hot-bedding, which has an impact on public health issues, and also on people's housing experience.

9.40 a.m.

[18] The UK-wide migration impact forum has been established by the UK Government, and is chaired by Liam Byrne. Its purpose is to look at the impact of migration across the UK and to ensure a managed approach to it. Housing was the main topic to be discussed at the forum's last meeting in January. I would be happy to forward a copy of the report that was presented to the migration impact forum on that. Although it was put together by Sheffield council, evidence was taken from across the UK. That report found that the biggest impact was on the private rental sector at the moment. For example, where there are issues around access to social housing and affordable housing, it is putting pressure on the private rental sector market in terms of migrant workers.

[19] One concern is that housing cannot be looked at in isolation. The wider neighbourhood issues need to be considered: the impact in terms of health and education. There are a host of issues there. Over the last few months, local authorities have been developing housing needs assessments to inform their housing strategies. Migration has featured in many of the assessments that have been undertaken. Not all of the strategies have been finalised and published yet, but a number of the strategies consider how issues relating to migration can be addressed in the future. I have seen some of the work done by Newport City Council on analysing its current migrant population—where they live, and the make-up of their families—to be able to plan for future housing needs. So, work is ongoing at a local level on housing, but we need to bring that work together to be able to analyse it at a national level so that we can identify any national or strategic work that should be taken forward on an all-Wales basis to ensure that there is enough housing and that issues are addressed. Housing issues can cause tension within local communities. This work would help us to dispel any myths, such as the myth that migrant workers, or any migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, take housing or social housing from local people. That has an impact on community cohesion. Although your inquiry focuses on migrant workers, we need to look at this more broadly and take into account asylum seekers and refugees. The public does not differentiate between migrant workers, asylum seekers, or refugees. Refugees who receive a positive status will have access to social housing and other forms of housing. That can create tension when communities do not understand the difference between the various groups of people.

[20] **Mr Burns:** Before I talk about the education issue, I would like to add a little about housing. Carmarthenshire County Council has recently undertaken a similar inquiry to this one through our social justice scrutiny committee. We hope to sign off the final report in the next few weeks. We would be happy to share that with you, because it goes into quite a lot of detail about the housing, employment, health and education issues, and so on. In that report, we have tried to examine the subject from a number of dimensions. Part of the work is to ensure that migrant workers have access to services and can meet their basic needs, such as housing. It also looks at the impact on services for local people and the local community. It considers issues such as whether we have been able to meet the needs of migrant workers only by impacting on other services. It also considers whether migrant workers are being exploited. I hope that the report will help you by giving you a local example. It is probably very similar to the inquiry that you are undertaking.

[21] The housing situation in our area is exactly as Naomi has outlined. It is often quite difficult to separate the myth and the fact in these things because there is a huge amount of myth about hot-bedding, for example. There are also lots of myths about bedblocking, Naomi,

but that is another subject. [*Laughter.*]

[22] There are lots of myths about hot-bedding and you encounter lots of people who will relate stories that appear to have come from a George Orwell novel. However, when you try to investigate them, our research and efforts show that it is very difficult to find any actual examples of three shifts of people all sleeping in the same bed, or bus loads of people arriving and jumping into the beds that others have vacated. You will find that a lot of people will tell you that that is happening, but to my knowledge, so far, you will not find anybody who can actually prove that it is happening. As the housing authority in the area, we investigate any complaints of that nature that come forward and, really, there is more myth than substance in a lot of these complaints.

[23] Having said that, we obviously now have a very large number of houses in multiple occupation, particularly in Llanelli, some of which are licensed and registered and some which are probably not. The explosion in the number of properties being used in this way has put the housing department under a lot of pressure, not just in terms of dealing with the people who notify us that they have a house in multiple occupation, but of trying to identify those houses, of which there are probably quite a few, that are not registered and which we have not been notified about. One of the biggest impacts comes from the fact that they tend to be concentrated in small areas—the lower-value areas. That may have an impact on the ability of local people, such as first-time buyers, to buy cheap properties in the cheaper parts of town, as they may find that the properties have been bid up by the employer organisations that are buying dozens and dozens of houses in one small area.

[24] This fosters social cohesion issues and confusion around things like the fact that, if you are talking about the Polish community in particular, things are done differently in Poland, where people put their rubbish out every day, for example, not every week. You find that when new people move in, they do not know the customs of the area and it takes a little while for them to become aware of them. What we have not seen, to date, is any real pressure on the social housing stock. There have been very few applications from migrant workers for local authority housing, but that number may grow in the future, once they have been here for more than 12 months and are entitled to apply for social housing, and particularly as the number of migrant workers with families grows.

[25] That brings me to the subject of education. What has come as something of a surprise to us—it has taken us a little by surprise in the last 12 months—is that we have seen quite a rapid growth in the number of children in schools from non-English-speaking backgrounds, which is probably the best way to put it. We may have included the figures in our evidence today, but, if not, we will certainly supply them in the evidence that we will submit from Carmarthenshire County Council to the inquiry. If you take children in category A, who are children who have no English whatsoever, or virtually none, the number of such children in primary schools went up from something like 80 last year to 170 at the start of the new term this year. That was quite a dramatic increase that I do not think anybody had seen coming. Equally, as Naomi said, Carmarthenshire, and Llanelli in particular, is an area with one of the highest concentration of Polish workers in Wales. However, if you take the four categories of linguistic ability, we are talking about something like 600 pupils in Carmarthenshire schools. In fact, 40 different language groups are represented, so it is not just one group, but a range, of people.

[26] That poses quite a challenge for teachers in an area like Carmarthenshire where there is not much of a history or tradition of migrants coming into the area. Possibly for the first time, teachers are trying to integrate these children. We have two schools in the county where just over or almost half of the pupils are Polish. We therefore have some quite significant concentrations, but in many cases there may be only one or two pupils in the school—there may certainly be only one in a class—and nobody else who speaks their language. We need to

give quite a lot of specialist support to those teachers.

9.50 a.m.

