



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

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

**Dydd Iau, 13 Mawrth 2008
Thursday, 13 March 2008**

Cynnwys
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Inquiry into Migrant Workers

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
Chris Franks	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Huw Lewis	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Y Cyngorydd/Councillor Dewi Enoch Chris Hartwell	Trysorydd, Y Gymdeithas Cymry-Pwyliaid Treasurer, Polish-Welsh Mutual Association Swyddog Cynorthwyol Ymchwil, Ymgyrchoedd a Threfnu, TUC Cymru Assistant Research, Campaigns and Organising Officer, Wales TUC
Jeff Hopkins	Cadeirydd, Y Gymdeithas Cymry-Pwyliaid Chair, Polish-Welsh Mutual Association
Derek Walker	Pennaeth Polisi ac Ymgyrchoedd, TUC Cymru Head of Policy and Campaigns, Wales TUC

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

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cyngorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.35 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.35 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Diprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody. I welcome you all to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. I remind everyone to switch off their pagers, BlackBerrys and mobile phones. We are not expecting a fire alarm test so if the alarm goes off, we will stand ready to evacuate and take our instructions from the ushers. The assembly point is at the front of the building, by the car park, and you will have no trouble finding it, because I will be the first one there. *[Laughter.]*

[2] We have had apologies from Joyce Watson and Angela Burns and we have some new committee members. We are very pleased to see Chris; welcome to your first meeting of our committee. Huw Lewis is also new to the committee and he will join us later. That means that we have lost a few old friends from the committee in Lynne Neagle and Helen Mary Jones, and I am sure that we all want to put on record our thanks to them for the way in which they have worked on the committee and their contributions over the many years that they have sat on this committee.

9.36 p.m.

Hygyrchedd Gorsafoddd Pleidleisio yng Nghymru Accessibility of Polling Stations in Wales

[3] **Ann Jones:** We have received the Government's response to our short committee inquiry into the accessibility of polling stations. I am pleased to say that, as you will see, the Government has accepted most of the recommendations. It suggests that recommendations 2 and 6 are matters for the Electoral Commission and, if it is acceptable, with your permission I would like to write to the Electoral Commission to seek its response to those two recommendations. I see that Members are happy with that.

[4] I do not propose to go through the recommendations one by one. Do Members have any points on the Government's response that they want to bring to the table?

[5] **Eleanor Burnham:** In case I have missed it, do we have any indication about any relevant funding?

[6] **Ann Jones:** I do not think that we asked specifically about funding, other than to say that we would expect that—

[7] **Eleanor Burnham:** I presume that, with the squeeze on local authority funding, local government is not going to be jumping up and down with joy about this unless it has some help.

[8] **Ann Jones:** Recommendation 12 was on the availability of grants for electoral equipment and training, and the Assembly Government says that it provides funding for electoral equipment and training for Assembly officers.

[9] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is not just about that, though; it is about the quality. We have been to some of these places. There was one place in my first election that I could not believe was being used. It was on a bad corner, and I do not know how anybody got inside it.

[10] **Ann Jones:** The Electoral Commission's report has been published this morning and perhaps we need to have to look at that in terms of funding.

[11] **Chris Franks:** I only caught the end of it.

[12] **Ann Jones:** I have not seen the report, but I believe that it suggests that the funding for the last National Assembly elections—

[13] **Eleanor Burnham:** —was insufficient.

[14] **Ann Jones:** Well, it says that how the moneys were distributed across the constituencies needs to be looked at. So, perhaps we will have a quick look at that report when it comes to us to see whether there is anything in there that ties up with this, especially

as we have two items that are going to the Electoral Commission. Perhaps we can ask it how it arrived at some of its recommendations. In terms of the rest of our report on accessibility, the Government has made a very positive response and, hopefully, we can make voting a more pleasant experience for everybody.

[15] **Eleanor Burnham:** I suppose that the only other thing to bear in mind is technology. Perhaps we should inquire as to how it is going to ensure that that is addressed. It is not just about physical accessibility. If people do not want to go to a polling station, they should be able to have access at a given point. There are local authorities in England, for instance, that provide access for the customer at certain points. You press a button with your finger and the screen menu comes up in front of you, and you can do all kinds of other things to access services from the local authority.

9.40 a.m.

[16] **Ann Jones:** The reason why we looked at this was because of Scope's Polls Apart campaign, and then it did a second report that showed very little progress, and I think it was that that we were concerned about. We did not go into the electronic voting issue because many people said that they felt that if they had some sort of disability or impairment, they would not wish to be confined to just a postal voting system because it was the easiest option for councils. That came out in the evidence. I appreciate that younger people might want to vote by texting a number, but I believe that the majority of people felt that they wanted to take part in the process in the way that most people take part in it. However, we might need to look at that at a later date, or we may return to it.

[17] **Chris Franks:** I am going to show my ignorance now, but what happened to our deliberations? What is the next stage?

[18] **Ann Jones:** The Government has accepted most of the recommendations. It says that recommendations 2 and 6 are for the Electoral Commission to consider, so we will write to the Electoral Commission and ask it for its deliberations on those. There has been a positive response from the Assembly Government to our recommendations on equality awareness training for staff who work on elections, and on the fact that there should be funding for that training. All that has gone through. The elections planning group has been set up, and there is an awful lot there for officials and returning officers to look at. They will look at the body of this report and make their recommendations. We may need to wait to see what the response is following the local elections in May. I am sure that Scope Cymru will do another survey at that time on whether access to polling stations has improved.

[19] We did this report to such a tight timescale—and even before the Christmas period—to try to get a response that could be fed in, so that this next set of elections could be used as a test as to whether things have improved. Therefore, I believe that the best thing to do is to look again at the impact that this report has made after the local elections. We are going to have to give it some time to get all the data together, but I am sure that Scope, and other groups that assist those who have impairments or disabilities, will want to see whether things have improved.

[20] **Chris Franks:** That reassures me; I was afraid that it would just disappear, so that is good.

[21] **Ann Jones:** No, we have put a lot of work into it, so we are not going to let it just sit there, as my favourite saying goes, propping the piano leg up. We do not do that.

[22] **Christine Chapman:** Recommendation 10 talks about employing disabled staff for elections and notes that these are not usually permanent positions. I was slightly concerned

about this. I do not know how soon we will have the guidance, or how much the Electoral Commission communicates with the returning officers, because sometimes, if these are one-off events, or if it happens quickly, there is not enough time to try to change the system. Therefore, I would like a longer lead-in time, because I am concerned that it might not happen if it does not look at it properly.

[23] **Ann Jones:** We could ask that question to returning officers following the elections: 'How many people did you employ for the elections on a casual basis, and how many of those were disabled people?'

[24] **Christine Chapman:** The way in which the appointments are made is almost a tradition, is it not? Unless this is in the system completely, the same sort of thing will happen again.

[25] **Ann Jones:** That might be a good question to ask, in order to find out in advance of our looking at the impact on this.

[26] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am sure that we have all found that when we speak to these people, they have been doing it for years. Therefore, perhaps the work needs to be shared out among other people, particularly disabled people.

[27] **Ann Jones:** Local authorities tend to use their own staff more at election time. If local authorities were to take people from across society, one would hope that we would get a wider spread of people. We will certainly look at that point. Is there anything else on the recommendations? All in all, it was a positive response. I see that everyone is happy with that. Perhaps we will revisit this at the back end of the autumn term, or whenever we can get the returning officers.

[28] **Eleanor Burnham:** After the council elections.

[29] **Ann Jones:** It will be the back end of the autumn term. I was thinking of the end of October or November, which gives the officers six months in which to evaluate. Is that okay? I see that it is; we will do that.

9.45 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Faterion sy'n Effeithio ar Weithwyr Mudol yng Nghymru Inquiry into Migrant Workers

[30] **Ann Jones:** I welcome Derek Walker, who is the head of policy and campaigns at the Wales Trades Union Congress, and Chris Hartwell, who is the assistant research, campaigns and organising officer. It is nice to have you with us, and it is nice to see Chris here in a new life. Thank you very much for your time and evidence. Our approach to this inquiry has been based on our concern about the effects on migrant workers themselves, and we have all been told horrific stories about how they are being exploited in some ways—I think that the word 'exploited' could be used; I am not saying that every migrant worker is exploited, but there is evidence that some are. We are grateful to you for your report. Derek, will you start off by talking about your report, and then we will go on to questions?

[31] **Mr Walker:** Chris will kick off with a few words, then I will say a few words, which I promise to keep short, and then we will take your questions.

[32] **Ann Jones:** You are a long way away, so I cannot throw anything at you to shut you up if you take too long. [*Laughter.*]

[33] **Mr Walker:** Paul Elliott is not with us this time.

[34] **Ann Jones:** That will make it slightly easier; I am sorry, Paul, if you are listening.
[*Laughter.*]

[35] **Mr Hartwell:** It is a pleasure to be here, and we welcome the opportunity to give evidence to the committee. By way of introduction, we will talk about some of the issues in the report and touch on some of the things that trade unions are doing to support migrant workers, for example, through the Wales union learning fund, and what other actions we are taking to counter commonly held myths and lies spread about migrant workers, as well as asylum seekers, refugees and Travellers—spread by the far right—which I know the committee has touched on in previous sessions. The report before you estimates that there are around 18,000 migrant workers in Wales. Although these sources cannot give an accurate picture for a number of different reasons, the key conclusions to draw from the report are that migrant workers are coming to Wales in significant numbers, with around half settling in Cardiff, Newport, Carmarthenshire and Wrexham. On the whole, our report states that they are less qualified than the UK population, however, a significant number have education up to NVQ levels 4 and 5, but all of them are generally concentrated in low-skilled, low-paid jobs here. They predominantly work in administration, hospitality and catering, and manufacturing, and can be clearly linked to employers that make extensive use of agency workers and recruit migrant workers in their home countries.

