



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

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

**Dydd Mercher, 18 Mehefin 2008
Wednesday, 18 June 2008**

Cynnwys
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Inquiry into Migrant Workers in Wales

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
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Nick Ramsay	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Naz Malik	Prif Weithredwr, Cymdeithas Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig Cymru Gyfan Chief Executive, All Wales Ethnic Minority Association
Christine Protheroe	Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol, Cyngor Cydraddoldeb Hiliol y Cymoedd Assistant Director, Valleys Race Equality Council
Tara Sinclair	Cyngor Cydraddoldeb Hiliol y Cymoedd Valleys Race Equality Council
Ravi Vedi	Rheolwr y Tîm Datblygu, Gweithredu Gwirfoddol, Caerdydd Development Team Manager, Voluntary Action, Cardiff

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	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol y Pwyllgor Legal Adviser to the Committee

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.31 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.31 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. I will start with the usual housekeeping rules. Members can speak in English or Welsh; simultaneous translation is available on channel 1 of the headset, and channel 0 amplifies the sound if you have difficulty hearing.

[2] I ask everyone around the table to switch off their mobile telephones, BlackBerrys,

paggers and anything else that may affect the broadcasting or the recording.

[3] We are not expecting a fire alarm test today, so if we hear the alarm, we should take our instructions from the ushers. The assembly point is at the front of the building, near the car park.

[4] We have been advised that HMS Gloucester, which is berthed alongside the car park, has been given permission by the harbour authority to fire their small weapons in practice this morning, but no specific time for that has been announced. They will be firing blanks, so we do not have to worry, and they are shooting away from the car park.

[5] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is not April fool's day is it, Chair?

[6] **Ann Jones:** No, it is not April fool's day. It is possible that we could hear gunfire during our proceedings today. If it is anything other than the training exercise, you will hear me scream and I will leave, so feel free to follow me.

[7] We have received apologies from Christine Chapman, Huw Lewis and Chris Franks. Do Members have any declarations of interest that they wish to make before we start the meeting? I see that there are none.

9.33 a.m.

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

[8] **Ann Jones:** It is my pleasure to welcome to the table our witnesses—that sounds terrible—who will feed us with evidence and information to help us with our inquiry. I welcome Naz Malik, who is the chief executive of the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association, fondly known as AWEMA. We also have Christine Protheroe, assistant director of Valleys Race Equality Council, Tara Sinclair, who is also from the Valleys Race Equality Council, and Ravi Vedi, development team manager at Voluntary Action in Cardiff. You are all very welcome.

[9] Thank you for the written evidence that you have submitted. This morning, we propose to ask you to briefly add anything that you think we should know, in a five minute summary, and then we will go on to Members' questions. It is quite informal, so if there are things that you want to tell us, we would welcome that—it might seem like a formal setting, but we are a friendly bunch.

[10] Naz, shall we start with your five minute overview?

[11] **Mr Malik:** I do not think that I will need five minutes. Our written submission, which was around 27 pages, was a joint effort and included the work carried out by the Curiad Calon Cymru European-funded project. Development officers worked with Race Equality First, the Valleys Race Equality Council and the North Wales Race Equality Network, and an officer was also employed by AWEMA. So, between us, we covered Swansea, Llanelli, Cardiff, Newport, the Valleys and north Wales. The written submission was the result of work done over two years by the different officers who came together to gather all the evidence and knowledge that they had gained from working with the different community groups across the whole of Wales. I am sure that you have read the 27 pages, which have also been summarised in our publication. I did not want to do a salesman's pitch and bring the publication with me this morning, but I am quite happy to send you copies of it. Other than that, I look forward to the discussion.

[12] **Ms Protheroe:** I joined Valrec while this work was going on, so I do not have as much background knowledge of the project as my colleague, Tara, has. However, I have done a lot of work with migrant workers throughout the voluntary sector and when I worked for the former Commission for Racial Equality. So, as you ask your questions, I may be able to add some information from my own knowledge and background but, in terms of this project, my colleague Tara led on it within our organisation.

[13] **Ms Sinclair:** The information that we supplied refers to work that began early in 2006. The Valleys Race Equality Council actually set up its first migrant workers forum in 2004, and I think that we were probably the first organisation to set up such a forum in Wales. It was something that influenced the forum that was set up by the Welsh Assembly Government. That is just a piece of information that was omitted from the submission.

[14] **Ms Vedi:** I work for Voluntary Action Cardiff, and our role is to develop community organisations. Our submission was based on our work with a group called the Central Eastern European Association. Our long-term aim will be link it into our various networks, so that it has an input into local decision making. It is fairly narrow in that sense.

[15] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. We will now move to Members' questions.

[16] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for the information that you have provided; it is very useful. The format that you all used was easy to understand, which is a good place to start. It seems that there are some key themes that come out of all of your submissions. One of those is access to whatever people need access to, be that education, health, and so on, and the issues that prevent that from happening. I suppose that this is a question for Ravi, but I noticed that you had an officer in Cardiff who was funded until March.

[17] **Ms Vedi:** We did not have an officer. We worked with Cardiff Race Equality First to develop this organisation, which is now fully constituted and running, but I understand that Race Equality First had an officer funded until March. I was talking to Naz earlier, and he was saying that that was through the EQUAL project.

[18] **Joyce Watson:** Is that post being continued?

[19] **Ms Vedi:** As far as I know, no.

[20] **Mr Malik:** The post is not being continued. I hope that we will pick this up as an issue, because, as part of the convergence and competitiveness funding, we have made a large expression of interest for a big project on a Wales-wide basis, but as I am sure you all know, European funding is fraught with difficulty at the moment.

9.40 a.m.

[21] I hope that we can pick up on some of those problems. The people who were employed under the Curiad Calon Cymru project, which was funded by European money, included an officer with Race Equality First in Cardiff, another with the Valleys Race Equality Council, one with the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association, another with the South East Wales Race Equality Council, and another with the North Wales Race Equality Network. All five posts have now been terminated as a result of a lack of funding. All that work that we were doing around Wales through five different officers has ceased, and it is creating additional problems and putting additional stresses on all the organisations. People who need help still call us to find out why we have stopped doing that work. At times, it is difficult to explain why that is, because they do not really understand why we were providing a service one minute, but the next, we are not able to, even though they still need it.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** Language problems can exacerbate these disadvantages of access, and there is a need to provide translators or, for the children, some form of education through the medium of English. How do you think that we in the Assembly could improve that?

[23] **Ms Sinclair:** In my project, we targeted a lot of our work specifically on the teaching of English as a second language. When we first came to Merthyr, there were approximately 2,000 migrant workers there, who were demographically quite different. There was a Portuguese and a Polish community. The Polish community was quite well educated, middle class and young; the Portuguese community was traditionally working class, did not have a strong educational background, and was made up of people in their 30s and 40s with families. There were about 30 funded English as a second language places in Merthyr at the time, and the demand was very intense. The ESOL course was annual, so you had to enrol in September for a year-long course, which did not suit the transitory nature of migrant work.

[24] What we had to do as an organisation was go into partnership with one of the colleges and apply for additional funding to put on more ESOL classes that suited the needs of the migrant workers. We ran 10 courses a week, building up language skills over 10-week periods, and it was a case of roll-on, roll-off. We understand that the former Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills did not fund that sort of qualification, and there has not been any growth in that sector at all, so, as I said, we had to apply for other small pots of money just to put these classes on, and they have been invaluable. Sadly, my project has finished, but we still run five classes a week at Rhymney College, with about 20 places in each class. I am also now running classes in the factories where people work, but that is all funded from little pots of money; it is not centrally funded at all, although it needs to be.