[27] We benefit from the minority ethnic achievement grant that we receive from the Assembly, which is well appreciated and received. One of the problems that we have had with that is that there is a time lag, in that the amount of grant that we get this year is based on last year's figures. So, we have seen a doubling in the number this year, but we have not received the additional financial support to try to cope with that. In a rural county such as Carmarthenshire, where there are 160 schools and where these pupils are spread across quite a large number of schools, it is difficult to give the schools the support that they require. So, it is very difficult to predict what will happen next year; we may have seen a trend where people have come over on their own, made a start for themselves and got themselves established, but are now bringing families over, so we may see yet another increase next year. We have not managed to understand exactly where we are on the trend or grasp the future projection.

[28] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you for your presentation, which was most interesting and enlightening. Why is the Office for National Statistics not charged with looking at more adequate statistics, so that you at the sharp end can get to grips with the reality of the situation? You talked about English language provision in certain areas—and I would imagine that this applies to Carmarthenshire—but would you not want to provide Welsh lessons? I know a little about this because, having spoken to the leader of Wrexham County Borough Council, I am aware of the huge influx of Polish migrants to the area. I also have a friend who delivers English language lessons in Flintshire, so I have some understanding of the pressures. English provision is obviously essential, but is Welsh also not essential? In terms of English or Welsh provision, it is a basic need, otherwise everything else will fall apart because they can be exploited. We talked about exploitation yesterday in terms of prostitution; we may not want to go down that particular avenue this morning, but exploitation becomes apparent when people cannot communicate—you have said so yourselves. Given the funding squeeze on local authorities, you must bear huge pressure and I wonder how you will cope.

[29] In Wrexham, there has been a successful community partnership, which includes the police among others, to ensure that there are no negative features that might incline people to become fed up with democracy and start voting for the British National Party, which thrives on these types of issues. The community even has a Polish-speaking policeman, which is wonderful. Is that type of provision something with which you have any dealings, or have you been looking at that to ensure that there is cohesion in the community? There were real problems about four years ago in Wrexham, so I have looked into this, along with the leader of the council and the police, because I was worried about what might happen. In our neck of the woods, the BNP did extremely well in Wrexham and Flintshire, and, in terms of democracy, this is something that bothers me because all of these issues that we are describing can be exploited in this way.

[30] **Ms Alleyne:** There are concerns about the ONS figures; a number of local authorities, including Cardiff, Westminster and Slough, have had concerns about the accuracy of the ONS figures, because they have an impact in terms of the amount of public money that comes to authorities. Discussions are ongoing with the ONS about the way in which the collection of those statistics can be improved. In Wales, the local government data unit is involved in those discussions with the ONS. Part of the difficulty, not just with the ONS figures, but with the national insurance number and the worker registration scheme figures, is that sometimes there is a time lag. What we are not doing that well at is analysing some of the longer-term trends that come out of those figures. Last night, I was reading a report from the Yorkshire and Humberside region, which has looked at its figures across the region to start to identify trends. That is an example of good practice. Part of our role and of Maria's role is to



share that best practice with local authorities, so that they can look at improving their collection and analysis of information at a local level. However, they can do that only with information that is available. Therefore, the issue of the accuracy of statistics is one of which people are aware. People are looking at ways to achieve that accuracy with an innovative new method.

[31] On Welsh lessons—Maria will correct me if I am wrong—Bangor University was looking at providing not only ESOL but Welsh lessons. Without a shadow of doubt, we need promotion of both languages or availability of lessons in both across Wales. There has been more investment in the past in teaching English as a second language, but one of the issues for people arriving in Wales is that, in the longer term, they may not stay in Wales. We do not know what their intentions are, so we need to ensure that the choice is available.

[32] On how local authorities are coping with the pressures, I think that Chris gave you a fair summary; it is very difficult to plan ahead. Therefore, in the first year, and knowing some of those statistics, you can start looking at the services for next year and how those might need to be delivered, but, again, you are not sure what may have happened in the past. So, those pressures are being addressed; and local authorities have reacted very well, particularly in education terms, to deal with the increased numbers. However, without a doubt, that has put pressure on their budgets and their staff. Local authorities can only be congratulated on the way in which they have responded, but they feel the pressure in that way. Therefore, it would be helpful if, as local authorities have suggested, there was a fund to deal with a huge increase, such as that Chris talked about, that they could tap into for additional funding without having to wait for the lag behind them. In that way, rather than putting pressure on decreasing budgets, they could have easy access to more money to deal with the situation.

[33] The work that you talk about in Wrexham is replicated in other parts of Wales. For example, Merthyr has a migrant workers forum that involves housing associations, race equality councils, the police and local authorities. They are looking at how they produce the welcome to Wales pack and myth-busting leaflets. Wrexham is doing work on community cohesion. Chris can talk about the group in Carmarthen. The paper from Flintshire, which I think you have seen, talks about the group established there. So, a great deal of work is ongoing across local authorities, but, again, it is work that is just beginning. It has been a reactive rather than a proactive approach.

[34] Last year, I think that we were all taken aback by the number of people who arrived in the UK from the accession states. In a way, we were not prepared, but we are now moving from being reactive to being proactive, with some of the work that you mentioned on improving integration and the work with host communities to enable them to better understand the arrival of people from other countries and their cultures.

10.00 a.m.

[35] **Eleanor Burnham:** Myth-busting is important. I use taxis to get to and from the train station here and in north Wales, and it is incredible what the taxi drivers will allege once they know what I do. They say things such as, ‘Did you know that these migrants get free cars?’, and they say that they get this, that and the other. Usually, they have been reading the *Daily Mail*—forgive me, *Daily Mail*—or some other organ of the media, and it is quite frightening. They realise eventually, when they find out that I am a Liberal Democrat, that I am liberal and democratic, whereas they believe these myths, which can be frightening. That is what feeds the BNP, and all these people who want to get rid of other people. Therefore, I am pleased about these myth-dispelling measures.

[36] **Mr Burns:** On the Welsh language issue, in a county such as Carmarthenshire, a large proportion of the primary schools are Welsh-medium schools, or the majority of

subjects will be taught through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, when children enter the education system, in some cases that creates an even more complex situation if the parents do not speak English but their children are in a Welsh-language school. So, there will be some examples of that. It is a more complicated issue than we give it credit perhaps.