[36] The report bears out trade union concerns that migrant workers' vulnerability or their status as temporary agency workers are being exploited through employment agencies. There are concerns also about practices such as taking excessive and unlawful deductions from the workers' basic pay, or providing substandard and overcrowded accommodation. Examples of bad practice include rooms that lack basic heating and are in multiple occupancy, no pay slip, pay slip discrepancies, deductions for uniforms, transport or food, holiday entitlement not given, or, if given, not paid. While no agency workers are entitled to the statutory protection of employees, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable because of language issues, a lack of knowledge about their rights, and isolation as they are alone in a different country. They often do not raise these issues for fear of recrimination and losing their work.

9.50 a.m.

[37] It is important to note that trade unions are responding and are making particular efforts to organise and engage migrant workers by distributing information about their rights in the accession country languages, and putting resources into different things for migrant workers. There are also various Wales union learning fund projects that unions are undertaking; for example, we can provide English classes for speakers of other languages, and provide advice and guidance.

[38] As I mentioned, we campaign against commonly held myths about migrant workers; we campaign against the far right. We are working with the four main political parties in Wales, and we have brought a selection of leaflets that describe the kinds of things that we are doing to dispel the myths in campaigning against the far right. We work with other groups involved in this agenda, such as Unite Against Fascism and Searchlight magazine, and with groups that undertake social cohesion work, such as the Welsh Local Government Association.

[39] **Mr Walker:** Here are copies of some of the leaflets that Chris talked about for your information, one of which is aimed at political campaigners in elections—candidates, their agents and party workers—and it is a handy guide to facts around Travellers, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees. I will leave some of the leaflets for the committee to look at.

[40] The TUC feels that a large number of the issues facing migrant workers arise from the fact that they are employed by agencies and that the abuses lie with these agencies. That is why we are focusing our campaigning—hopefully, you will have seen a lot about this—around an agency workers Bill or an agency workers directive at a European level. We estimate that between one in four, or one in five, migrant workers in this country are employed by agencies. So, although improvements in the practices of agencies will help all vulnerable workers and all agency workers, it will have a significant impact on migrant workers in particular because so many of them work through agencies.

[41] The Government has previously taken the line that better enforcement and better awareness about employment rights is the answer to the exploitation that we are seeing. However, our view is that this can only be part of the solution, and that we need agency worker protections to give those workers the same protections as permanent employees.

[42] On the recommendations in the Bevan Foundation report, we have found that the current regime of inspections and penalties is not that much of a deterrent to rogue employers that want to get around it. The penalties are small, the resources for inspection are poor and there is poor communication between the agencies. We have heard that these agencies are sometimes not even allowed to share the information, but, where they are, they do not do so. This is confusing for all of us—it is confusing for union officers and representatives, but it is particularly confusing for migrant workers who also have language barriers.

[43] There is talk of a single enforcement body to bring together all of the enforcement bodies, but we have not taken a position on this yet. We would like the committee to recommend that the enforcement agencies come together on a Wales basis to share information on a quarterly or six-monthly basis, because that would be a simple step to ensuring better information about rogue employers. We would like to see such a body prioritise its inspections of employment agencies. I am aware that one of your emerging recommendations is around better awareness of employment rights, and we welcome the welcome pack that the Assembly has put together. However, we think that more strategic targeting of this type of information could be helpful, and we are interested in working with the Assembly on that.

[44] Another recommendation was around the strategic approach of the Assembly Government, and I guess that the work of this committee is helping with that. As you know, there was an Assembly forum looking at the issues around migrant workers, which we felt was important and useful in sharing information between agencies and ensuring some co-ordination. For example, in preparation for these local government elections a number of bodies, including us, have produced myth-busting leaflets, and if there had been some sort of strategic co-ordination of those efforts, they would have been more effective.

[45] Finally, there was discussion about a Welsh code of practice on migrant workers for employers and employment agencies. I have a draft of what was prepared. We thought that there was a lot of value in the initiative, but it seems to have been lost, and we would like to see it pursued further.

[46] **Ann Jones:** Who wants to start the questioning?

[47] **Mark Isherwood:** I have a short question. May I confirm that I heard you correctly—did you say that one in four or one in five migrant workers were with agencies?

[48] **Mr Walker:** Those are not our figures, but that is what the research has shown.

[49] **Mark Isherwood:** So, 75 to 80 per cent of migrant workers are not with agencies. As

you are focusing your efforts on agency workers, what is your general perception of the situation with the other 75 or 80 per cent?

[50] **Mr Walker:** As you will see in the report, migrant workers coming to this country are mainly having a positive experience, benefiting our economy, and filling a skills gap—the TUC welcomes the fact that migrant workers are able to work here. However, there is exploitation, and it seems to happen largely with employment agencies, which is why we are focusing our efforts there.

[51] **Mark Isherwood:** Is there an online version of that leaflet?

[52] **Mr Walker:** We have pdf versions of all of them, and this leaflet is produced in Welsh as well. This one is specifically for the local government elections—we went to the party conferences, and spoke to all the political parties, and they have all agreed to distribute this to their candidates. So, thank you for that. We will adapt it, and will distribute it through a mailshot in areas where we think that the BNP has more likelihood of being elected—mainly in Wrexham and Swansea.

[53] **Mark Isherwood:** If there is an online version, could we perhaps be sent a copy? Sometimes, we receive e-mails from people that are based on lack of understanding of reality, and if we were able to forward something like that on to them, it might be helpful.

[54] **Ann Jones:** That would be handy. If you could send that to the secretariat, then it can be distributed to all Members.

[55] **Eleanor Burnham:** Just following on from that, we know from visiting Wrexham—and obviously, I live in the borough—that the council has made huge inroads with myth-busting. As you know, Wrexham has a Polish-speaking policeman, and so on, and has been co-ordinating a lot of activity. Is your myth-busting leaflet along similar lines to the leaflets that Wrexham County Borough Council has been issuing?

[56] **Mr Walker:** I have not seen them, so I cannot comment, I am afraid. However, it sounds like it is similar. This is our leaflet, and here is the other one—perhaps you will be able to see from that. I guess that they would have similar messages. In developing that leaflet, we have looked at the messages that are being put out by fascist parties and fascist elements within society, and we have tried to address them directly. I guess that Wrexham would have done the same.

[57] **Eleanor Burnham:** Unfortunately, those elements do exist—every time I get in a taxi, because the drivers know what I do, they hassle me about migrants who are supposedly getting things for free. The BNP could well have managed to get a regional Assembly Member elected in north Wales, as our Chair knows—it is a clever ploy.

10.00 a.m.

[58] **Mr Hartwell:** We have been looking at the Assembly election results, and trying to gauge where they could gain seats in the local government elections. That leaflet was produced in conjunction with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Welsh Refugee Council. I think that the Wrexham leaflet is along similar lines.

[59] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is Wrexham and Flintshire that are most at risk.

[60] **Ann Jones:** I do not think that we should rule out any area. We are right to prioritise, because resources are scarce, but we should be aware that it could happen in any area. The purpose of our report is to try to find out where, apart from the obvious places, it could

happen.

[61] **Christine Chapman:** Chris mentioned qualifications, and that many migrant workers were highly qualified. Nevertheless, we still have a situation where many migrant workers are doing jobs for which they are overskilled. Why is this mismatch happening? There is a gap here somewhere. We have people living here who could also do those jobs, so why is there a mismatch? What is going on? We have mentioned before that, historically, when migrant workers have come to the UK and Wales, there has been prosperity, which is positive. That sometimes gets lost. I am pleased that you are producing these leaflets, because it is important. Like Eleanor, I believe that there is a huge amount of ignorance and lack of information out there about the real situation; that is sometimes fuelled by the tabloid press, which is quite dangerous. We must keep on top of that.

[62] Having said that, how much support are migrant workers getting to help them use their skills? The economy could do with those skills. Do you have any comments on that?

[63] **Mr Hartwell:** It is important, as Derek said, to recognise that migrant workers come here and contribute to our economy with their key skills. In the public sector, we do not often hear about that, as the public sector is more directed towards demand and resources. In a sense, that can get lost. Migrant workers with high-level qualifications can get trapped in low-paid, low-skill work because of the way in which they are brought here, through agencies and tied to accommodation. Under the worker registration scheme, if they lose their employment within the first 12 months, they are not entitled to benefits and could be left destitute. So, in a sense, they are trapped in the employment that brought them here. However, we would certainly be looking for some accreditation form for the use of their skills. The skills strategy recently produced by the Welsh Assembly Government refers to English for Speakers of Other Languages training, but we could go further, and talk about what could be done to accredit their skills.

[64] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Chris, for that. One of my concerns, which is not just for migrant workers, but also for people who already live here, is that many employers do not get involved in skills training. We want people, wherever they work and wherever they are from, to acquire skills. Do you have any thoughts on the work of the sector skills councils? That could help migrant workers and people from Wales who need upskilling. So, rather than treat this as a separate issue, have any efforts been made to bring both issues on board together?