[25] **Mr Malik:** I will add to that, because I think that the key point that needs to be made today is the need for language support, whether for migrant workers who are middle class or working class, or, indeed, for young people. Our experience, certainly in Swansea and Llanelli, has shown that the demand is there but the supply is not readily available. There are places at Swansea College, which has done some work on this, as has Swansea institute, but these pockets of work are not consistent or ongoing. One frustration that was expressed to me by a member of the Polish community was that, if you commit a crime, translators are readily available to you, but if you have been mistreated by failing to get access to a doctor or hospital, or if you want to go to your young child's school to understand the child's needs, that kind of support is not available to you. That was a stark reminder of the need for balance on this issue. If you commit a crime, you can have language support, but if you are law-abiding and are just going about your daily business, there is not that support for you.

[26] The desire to learn English is just as strong among the European migrant community as it is among the black and minority ethnic communities. However, the sad reality is that the supply is not readily available. We have done some voluntary work, by running after-school activity clubs. However, when we were running these clubs, we found that the demand that they were creating was so intense that, at one point, in Swansea, we had more than 40 young people coming to our clubs, with just three of us there. Their ages ranged from three and four-year-olds to 15 and 16-year-olds, and their needs were so different and diverse that we just could not cope with that level of demand, even on a voluntary basis.

[27] In addition, in Swansea, the Polish community runs a Saturday club at Pentrehafod school. The issues and the problems are exactly the same there. Although it is being run by Polish people and they promote the Polish language, they want English support as well, but we are not able to provide that support.

[28] Finally, one of our development officers, across the project, had a masters degree in teaching English as a foreign language. However, we were not able to keep her because the funding did not come online, despite our best endeavours to ensure some kind of continuity.

We were able to keep someone with such high-level skills for up to a year, but she has now had to go back to Poland, where she is teaching English. Therefore, there is this mismatch of the timing difference of funding cycles, and I think that it is in your gift to address that.

[29] **Ms Sinclair:** I want to mention an interesting case study that we have. We have been helping a Portuguese family for about a year, who are not literate in their own language. They came here to work and they had attempted to work—they worked in a factory for a while, and they now do agency work. However, in the last year, they have been threatened twice with eviction. We have informed the local council that they are not particularly literate in their own language but that, if it provides a basic letter in Portuguese, they should be able to understand what payments they need to make and when to make them. However, this council has continually provided information in English, and it has now reached the point where the family phones us up when they get a red letter, which is a summons or a bailiff's notice, asking us what it means. That has happened twice, and the family is about to be evicted next Monday, purely because that information was not provided in their own language, even though the council had been told time and again that that needed to be done. When we spoke to the council, it said that it was under no obligation to provide anything in any other languages. We get the same responses from hospitals and schools, all of which makes it difficult to help migrant workers to integrate with our communities and to access services.

[30] We also hear that there is not enough funding for that sort of provision. Councils say, 'We are a small council in a semi-rural area, and we are not funded to provide that sort of translation, so we cannot do it'. That is where you really need to come in and provide extra pots of funding for councils, so that they can provide those services that would prevent families from becoming homeless.

[31] **Ms Protheroe:** I have two quick points to add to that. From my experience of working in some of the areas that this project did not fund, I know that a huge amount of pressure is put on teachers and schools that have migrant worker children who do not speak English; they do not know where to go and what to do, and the facilities and the capacity are just not there. In addition, many of these places are funding English classes through the voluntary sector. However, because migrant workers are working predominantly in factories, doing shift work, the children are minding the younger children in the family and cannot attend these evening classes. Therefore, more funding is needed as well as more of a structure for delivery.

9.50 a.m.

[32] **Ms Vedi:** I have a few statistics from the Cardiff perspective. There is great enthusiasm for learning English as a second language, and the figure that I will quote comes from across a number of communities, and not just from migrant workers. There is currently a waiting list of 500 people for ESOL classes. Cardiff had an Estyn inspection of adult learning last year, and one thing that it stipulated was that there are not enough qualified staff to teach ESOL. As a result, Voluntary Action Cardiff brought together a number of BME organisations to look at the issue, and, as a consequence, a paper has been submitted to Cardiff community learning network on the issue.

[33] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thank you for providing that evidence. We have heard similar evidence from many of the other organisations that have come to speak to us. On what Naz said about the after-school activity for young people, have you considered approaching the council to encourage it to incorporate that into the new children and young people plans and partnerships, which the Welsh Assembly Government has been involved in? Has that happened, because there is massive pressure on you to implement this on a voluntary basis, but perhaps that could become statutory to enhance the facilities on that level?

[34] You will know this, because you work in Swansea, but I went to the launch of refugee week in Swansea this week, and I was also at the launch of the new website through Swansea University, which is encouraging asylum seekers and migrant workers to learn English. They were given mp3 players so that they could learn English out and about in their daily lives, as opposed to attending evening classes. It was all about the flexibility of learning English as part of their daily lives. Have you been involved in that, or do you think that those types of schemes should be rolled out? Could the Welsh Assembly Government be looking into that?

[35] I also want to clarify what you say in your evidence about the career advice centres that should be set up to help to gain experience. Are you talking about new career advice centres or could they be tagged on to Careers Wales initiatives or something that already exists? Is that a new grass-roots initiative?

[36] **Mr Malik:** You have raised two essential points, Bethan. The first is working with young people through after-school activity clubs and linking up with youth networks, and the second relates to the work of Refugee Voice Wales.

[37] On young people and the after-school activity clubs, there is great difficulty in trying to link young people who do not speak English naturally in to the other networks, because there is a capacity issue. Allow me to give you an example. We have done some work around the Swansea and Llanelli area to celebrate 10 different cultures, for which we received a small grant from the heritage lottery fund, and that work involves working with young people to give them an appreciation not only of a festival of their own culture but also of the festivals of other cultures. We have three young Polish people who come to that particular project regularly. Two of them speak English but not that well, and we have to make an extra special effort with the third to make sure that he feels included. Part of the networks that you talk about will not address those problems. If those problems are not addressed in school, they will certainly not be addressed in the youth networks or youth parliaments and so on. The important thing is to have specific initiatives for people who do not have a great capacity to communicate, and then to build their capacity to ease them into the different networks.

[38] Through a spoken word poetry project, we work with asylum seekers as well as with European economic migrants. We were able to engage with children of asylum seekers, but it was very difficult to engage with children from a European economic migrant background. We piloted this project and tried to get some of the local authorities to show an interest in it. We wrote to all the secondary schools in Wales—all 350 or however many there are. We wrote to all 22 local authorities, sending them the poetry books that we had produced as a result of the work of the youngest asylum seekers. Of those 350 schools, we had a reply from one. It was very interested and the young people were keen to be involved. However, when we told the school that we could do it only on weekends because I was doing it on a voluntary basis and I could not do it as part of my work, the interest waned.

[39] There are many different and innovative things that can be done, but if we are doing them in our own time, it is self-evident that the young people you are working with will also have to do them in their own time. Having said that, there is a bit of a carrot that we can now use, namely the Kids' College, the Children's University and the Youth University. That scheme is being run by 18 of the 22 local authorities. It is something that we have only just come across. What happens is that, where local authorities have signed up to the scheme, young people are required to undertake extra-curricular activities. If they do 25 hours, they graduate with a bronze award, 50 hours means a silver award, and 75 hours means a gold award, and they have graduation ceremonies. We are beginning to find that that carrot is enticing young people in, because they get something at the end of it.