[37] On social cohesion, this has been a great concern to us all. In Llanelli, we have seen some activity by extreme right-wing groups—not the British National Party, I do not think, although it is difficult to work out who is who, and who is using what identity. However, there have been some efforts to whip up interest from far-right groups over the last few years, which to date, I am pleased to say, does not seem to have come to anything. As has been said, the police have been proactive and have been of great assistance. They have made a lot of effort to build big links with the Polish community and the migrant worker community in Carmarthenshire in general, but especially in Llanelli.

[38] One of the biggest assets that we have had in that area, and one of the things that has been of greatest benefit—if you are looking for examples of good practice—is the Welsh-Polish Mutual Association, which Naomi mentioned. The Polish advice centre in Llanelli was established by Llanelli credit union, because there happened to be someone working there who was Polish by origin and spoke Polish and who became aware of the growing numbers in the area earlier than any of us.

[39] The centre has done some fantastic work. I was going to try to find an opportunity to plug it some time during the morning, so this seems as good a time as any. It was established with financial support and help from the Assembly; it was a great credit to the Assembly to do that at a very early stage, when most people still had not really woken up to the fact that this was happening in Wales. The centre is living from day to day, because its funding comes to an end next year, I believe. I hope that, between us, we are able to find a way to help it to continue, because it has done great work, and not just in the local area in Llanelli as it has given advice and support and shared its experience across Wales.

[40] I was with people from the centre a few weeks ago when they had a delegation down from Merthyr Tydfil to swap notes and share ideas about what was going on in the two areas. It has been more successful than anything that we might have done as a local authority, or that anyone else might have done; it has been the ideal organisation to build links between people in the Polish community and the local community and local statutory organisations, whether that is the local authority, the local health board, the police, or whoever. It has provided an advocacy service but, in particular, it has helped to build that bridge and that understanding with local people, which has been a great asset.

[41] One thing that we did as a local authority last year was to call together a multi-agency group to try to get all the organisations together to share our thinking and ideas. That has been of great value, particularly in building up the links between the various organisations. I will give you one example. The Polish centre felt that the support that Polish workers were receiving from the job centre in the town was perhaps not as good as it should be and that they did not know, if they were looking to change jobs, whether they were being taken seriously and given the right sort of support. Because we had the regional director of the employment service on that multi-agency group, we then organised a session to bring together people from the job centre and the employment service, with the Welsh-Polish centre. The centre held a briefing session for all the staff in the job centre to make them aware of issues and thoughts within the Polish community. The manager of Llanelli job centre gave them his direct-line number, and said that if there was any issue concerning a Polish person who felt that he or she was not getting offered a job or being supported in the way that they should, they would only have to phone him and he would come straight over to the centre and talk to them and so on. Building that sort of trust and support in the area has been very important.

[42] There are also other organisations involved, for example, the local voluntary association organised a multicultural event in Llanelli last week, which was very successful. So, it has been a real team effort and, so far, that has paid dividends. One of the things that we decided as a multi-agency group in Carmarthenshire, for example, was not to go down the road of producing myth-busters-type publicity for local people. We saw the example that came from Wrexham that was very good but, given that things are largely reasonably okay with the local community, we thought that rather than putting out the myths and then hoping that we could convince taxi drivers that they were not true—and I am not sure that we could not do that—we would promote and foster positive role models in terms of the contribution that Polish people and other migrants make to the local community. I hope that, in the long term, that will have a very beneficial effect.

[43] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thank you for the report. Many of the questions that I was going to ask have been answered already. It has been very informative. You are talking about multi-agency approaches in various local authorities. Is any of it top-driven by the WLGA in terms of ensuring that these agencies exist and are interacting? I sat on the Graham review before I was elected and we were talking about access to student services and a wealth of support mechanisms. Has a one-stop-shop-type aspect been looked into or do you believe that the individual areas should look at it in different ways, because there is no clear definition of migrant workers from one area to another?

[44] I am involved with asylum seekers in Swansea. I know that the literature and the myth-busting is one thing, but have you looked at other ways of addressing those issues in terms of differentiating between the situations? It is not entirely clear at the moment whether all the different agencies that are working in areas can communicate this effectively with people who live in the area, and that affects local communities and the culture aspect.

[45] There is sometimes the impression that communities are isolated within their specific migrant areas and, of course, cultural events help. Do you think that anything can be done to make events and so on happen on a regular basis to ensure that it is ingrained in what we are doing and is not just a token gesture to things that are happening?

[46] What can the Assembly Government do in respect of affordable housing and social housing? There is a call for more affordable housing and we have committed to that as part of the One Wales Government. Do you think that there is any obligation for us to set out key elements in those quarters for migrant families or families in this situation?

[47] **Ms Alleyn:** I will pass over to Maria to respond on some of the work that has been done around the isolation that some migrant workers may feel. Maria came into post last September and it is the first time that we as the WLGA have had a dedicated post to look at new communities—we have termed it in that way instead of using the term ‘migrant workers’ so that it could be broader to include asylum seekers and refugees. You are right; it is very difficult for members of the public to differentiate between those. We are clear that there needs to be more information and understanding around the different rights and entitlements of those groups. It is very difficult, in some instances, for public services to understand that, for example, if you are a migrant worker who has been here for less than 12 months and have registered, you will not be eligible for public services but you will be once you have been here for more than 12 months, what the difference is between the rights and entitlements of an asylum seeker or a refugee, and so on. So, more work needs to be done with public services around those rights and entitlements, without a shadow of a doubt.

10.10 a.m.

[48] From a WLGA point of view, we work closely with the Wales Consortium for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants, which has a role in overseeing the dispersal of

asylum seekers to Wales. The consortium works closely with the local authorities in Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham. However, more recently, the Border and Immigration Agency has asked the consortium to take on an increased role in managing migration in that broader sense across Wales. So, migration involves and includes asylum seekers and refugees, as well as migrant workers.

[49] As we said, some of the difficulty that we have experienced has been because of the lack of information and, as Chris said, there is a lot of anecdotal information out there, but in terms of having evidence-based information, we are still at the stage of developing that. For example, the consortium is in the process of undertaking some research across all local authorities to try to identify the nature of migration within those areas, so that we can start to get a better handle on the situation at a national level. A lot of good work is being done by some local authorities, and although they have a much better understanding of what is happening, they perhaps do not have a complete understanding because, as I say, we still need to look at the trends. For some local authorities that may have experienced migration at a much lesser level, it will have had less of an impact, but they still need to become more aware of those issues. Because a lot of the information is anecdotal, we need better evidence. The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned some research around the impact of public services, which will look at Carmarthenshire, Wrexham and Newport, and I think that it is due to report around the summertime.