[65] **Mr Walker:** I think that that is right. We have been saying, until we are sick of saying it, that employers are not investing in skills as they should be. There should be far more pressure on employers to invest in skills, because it is in their interests to do so. This would have an impact on all vulnerable workers, not just on migrant workers.

[66] To slightly go off on a tangent, at the TUC, we are increasingly looking at the picture of all vulnerable workers, with specific measures for different types of migrant workers, where appropriate. However, the experiences of migrant workers, as we have already indicated, are shared by other workers who, although indigenous to this country, face the same sorts of problems. The risk is that we forget to address those issues. However, having said that, of course, we need specific measures for specific groups.

[67] The other thing about the skills issue and the ability to get jobs is that I do not think that it would be remiss to say that migrant workers are bound to face an element of discrimination. So, even when applying for jobs, they are likely to experience discrimination from those who are recruiting, because of their background—because they are foreign, effectively. We know this because it happens to other workers who are black, who are not from other countries, but who experience this when applying for work. I guess that there is

another issue around references. Although we have not uncovered it in the report, we have anecdotal evidence of employers being reluctant to take up references from abroad, which makes it very difficult for migrant workers to get jobs.

[68] **Huw Lewis:** I have quite a number of questions, so just stop me when you want to, Chair.

[69] **Ann Jones:** In fairness to Derek and Chris, could we just take them in bite-size chunks? There is plenty of time, so Members can come back in.

[70] **Huw Lewis:** My first question surrounds our difficulty in putting numbers on the problem. Representing Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, I know that there are X thousand, mainly Polish and Portuguese, migrants in my constituency, but no-one has a clue as to exactly how many there are. I know of at least one positive effect in my constituency. One of the problems that a lot of Valleys' towns have faced is that of a falling population and the first organisations that feel that bite are schools, because, as the rolls fall, schools get into trouble in terms of surplus places. I can think of at least two schools in my constituency where the falling-rolls problem has been solved because of migrant workers' children. The schools are cock-a-hoop, because it has been turned around and we actually have a growing population around that cluster of schools. Do you have any ideas about how we can work with local government, primarily, I would imagine, to try to get a better handle on the numbers involved, so that we can then start to talk about how services can be improved?

[71] My second question is around the points that you made regarding agency workers and working conditions and so on. You talked about the Temporary and Agency Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Bill, which is not a Government-sponsored Bill, going through Parliament. I was not aware of the EU directive side of things. Could you tell us a little bit more about how you feel that those two pieces of legislation, if you like, are going? Do you have any recommendations to us as a committee, or as a wider Assembly, in terms of how we could promote the passage of better legislation, like the agency workers Bill, by perhaps putting pressure on our colleagues in Westminster—in a nice way?

[72] One of the most shocking problems that I have encountered in my attempts to contact the migrant community in my constituency—it is not easy because there is a degree of suspicion among many migrant workers about anyone in any kind of official capacity—is the tied accommodation and transport costs. It is a trucking system, essentially. Is there anything in the pipeline about legislative ways of knocking that out of the system? This is something that miners in Wales faced 100 years ago. It is absolutely shocking that you can control someone's entire life by tying them in to the means of living—food, accommodation, transport and so on. What are we doing about this? Is there a recommendation from the trade unions about how we should proceed?

10.10 a.m.

[73] Finally, certain sections of the migrant worker population are suspicious of the authorities, because they are worried about upsetting the dodgy agencies that they work for and losing their work. However, I found that the churches arouse perhaps the least worry and suspicion. Given that Merthyr seems to be hosting mainly Portuguese and Polish migrant workers at the moment, it is primarily the Catholic church that acts increasingly as a social centre for migrant workers and their families. They trust it, and it is probably the single best place to contact the largest numbers of migrant workers.

[74] Are we working with the churches? Have we got them to come to the table? In my area, it is mainly the Catholic church that is involved in this, but I am sure that other churches could be. To my mind, they are trying to struggle with issues such as tied accommodation,

debt and language problems, and, often, they are doing this alone without any kind of governmental support. Are there any moves to bring the churches into true partnership to help to solve some of these problems?

[75] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. I counted four areas of questioning there. Do you wish to respond, Derek?

[76] **Mr Walker:** Yes, I will kick off. I do not have an answer to the numbers question; it is a key issue, and many people who have given evidence to your committee have said how important it is, particularly in planning the delivery of public services. The worker registration scheme seems to be one of the most accurate ways to get information, but it is also very poor. In preparing for this meeting, I read a piece of work about the Slough area, which said that only some 40 to 50 per cent of those who should be registering with the worker registration scheme in that area were doing so. Therefore, we are missing huge numbers of people. We have our own problems with the worker registration scheme, which I can go into. We need to get accurate numbers, but I do not know how best to achieve that, because people come here on the worker registration scheme and then they leave, and that is not always tracked properly.

[77] On the Temporary and Agency Workers (Equal Treatment) Bill, implementing the temporary agency workers directive has been part of a long-standing campaign by unions across Europe. In many ways, it is the best way of achieving legislation on this area, because it means that we all come together around the same rules. It has not happened due to a blocking minority of member states, one of which is ours, which has listened perhaps too closely to the Confederation of British Industry's concerns about jobs. We feel that those concerns are not justified, because we have not seen the CBI's predicted fall in the number of jobs in those member states that have put such legislation in place. Furthermore, the CBI said the same sort of things about introducing the national minimum wage, and we did not see those things happen either. So, we are still campaigning on that front.

[78] We are campaigning on the private Member's Bill, but, as you may remember, there was a private Member's Bill last year—I think from Paul Farrelly MP—that did not get onto the statute book. So, although we are doing all that we can to support Andrew Miller MP's private Member's Bill, it may not result in legislation, so we are taking a twin-track approach.

[79] A couple of weeks ago, the Government met with trade unions and the TUC to talk about agency workers. We were very pleased that the Prime Minister said that he was now committed to addressing the issue. He has proposed setting up a commission to look at the issue, and, although we are yet to see how this commission would work and what it would add, we are open minded. So, we have had Gordon Brown's commitment to do something, and we will not be letting up on this, because it is crucial. Some of the disagreements are around the eligibility period, namely when rights kick in. The initial proposals were for around one year, but we think that that is far too weak as it gives plenty of opportunity for the system to be abused, for people to be moved from agency to agency, to lose their jobs, and then to have no rights at all. So, we are fully behind both pieces of work. One thing that the committee or individual Members might want to consider is a written statement of opinion on agency workers. I am not aware of one that has already been tabled, but any sort of pressure to ensure that something happens would be helpful.

[80] The third area of questioning was around the issue of migrant workers and tied accommodation and tied transport. Going back to the recommendations, we think that an Assembly code of practice would be useful in this area, and perhaps using procurement channels to ensure that the code of practice be adhered to. As originally drafted, the code of practice was primarily about giving agencies and employers in Wales information about what the law was, which they should know already, but it also went beyond that by highlighting

good practice, and covered things like accommodation and transport. Any efforts to raise awareness in this area would be useful. A note that we have received about accommodation says that the rules around accommodation state that there is a limit on the amount of money employers can deduct for accommodation below the minimum wage; they can deduct below the minimum wage, but the limit is around £30 a week. However, that rule was largely being abused. We lobbied on that issue and the Government has since reviewed the guidance to employers to make the rules clear, and we hope that that will have some sort of impact. That review was in 2006, so it is probably time for another review of that now. That is one thing that we think could have helped. Many of these practices are legal as they stand, and some of them require legislation to ensure that they are not illegal.

[81] Fourthly, unions are working closely with the churches, because, from a practical point of view, it is often difficult for unions to speak to migrant workers if they do not have recognition, if the employer makes it difficult in the workplace, and if migrant workers do not want to be seen with union representatives or officials because they are scared about losing their employment. As a result, it is more practical for unions to work with the churches, because that is where they can speak to people, and try to recruit, and that is where they can give information about employment rights. We see our role very much as being to work with other agencies, as we do not have all the answers around housing, services or immigration legislation, but employment is our niche. So, being part of a strategic forum looking at these issues is the best way to do that, and that is why an all-Wales forum on migrant workers issues would be useful. I went to several meetings in Merthyr Tydfil of the migrant workers' forum where different agencies were represented. That was disbanded, but has now been started up again.

10.20 a.m.

[82] There are other fora in other parts of Wales. That is quite an effective approach, because everyone brings different people, experiences, and knowledge to the mix. I am sorry that I have not been able to answer all of your questions fully. I do not know whether you want to add to that, Chris.

[83] **Mr Hartwell:** That covers a lot of it, particularly to do with tied accommodation and getting out of it. Workers who register with the workers' registration team are not entitled to benefits if they lose their job within the first 12 months. That leaves them trapped in that employment. It is important to get them information about their rights in the UK. Many can be left isolated without the ability to speak the languages of this country. They can feel alone in that employment and not know that they are being exploited, to some degree.

[84] **Ann Jones:** I want to press you on one point before Eleanor comes back in. Derek said that there should be a voluntary code of practice on employment, to be signed up to by the CBI, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the unions. That is laudable, and is probably a good way to do, but how do we encompass those less laudable employers, who are less forward thinking, more ready to exploit, who are exploiting workers by paying cash with no wage slips or holidays, who say, 'Here, take this; we will have you a week on Friday if there is work to do'? How does your voluntary code of practice help with that? Should it not be firmer, so that any employer who refuses to sign up to it is prevented from practising?