[40] As part of the poetry project that we did last year, we took a team of 10 young people

to London for the finals of the London teenage poetry slam. Of those 10, seven were children from asylum seeker backgrounds. It was fantastic to get reports back from the school about their level of English, how their confidence had improved and how they had started to write creatively—we had a very positive response. However, although we have piloted that scheme successfully for the past two years, when you try to engage with the local authorities through their education departments you get nil response. The first reason is probably that they do not understand the concept, and the second, I suppose, is that they do not have the means or the budget. When I spoke to the chief executive of the City and County of Swansea, he said that the greatest barrier would be funding, because the margins are so tight that it is difficult to find even £4,000 or £5,000 for such a project.

[41] While I am speaking to you about this spoken word poetry project, we are taking the project England-wide through all nine regions. We have been reasonably successful because we have progressed to quite an advanced stage of being able to do that project—and of doing it really well. However, we are having great difficulty in explaining and putting this concept across, not only to the Assembly but to the Arts Council of Wales, although we are making some progress in that respect.

[42] We have spoken to some people in Hay on Wye, and, as a result of the twinning of the town with Timbuktu, they are beginning to show an interest in using that sort of concept; perhaps we can introduce an overseas element, given the Timbuktu link.

[43] On capacity and the work of Refugee Voice Wales, that work was done under EQUAL, particularly by Supporting Others through Volunteer Action, SOVA, which told digital stories about the journey that it had made over the past two years. That project was very successful, but again, sadly, as a result of the funding coming to an end, that cannot really be taken forward either. All of these initiatives are possible, but we do not have a consistent means of sustaining them.

10.00 a.m.

[44] **Bethan Jenkins:** Does that hinder your sharing best practice because some schemes come to an end quite abruptly and then there is no capacity to share?

[45] **Mr Malik:** I am sure that the others will outline their experience but ours is that we still have the material but not the means to share it consistently. The best that we can do is put it on our website and tell people that if they need the material, they should get in touch with us. There are organisations that want the material but they want it for nothing. One organisation contacted me last week wanting 15 of our publications for nothing. We said that we would have to spend money to either burn a CD or photocopy the material, but that organisation was not prepared to cover the costs.

[46] A lack of resources will always be a problem. If that kind of logjam could be broken so that there was a sustainable and even spread of resources, it would ensure that if a project was to run for three years, it would have the necessary resources. On the EQUAL project, we started as a Wales-wide partnership of 20 different organisations. We started preparing for the convergence and competitiveness programme in April 2007, and we knew that it would come to an end in March 2008. We had our partnership meetings and consultations and we responded and engaged with the Welsh European Funding Office. However, when it came to the crunch, we were told, 'You cannot do it like this.' I think that there is a lot of confusion in WEFO at the moment. We do not even know as yet whether a partnership can be formed, what shape it would take if it could be formed, and whether, if you are successfully developing a project and submitting it, you can deliver it, because there is now talk about having to subcontract that work out. It is very confusing at the moment.

[47] **Ann Jones:** Does anyone else want to offer an answer to Bethan's question?

[48] **Ms Sinclair:** I second what Naz said on every level. When I worked in Merthyr Tydfil, we got some funding to set up a homework club, and we set up a group called the international club, which is fully constituted and holds events. However, sadly, as my position came to an end, it was difficult for us to further support that group further to get the club up and running, but I am doing all I can in my new role. I second what Naz said about trying to get young people from migrant worker backgrounds to engage with young people's partnerships. If you do not have the English-language skills and there is no support, it is very difficult to engage.

[49] **Ann Jones:** Ravi, do you have anything to add to that?

[50] **Ms Vedi:** We will continue to work with the central eastern European association and hook them into our network and, therefore, policy making, but the issue of language still stands.

[51] **Eleanor Burnham:** This is fascinating. My son is teaching English in Lisbon, and my daughter lives in Bucharest. The North Wales Economic Forum had an interesting seminar with WEFO around two years ago. I did not mince my words with one particular person at that seminar, and I thoroughly condone what you say because, frankly, I was baffled by WEFO's presentation at that time. I could not work it out, and I do not think that others could. Should we not call WEFO in to give us evidence on why there is this problem? This is a crucial issue. If you go to Europe, as we all do in little groups, and discuss this with high-ranking officials, you find that they have no idea that we have all these problems. This is the issue for you, is it not, namely that WEFO programmes, which are supposed to be helpful to you, are not helpful? That is the crunch.

[52] **Mr Malik:** That has become the crunch. It seems to me that it is not just our sector that is suffering as a consequence or is being affected, but we are particularly affected. We have painstakingly put together the project and partnership over nine months to a year and, having got a diversity of people with different language skills from different cultural and religious backgrounds together, we found that we had to let everyone go. That is a great loss in terms of the skills that we have created and the development that we have made.

[53] On WEFO and European funds, I am not sure whether the problem is WEFO or the European Commission with regard to the rules about how projects can be developed and who can deliver them not being quite clear. I read a report in the paper in the last couple of days—I cannot remember who wrote it, but it was probably Martin Shipton, knowing his access to sources—which said that where European funding projects are concerned, it now seems to be the case that a lot of organisations are having to return money because they have misspent it because, having developed projects, they should not have delivered them. It almost seems farcical that we, as a partnership of 20 different organisations that have come together, will develop a project and then have to say, 'Right, who is going to come and do it? Somebody else must come and do this work for us; we'll subcontract the work out.'

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** So, it is almost as though the goalposts, having been supposedly defined, have now been moved.

[55] **Mr Malik:** It appears that way. Part of the problem is that the EQUAL project was a pilot project—it was experimental, and we were looking to see what innovations we could bring—and, having developed the concept, we have now had to let it lapse, which is plain wrong. It has had an economic impact on our sector; it has almost decimated a lot of our partnerships, which have had to shrink, and we have lost a lot of the experience and expertise of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It goes much wider than migrant

workers. It impacts on them as much as it impacts on the other communities with which we work and serve.

[56] **Eleanor Burnham:** You are obviously feeling disheartened at the moment.

[57] **Mr Malik:** I am an eternal optimist. When you live in Wales, you have to be, do you not? [*Laughter.*] The important thing is that we are remaining engaged, but we are beginning to get to the point where we feel that this is a long-term decision that can be changed only by the politicians sitting around this table—

[58] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is why I am asking what we can do. This committee's aim and remit is to check on what is happening, what the problems are, and how we can move forward.

[59] **Ann Jones:** We will take some advice as to whom we should contact in terms of looking at some of these problems. I chaired the EQUAL partnership for a while, so I am aware of what it is about.

[60] **Eleanor Burnham:** May I ask another question when you have finished?

[61] **Ann Jones:** Yes, you may. We will look at this issue. Funding will probably be an emerging theme in our report. We will need to look at it. So, we will try to cover those points when we look at the report.

[62] **Eleanor Burnham:** Frankly, some of my other questions are almost meaningless in many respects, because that is your main issue. However, what can be done about the recognition of professional qualifications? I understand that there is a problem for qualified people who do not have the linguistic skills, and there is not a seamless recognition of their professional qualifications here.

[63] **Mr Malik:** May I answer that, or do you want to? I do not want to be seen as hogging the proceedings.

[64] **Ms Sinclair:** No, that is fine.

[65] **Mr Malik:** We have put in a direct application to Brussels with six other European partners, and I think that the lead partner in this will be an organisation in Germany. If I remember rightly, the participants are from Germany, Wales, Italy, Spain and either Estonia or Slovakia. The whole idea of this particular project is to look, on a Europe-wide basis, at the problem of professional qualifications and how we can address it, because so much talent and so many skills are going begging, because there is no general recognition of them. There is recognition for people with professional qualifications from outside Europe who come to Europe to study or to do a postgraduate course, as you can go to a European database and, through that, you can say, 'That is the equivalent of somebody being a barrister.', or, 'That is the equivalent of somebody being a solicitor.'

10.10 p.m.