[50] So, part of our role, since Maria's post was established, is trying to talk to local authorities to get a better idea of what their issues are at a local level, because they will differ from authority to authority. On best practice, we are in the process of developing the website to be able to provide examples of that, and to be able to provide links so that if you are in one authority and you want to speak to someone in another authority, there is that ease in finding information and sharing best practice.

[51] In terms of what can be done around housing, again, it is one of those new issues and we still need more information about the possible impact. However, I know that the UK Government will be looking at reviewing the private rented sector, with a particular emphasis on how it is impacting upon migrant workers. From our own point of view, we would welcome further discussions with the Assembly Government on any work that it can do to start to collate the information and identify what some of the issues are so that we can look forward. As I said, the housing strategies, when they are completed and submitted, will give us that information at the local level, and it is about how we draw some of that together at the national level. I will hand over to Maria to speak about some of the work that authorities are doing to address some of those issues of isolation within communities.

[52] **Ms Allen:** Isolation is certainly a big issue for migrant workers. In one area that I am working in at the moment in Cardiff, there is a dedicated officer who is funded through the EU and works with the Polish community. She organised a day at St Fagan's for them to learn about Welsh culture and Cardiff, and she said that the added value from that day was that, by going on the bus and being with other people, they gained more confidence about navigating their way around Cardiff. Previously, they had just gone to work and then come home. Yes, they are living among other Polish people, but they are not interacting with the broader community, and that is one of the key issues when we talk about cohesion—they are not really interacting at all unless there is some dedicated work happening to help that. One of my key roles is to share that information. The work in Cardiff is quite new, whereas the work in Carmarthenshire that Chris described is quite well established. I am trying to connect people—Naomi mentioned the website, which is a practical tool that people can tap into in order to learn about good practice and find a terms of reference for groups, and so on, which have proved to be very useful and were very well received. So, we are connecting things that are happening in Wrexham with things that are happening in Cardiff. However, the main problem is that such initiatives are short term. On the work that I described in Cardiff, that

officer's funding has come to an end now. So, there will be nothing in addition—there will be no dedicated work.

[53] Another good practice example is in Merthyr Tydfil, where an international club has been set up through the Valleys Race Equality Council where migrant workers can go. It is run by the migrant workers themselves and they have a constitution and so on. They meet regularly, but it is more of a social event, where they can meet, discuss things, have a drink and enjoy themselves.

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** I forgot to declare an interest. Actually, this is just a bit of fun, Chair, but my constituency office has a Polish club downstairs, because it is owned by a former Assembly Member who has developed a Polish club.

[55] **Christine Chapman:** I have one question. I was interested in your evidence this morning, but on economic development—I know that Chris has touched on this—when we reflect on Wales's industrial past, there is a huge correlation between the increase in in-migration and quite a dynamic period in Welsh industrial history. That would help with some of the myths in terms of the difficulties associated with how people perceive migrant workers. The opposite is true, is it not? We are told that many migrant workers have university degrees. Have you picked any of this up? I know that you have talked about the job centre, but is there a role for the Welsh Local Government Association and the local councils to work with skilled migrant workers to look at setting up businesses? We are looking at trying to increase the number of SMEs, so is there any work going on there?

[56] **Mr Burns:** I do not know if I should declare an interest, because my grandfather came here to work from Ireland. I think that you are right, because if you go back far enough, you will see that much of our prosperity is tied up with waves of immigration, even in Wales.

[57] When we have looked into this in Carmarthenshire, many of the companies that have taken on quite significant numbers of migrant workers in general, but particularly Polish workers, would probably have struggled to stay in business at all had they not been able to recruit that particular workforce. You can get into a debate about the fact that if they had paid more wages, they would have attracted their workforce, but they must remain competitive in their particular marketplace and if they had to pay higher wages, would they remain competitive or would they go out of business altogether? So, it is quite controversial and is quite a complex area to look at.

[58] However, the fact remains that there were significant vacancies for quite a period of time and many companies in Carmarthenshire have now recruited quite large numbers of migrant workers. You are right that many of the people doing quite basic skilled work in these businesses are, in many cases, skilled and highly qualified. Some of them speak English perfectly well. They are not all in low-paid jobs. I mentioned our social justice scrutiny investigation into this issue. We went to a meat processing company in the north of the county, which was different from Llanelli, where there were several thousand Polish people in a town with a population of around 30,000. So, that is significant, but it is not overly significant in the context of the town's size. When you go to a small rural town with a population of a few thousand where a company employs 300 or 400 Polish people, the impact will be much greater.

[59] In that company, depending on the job that they were doing and how skilled they were, because it was a meat processing company requiring butchery skills and so on, it was possible for them to earn £25,000 to £35,000 a year. That is what we were told by that business and I am sure that that was accurate. So, some of the jobs on offer are not just the lowest-paid, lowest-skilled jobs.

10.20 a.m.

[60] However, within that cohort of people, we will undoubtedly have people with entrepreneurial skills in the future. We have seen a little of that; some people have come here and established themselves and have then set up shops, to serve the Polish community in particular. I am sure that that population has a lot more to give, once it becomes established. I do not think that that area has been explored properly so far.

[61] **Christine Chapman:** I know that local authorities offer grants to people to set up businesses, and there is the entrepreneurship action plan. Is any work being done across local authorities in that regard, because they are key players in this as well?

[62] **Mr Burns:** It is early days. I do not think that there has been much targeted work. Obviously, the general support and promotion of self-employment and so on would apply equally to everyone, but I do not think that there has been a targeted approach as yet; it is a good suggestion.

[63] **Ms Alleyne:** You are right that it is early days, and there will be ongoing work on discussions with Jobcentre Plus, which Chris talked about, but not necessarily in the strategic way that you might be suggesting.