[85] **Mr Walker:** Absolutely. That is what we would like, in an ideal world. However, it is voluntary because of the Assembly's powers. The Bevan Foundation's recommendation was that this was as far as the Assembly Government could go. There is value in this approach, but it will inevitably not get at the most unscrupulous of employment agencies. The way to do that is through the agency workers legislation, and through far better co-ordination and resources for current enforcement bodies. There are five or six enforcement bodies, and I do not know whether they have been to see you, but there has been talk of establishing a

single enforcement body. However, we have not come out with a position on that, because we are concerned that a single body might mean a reduction in resources for the others, which is the last thing they need; they need more resources to do their job.

[86] As an interim step, there is talk of bringing these enforcement agencies together on a regional basis in England, as well as in Wales. That would be a positive first step. The Government's Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform—the former Department of Trade and Industry—is putting together a short guide to these enforcement agencies. It will state what they enforce, how to get hold of them, the maximum penalties, and so on. That will be a good step towards ensuring greater awareness of the different agencies. There is a lot of confusion among migrant workers—and some union representatives, I am sure. So, that will help.

[87] **Ann Jones:** We have had evidence from the police and from two north Wales local authorities. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority is coming to meet the committee later in the year, on 15 May. We are fetching them in. However, I firmly agree with you about enforcement. On your view about small penalties, a penalty has to be a penalty, does it not? If it is an amount that an unscrupulous employer can make up within a fortnight, it will have no effect. So, I think that we need to tighten up that part. So, thank you for that.

[88] **Eleanor Burnham:** A couple of points come to mind, following on from Huw. I questioned a couple of people early on about the role of the Office for National Statistics, because the understanding was that many are worried about the lack of up-to-date data. Do you have a comment on that?

[89] The other point that comes to mind is about the transfer of professional qualifications. As we know, many people are over-qualified when they come here, so what can the TUC do to help those who have medical or teaching skills and who perhaps cannot use their qualifications, probably because of language issues? That brings me to my next point, which is language provision. Someone I know well teaches in Flintshire and there is always pressure on the sparse funding available to educate not only the adults, but also the families, because these people operate on a one-to-one basis, as you know.

[90] I noticed, on page 27 of the Bevan Foundation's report, that, in my north Wales region, there are two organisations in the list of those registered with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, but the status of one of them is listed as 'applied'. Do you have any follow-up information on that? They are NW Catchers. What do they catch?

[91] Finally, my last question is about the difference in the type of people who come here—and I point out that my daughter is a migrant worker in Romania, and my son lives in Portugal. You have people like my children, who are single, and then you have those who will come here initially on their own and then bring their families over. There are those two different types of people. It was heartening to hear what Huw said earlier about the people in his area, who come over as families and are then plugging the gaps in the schools. How do you differentiate between those groups and what kind of advice and help do you give them?

[92] **Ann Jones:** I thought that we had covered the skills issue, but perhaps there are specifics about how professionally qualified some of these people are who end up packing food and so on because those are the only types of jobs available to them. You are probably thinking about the veterinarian that we heard about, Eleanor, who was highly qualified, but was stacking shelves because that was the only employment available to him as no-one recognised his qualifications.

[93] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes. I wanted to know how the TUC is helping with that in terms of how qualifications can be transferred, if that is the right terminology.

[94] **Mr Hartwell:** It comes back to having a framework for accreditation for foreign workers working in this country. Without that, it would be difficult for them to go forward. Trade unions are focused on learning skills in the workplace. Certainly, trade unions throughout Wales are providing English-language classes or are facilitating the teaching of English, which can help people who come over to work in low-skilled and low-paid jobs to use their skills in other areas. There has been anecdotal evidence of people coming over to work in low-skilled, low-paid jobs who are skilled in IT provision, for example, and who then go on to seek out more professional jobs after they have been here a while, familiarised themselves with the country, and learned the language.

[95] On the figures, I do not think that we can add much to what we said previously about the workers' registration scheme. For a variety of reasons, that is the best information that we have, but it is not that accurate. People move around, and they do not register because of the high cost of the workers' registration scheme. There have even been instances when employers have said that they have registered their workers and then have not done so because they can exploit them illegally in so doing. The same is true of national insurance figures, because of the process, and people move around once they are in the UK. There have been instances where migrant workers have left and others have used the same national insurance number, because of the process. So it is difficult to arrive at hard figures on how many migrant workers there are in Wales, and there has to be cross-agency working, as Huw said, with local government to get those figures.

10.30 a.m.

[96] **Mr Walker:** I do not have any more information on NW Catchers, I am afraid, other than what is written in the report.

[97] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are they on the beach?

[98] **Mr Walker:** They could well be; I would not like to guess. So, sorry about that, but I do not have any further information.

[99] **Eleanor Burnham:** Those poor Chinese people in Morecambe Bay come to mind, and so I wondered about it. If the organisation has only applied for a licence, and is not licensed, it is something to be concerned about.

[100] **Ann Jones:** Keep that as a question for the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, Eleanor.

[101] **Mr Walker:** In response to the question about the types of migrant workers who are coming over, you are dead right, more people are coming over with their families than was the case when the eight accession countries first joined the European Union. They are now coming over on a more permanent basis and putting down roots, so we are seeing more stability in the population. That is not the case with everyone, of course, but more people are coming here with their families to stay.

[102] Another thing to add is that, as a union movement, we are trying to work more closely with colleague unions in eastern European countries in particular, so that people have a better awareness about what they are going to come to before they get here, because large numbers are being brought over by agencies and the agencies are not necessarily giving them the whole picture—not just about the weather, but about the whole experience that they are going to have. That is horrific for them, because they come over here and might spend a lot of money to get here and then do not have any money to go back. So, we think that we can contribute by giving people a better awareness about what they are coming to—it is not about

preventing people from coming here—far from it—but it is about giving them better information and also giving them information about the unions that they can join when they arrive. It is all the better for us if they can get continuity of union membership.

[103] **Bethan Jenkins:** Sorry I was late, I was in another committee. To come in on that point, when we went to Wrexham the point was made that some people were scared of joining unions in their respective countries, so I was curious whether you had more detailed information about that relationship with the unions, in Poland for example, to try to take the scaremongering out of the process. Points were made quite consistently that we should be making more links with those countries, as opposed to them landing here with no support at all. Do you have any information that you could give us to expand on that?

[104] **Mr Walker:** The only information that I can give here, although we could perhaps provide a note with a bit more detailed information, is that different unions have different relationships with unions in other countries. The picture is not overwhelmingly negative—far from it. There is some information in this report about unions, and some countries have a strong culture of trade unionism and some do not. So people come from different starting points, but the majority of people are fairly positive about trade unions, not just in terms of the service aspect of trade unions but also in the way that trade unions are a progressive force for good within society. That is good news for us and it gives us a chance to organise them, but there is still the fear factor that many workers experience when deciding to join a union, that it would mean pressure from their employer to leave the job, difficult work patterns or, if you are on a zero-hour contract, that it would suddenly mean that you do not get any work. Those are the issues that we face.

[105] **Ann Jones:** What are your views on hot-bedding, which is an awful term? It is about agencies that bring people over, who are usually single men. They bring them over and find them jobs—the usual agency stuff—but no-one really knows how many people are actually staying in the accommodation. What they do is a 12-hour shift, for example, and as one lot gets up out of bed, the other lot goes straight back in. That is the process. Is there any evidence that that is spreading or still happening, because you have said that migrant workers are now coming over with their families and putting down roots here? The other question is that if unions are making links with trade union colleagues in Europe, why do you think that migrant workers are still turning to some of these agencies, many of which are not the best of agencies? Is there any evidence from migrant workers who have managed to break away from those agencies and set themselves up here? They may be able to assist with the reasons why agencies seem to be the only way to come over to this country. Sorry about the list of questions, Derek.

[106] **Mr Walker:** That is all right; we are here to answer questions. On hot-bedding, I agree with Huw that we are seeing nineteenth-century employment practices in this country for the first time in years, and it is horrific that we are seeing it. There was a programme on television the other evening that was looking at migrant workers coming to this country. It showed, not just single people hot-bedding, but families squeezed into accommodation as well. I must admit that I do not know what the rules are on eligibility in terms of how many people can share accommodation, but the rules are certainly not very strict because this programme showed a household where eight people were living in two rooms and that was deemed acceptable by the local authority. I am not sure what the rules say, but they are certainly not very strict, on the basis of that anecdotal experience. I do not know of any evidence that says whether this practice is increasing or whether it has been decreasing over the last few years, I am afraid. However, it certainly still exists and we are still hearing about it from our union affiliates.

[107] I guess that the answer to why people are still turning to agencies to bring them over here is that unions only have a partial reach with their counterparts in eastern Europe.

Relationships are being built, but there is by no means anything like full coverage between unions here and unions in other countries—far from it. There are bilateral arrangements here and there, but we are hoping to see that grow. I think that people turn to agencies because agencies help them with the cost of getting to this country and they make promises that are not always kept, but they promise work and sometimes that promise is kept, of course, and they are just an easy way of getting to this country. That is still ongoing.

[108] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. You mentioned the programme that was on the television the other night and the secretariat does have a DVD of it for committee members. We can either arrange to show it at committee or Members may borrow it. The first one was called *The Poles are Coming*. The second one is called *Polish Welsh*, but I believe that it is a Welsh-language programme. Sorry, the deputy clerk has just told me that there was no description of it.