[66] So, they can come to do their PhD because it is a recognised way for entry into postgraduate education or education itself. We do not have anything similar when it comes to professions or work. We have people who are structural engineers who are working in our sector; we have a doctor who works in the voluntary sector because her qualification is not recognised in this country. There is a huge issue about professional qualifications. As to what the answer is, I will come back to you in 18 months' time and tell you what the result of this particular project is. On that particular project, we are making the application directly through

Brussels. We are responding to the call because the intervention rate there is 80 per cent, not 50 per cent, so the match funding is a little easier to find. There is some work that still needs to be done to see exactly what the problem is and what the solutions might be.

[67] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you have a name for this project?

[68] **Mr Malik:** The project is called, 'Poems'. I can send you the details, if you so wish.

[69] **Ann Jones:** That would be helpful. Does anybody else want to add anything in response to Eleanor's question?

[70] **Ms Sinclair:** In terms of professional qualifications, in the Valleys we have a very small black and ethnic minority population, so we do not come across the same issues as Naz Malik. However, I am working with the Polish community and we find that approximately 80 per cent has a degree or a higher qualification. We have worked with people who are doctors and logisticians and who are working in meat-packing factories. It is to do with their English language skills. As soon as they have learned English, they can access the labour market appropriately. However, as they do not have English-language skills or those skills are not of a high enough level and they cannot access courses, they are left working in factories, which is a waste when they have all these skills to offer our economy. For us, that is a great tragedy.

[71] **Ms Vedi:** The groups with which we have worked have a number of very highly qualified individuals on them, indicated by the quality of the organisations that they have formed. Again, language continues to be an issue. Our work with them was made possible because a migrant workers' officer from Race Equality First, which supported us, was Polish herself and the Polish community was the main make-up of that organisation. Language continues to be an issue.

[72] **Ann Jones:** Thanks. Nick is next.

[73] **Nick Ramsay:** I think that my points have been covered; I was going to ask about qualifications. I will just go back briefly to something that was said earlier on the English-language issue, which is clearly key to this whole problem that you have outlined. You mentioned that the shift patterns of the workers mean that the older children are often looking after the younger children, so they are unable to find the time to get to those courses. I did not quite follow, after that, what you thought that the solution was. Do you think that there should be more support for those children or do you think that there should be greater flexibility in when the lessons are provided to enable those children to attend them?

[74] **Ms Protheroe:** I mentioned that point. The reason that they are attending after-school activities is because, usually, they are funded through small pots of money and it may be one voluntary worker or one worker from the voluntary sector providing an English service. So, it is not a structured, strategic, funding programme of teaching and learning. It is picked up through the voluntary sector, through registered charities that are accessing pots of money to provide after-school English-language activity. You asked about the solutions to that. I would suggest having structured, strategic funding built into the children and young person's strategy, for example. There should be funding through schools for this. I am finding that schools and teachers are saying that they do not know what to do; they do not know who to access to get this information and to get assistance in the classroom for children who cannot speak English. This is a huge problem and, as has been mentioned, it affects everything because if you cannot speak the language, you are not only going backwards in terms of the school curriculum, but it affects a person's self-esteem and it creates isolation, so it is a huge problem.

[75] **Nick Ramsay:** Naz mentioned earlier that one out of 350 schools responded. By any

measure, that is a particularly low hit rate. Did you also say that the situation over the border, where these attempts have been made, is quite different and that you are getting much more engagement and a lot more understanding?

[76] **Mr Malik:** On that one, Nick, we were very disappointed that the response rate was just one out of 350, because we sent a copy of the publication of the work that we had done with young people, and it was their creative written work that we were showing, and we were also inviting them to show an interest and informing them that we would be prepared to come with the artistic director for the concept and the chief executive of the charity that runs the particular project to make presentations to the school to show them how the concept works. When only one out of 350 responded, we knew that we had a challenge.

[77] Looking at the reverse, where England was concerned, when we started to put this particular project together for the nine regions of England, we had about three weeks to put an application together, and the funding application that we made to the Big Lottery Fund is for just under £5 million over five years. Within 10 days, I had found a partner for every region, including Leeds City Council. Given that level of engagement we are confidently predicting that, over the five-year period, our work on the poetry project will affect over 13,000 young people. That is based on the work that has already been done in London over the last five years—for the last two years, I have been involved in that project, and that is how we came across it.

[78] It is a matter of looking to see how the engagement takes place. The critical point for us—and this is what I was going to say earlier, and it could be a policy implication that you could pick up on—is that you see schools, local authorities, people working with youth parliaments and this, that and the other, and they all work in splendid isolation; they do not look outside to see who else is doing the work and whether they can come in and help them to do it. We as a partnership are now very outward looking. The fact that we were able to put such a wide and diverse partnership together was down to the fact that we said, ‘Look, this is the work that we need to do, and we need to make an impact on a Wales-wide basis; let’s get out there and do it’. When we were doing this work, whether it was with young people or looking at economic inactivity, or people progressing in employment, we looked at schools, local authorities, and Jobcentre Plus, but it is difficult to get them to open up to come and work with us.

[79] At one of our conferences, we said that it is extremely difficult to work with Jobcentre Plus, because that was what we were being told by people who would not use it because they found the place intimidating. When they went to the doors of Jobcentre Plus, there was a security guard standing outside, and they found that intimidating, so they would not go in. So we started a drop-in on a Thursday, when jobs are advertised, and we said, ‘Right, each Thursday for the next year, anybody who wants to look for a job can just drop in, we’ll look through the papers with them and we’ll help them with telephone calls and application forms.’, and we regularly had 30 to 40 people walk in through the door, because they knew that they would get that one-to-one support. I think that that work was done in the Valleys and in north Wales, and it was done by the South East Wales Racial Equality Council, and yet, even now, we do not have engagement with Jobcentre Plus.

[80] Another interesting point, which supports the argument that I am making, is that in one of our applications to tackle economic inactivity through the convergence programme, the Welsh European Funding Office, in its assessment, asked us to get in touch with Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and two or three other organisations. I said, ‘Right; we promise that we will get in touch with them’. I got in touch with every one, I spoke to every one over the phone in person, and not one of them has come back and said, ‘Right, let’s see what we can do together and how the voluntary sector can be engaged’. It is all very well to say that there has to be engagement of the third sector, and the third sector has a lot to offer, but it is the

culture of the statutory sector that needs to change, because those organisations do not recognise the knowledge, the experience and the expertise that we have and therefore do not use us.

10.20 a.m.

[81] **Ann Jones:** I want to pursue one line, and then I will bring Mark and Bethan in. On the issue of using other agencies and frontline staff, we heard from the police in north Wales that they have officers who have learned to speak Polish, because that is the predominant migrant community in Wrexham, and have taken the issue on board. Is that the type of thing that you would like frontline staff in other agencies to adopt, or are there any issues that frontline staff should be doing to make things more welcoming for people who are afraid of walking into a jobcentre when there is a security guard on the door, or even of walking into an official office? Do you have any views on that?

[82] **Ms Sinclair:** What we have found in our area, and we have done quite a lot of direct support work with families of migrant workers who are trying to access services in schools, is that we have come across a lot of discrimination. Frontline staff read newspapers like anyone else. I have gone into a council office or a jobcentre and had the response, 'Why don't they learn English?' when I have explained that material needs to be translated. We have had very negative responses. We had a situation where a Portuguese gentleman went in and said, 'I have become homeless—I have lost my job', and because he was not white the immediate response was, 'We do not help illegal immigrants—you are not entitled to anything'. I then went back with our support to explain his background, and because there was an agency involved, the attitude changed completely.