[64] There are issues around migrant workers who arrive with qualifications that are not necessarily recognised within the UK. As a result, they cannot undertake jobs until they follow some kind of conversion course. Something that sticks in my mind is the work that the Reverend Aled Edwards has undertaken with Displaced People in Action on ensuring that people who are qualified as doctors in their home countries are able to utilise their skills within the UK. Aled would tell you himself that it took a long time to get that scheme up and running. In its evidence, Flintshire County Council has suggested that there could be quicker ways of converting the qualifications that people have into qualifications that we recognise and could use across the UK. So, some work is ongoing around trying to ensure that the qualifications that people have are utilised to the best effect.

[65] A consultation that was undertaken as part of the development of the refugee inclusion strategy showed that many refugees were saying that, once they get status, they find that the jobs that are available or are being suggested to them are back in the refugee community, and they are unable to utilise their qualifications to best effect across public services. There is a risk that refugees and migrants are sometimes ghettoised and placed in certain types of jobs, and that their skills are not utilised in the broader sense.

[66] The UK Government is introducing the new points-based system for people migrating from outside the EU, which will be looking at highly qualified and highly skilled migrants as well. It will be interesting to see how that system pans out over the next few years.

[67] **Christine Chapman:** I think that everyone has had a chance to ask their questions. I thank you all for your excellent contributions; it has been a comprehensive discussion this morning and a number of pertinent issues have been raised. I am sure that the debate on this issue will continue. I found it extremely valuable to talk about the practicalities of the issue.

[68] Chris said that you would send the committee a report, which we would welcome. I invite all of you to make further contributions after today's meeting. This review is ongoing until the summer and if you feel that you wish to make any further comments on what we are looking at, we would be happy to receive those. You are welcome to stay for the second half of the meeting. Thank you all for coming today. We will now have a short comfort break.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.24 a.m. a 10.34 a.m.*

*The meeting adjourned between 10.24 a.m. and 10.34 a.m.*

[69] **Christine Chapman:** Welcome back.

[70] I now introduce Alun Williams, who is from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. Welcome, Alun; it is good to see you here. Would you like to say something about your paper first, before we go into questions?

[71] **Mr Williams:** I will do that very briefly, because I think that it would be wrong to just identify the areas in the paper. First, I welcome the interest of this committee in the issue of migrant workers. People feel very strongly about the issue of migrant workers and their treatment. As I think you heard from the Welsh Local Government Association earlier, so much of the information is anecdotal. A great deal more research needs to be done, and I am sure that your interest in the issue will contribute a great deal to that.

[72] My involvement has been mainly in the Merthyr area, where several of the large employers have taken a different approach. The information that I hope to offer to the committee generally relates to employment issues, and perhaps the friction between the groups of workers. Naomi from the Welsh Local Government Association talked earlier about the welcome pack that has been produced in Merthyr. I have brought a number of the packs with me to be distributed to you later, which will give you some indication of the work that is being done there by the migrant workers forum and the multi-agency diversity forum that have been established there.

[73] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Alun. I think that Janice wanted to come in first.

[74] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you, Alun. It is nice to see you again; this is the second time in a week.

[75] Many issues arise from your paper. I have four questions, and I will try to put them all together. I am a member of USDAW. In Saturday's divisional conference, concern was expressed by our members that there is a certain perception of migrant workers; they were concerned as union representatives. In your paper, you talk about the importance of making a distinction between migrant and agency workers. How does USDAW think that awareness can be raised? This could also be relevant to Eleanor's point about *Daily Mail*-reading taxi drivers. There is a marked distinction between the two. That leads me on to the European temporary agency workers directive, which you also mention in your paper and which I feel strongly about. It is clearly not a devolved matter, but I am sorry that it did not receive support in Parliament and was not passed. As a trade union, how do you think that the Welsh Assembly Government can assist in doing something about this, given that, as I said, the matter is not devolved?

[76] You also talk in your paper about language skills. I was quite taken by the idea that the language skills of some migrant workers can be used to help others. I should use a highlighter pen, like Bethan, instead of a pencil, as I would then be able to find the exact quotation; I will come to it eventually. This is important, especially when you talk about English for speakers of other languages and the current gap in provision because of funding issues. Using their language skills, those who speak English reasonably well—or, in many cases, very well—can help their colleagues to better learn English. Can you expand a little on ESOL and how that is addressed by union learning representatives? You said in your paper that they are negotiating with employers to try to fill that gap. I will leave it at that.

[77] **Mr Williams:** To address the question on the directive, there is a specific opportunity—and I am sure that you will, through a variety of channels, have the opportunity to influence it—in that on 22 February, a private Members' Bill will be debated in

Westminster that seeks to implement the terms of the directive for equal treatment for temporary and agency workers. We hope that that will be accepted and that the required number of people will be there to support it. For me, one of the key issues is that, because there is a national minimum wage, and an hourly rate that has to be paid, it is often suggested that there is not a meaningful difference between agency staff and the core workforce.

10.40 a.m.

[78] I think that it is important to understand that there is a significant difference in a number of ways: for example, agency staff do not have the same rights because they are not technically employees, but provide services to an employer. If an employer does not want an agency worker to come into work tomorrow, he simply says, 'Do not come into work tomorrow'. If the work that is required of them finishes at 1 p.m., when the shift is due to finish at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., he tells them to go home at 1 p.m. and they are not paid or guaranteed any entitlement for the course of the week. That is a very significant difference in entitlement between agency workers and core employees, in any event.

[79] The second area where it creates a direct disadvantage is that agency workers do not generate core employment rights, such as unfair dismissal rights, in the same way as core employees. Therefore, their ability to raise grievances, for example, is clearly affected by their job insecurity and the fact that they do not have these other employment rights. In that sense, there is a significant disadvantage. It is fair to say—I hope that I am allowed to comment on the evidence that has been given by the people before me—that although it is right that employers have to remain viable, one of the key issues that causes friction is that if all or most of the new workers that are taken on happen to be agency workers, it is very easy to understand how people will see that as job substitution. I know of an example in Merthyr, where there is a factory with 800 or 900 workers, and we are given to understand that there may be 300 agency workers there. That is not a matter of dealing with ebbs and flows or highs and lows in production, as the argument is made. There is clearly an issue of substitution and that creates friction between these different work groups. That is why we have said in the paper that what tends to happen in workplaces is that there is friction with agency workers, who happen to be migrants. In my experience, the issue is not whether there should there be migrant workers, but the fact that they are treated differently. They are seen to be undermining terms and conditions and, in some ways, to be substituting jobs, which creates friction.