[109] **Eleanor Burnham:** Was it in Welsh?

[110] **Ann Jones:** We do not know, sorry. I have just read it wrong. The second of the programmes was called *Polish Welsh*, but there was no description available, so we will just have to look at that. However, they are available if committee members want to see those programmes. Those are the sorts of things that we need to be looking at to inform our research.

[111] Does anybody else have any more questions for Derek or Chris or shall we let them go? It looks like we are going to let you go. Thank you ever so much for taking time out to come here to help us with this research. You will receive a copy of the transcript of today's session to check it for accuracy and you will obviously get a copy of the report when we have finished it. Thank you for giving of your time, both of you; we appreciate it. We will now have a short break.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.40 a.m. ac 11.02 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.40 a.m. and 11.02 a.m.*

[112] **Ann Jones:** We will reconvene the meeting. I remind Members that if they have switched their mobile phones or BlackBerrys on during the break, they should switch them off again.

[113] We were now due to take evidence from the Polish-Welsh Mutual Association, from Jeff Hopkins, who is the chair, and councillor Dewi Enoch. They are stuck in traffic, but they will join us as soon as they can. We have sent a message that we are aware of the situation.

[114] The paper provided by Denise Rogers from the Members' research service begins to pull out the emerging themes from our inquiry into migrant workers. As background, 28 responses were received following the initial call for evidence. Everyone has had electronic copies of the responses and will have seen that they contained some good points. You will know that we have now had three evidence sessions on the issue, so are Members content with the way in which this paper, which is almost a scoping paper, is leading us? Are the emerging themes things that we should look at? A couple of things came up in the TUC's evidence earlier that I would like to include. They related to Huw's point about how we can ensure that we get some decent legislation progressed, either through Europe, Westminster or our programme here.

[115] **Christine Chapman:** I know that the paper talks about accreditation schemes so that the qualifications and skills of migrant workers can be utilised. Should we be seeing more proactive approaches? I am thinking of the jobcentre—

[116] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, and Careers Wales.

[117] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. There are job vacancies out there, and I would be keen to get all of the relevant organisations involved. I know that there is legislation on certain things, but there is not enough done on that.

[118] **Ann Jones:** Skills accreditation is a concept that struck most of us as something worth doing; we heard about it at our meeting in Wrexham. I asked people at that meeting whether they thought this report could look at that, and they all responded positively that that is what they are looking for from the project at Caia Park. The first thing that we have to decide is whether we are happy for this to run across the summer term.

[119] **Eleanor Burnham:** I believe that it should if people who are important to this equation cannot come until then.

[120] **Ann Jones:** So, if we run this across the summer term, it might give us an opportunity to ask Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales to come in. I am not sure if Careers Wales has responded. No, it has not. Therefore, we will ask it for a paper on the specific issues of skills accreditation and the ways in which Careers Wales assists migrant workers with professional qualifications from their own countries in relation to how we can ensure that the translation of that professional skill—

[121] **Eleanor Burnham:** Along with English-language skills, because these would be necessary in professions such as medicine.

[122] **Christine Chapman:** There have been issues relating to schools; either we could ask for evidence or we could ask the Minister what she is doing with regard to the education side.

[123] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would like to come back on what you said about recommendations to Westminster or the European Union. Could that be enhanced, because the majority decided that there should be a Wales-only approach? I am only concerned because many of the legal aspects are outside our control, and it could become frustrating. Can we recommend that our Ministers make recommendations to the Westminster Government?

[124] **Ann Jones:** We found that issue very difficult in relation to the terms of reference, did we not? Given the evidence from the TUC and others, and the written evidence, perhaps we could look at whether we can formulate a recommendation, or even put a chunk in the report outlining what we would like to see. We may need to take legal advice on that. The Temporary and Agency Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Bill is a private Member's Bill at Westminster and, therefore, could fall foul of the legislative programme. There may be a way for us to include a substantial section in the report. We would have to take legal advice with regard to what we do. I do not want to upset colleagues in Westminster or in the European Parliament. However, we need to look at those things, and we may decide that it is out of our remit.

[125] **Mr Jackson:** There are ways of gaining influence, but we do not necessarily have powers to enforce it.

[126] **Huw Lewis:** It may be true that the employment-law side of this is outside our remit, but almost everything else falls within our remit. Housing issues have been thrown up, as have issues relating to educational and language training, access to advice, and financial exclusion. The paper from Llanelli is tremendous in terms of what has been done there. There are also integration issues—which have also been addressed in Llanelli—health issues, and issues relating to the way in which we work with schools, and so on. So, almost everything except the employment-law side of things is for us. There are issues for our Ministers in here,

and they are legion. It would take a whole meeting to go through what we might want to say to a housing Minister in Wales about the ways in which houses in multiple occupation are managed, registered, and inspected, and about the safety and hot-bedding issues and so on. If we are going to hear from Llanelli, there are huge lessons in terms of the way in which we might want to spread best practice among the credit unions and voluntary sector in terms of the work that they have done, which makes astonishing reading in this paper. So, it is not just a question of nagging MPs; there is work for us here.

[127] **Ann Jones:** Yes, but I think that Bethan is right too, because we agonised over the terms of reference at the start.

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is not to say that there is nothing for us to do, but I did not want us to come to the end of the inquiry without being able to recommend anything on that level. However, I acknowledge that there is lots of work for us to do in Wales.

11.10 a.m.

[129] **Ann Jones:** We will look at how we can legally include some recommendations that do not have everyone running away. Whatever this report does, it has to deliver for these people. Many people out there will be pinning hopes on what can be done, and, as Huw and all of us have acknowledged, there is a lot for us to do. If they are pinning hopes on it, I want to avoid its suddenly becoming a report that no-one takes any notice of because there is a section in there that we should not have addressed, or because we have included a word that alters the whole thing. We need something tangible from this and we need to see an effect and a change in what is happening.

[130] **Eleanor Burnham:** Huw mentioned best practice, and I am seeing it in Wrexham, where an enormous amount of dedicated work has been done throughout the partnerships. Churches are involved and the police are involved, and to have a member of the police force who has been encouraged to learn Polish, and so on, is absolutely wonderful. From a democratic point of view, I feel that it is extremely important with regard to the British National Party factor. That worried me in Flintshire and Wrexham, and the thought that we could have BNP members as Assembly Members fills me with horror because we all know that the party's agenda is racist. The other thing that comes to mind is that it might be very helpful if we could have a note about the private Member's Bill and the ins and outs of that. Politically, it might be something that some of us would like to feel that we could support here. On the other hand, in Westminster—.

[131] **Ann Jones:** I am conscious of the point that the previous chief superintendent, Phil Thompson, made, which was that we should not concentrate totally on Polish.

[132] **Eleanor Burnham:** No.

[133] **Ann Jones:** There is a huge Polish element there, but there is also a very strong Portuguese element.

[134] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, but the Portuguese element is mostly in Flintshire.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and I was wondering, when we publish this report in English and Welsh in the usual way, whether we should look to publish it in those languages so that people from those countries can read it.

[136] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is a brilliant idea.

[137] **Ann Jones:** I am sure that we can find funding for that. That was the committee

secretariat's idea, so credit where credit is due. Are we content to invite Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus in addition, and is there anything else in the paper that Members wish to raise, or are we happy to take this as the way forward?

[138] **Eleanor Burnham:** Can you remind me whether we have heard from the agencies to which we have been referring?

[139] **Ann Jones:** The Gangmasters Licensing Authority—

[140] **Eleanor Burnham:** It might be interesting to hear from these agencies, particularly the ones, as I mentioned, that were only applying for a licence—the NW Catchers, whoever they are. Are they on the hit list for invitation?

[141] **Ann Jones:** We thought that we would have the Gangmasters Licensing Authority in, which is the overall body with which agencies must be licensed.

[142] **Eleanor Burnham:** Will someone chase up the one I mentioned? I mentioned it only because it is in my area. Has an agency in any other area that only applied now been registered?

[143] **Ann Jones:** We can perhaps check with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority on that one. I doubt whether another agency will come to committee.

[144] **Eleanor Burnham:** Why do you not invite them?

[145] **Ann Jones:** We will try, but I do not think that they will come.

[146] **Christine Chapman:** You did invite—

[147] **Ann Jones:** They have not responded to the consultation.

[148] **Eleanor Burnham:** GAP Recruitment in Wrexham is quite well known, and I would be very interested to hear its point of view. If you raise awareness among the agencies, that might help improve their way of working, if there are any issues.

[149] **Ms Griffiths:** Sorry, Eleanor, what did you say?

[150] **Eleanor Burnham:** I was just talking about GAP Recruitment in my area, again because I know of it.

[151] **Ann Jones:** We will write again and see whether we can persuade it to come to committee, but I would have thought that the Gangmasters Licensing Authority will come to speak on behalf of its registered agencies. I am being told that it gave evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee and it was a good session.

[152] **Eleanor Burnham:** Can we have a note on the evidence it gave?

[153] **Ann Jones:** It is available on the Welsh Affairs Committee webpage.

[154] **Eleanor Burnham:** I thought that it would be easier to collect it all together.

[155] **Ann Jones:** That brings me onto another point, which is that the Welsh Affairs Committee has agreed to try to come to talk to us, because it is doing a similar inquiry. So, we are going to try to make arrangements for that happen. Whether diaries will allow it to happen is another matter. I am told that that will be on 15 May.