[83] There is a huge lack of training, and I will pick up again on Jobcentre Plus, where many frontline staff do not seem to be aware of the benefit entitlements of people from EU countries—you can have a different response from 10 different people. The vast majority of migrant workers do not access benefits because they are working, but if they become unemployed or they are entitled to child benefit, most frontline staff do not seem to be aware of their entitlement and do not do anything to support them in accessing benefits. Normally, an agency such as ours will have to go in and do that work because there are gatekeepers and barriers at every turn, and if you do not understand the language it is impossible to navigate the system. That has been our experience of frontline staff—there needs to be training, awareness raising and myth-busting exercises. As I said, frontline staff are members of our community and often harbour discriminatory attitudes.

[84] **Mr Malik:** To add a point in support of what Tara is saying, the Valleys Race Equality Council also produced a welcome pack for economic migrants, which I thought was a fantastic innovation, which told people who they should go to see and what they should do if they had certain problems. That can be extended. That type of tool should be available in Jobcentre Plus or other places. It is one thing to get people to make a commitment to learn the language—I have been trying to learn Welsh for the past 25 years, and I have not made dramatic in-roads into it, so I know how difficult it is—but the main problem is not that the desire is not there, but the time. If we say, 'You must start learning Welsh as well as Portuguese, Urdu and Punjabi', we are putting an unnecessary burden and pressure on civil servants in that respect. However, what we can do is to say, 'This experience and expertise exists in the Valleys Race Equality Council, Voluntary Action Cardiff and the All-Wales Ethnic Minority Association—you should be using the money to support and resource them so that you can take advantage of those skills'. That is what I meant earlier when I said that there was a lack of recognition of this experience, knowledge and expertise, and that it is being wasted. We do not want people to start learning everything so that they can provide the solutions to every problem, but if there is a problem we should expect that there is someone out there who can provide the solution. It is about making sure that they work with us, so that

we can work with them.

[85] **Ms Vedi:** You were talking about how we can make the environment more welcoming. On our website, vacardiff.org.uk, we have done simple things, such as a multi-lingual welcome sign; that immediately sends the signal that we are an accessible organisation. All of our training includes elements of the Welsh language, even if it is just names in case studies. Our welcome signs are always in various languages. However, the wider issue for me is not just about Assembly staff, but how migrant communities are portrayed in the media. We hear a great deal of negative stuff—good news is no news—so perhaps this is about looking at how we project a more positive and realistic image of migrant communities.

[86] **Ann Jones:** Eleanor wants to come in briefly on this aspect, and I will then bring in Mark.

[87] **Eleanor Burnham:** You probably know about the work of Wrexham council. I live in the area and I am very proud of it, because it has done a great deal of hard work on myth-busting, including producing booklets and so on. As Ann said, the area now has a Polish-speaking police officer and so on. However, the issue of the media is very difficult, as we all know and as Ravi has just said. It is incumbent on us all to do our best on this; myth-busting is one of the biggest issues. For example, when you get into a taxi, which is a wonderfully informative place to be, you find yourself having to tell the driver that whatever they have heard is not actually happening—that migrants are not getting free cars or a free this, that and the other, and that they have to wait in the queue like everyone else in the UK. There is a great deal of misinformation. Thank you for making that point.

[88] **Mr Malik:** To add to what you just said about Wrexham, Eleanor, the authority has engaged with us on the convergence and competitiveness programme, but the work that it wanted to do was on providing access to the heritage museum or something like that—I cannot remember exactly. It wanted to do part of that work with migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers in Wrexham. It has engaged with us for the past nine months to a year, but the whole thing has come to a halt because we cannot make progress.

[89] **Ann Jones:** Before Mark asks his questions, perhaps we should have a five-minute break. I have just realised that we have been going for about an hour. We will return to this issue then. Thank you.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.27 a.m. a 10.38 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.27 a.m. and 10.38 a.m.*

[90] **Ann Jones:** We will now reconvene. I apologise about the temperature; we have asked for it to be raised—we are obviously not talking enough hot air to keep us warm, so we must be doing good stuff. If you switched on your mobile phones, BlackBerrys and so on during that short break, will you please ensure that they are now switched off? We will carry on with our questioning, and Mark, you may start this second session.

[91] **Mark Isherwood:** I will develop some of the points that you all made towards the end of the previous session. Tara referred to the need for awareness training, particularly for front-line public sector staff. How should that be delivered, and who should deliver it? Naz also referred to the concern that the rhetoric about using the third sector was not always matched in practice. How can we raise awareness in the public sector of the benefits of commissioning outcomes on a level playing field across the sector, utilising the skills, expertise and resources of the third sector? Finally, in terms of service users themselves—the migrant workers—you made reference to helping to raise their awareness of their rights and responsibilities through welcome packs, but what other measures could be undertaken to raise

their awareness of their own entitlements?

10.40 a.m.

[92] **Ms Sinclair:** In response to the first question, on front-line workers, social workers and nurses get trained in equality and diversity and that is a statutory responsibility. I am not sure how things are funded, but the Valleys Race Equality Council has trained the police and local authorities, and provided training in our area. If Jobcentre Plus and other front-line agencies had funding available to provide training, and it was made a statutory requirement that workers had to undergo this training if they deal with the general public, organisations such as ours, or any other organisation that provides training, could be taken on board to ensure that the front-line workers do not act in a discriminatory fashion when dealing with people from different backgrounds. It is essential that that training takes place. Valrec is not there nine times out of 10, and people cannot access the services that they need. We usually end up coming on board—if the client is particularly lucky and has heard of us—in an emergency situation, such as if an eviction is to take place in a few days' time, or where social services might be involved and may not be aware of cultural issues where children are being removed from their parents' care. That has happened, where people have not been aware of the cultural needs of the people that they are working with. It needs to be a statutory requirement and people need to be made aware of the law.

[93] Also, within these services, people need to be made aware of entitlements, and there needs to be much better training. As I said, most Jobcentre Plus staff have no idea what migrant workers are entitled to and what they are not. This can end up placing the families of migrant worker in extreme poverty, which has an impact on schools and on the communities in which we live. What was your third question?

[94] **Mark Isherwood:** The third one was about raising the awareness of migrant workers themselves about their rights and responsibilities.

[95] **Ms Sinclair:** As I said, on migrant workers' rights and responsibilities—going back to the language issue—unless you have English language skills, you cannot realise your own rights or perform your own responsibilities. We deal on a regular basis with migrant workers who suffer from exploitation, be it withholding of bonds when moving into houses or zero contracts—I do not know whether you are aware of those—where migrant workers are recruited and offered no hours of work but have tied accommodation. Workers are sometimes threatened that their jobs will come to an end and that they will have to leave the country if they join a trade union. Unless people have English language skills, it is virtually impossible to realise their rights or to be aware of their responsibilities. We have had evidence that certain agencies are deliberately recruiting migrant workers who do not have English language skills, so that they are more easily exploited. That is massively problematic. This goes back to language, language, language.

[96] **Ms Protheroe:** Just to pick up on some things that Tara has said, it is becoming evident that all of these issues are linked. Although we emphasise the importance of language, it crosses over into accessibility, training, discrimination and so on. All these issues are connected and interlinked. When we approach one issue, we must remember how it will affect others. That picks up on what Naz said earlier about working together and agencies talking to each other and understanding their obligations.

[97] On the training element, Valrec provides a lot of training across local authorities within our area and we also provide training to South Wales Police and Parc prison, with which we work very closely. We know that public bodies have a statutory obligation to ensure that their staff are trained around equality and diversity, but a lot of training within local authorities, for example, is done through e-learning, which is just a tick box. So, the

quality of training and the type of training that is being delivered is also something that needs to be thought of when you consider the training issue.