[80] In fact, there are circumstances, elsewhere in the Merthyr area, where an employer uses an agency, frequently brings in migrant workers, initially as agency workers, and, after a period of maybe 13 weeks, the employer makes some sort of assessment of the contribution that an individual worker has made and then, generally, that worker is brought into the core workforce. There are numbers of migrant workers in the core workforce and my experience is that there is not as much friction in that situation as there is in the other situation, when they are largely agency workers.

[81] Language also makes a contribution to the difference between agency workers and others. I think that that leads on to what you asked, Janice, about ESOL classes and provision. I am told that the funding arrangements are slightly different in Wales from those in England. In that sense, I think that the position may well be better in the long run in Wales. One way in which the devolved situation in Wales has assisted us is through the Wales union learning fund. We have a lifelong learning project worker as a result of the Welsh union learning fund and she is concentrating her efforts on these locations, not exclusively, but focusing very much on them. I think that that is now beginning to bear fruit. There are ESOL classes starting in both the sites that I have referred to in Merthyr and elsewhere, in Wrexham, in a cheese production plant in north Wales, and across the piece. Generally, these are industrial sites because our experience of migrant workers is largely restricted to the industrial-



distribution-type of members that we have.

[82] **Eleanor Burnham:** I found it fascinating, because I have no real understanding of your strengths, but I have learned a lot from reading and listening to you, and I am grateful to you. In north Wales, my understanding is that the hospitality sector is very reliant on migrant workers. Are you involved with that?

[83] **Mr Williams:** No, although I am told exactly the same. I would think that the employment opportunities in that regard would be much more seasonal—

[84] **Eleanor Burnham:** They are not, actually; that is the point. I was talking to a gentleman from a very well-known establishment on the Llŷn peninsula, and he explained that if it were not for migrant workers, he would probably be out of business, and his business is not seasonal—in fact, tourism in north Wales is all year round, so it is extremely important. So, are you just involved in retail?

[85] **Mr Williams:** We are involved in retail and food manufacturing, such as meat processing. In Merthyr, we are also involved in a biscuit manufacturing company. The other area where we have significant membership is in wholesale distribution, namely the regional distribution centres operating for the large retailers.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** With the hospitality side, we are looking at the TUC—

[87] **Eleanor Burnham:** Fine, I will not continue with that. On the figures that you have given, the fact that most of your members are women is very significant, and it important that they belong to your very strong union to ensure that they get fair play. I am interested in the agency aspect, because recently I read that in certain areas of the NHS, people are being paid £100 an hour for agency work, whether they are nurses, or whatever, and that is to the huge detriment to NHS. It is not of significance to the worker, because they do not get that rate of pay. How are you trying to overcome the agency worker issue, because it is a key issue of friction?

[88] **Mr Williams:** You referred to a higher rate of pay; even in the food manufacturing sector, as was said earlier, there are some jobs which will be highly-skilled and highly-paid, but they are very small in number. They are also very small in number in the meat packing and processing industry. In terms of overcoming the challenge of organising these groups, we are not at the point yet where we can say that we have large numbers of migrant or agency workers in the union. We have started to break through, and the message that we have got from that is that once you identify people within the groups of migrant and agency workers who are able and willing to represent their colleagues, that is the point at which you break through. We had a conference over the weekend where we had a Moldovan union representative who spoke in very clear and good English; he was the ideal individual that you might want as a representative, because he was able to speak to his own colleagues and fellow workers and represent them with management who would not speak their language.

[89] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is the point that I was going to ask about. You talk about small retailers, so how do you manage to reach the workers when some of them might be exploited, for instance?

[90] **Mr Williams:** In terms of small retailers, although we represent people who are small retailers, who own convenience stores in general, we have not had much experience of migrant workers being employed within those companies.

10.50 a.m.

[91] **Eleanor Burnham:** The local Spar shop now stocks Polish food.

[92] **Mr Williams:** I am not saying that there are not any or that there are none of those people in our membership. It is probably less of an issue in such places where, in my experience, people find it much easier to integrate with their fellow workers, than it is with a large site where there might be 300 Polish or migrant, largely agency, workers, in a total staff of 1,000. In my experience, they tend to be separate, particularly while they remain as agency staff.

[93] **Eleanor Burnham:** My last question is about gangmasters. I hate that term; it makes me think about all those poor people who were swept to their deaths in Morecombe bay. Is that something that is in force in Wales?

[94] **Mr Williams:** Yes, it is in force in the sense that the gangmasters authority is there to regulate agency provision. It is worth saying that the cases of extreme abuses, which we were being made aware of largely through anecdotal reports four or five years ago, are brought to us less. A few years ago, workers came to us—at that time, frequently from Portugal—and the agencies would provide them with houses, jobs, transport to work and so on, and all sorts of abuses were linked in with that provision in one way or another. My judgment is that incidences of those extreme abuses, for example to do with housing that is linked directly to employment, are far fewer now. That is not to say that housing is not a problem, as you heard earlier, but it is a slightly different problem now.

[95] **Eleanor Burnham:** So the hot-bedding that was referred to earlier is not as prevalent as it was?

[96] **Mr Williams:** I do not think that hot-bedding is that prevalent, but I think that overcrowding is. If there are six or seven people living in a semi-detached house and paying high rents, we can probably count that as exploitation of those individuals in housing terms. Those housing issues exist, but they are no longer so directly linked to the employment providers. People do not necessarily feel that they will lose their house if they lose their job, but they still have a commitment in relation to how to get home and so on.

[97] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wish to clarify the issue of the surveys that you have conducted. Is the evidence from the two surveys part of this evidence, or is there additional evidence that you have not shared, on a wider basis, that you think we should know about?

[98] **Mr Williams:** The surveys have informed the paper.