[156] **Eleanor Burnham:** I will be in Edinburgh.

[157] **Ann Jones:** Oh well. Anyway, we will see what we can do for that. Are we happy with the way that we are going and that there is nothing in this paper that is taking us down a route that we should not be going down? I see that we are happy with that. This paper will probably form the basis of the work, and I thank Denise for putting it together.

[158] To return to the agenda, we will now receive evidence from the Polish-Welsh Mutual Association. I welcome the chairman, Jeff Hopkins, and Councillor Dewi Enoch. We have already discussed the other item on the agenda, so that you did not feel pressured to get here. We are sorry that you got stuck in traffic. Thank you for the paper and for coming along today. I do not know who wants to go first. Do you want to speak to your paper for about five minutes and then Members will ask questions?

[159] **Mr Hopkins:** My name is Jeff Hopkins. I am the chairman of the Polish-Welsh Mutual Association and I am also general manager of the Llanelli and District Credit Union. Alongside me today is Councillor Dewi Enoch, who is currently the secretary of the credit union and the treasurer of the Polish-Welsh Mutual Association. One of our colleagues, Halina Ashley, would have been with us today but she was already committed to an international women's day event in Llanelli. She was booked to do something there and could not let the organisers down. So, I apologise for her not being here. She is in the middle of the action and works on a hands-on basis in the Polish centre, which she manages, every day. However, we will do our best to accommodate you in answering your questions.

[160] Halina and I went along to the House of Commons back in November and, in terms of the paper that we have submitted to you, nothing has changed, basically, since then. There is a record of our evidence to the committee. The committee asked us questions on what we had submitted. I believe that you have gone a little further. I read the notes that were made of the meeting when a county council representative came before you on 7 February, when Mr Enoch's colleague, Chris Burns, gave evidence to you. I completely concur with that evidence. What he was saying was valuable and I was thankful that he said some of those things. Perhaps you would now like to ask us questions, Chair.

[161] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. Huw wants to start.

[162] **Huw Lewis:** Thank you, Jeff and Dewi, for being here. I pay tribute to the work that you have been doing. I have read your memorandum, which goes back to last October, and the work that you have been involved with is quite astonishing. To my mind, it is in the best tradition of a welcoming Welsh community model, built on the very best kind of practice in terms of co-operative and mutual working. It is mind-blowing. How could we bottle you and send you around other Welsh communities as a means of exemplifying best practice? I am very interested in particular in the efforts that you have made on integration. You mention on page 6 of your submission:

[163] 'We are now beginning to see the start of a real integration process.'

[164] In our experience in Wales, all migrant communities, over time, have found a way of integrating, but it seems to me that, in the most positive way, you have reached out and assisted in a proactive way, using the good old Welsh method of having charabanc trips. [*Laughter.*] They are charabanc trips—I remember when I was a kid, communities came together on bank holidays and so on.

11.20 a.m.

[165] How can we do it without disrupting your work—that is always the danger. You take an example of best practice, you ask the people in that organisation to show other people how it is done, but then you take them away from their core work. I do not know that there is an easy answer to this, but I know that, in your travels around Wales, you have talked to people about how this is best done. Is there some way that we can help you to spread the message about how you are working, to build on the credit union movement, which is growing everywhere—perhaps nowhere so fast as in Llanelli? Do you have any bright ideas, or a wish list of things that you might want from us, about how we could help?

[166] **Mr Hopkins:** It is about giving support to other groups. People come to talk to us about their problem. Our problems were quite focused in that we were only dealing with an influx of Polish people—it was focused completely on them, because that was where the perceived problem was. We have looked at this, in a sense, from the bottom up, and in a way that, to some degree, prejudiced our own sustainability as a business, as a credit union, inasmuch as we had this influx into the centre of our core activity. So, we were under some pressure. We are situated in the centre of Llanelli, next to the heritage site of Llanelly House, which we all have our opinions about, and there was more than an indication that they wanted us away from our premises. We—that is, my board of directors; Dewi being the secretary—bought the leases for the next building to us. It was fortunate, in a sense, that we had an empty building that was ready for redevelopment for our credit union, which we could utilise as a Polish centre. We had a board of directors who were prepared to make those kinds of decisions. They made those decisions quickly, because we had to face the situation.

[167] From that point on, we have had quite good co-operation, and I think that the former Minister, Mrs Hart, was quite strong in her support for us. We had several meetings, Dewi, Halina and I, with her at her office, and we met her officers of her department. I would say that they were able to act quite swiftly. If one were standing back from it to look at the issue, then one would say that if it were not for devolution, we would not have been able to get to where we were as quickly, because decisions could be made here that you would never get through a county council. Okay, we are in a committee today, but committees tend to pull things in, and nothing ever gets done, and they talk forever. However, this was quite decisive, and that was a welcome sign. That is good for Wales, actually. If it carries on in that manner, then good things are going to happen here.

[168] **Huw Lewis:** You identify the language issue as the big issue—it is the big barrier and the first barrier.

[169] **Mr Enoch:** That was a major problem.

[170] **Huw Lewis:** How did you work through that? I assume that you still do not have the resources to crack it completely, but can you take us through how you started to tackle that problem? What assistance did you have to help you?

[171] **Mr Enoch:** We were fortunate because we had Halina with us, and she speaks Polish like she speaks Welsh and English. Coming back to what Jeff said, this is how we got involved with the Polish people, because they realised that someone in the credit union could speak Polish. This is where the Polish centre emanated from. We then had some staff who were very good in English and in Polish. I think that we now employ five at the centre, which the Assembly is supporting anyway. We have gone from there, where these people were able to help their fellow citizens to overcome the language barrier. Their difficulty, obviously, was, when trying to see a doctor or anyone else, how would they approach that unless they spoke the language? Therefore, it is working well, but much more can be done to get Polish people, or all migrants, to learn English and, hopefully one day, move on from English and learn Welsh as well—the three languages will combine.

[172] **Mr Hopkins:** We have to be clear, and identify that the problem is that migrant workers do not speak any other language, other than Polish. They have been brought here by an employer—or an agency—and there is plenty of reference to these employers in the work that you have had done as a committee; they are not the best of people, and they do not have any social responsibility, from what I can see. They do not do any language teaching, so we liaise with the county council, and with the Wales TUC, through Keith Jones in the Transport and General Workers Union, and we have been able to put on some English-language tuition for children, which the TUC, through Keith, paid for. That was pre-school English tuition, just to signpost the kinds of sounds that the child would expect to hear in school.

[173] Unfortunately, the meetings that we had with the county council about providing those lessons ran up against a brick wall, because they were locked in a box that only teachers can provide English lessons, and so on. We did not want to teach—all we wanted to do was to signpost, which we have done each summer. We bring newly arrived children to a location, we hire a teacher, because we are able to do that now, and we signpost the English language before they go to school, throughout the month of August, prior to school entry. The children pick up the language quickly, whether that is Welsh, English, or whatever. I notice from your evidence that, if they go into a Welsh-only school, there is no problem. Similarly, if the child enters, on his or her own, an English-speaking school, it is super for that child too; we have tremendous successes with young Polish children and their ability to pick up a language.

[174] However, as for the adults, it is unbelievable—it is difficult for them to master another language, as it would be for me; I am immersed in Polish, to some degree, and I have great difficulty in picking up the sounds of their language. What we have attempted to do is to go down the ESOL course. We had some money, again, from the trade unions, which are still sponsoring one ESOL lesson a week in Llanelli, as well as what the county council does on weekends in the library, and so on. However, when we visited those ESOL classes, we saw that the teacher was teaching the language purely through the medium of English, and was not getting through to people because there was no Polish-English speaker in the room who could assist. That was the first thing that we noticed when we visited, and we are trying to come to terms with these things. That has developed since; I believe that the county council and the people who run the ESOL course have done that.

[175] We also do fortnightly ‘survival English’ classes. We put people into a social setting and our staff prepare topics that can be discussed with English-speaking volunteers around the table, during an evening. This week, the topic was sport. We talked about the local rugby teams, where they could find places to go to exercise, and we talked about the weight-lifting club. We talked about many things that got them involved and got them thinking about their locality, and what was available from the voluntary system, and the services that are provided in our community. That has been happening fortnightly, on a regular basis.

[176] We also have a free draw each week. We bought quite expensive English-Polish dictionaries to help people, so that, when they go to a lesson, or to the ESOL classes, they are better equipped to deal with that. I believe that there was a reluctance among educational professionals to bring it down to a level, when they are dealing with adults, that is childlike to some degree. I think that some of these teachers thought that it was demeaning. However, you have to get down there to get the basic principles—it is like a baby; you have to take them back to basics to bring them through to a language. I am a firm believer that you have to get right back to ‘the cat sat on the mat’; that will bring them forward.

11.30 a.m.

[177] So, that is how we have been trying to push things in our discussions on ESOL. I think that Halina has been to the TUC and many other places advocating an easier way of getting English across to them. It needs to happen, because if they cannot speak English, they

experience difficulties in the workplace and may lose their job.

[178] **Huw Lewis:** I do not think that I have ever come across such a proactive community-driven solution to these issues. I cannot think of another one; it is fantastic.