[98] **Ms Vedi:** Just to follow on from that, Voluntary Action Cardiff runs a community development network, and one of the themes that we worked through last year was around faith and diversity. We ran an event called ‘Getting to know our Muslim communities’ and it was very much about sharing individual stories and building upon them. Human beings have a lot in common, but when it comes to issues around race, that goes straight out of the window. We had a huge demand from the statutory sector to attend that training. In one day, we had 10 calls from the officers of statutory organisations. So, there is a demand for it, but provision is patchy, and so there needs to be consistency in diversity training. As Tara said, it is about it being a requirement, and it needs to be part of the provisional framework for statutory agencies.

[99] **Ms Sinclair:** In addition to that, I am aware that it is a statutory requirement for people to be aware of equality and diversity issues, but, as Christine said, the issue is how that is done. From my experience, I know that a lot of front-line staff have not been trained at all, and I do not know how statutory organisations are getting around that requirement. It seems to me that a lot of managers get trained but not the front-line staff, or they are asked to fill out a questionnaire and that is considered to fulfil the requirement. As a result, we are having these problems.

[100] **Ms Protheroe:** This goes back to the equality training and how that obligation is met. If they just have to tick a box, they can do that by asking questions such as, ‘How would you treat the person in this example?’ and giving people a choice of box to tick. That can be defined as equality and diversity training. However, as we all know around this table, in the real world, when you are a front-line member of staff, knowing how to deal with and approach someone of a different culture is very different from sitting down and answering a series of tick-box questions. The quality of the training is very important. We have had an excellent response from all the organisations that we have worked with, and lots of them are saying that they want to put on more training for all staff. However—and you know what I will say next—the main problem is funding. That has been a problem for us, and especially for the local authorities that are on board and that want to provide equality and diversity training. They want to bring in the voluntary sector to do it, and they think that face-to-face training for front-line staff is important and should be done, but funding has been a problem.

[101] **Mr Malik:** I want to illustrate the point and the work that the Valleys Race Equality Council is doing on training because Mark raised two issues, one of which was training and how it can be delivered, and the other was the rights and responsibilities of the people who come here wanting to work. The point is best illustrated by the fantastic and phenomenal amount of engagement that is going on between Valrec and some of the statutory agencies. Part of its success story is that it is on the ground, nearby and easily accessible.

[102] I would be happy to wager that, if you did an elementary trawl through some of the training being delivered on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, you would find that more than 80 per cent of it is delivered by organisations based outside Wales. That cannot be right. It seems to be either a culture or an inadvertent consequence, but we are hooked on inviting organisations to tender and those that have the experience and expertise of writing a good bid will get the work. However, once they have the work, they ring up Valrec, me and the others, saying, ‘We have been given this, that and the other’. I have started saying, ‘Yes, wonderful, but that will be £250 an hour if you want me to do it’. The crazy thing is that, in the last two weeks, an organisation based in Leeds paid us £250 for one hour’s consultation, because it just did not have the access that we had. I think that that is wasteful.

[103] Why can we not have some kind of mechanism that recognises the work that Valrec

and other organisations do and the training that we provide? Why can we not say that, when it comes to training provision and the type being delivered, we have a register of home-grown experience and expertise, so you should go there first and invite the organisations on that register to tender? If it does not work and the quality is not as good as it needs to be, you can go out, but before that, there should be an obligation on you to provide pre-invitation-to-tender training on how to fill in a form and meet your selection criteria, on what you are looking for, how you score and so on. It is your responsibility to ensure that organisations in the third sector have the experience and expertise to write good bids so that they can win the work. They have the experience and the expertise to do the work, but they do not necessarily have the experience and the expertise to write good bids. That would be the main point that I would make when it comes to training. We need to encourage home-grown organisations within our sector to provide that training.

10.50 a.m.

[104] The second point, on which I will be very brief, is how people understand their roles and responsibilities. Tara was saying that it is language, language, language all the time. The most important point, I think, is that the demand to learn is there. We do not want to give the impression that the people who come here who do not speak English do not want to learn because they are being lazy or because they are not prepared to make that commitment; the people who come here and make a long-term commitment have a genuine desire to be integrated, valued and to be a part of the community and society that they live in. However, when they try to access those language courses, the supply simply is not there. So, it is not so much a question of giving us the money as of giving us the resources, I would say. If the resources are right, the courses will be laid on at Swansea Metropolitan University, Merthyr College or at the organisations themselves. If the supply is there, the demand will always be met. I think that we will be able to break that logjam and people will know and understand what their rights and responsibilities are.

[105] I am always keen to give the example of Sweden. When you go to Sweden, for the first six months, there are intensive language-training courses and people coming in are expected to learn Swedish or get an elementary grasp of the language. If the resources were available here for us to say, 'Right, you can work with people intensively for a period of six months to bring them up to speed, so that they can know and understand what their rights and responsibilities are and can communicate at an elementary level', that logjam could be broken.

[106] **Mark Isherwood:** You mentioned funding in the public sector. I have spoken to a number of third sector groups, charities and local organisations that represent the different equality strands that say that the problem lies with funding. They are not always asking for £250 an hour, but if their core administration costs are not being covered, they cannot go to provide the service that the local authority wants them to provide. So, it is a two-way street.

[107] You mentioned e-learning. I spoke at a conference in north Wales last December, when some new e-learning modules were being launched for each of the strands. Representatives of each of the equality strands, when you ask them, will put training at the top of their list—on the one hand, about equality awareness and, on the other, about the equality duty. Is there a case for having some generic training in those areas for all staff, and then perhaps to go down the e-learning line to drill down to the more detailed knowledge within the strands?

[108] **Ms Protheroe:** I would definitely say that training on equality was, traditionally, very much based on race, as that was the first legislation on equality to be passed and it contained the first statutory obligation for statutory bodies. However, we now have the six equality mandates and none of us fits in nicely to a box of any kind, so training and equality

training must be done across the board for the individual. It must be across the six strands, but it must also cover other issues in society, such as carers and lone parents. We bring all of that into our generic training. However, we do exactly what you said. Within that training, we drill down to the specifics of the equality duties, against the specific equality mandates, and then we train on those duties. Given that the Welsh Assembly Government has now created a single equality duty, we would advocate that anyone doing something against individual obligations, such as impact assessments and so on, should look at it from a generic stance first and then start doing that. That is how we provide our training. I cannot speak for other organisations, because I do not know how they provide their training, but I know that there are consultants in the private sector who provide training on just one specific issue. However, that can sometimes have an adverse effect, rather than a positive effect—especially when we are dealing with and talking about non-visual migrant workers, who bring with them different cultural issues and different kinds of discrimination and prejudice.

[109] **Ann Jones:** Joyce, you wanted to come in on that, and I know that Bethan wants to, as well.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** We all know that we have this single equalities Act and the new Equality and Human Rights Commission, which has Welsh representation on it. The other point that I wish to mention is the applications that allow you to take part in the procurement process. We took evidence from the Wales Council for Voluntary Action a short time ago, which is charged with helping organisations to access funding. Having heard its evidence and its claims that it will help organisations to access money and perhaps write up bids, I am a little surprised to hear that you are experiencing problems. I just want to put that on the table, but I will park it there.

[111] The other issue that I am picking up is that of training across the board and the value of front-line staff. We are not just talking about front-line staff in a particular department, such as housing, but about staff who must find housing for women and children who are suffering domestic abuse, for example, and absolutely everyone. How do you think the Assembly and the EHRC in Wales can facilitate, given that that is its role, that comprehensive training? It is not about just any training either.