[99] **Bethan Jenkins:** On your evidence on transport links and the fact that many of these people live far away from where they work, what could the Assembly Government, perhaps through its relationship with local authorities, do to eradicate the problem or help in that respect? You mentioned ESOL and training for people from different countries to help with trade union activities, but how can potential trade union activists or potential staff members in Wales and the UK now upskill themselves to cushion the blow, so to speak, when learning English or Welsh? In turn, that would help to upskill our workforce with regard to the language aspect.

[100] **Mr Williams:** To address the second issue first, lifelong learning is a general objective. We have found that, using union learning representatives for example, where work colleagues are encouraging people to take up the learning opportunities that exist, there is a greater likelihood that those people will trust the information and the motivation for the learning opportunity than if the information comes from their employer, whose main reason for wanting staff to upskill might simply be their own business interests. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with that, but it will be their main motivation, whereas their

colleague's motivation will be, 'What is in our interest as a group?'. We have used, and are using, that with employers as a way of encouraging people to take that step into learning. They may have been reluctant to take that step in the past, perhaps as a result of previous experience or a lack of qualifications, or for some other reason.

[101] Therefore, there is a specific role that unions can play in this regard. As I have said, the Assembly Government has funded, through the Wales Union Learning Fund, a lifelong learning project worker specifically for that purpose. The beauty of that arrangement is that it provides not only ESOL classes for agency workers, but other learning opportunities for the core workforce. Therefore, from our point of view, and in terms of general provision, that would mean that no-one can argue that preferential treatment is being given to agency workers or that provision is being made for them and not to the core workforce—provision is being made for both.

[102] Therefore, there is a real opportunity. As I believe the paper highlights, because the experience of some people from eastern European countries has given them cause not to have trust in what were in the past described as unions in eastern Europe, it is important that these services and facilities are seen to be relevant to these people. To go back to Eleanor's earlier question, this is one of the other ways in which we would hope to make unions more relevant to the groups of people that we are talking about.

[103] In terms of transport links, to be fair, I am not sure that there would be any obvious way that the Assembly could help with these links. In many cases, these are private transport arrangements that make use of buses rather than cars; they involve employers' private contracts, rather than employees using public transport to get to work. There may be ways in which to influence how this is done, but I am not aware of them. A big influence on this issue was the way in which the amounts that some of the providers were charging became public knowledge; that was part of the process of bringing agency providers into disrepute.

[104] **Mark Isherwood:** I wish to endorse what Eleanor said about the hospitality trade, although, as you have explained, not many of your members would be in that trade. When North Wales Tourism visited the Assembly about 18 months ago, along with several members of the north Wales hospitality trade, they told us that migrant workers were filling jobs that they had been unable to fill for several years, so they were not competing with local people for whatever reason.

[105] I would like some more information on public service provision. We know from the tabloids, and our own casework, that one of the key areas of friction is the public perception of migrant workers competing for scarce public resources. You commented on transport, accommodation and settling into communities. What did your survey find, more broadly, about health and education? What were the concerns? What role would you see the Assembly Government and local government having in helping migrant workers to access, for instance, affordable, quality housing in an environment where, often, people who are already resident in communities are competing for affordable housing?

11.00 a.m.

[106] **Mr Williams:** My main experience in this regard comes from what has happened in Merthyr. Over the past three years or so, a migrant workers forum has been developed there, which involves mainly public sector organisations. It was identified early on that people were coming here for work and were being placed in accommodation, but they were isolated by language. So, one of the real barriers to their gaining access to provision was that they just did not know what was there. They had very little knowledge of how to access health services and, in some cases, they did not know how to register children so that they would gain access to education, and so on. It was a fairly long process leading up to the welcome pack. Also,

they did not know and, in some cases, did not trust public authorities, such as the police, partly for historical reasons. So, their not having the information about how to approach these areas of provision was a significant barrier. I am not going to say that this is going to change the world, but the idea of providing them with information in their own language about what services are available was certainly a significant first step, and I would hope that that provision could be replicated in other areas. It has been produced in about 15 or 20 languages. With the other set-up in Merthyr, it has been supported through the Assembly, and I would hope that that sort of arrangement could happen elsewhere.

[107] I do not have the expertise in public service provision to know much more than that, but, as a result of the situation in Merthyr, I know that the chief executive of the Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association has had a key role in ensuring that that migrant workers forum has continued as part of the process. This type of collaboration to try to get organisations to make provision in this way is probably the best way in which it can be done. It will probably be a never-ending saga in terms of providing access to public services, but it has been shown that it can be improved.

[108] **Janice Gregory:** I would like to go back to the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, which we touched on earlier. As good a job as it is doing within its parameters, and with regard to the issue about transport that Bethan raised and that you raised in your paper and presentation, I know that there are difficulties. Sometimes these people live far away from their place of work. Does the Gangmasters Licensing Authority have within its powers anything that it can do about that when it comes to license? Presumably, that would be part of the conditions of the licence that it would grant. The whole issue of pay and employment practices was brought to the fore with the tragedy in Morecombe bay. I do not know an awful lot about the Gangmasters Licensing Authority. I know that Bill Snell, from the union, sits on the board and I am sure that it meets on a regular basis, but I am not quite sure about the parameters in which it works. Do you know any more about it?

[109] **Christine Chapman:** Bethan, you have a question. Is it on a similar point?

[110] **Bethan Jenkins:** No, it was on a point that Mr Williams made previously.

[111] **Christine Chapman:** Perhaps Alun can answer Janice's question first then.

[112] **Mr Williams:** I cannot claim to be an expert on the way in which the Gangmasters Licensing Authority operates. My understanding is that agency providers have to register with it and, in that sense, I suppose that it has contributed towards the removal of the real extremes of treatment that we spoke about earlier. In terms of regulating agency employment, my view would be that it would be much better to move towards equal treatment rather than seeking to regulate the agency providers. In the long run, it is the removal of the widespread overuse of agency workers that will contribute more to fair treatment than the increased regulation of the agency providers.

[113] **Janice Gregory:** May I make a suggestion on that, although I know that I do not usually sit on this committee? Have you contacted the authority?

[114] **Christine Chapman:** Tom, do you want to mention something about that?

[115] **Mr Jackson:** The Gangmasters Licensing Authority was contacted during the call for evidence, but it has not yet replied.

[116] **Janice Gregory:** Right, okay.

[117] **Mr Williams:** We have a representative on the Gangmasters Licensing Authority,

and I could certainly ask him to contribute some sort of paper about its work.