[179] **Christine Chapman:** Welcome to you both. Your paper is very good, and it is heartening to see the procedures and the methods that you are using, which are excellent. I wanted to ask about jobs and the employment situation, because there is a section in the paper in which you say that there is a gradual realisation in the local economy that a new resource is sleeping in its midst. You talk about migrant workers underpinning small businesses, but do you have experience of their starting to set up their own businesses? We know that there is a correlation between migrant workers and increased prosperity; do you have any evidence of that? If so, were there any barriers to that, which we could look at?

[180] **Mr Hopkins:** It is particularly apt that you asked that question, because only yesterday I received a telephone call from someone working for the Assembly—and I also picked it up in the notes from your last committee meeting—who wanted to discuss entrepreneurial activity among Polish migrant workers. I said to him that I was aware that the committee was discussing this issue, and that how to tap into that has been on our minds. There are some difficulties, and, in fairness to the Assembly, we have received some funding for a Polish worker in the credit union to encourage Polish people to save with us, which may lead some to a borrowing situation. If one was to look at the migrant population, they are unable to access credit. If you want to set up a business, you must have a credit line. For two years, banks will not lend the money, but micro-lending is something that we as a credit union could look at in terms of encouraging that type of development. Unquestionably, there are skills that are being wasted in meat packing, because when we get into conversation with Polish workers, particularly in our conversation clubs, we come to understand what they did in Poland. Many of the jobs that they did were skilled jobs, using skills that are needed in this particular area, and which can give a boost to our fortunes.

[181] Having said that, there are some difficulties in that those people may have ventured out to work for small businesses and have been ripped off, because small businesses, to some degree, have thought of them as cheap people to use. So, it is a bit difficult when we encourage them to look at smaller businesses; it is not a happy situation, because they do not pay their Inland Revenue bills or their taxes properly for them, and they end up having to pay workers themselves as the law stands. Those are bad experiences; on the whole, they are pretty good, but we must be careful. I think that there is scope to encourage them to do things for themselves in small businesses, as they do in London—there are facilities in London with Polish plumbers who develop small building businesses. I think that there is scope for that in the Valleys—many housing repairs could be done by small groups, which could be developed into co-operatives. There is a great opening for co-operatives in today's society, and someone must get there quickly, because many things that are being done by local government can be done better and more efficiently by co-operatives, and at less of a cost than is currently being paid.

[182] **Mr Enoch:** Coming back to what Jeff said, having spoken to some of the Polish people, they get frustrated knowing that they have so much to offer but yet are in menial jobs such as meat packing, for example. They feel very frustrated about this and would like to get their hands on something where they can contribute, whether it is bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry or anything. You could go a long way to help these people, and there is a need for them. We are desperate for them.

[183] **Mr Hopkins:** We have identified a number of people whom we have helped to move into the health service, by getting their qualifications translated and verified in Poland, so that they are acceptable to our health service, and they are moving into hospitals and care homes.

These are qualified people, some with masters' degrees. They are good people.

[184] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you for that, it is useful. I suggest to the committee that we invite the Minister or some of the former agencies that are under the Government now, to look particularly at the issue of entrepreneurship, because there are all sorts of programmes in existence, and migrant workers should be part of them. It is not just about them working; by eventually setting up businesses, they will employ other people as well. We need to go down that road.

[185] **Ann Jones:** We will include that.

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** You touched on the fact that you needed credit checks and credit history, and that three years' residence is required by banks. Have you talked to any of the banks, and could we look into that, because if migrant workers are coming here, but are not able to access finances for the first three years that they are here, that may severely hinder them? On the benefits issue, what have you been doing to try to help explain the benefits that they can access through the Department for Work and Pensions, and has the current streamlining of those services hindered the progress of your association? We had a meeting on trafficking last night where it was said that a multi-agency approach would be the best way forward, and there are regular multi-agency meetings in the domestic violence area. Would this be the best scenario for discussions in terms of benefit take-up too?

[187] **Mr Hopkins:** You are on dodgy ground with benefit take-up, because there cannot be any benefit take-up for two years, and we have highlighted that problem in part of our evidence. There is a black hole there. If they have not paid national insurance contributions for two years, they cannot move into the benefits system, not that they particularly want to move there—they will only need to move there if misfortune besets them. The number of people to whom that happens is not that great, but, when it happens, it can be traumatic. Recently in Llanelli, three men were sacked by their employer, which was an agency, and, as a result, they had no money at all, lost their homes as well and were basically sleeping on a beach until we were able to use our own funding, and, in fairness, the public responded as well and gave us some money, to keep them in a hotel for a while. We have now been able to place them to work on a farm in Llandeilo. They had no recourse to public funds, and this is a real problem. If citizens of the accession 8 countries break the law and go into prison, when they come out, they have no recourse to public funds either, so what happens in those circumstances, when the authorities and the social services run away, because they cannot spend money on these people? What happens? There is a big hole there.

[188] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do you have an emergency fund?

[189] **Mr Hopkins:** No, we have a whip-round. We are a voluntary organisation in that sense.

[190] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, you have nothing to offer them? If they come to you, there is nothing that you can ring fence?

[191] **Mr Hopkins:** There is nothing. The Red Cross has done some work on this with migrant workers, and it has been talking to the Home Office about such matters. I am of the opinion that if someone breaks the law, they should get deported and sent back. Do we really want criminals or gangsters coming here? I say 'no', and that we should deport them. I am quite firm in my opinion that that is what should happen, because some of these agencies have been trawling towns in Poland, and emptying prisons in some cases, and bringing them here. That is bad practice, but it is happening. You have taken some evidence on gangmasters—the way that they operate is questionable, because many of these agencies were grandfathered, and were not really put through any tests to see if they were competent in dealing with the

people that they are working with. So, there are big holes in that system as well. You will get people coming into this country who we do not know about, and the police throw their hands up in the air and hope that the problem will go away—they do not co-operate with the Polish police at all, and it is a problem.

11.40 a.m.

[192] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am interested in the crisis issue that Bethan touched upon, and the myth-busting that is being done in Wrexham. The TUC showed us its leaflet, and I am sure that you are aware that, in Wrexham, apart from the wonderful work that you are doing, there is a policeman who speaks Polish, and so on. I think that it is tremendous.

[193] I am very interested in your conclusions, and I would like to ask, if it is not too insensitive, what kind of expectations some of these people have. It seems to me that many of them come here because dubious agencies promise them a land of milk and honey, and so on. They must have fairly detailed ideas when they come here, and unless they suffer the crises that you mentioned—homelessness, serious illness, mental illness, and so on—a lot of these people will have high expectations. I am particularly concerned by point 5 in your conclusions, about the Gangmasters Licensing Authority needing to be given enhanced powers to police and control the activity of the employment agencies—particularly bearing in mind what you said a minute ago. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority will be giving evidence on 15 May; unfortunately I will not be here, but that will be interesting. Why do you make that point in your conclusions?

[194] **Mr Hopkins:** We met the Gangmasters Licensing Authority about a specific agency operating in Llanelli, but we have not had a result from that. The agency continues to handle Polish migrant workers in the manner we described earlier, and we felt that it was a waste of time talking to the authority because it did not alter the situation.

[195] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am not quite clear about the legality of all of this. Why should you ask for the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, which you just said you have issues about, to be given enhanced powers to police and control employment agencies? Please explain that to me, because I am perplexed.

[196] **Mr Hopkins:** We believe that these agencies are bringing migrant workers into this country on contracts—we referred to the zero-hour contract in our evidence—that should be outlawed in this country. There is no question about that.

[197] **Eleanor Burnham:** However, if there is a question about gangmasters—and I must be careful how I say this—

[198] **Mr Hopkins:** When we refer to gangmasters, we refer specifically to agencies bringing workers here in large numbers from Poland—agencies that have their offices in Poland, who bring the workers over, make them sign contracts in the dark, and all sorts of things. Who is going to be responsible for that? Are you going to be responsible? Will the Gangmasters Licensing Authority be responsible? Who is responsible when things go wrong, and these agencies invade our towns and make millions of pounds?

[199] **Eleanor Burnham:** I understand what you are saying. However, when these people come here, in this kind of worst-case scenario, they really have no clue what they will be doing other than what the employment agencies have promised—

[200] **Mr Hopkins:** They have a clue what they will be doing—they will be working for 40 hours per week on the minimum wage. That is their expectation.

[201] **Eleanor Burnham:** However, as they do not have any understanding of the language, has anyone ever discussed that with them? I say this as the mother of two migrant workers. One lives in Romania and one in Portugal, but they have a command of the language.

[202] **Mr Hopkins:** We do not ship British people to foreign countries the way that people are being shipped out of Poland. Did you see the BBC programme on Peterborough the other night? I think that it was the night before last. The Polish Government is trying to attract Poles back to Poland, but they will not go, because given the money that is paid in Poland for the kind of jobs that they do, it is not worth it. They get more money on the minimum wage here than they could ever dream of getting in Poland. That is sufficient for them to go packing meat for 40 hours per week over here—if they get the 40 hours, that is. The agencies live on them through that 40-hour contract. When they get here, they have to live in the agencies' accommodation, they have to have their transport and the minute that they opt out of one of those, because they want to better themselves, they discover that they are not working 40 hours a week any more, but only 10 hours, so they do not have enough money to live in this country, let alone enough to send any home to their families in Poland.

[203] **Eleanor Burnham:** So, this is about bully-boy tactics.

[204] **Mr Hopkins:** It is insidious, is it not? They are saying, 'If you are not putting the money into my pocket, you do not work for me any more; I will push you away and bring fresh people in'. That is what they do: they bring fresh Polish people in.