[112] **Mr Malik:** I will pick up the points that you made about the WCVA and the EHRC and the training that it provides. Incidentally, we do not have a single equalities Act as yet; it is on its way. On the WCVA, to be honest, I do not know how much work it does with our sector, how many funding applications it has facilitated or its success rate. However, AWEMA recognised around three years ago that one of the biggest problems with the race equality part of the voluntary sector was that there was a lot of conflict, founded on the fact that we were competing for the same minute amount of resources. The winners would walk away with a smile and the losers were left smarting. AWEMA came to the conclusion that the only way to demonstrate that we were not quarrelling with each other just for the sake of it and that we could work together was if we solved the issue of access to resources. So, we made a deliberate strategic decision that, in future, when we started to fill in funding applications, we would keep others within our sector in mind as well. We wanted to experiment through the EQUAL programme. As a result, we made one application, but within our budget were the budgets of 20 other different organisations. We took the pain away from all the partners by saying that we would manage everyone's budget. So, we were collating the budgets and dealing with the Welsh European Funding Office as one organisation, but it was dealing with 20 organisations, just by dealing with AWEMA.

[113] I do not think that the WCVA has done anything like that, certainly not within our sector. I do not know whether it has done anything like that on a wider basis, but it may have come to you and said, 'Look, we made a funding application for 25 different organisations and this is the result of the partnership work that we have done'. I do not know. That would

have to be established as a fact. Once we successfully accessed Equal funding, it provided us with some training on the accounting rules and the regulations, and how we needed to ensure that we did not fall foul of an article 4 visit or an article 10 team visit. Despite that, we took what little training they provided us with on board, and we invited the article 4 team to come in at the beginning of the project to tell us whether we had our systems and controls right. So, there was a certain level of engagement, but at a very low level.

11.00 a.m.

[114] The one thing that I would say about the WCVA is that it does sterling and fantastic work, but I do not think that it touches our sector anywhere near to the extent that is needed. It has its own executive committee, and it has only one space for an ethnic minority person. The same person has been the ethnic minority member for some time; he lives in Cardiff and I have never heard any person from outside Cardiff tell me that he has visited the different BME organisations across Wales to try to understand the problems so that he can represent the interests of that sector. I am not too sure that I would laud the work that it does in our sector, but I am not taking anything away from the fact that it does some very good work as well.

[115] The second question that you asked was about training and some of the work that the EHRC can do. I think that it is early days to say anything about that, but we have certainly bid for some work, and we are in the process of developing a good practice guide on the Human Rights Act 1998, and as a part of that we will be engaging the statutory and the voluntary sectors as well as, to a limited extent, the trade unions. That work has only just started, however, and I think that we will be able to pick up all these points and perhaps come back to you in a year to look at how it has worked.

[116] **Ann Jones:** Does anybody else want to add anything in response to Joyce's question?

[117] **Ms Protheroe:** Yes, just to pick up on the question of what the EHRC does with regard to training, the problem for us as an organisation is that we have identified a need, there is an acceptance that the need exists and people want training, so it all comes down to funding. We would never turn people away, and we do a lot of work over and above what we are called to do and for no moneys with the statutory sector and other sectors. However, there should be something, I would say, along the lines of a core funding scheme, which could perhaps come from something like the EHRC, to fund the voluntary sector to deliver all this training to the statutory sector so that the statutory sector is meeting its obligations. It could be claimed at this point in time that, if we were to trawl through the public bodies, including schools, and looked at race equality schemes and disability equality schemes, it may be that they are not all meeting their obligations, although I am not saying that that is the case.

[118] So, it is a problem, and we now need to look at this with some urgency. Also, this is something with which the EHRC could help by, for example, providing core funding to the voluntary sector to provide this training to the statutory sector, and perhaps this could then be rolled out to other sectors, and particularly to bodies such as Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales, as they have a huge impact on our work.

[119] **Ms Vedi:** A number of voluntary sector organisations would be able to provide the training, given the resources. For example, Voluntary Action Cardiff works quite closely with the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales, and it provides, I understand, quite a lot of training. Its people are experienced in providing training for the statutory sector and so, in that sense the resource is there; it just needs the funding. As many of these organisations are fairly small, it is very difficult for them to do everything that they would really like to because, in reality, they consist of about four or five staff and they are dependent on varying core funding.

[120] **Ann Jones:** Thank very much. The final question is from Bethan.

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** You touched on this question earlier with regard to rights, when you said that the language comes into play. Other organisations, such as Citizens Advice, have told us in their evidence that they are lobbying for the establishment of a fair employment commission, which would bring various organisations together, such as the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and the employment tribunal system. Have you been in any communication with Citizens Advice regarding that initiative, and do you support it?

[122] Secondly, we are talking extensively about encouraging migrant workers to learn English and to learn about their rights, but what efforts have you made to encourage wider communities to engage with migrant communities? In a former life, as it were, I organised lots of events for international students at Aberystwyth University, and that proved successful in getting people to talk and to mix culturally. Do you think that that needs more funding, could it be done purely through organisations such as yours, or should the Welsh Assembly Government steer that?

[123] **Ms Sinclair:** We have organised many multicultural events in the areas in which we work to promote community cohesion. We have set up an international club in Merthyr Tydfil, which is run by and for migrant workers. They host events for migrant worker communities and the general public, to engage them. I have just finished training everyone at Merthyr Tydfil College on equality and diversity, and specifically with 16, 17 and 18-year-old students on busting the myths surrounding the issues of migrant workers in their areas. The aim is to bring down the barriers and to dispel preconceived ideas about why migrant workers are here or about the work that they are doing.

[124] The areas that we work in are fairly homogenous: the south Wales Valleys are traditionally composed of white, Welsh and working-class people with a tiny black and minority ethnic population. The impact on those communities of large numbers of people coming into the area who are perceived to be foreigners is dramatic. This work is about raising awareness, promoting interaction and—to flag it up yet again—language, language, language. If people have learned the English language, it is a lot easier to promote community cohesion and integration.

[125] On the question about Citizens Advice, I am not aware of a specific good practice guide for employers. I do not think that it is an issue of employers not knowing what they are supposed to do; to be blunt, it is more one of their cutting corners and deliberately violating legislation and people's rights to make profits. Therefore, I am not quite sure what this good practice guide would be. Could you tell me a little more about it?

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** Citizens Advice proposes an independent body for workers' protection, because one does not currently exist here, which would bring all the relevant bodies together. As you said, many of the companies know what they should be doing but do not do it. Therefore, it is trying to make that statutory through an independent commission.

[127] **Ms Sinclair:** That sounds very positive. However, many migrant workers—certainly those with whom we have worked—will not whistle-blow. Instead, they tell organisations such as mine what is going on, in the strictest confidence. If you are tied into a zero-hour contract, all you have to do is make a simple complaint and you will find that you are suddenly left with no hours of work. There is nothing that states that your employer must provide you with work, and so, basically, you would be told to leave and to go back to your own country. That means that your ability to pursue that complaint is hugely limited. Although that independent body sounds like a positive move, I am not sure that it would have a massively positive impact on migrant workers' lives and rights.

[128] **Ms Vedi:** I just want to add a point on community cohesion. Voluntary Action Cardiff has recently been successful—although we still have not found desks for everyone—in engaging several community workers in the new Communities First areas, given that Cardiff had the largest number of new Communities First areas in Wales. We are in the process of engaging two community cohesion workers. One of the communities has quite a large migrant worker population, and so we hope to work on community cohesion by looking at those issues that are of concern to communities and by trying to link communities together in that way.

11.10 a.m.

[129] **Ms Protheroe:** I would also like to add to that. This obviously fits into the regeneration process within communities, and that is why there is an element in regeneration for mainstreaming equality and diversity. Valrec has done a lot of work with Communities First in that area, and part of that work has been delivering a lot of workshops to the communities and partnership boards in our area as well as to schools. This has been seen more as awareness-raising rather than training—if you can put those into two separate areas—in that workshops for schools have lasted only an hour or two. It has been very well accepted and schools have asked for us to come back on many occasions.