[118] **Christine Chapman:** That would be good. Thank you, Alun.

[119] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just want to come in briefly on what you said about Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association. I know that you said that you were not an expert on access to public services, but do you think that housing associations are the best avenue for providing that type of support, through the welcome packs? Do you think that that is where it should be based? You said that the Assembly Government has accepted the Merthyr model as one of the most effective so far, so do you think that it would be effective for some delegation from the committee to go to the forum to see what you do at a ground level?

[120] **Mr Williams:** I am not sure that I quite said that Merthyr was the best in Wales. I am not in a position to judge it against Llanelli, for example, where I know some extremely good work has been done.

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** Just as an example of best practice, then, I guess.

[122] **Mr Williams:** Merthyr is certainly an example of good practice in that sense. I am not trying to be picky about the word 'best', but it is certainly good practice. I would welcome the committee's sending a delegation to the forum, if it would be helpful. Housing associations are one of the means by which the welcome packs should be distributed. Having produced them, we subsequently identified that the real problem was that they were not being distributed properly, and people were still not receiving the information. The best means of providing the packs, if we could ensure that it was done, would be via large employers of agency staff. In the end, I believe that they may be willing to do that. The answer, in the end, is that they must, effectively, be everywhere: the library, council offices, schools, those places where people access health providers, GP surgeries, and anywhere people access public services. Having access to one public service does not mean knowledge of all the others.

[123] **Christine Chapman:** We are visiting Wrexham in a few weeks' time, so perhaps the committee could look at Merthyr.

[124] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am interested in the point that you made about not trusting authorities. I have a little knowledge of this, as my daughter has lived and worked in Romania for the past four years, and I understand what you refer to. I know that you are talking about your Merthyr experience, but are you completely convinced that this problem is improving now, with the dispersal of more information, and what you said previously? It suddenly struck me that I understood exactly what you meant, and it is obviously a huge issue.

[125] **Mr Williams:** I believe that it is improving, and I suppose that the evidence that I would use to show that is that we are starting to find that Polish-speaking workers, for example, at one of the sites that I mentioned in Merthyr were prepared to put their names forward to be union representatives. At the other site, Polish agency workers were prepared to approach union reps openly in the workplace canteen, and, rather than have nothing to do with them, were talking about union membership. So, again that is anecdotal, but it is my experience that that is beginning to improve.

[126] **Christine Chapman:** I know that you covered this partly, but one concern that has been raised with me is that myths have grown up around this. As you know, Alun, there is not a huge number of migrant workers in our constituency, unlike Wrexham or Llanelli, though there are some. Sometimes, people perceive that local employers are prepared to take on only migrant workers. That is obviously illegal, but was there any sharp practice around that, as that can cause a breakdown in community cohesion? Were you aware of that?

11.10 a.m.

[127] **Mr Williams:** We have raised this with many employers. However, many employers appear to have taken on agency employees almost exclusively for quite a significant period. Almost all if not all of those agency employees are from the A8 accession countries. So, I do not think that there would be a blanket ban on recruiting local workers. However, the number of workers speaks for itself in their being agency employees. I was amazed, and I wondered how it was done. Originally, as I understand it, some of these agencies set up offices or had workers in Poland or Portugal—and those are the two nationalities with which I have had most contact. However, I am now told that that is not how most of these agency workers are recruited: they are recruited by word of mouth. Other agency workers give a telephone number for the site involved, and people from Poland ring through to ask whether there are any opportunities coming up in the near future. It is all agreed and arranged over the telephone, and these people appear on the site relatively soon afterwards. So, it is much easier to do that now.

[128] It appears to me to be globalisation in our faces. However, I do not think that there is a blanket ban on taking on local employees, but there is a significant usage of agency workers. We have tried to say in our paper that the friction is created when the local core workforce and people living in a local community see migrant workers going into jobs, rather than friction being created by the undercutting of their arrangements by the use of agency workers in the workplace.

[129] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can you clarify the difference between core workers and agency workers, both local and migrant agency workers?

[130] **Mr Williams:** In my experience, agency staff are almost exclusively migrant workers. There are agencies that operate with temporary clerical staff, for example, but we are not talking about that here, are we? We are talking about people in food manufacturing, distribution centres and similar large workplaces. My experience is that agencies in that situation are largely employing migrant workers and not other workers.

[131] **Christine Chapman:** The other point that relates to this, which has been raised with me—and I do not know whether it is true—is that migrant workers are prioritised for the New Deal, and so on. Are you aware of that? It is probably a myth, but that is what people think is happening. People think that others are being prioritised, which does not help.

[132] **Mr Williams:** I am not aware of that.

[133] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Are there more questions? I see that there are none.

[134] Thank you for your very comprehensive paper, Alun. We have had an excellent discussion here today. If you would like to make further comments as the review progresses, please feel free to contact the committee. We would be happy to receive any further evidence.

[135] In closing, I inform the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for 28 February, and will be held in Wrexham. The first part of the morning will involve a visit to the Caia Park Partnership Ltd, where an advocacy and information clinic for the Polish community is running. So, I am sure that we would like to see that. The formal meeting will start at 11.15 a.m. at the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education in Wrexham, at which we will gather further evidence for the inquiry into migrant workers. The meeting will end at 1.30 p.m., and then a buffet lunch will be available. Those of us coming back to south Wales will then be able to catch the train.

[136] **Eleanor Burnham:** You poor dabs. [*Laughter.*]

[137] **Mark Isherwood:** Do we know yet who will be giving evidence at NEWI?

[138] **Mr Jackson:** We have received confirmation from most of the people whom we have invited to give evidence. I will provide you with a list shortly, if that is okay.

[139] **Mark Isherwood:** Have you contacted Flintshire County Council?

[140] **Ms Griffiths:** Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and the Roman Catholic bishop from the diocese of Wrexham have confirmed that they will be attending. We are awaiting confirmation from the other invitees.

[141] **Mark Isherwood:** Have you invited the police?

[142] **Ms Griffiths:** Yes.

[143] **Mark Isherwood:** Good. I think that they would have a valuable input.

[144] **Christine Chapman:** That concludes today's meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.16 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 11.16 a.m.*