[205] **Eleanor Burnham:** One presumes that these people have never had the opportunity, therefore, because they are working such long hours, to be able to develop any English language skills.

[206] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely. In fairness, if you are Polish and you come here, you could be living in Warsaw or any town in Poland, because you live in a Polish community, you work with Polish people, you have Polish foremen in the factory, and so you do not have to come across English. You even have Polish television that you can watch at home.

[207] **Eleanor Burnham:** So, that is what you are talking about in point 1 of your conclusion in paper 2. You are suggesting proper recruitment and the screening of candidates, and contracts with cooling-off periods and so on.

[208] **Ann Jones:** I will just turn to the housing section of your paper. As others have said, this paper is very good. I think that I have to agree wholeheartedly with your first sentence, that 'Landlords never had it so good'. You talk about the exploitation by landlords of these people who are coming in. Given that there is legislation regarding houses in multiple occupation, how do you think that it should be strengthened to stop the exploitation of these people in terms of housing?

[209] **Mr Hopkins:** Our view is that, as with all powers—it is the same with anything—if the law has been broken, do you have the police to police it? I do not think that the local authorities have the wherewithal to police it because it is happening on such a large scale. It is insidious because some of these houses are probably on reduced local authority rates because it is claimed that pensioners are living in them, but they have not lived there for donkey's years and there are now six Polish people living in each house. How can the local authority get to know that? How can they home in on all of this?

[210] **Ann Jones:** I represent an area that includes Rhyl, where houses in multiple occupation are a nightmare for people. It is certainly a nightmare for migrant workers, but it is a nightmare for anyone who is stuck in that trap. Is there not a suggestion that this should be a

multi-agency task and that they should target the houses where they know that landlords have several benefit claims in? Do you think that that should—

[211] **Mr Hopkins:** We would agree with that. We have had discussions with them recently and have been talking to them on those terms because something has to be done. These people are working, so they are cash rich, in a sense—they are not on benefits. Formerly, before these people arrived in our localities, most people who were in that type of accommodation were on benefits, so the landlord was picking up the state's money every week or whatever. Now, they are picking up pure cash and they love it, and they are not going to be telling anybody about it either because it is so good.

[212] **Ann Jones:** So, if there is evidence that this is happening across communities, the Inland Revenue should be a central part of that—

[213] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely. It should have staff at Cardiff airport, watching them going to Spain with the money.

[214] **Ann Jones:** I think that you will have to go up to north Wales and show them how to do it. In terms of housing, we have heard evidence about hot-bedding, which is about not knowing how many people are living in a house. I know that you have a settled community—

[215] **Mr Hopkins:** I read your evidence on hot-bedding and I think that what has been said to you is correct. I do not think that is happening on the scale that it was happening in 2004—it has settled down to some degree—but that does not mean to say that there are not houses with too many people living in them. The three gentlemen who came to us, who were put out on the road, had been living in a hotel in Llanybydder, four to a room, with £50 a week being taken out of their pay. That room was bringing in £200 a week for the company, the agency. What the hotel guy was getting, I do not know. However, £200 a week was being made out of one room in the centre of Llanybydder, a village—they have not seen money like that for donkey's years.

[216] **Mark Isherwood:** On that point, you are highlighting the problems with people who have not registered and who are taking the cash and avoiding tax and so on, but in terms of registered landlords, local authorities have some increasing powers to intervene. Have you had any dialogue with the National Landlords Association, which is keen to ensure that the reputation of the profession is not dragged down further by these people?

11.50 a.m.

[217] **Mr Hopkins:** I would say 'no' to that.

[218] **Mark Isherwood:** It may want to co-operate in helping to root out—

[219] **Mr Hopkins:** To be quite frank, that is not our problem. We can identify the problem, and we can come to people such as you and say that a certain thing is a problem. We run a business; we run a credit union basically, and we have a Polish centre. We can report on such matters to local authorities and other bodies that have the wherewithal to deal with them.

[220] **Mark Isherwood:** You mentioned myth busting. Things are becoming very heated again before the May elections, particularly in some parts of north Wales where I am based, because of the fear of certain candidates spreading myths. I am receiving what I would describe as hate mail from certain types claiming, among other things, that the Polish community in Wales is obviously anti-fascist, but also anti-Communist, because of its experiences in recent history, and that those people who support organisations fighting the far right are therefore a front for the Communist Party and that the Poles would therefore not be

pleased with such a campaign. Could you, through your contacts with the Polish community, help us to bust those myths and to hear what the Polish community is saying?

[221] **Mr Hopkins:** To be frank, I have never heard any of that. I will tell you another thing: we do not really get into politics, because there are so many daily problems facing Polish people, we do not get into why they do certain things and so on; I really do not know. I look at the problems that are presented to us, but what the reasons for such things are, I do not know. However, what I will say is that the conclusions in the Experian report undertaken for you are first class. If you want to go by anything, go with those conclusions. The report has quite clearly identified what is happening in society.

[222] **Ann Jones:** To take you back to the issue of gangmasters and agency workers, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority will come to give us evidence later in this inquiry. You have talked about the powers that gangmasters have. What exactly would you change to enhance their powers?

[223] **Mr Hopkins:** My colleague was responsible for that. I do not really know what their powers are. There is probably some big schedule in some Government department. My colleague has identified the gangmasters as having to deal with this, but what we are saying, is that, regardless of who is to deal with it, surely there is a problem with that contract and the way in which people are brought here. There are issues with regard to the way that they live; so much money can be taken out of their pay, they can get less than 30p a week. In this society, that should not be happening, but it is allowed to happen because they have signed a contract. Very often, they are signing a contract in the dark on a bus. They arrive in Llanelli at midnight and they are pushed out of the bus. They are often quite hazy about whether they have signed an English or Polish contract. However, the gangmasters hold them to those contracts, and once they have been sacked they have nothing.

[224] We believe that this process goes against their human rights, and we are talking to a lawyer to see whether we can pursue that in the courts. We run up against the local authorities, who will not house people who are sleeping in the streets. No-one can help them because they do not fall within the law, and so the local authority runs away. So, we have to show that human rights are involved. I would have thought that gangmasters would have a duty of care to the people they bring here and that they should at least discuss this within the community before they throw people out on the street to see how the community can respond if the person cannot afford to go back home.

[225] **Ann Jones:** So, this is about tightening up what they can and cannot put in a contract, and we need to get to people before they sign these contracts to tell them that they need advice before they do so, but, as you say, they are signing them on buses in the middle of the night—

[226] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes. There should be a cooling-off period, as there are in normal contracts in this country, so that they are not held to this.

[227] **Eleanor Burnham:** Should someone not, therefore, hold a list of these people so that they could try to alert the Polish authorities, because this is happening back in Poland, is it not, before they get here?

[228] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes.

[229] **Mr Enoch:** I met some of these people, and asked a lot of questions. They promised us a lot, but we have not seen anything. I remember when we were trying to find out the number of Polish people in Carmarthenshire, for example. They all said that they would help us and would let us know the figures, but I have never seen them, and neither has the

authority. The same is true in relation to many other things, such as the contracts. They said that they would give us copies of the contracts, but we have not seen them. In other words, I think that they are hiding something from us.

[230] **Ann Jones:** That is useful information. We will certainly look at how we can feed that in and at what the Gangmasters Licensing Authority tells us when it comes to give evidence. Are there any more questions?

[231] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do you collect any data on the people who access your services?

[232] **Mr Hopkins:** Do we collect data on them?

[233] **Bethan Jenkins:** Any information about how many people—

[234] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes, we report regularly to the Welsh Assembly Government. I think that the figures are attached.

[235] **Bethan Jenkins:** Oh, sorry.

[236] **Ann Jones:** They are there, thank you very much.

[237] **Mr Hopkins:** We have also included information on the types of queries that come to us.

[238] **Huw Lewis:** It is a huge workload. It is fantastic.

[239] **Mr Enoch:** Many of these people do not come to us once; they come back all of the time. First, they may ask us about a doctor and then about a dentist. There is a constant flow of people coming back.

[240] **Mr Hopkins:** The best source of information that we have seen in Wales—and we do not have the funding to do such things—is this booklet, which was produced in north Wales. It was produced with the help of Her Majesty's Court Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the police in north Wales. It is the best that we have seen in Wales. The Assembly Government produced a practitioners' guide that you could not really give to Polish people, because they could not make telephone calls themselves because they do not speak the language. However, this one is first class.

[241] **Ann Jones:** Could we have a copy?

[242] **Mr Hopkins:** Would you like me to leave it here?

[243] **Ann Jones:** Not if it is your only copy.

[244] **Mr Hopkins:** It is no problem; I have another copy.

[245] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much, that will be handy.

[246] I see that there are no more questions, therefore I thank you both very much. It has been a most enlightening evidence session. You are the ones working among the communities. It is good to hear those views. A copy of this evidence session will be sent to you in order for you to check its accuracy and to ensure that we have not put words into your mouth. We will then send you a copy of the final report. Thank you very much for your time and for your paper.

[247] **Mr Hopkins:** We were pleased to come here.

[248] **Ann Jones:** That concludes our business. I would like to make a plea to Members. You have all received the dates for next term's meetings. Please make sure that whoever is responsible for your diaries puts the dates in, because there is a lot of work to do next term. We will move to a Wednesday morning part way through the term, so you also need to be aware of that. Thank you very much. I declare the meeting closed.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.58 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.58 a.m.