[130] Obviously, the issue of funding comes up again there with regard to us going back into the schools. The schools are very open to it; they want us to come in and the feedback from the children is very good. They are saying to us that they have never been told things like this before or heard stuff like this about different cultures in different areas of the world, and the teachers are asking us to please come back to do more of these workshops. The issue has been about funding again.

[131] **Mr Malik:** I am not entirely sure about having a commission that looks at employers to see whether they are doing the work. I was telling Ann during the break about the Environment Agency; Professor George Karani, who happens to be our chair, is also on the Environment Agency board. As part of the EQUAL project that we did, he visited some of the employers to look at the working environment of European economic migrants—and it was not as a result of having access or people complaining. He said that the shocking thing was that elementary things were missing. For example, if you went to the loos there was no hot water for people to wash their hands or a blow-dryer. These were elementary things, and by working with these different employers, they were able to bring about those changes in a completely non-threatening sort of way. I am sure that a great deal of that work could be done through the Environment Agency, and where there is an engagement with Citizens Advice and so on, that is all positive because it gets different organisations and institutions working together. I would be supportive of that.

[132] You have hit on another hobby horse of mine, Bethan, namely the civic welcomes for international students. About four years ago, for two years running, we were able to persuade Swansea University and Swansea Metropolitan University, along with Gorseinon College and Swansea College, to host a civic welcome for international students, and we tried to engage the local authority. In the first year, we were given a small sum of money, and as part our Communities First work, we said that we would invest £500 or £600 as well. We could justify it as part of the community cohesion agenda, which highlights the issues of the communities that these students come into. It worked really well for two years because we were driving it, and then, from the third year on, we said that the local authorities and the university should take it on, but they just dropped it because they were not prepared to invest the time. At the same time, I wrote to all the principal universities in Wales and suggested that one day should be nominated on an annual basis as a day of civic welcome for international students to recognise the contribution that these students make to the economy of Wales and the richness

that they also bring with them. If you were to pick that as one of your hobby horses, I would be delighted.

[133] **Ann Jones:** Very briefly, I will bring in Eleanor and then Nick.

[134] **Eleanor Burnham:** I just wish to clarify Naz's and Tara's comments about employers. Who should be tackling this and how? We are very concerned with the whole issue of improving, and we are not just speaking to you because we want to write a nice report; we want to improve things. On the issue of zero-hours contracts and so on, I visited pickers of cauliflowers and leeks on the Cheshire/Flintshire border and I was fascinated and a little perturbed because there were two wonderful groups of Polish people, with one interpreter, who were being bussed in daily. One group was from Wolverhampton and the other was from Manchester. That perturbed me. They looked happy enough, but who was I to tell? We had a little look at how leeks are cut differently for the Welsh and English markets and so on, which is fascinating in its own way, but, seriously, this is a huge issue because the employers have total control as the workers cannot speak the language. The Chair has mentioned the possibility of hot-bedding and such nonsense and that is quite worrying, so who should be putting the pressure on whom?

[135] **Ms Sinclair:** There is the gangmasters legislation, but apparently there are only four enforcement officers across the whole of the UK. That is what I have heard. I am not sure whether that is just anecdotal or fact.

[136] **Ann Jones:** The Gangmasters' Licensing Authority came to give evidence to us. It said that it knew that there was a lot of work to do, and that it is systematically working through it, but we never asked it about numbers. Perhaps we should go back and check.

[137] **Mr Jackson:** I think that it indicated that it was looking at how it could make a case in the future for increased resources.

[138] **Ann Jones:** We might check on that; it might be interesting to do that.

[139] **Ms Sinclair:** Apparently, it is a very difficult situation and there is not much enforcement. The law on tied accommodation and zero-hours contracts and so on needs to be tightened up, but that is a Westminster issue. An issue that we have not touched on specifically is how this impacts on migrant workers' children. We have had several cases of children living in absolute poverty as a result of zero-hours contracts. One woman whom we met was living off £20 a week in shared hot-bed-style accommodation with her eight-year-old child. In a Valleys area that suffers from high levels of deprivation, you can imagine what that must be like.

[140] **Eleanor Burnham:** Such cases are in the minority, are they not? The majority of people are being looked after.

[141] **Ms Sinclair:** From when we first started doing this, I would say 'no' and that the majority of people are on zero-hours contracts. They come over and bring their families and they may be told by the agency that there is no more work in a factory, so they may have several weeks of no work whatsoever, which means that they do not have any money to pay the rent or to feed their children. If you are a Polish worker, you cannot access benefits until you have been working here for 12 months continuously. If you have children, you have no means to feed or clothe them during that time. You then may be told that you have to move to the south of England if you want work, because that is where the work is. So, you take your child out of school and move however many hundreds of miles for the possibility of work that you may or may not get. We had frantic calls from Polish workers around a year and a half ago when that happened—work had dried up in the factory where they were working and they

were all moved down to a youth hostel in Cornwall and were all living there, with children, and working in another factory. The industry needs to be much more tightly regulated. Employers are benefiting hugely from this. They are getting all of these benefits and there are no rights for the workers and no responsibility is being taken for them.

[142] There are also situations where people are working in abattoirs and are doing the job of slaughtermen, who should get paid around £14 or £15 an hour, but the migrant workers get paid exactly the same as meat packers. This is anecdotal; these stories are told to us. People do not want to put their heads above the parapet and say these things publicly, but, when there are inspections, all of the Polish workers are taken off the job of slaughtering and put back to packing meat which is paid £5.25 an hour. They are taken out of the boning hall where they have to chop up all the meat, which is also a highly skilled job and should be paid significantly more, but the migrant and Polish workers are being paid a flat rate of £5 an hour to do those more skilled jobs. That is standard practice for migrant workers.

[143] On the impact on children, if the children are in school, particularly Polish children who seem to be very academically able and, generally, that is the consequence of having highly educated parents—

11.20 a.m.

[144] **Eleanor Burnham:** Surely that must also aid the myth that they are taking our jobs and are willing to work for less money and that that is not good for the economy.

[145] **Ms Sinclair:** Yes, but the migrant workers are trapped in a cycle; they are told that they are going to a packing job, but are then forced to do a more highly skilled job and are paid a minimum wage for it. That is how these employers are making their profits.

[146] **Ann Jones:** I want to bring Nick in with the last question, because we are running out of time.

[147] **Nick Ramsay:** I have a general question about the term ‘myth-busting’, which was used earlier. I noticed that all of you used it at one point or another. There is clearly a problem when you are trying to get through to migrant workers and people who may be unable to access services or are unwilling to do so—[*Inaudible.*]—people have misconceptions. To what extent are you able to use people who have been through the system who know that those services are there for them and that the situation is not as bad as people might think in order to help new people coming in?

[148] **Ms Sinclair:** I think that the bottom line is that people are not having that good experience. The majority of people approaching services are having huge difficulties in accessing them. For example, when I first started this job, we went around all of the banks in the area in which we worked and asked what would happen if someone who did not speak English came into the bank, and all but one bank told us that they would turn them away. We were told that if such people did not bring someone in with them who spoke the language they would not be able to open a bank account.

[149] **Ann Jones:** I have raised the issue of the language barrier before. Welcome packs in different languages are needed.

[150] **Ms Sinclair:** The thing about welcome packs is that you provide information in different languages describing the services and what they provide; but try to access it—you cannot. You may know that the service exists, but it is impossible to access it. For example, what happens if you are a Portuguese worker and you want to apply for child benefit? It is virtually impossible for an educated British person to fill in some of those forms, so can you

imagine trying to do that if you cannot speak Welsh or English? The forms are provided only in those languages. If people had that good experience, we could use it, and it would be one way of helping people, but the only people who have that experience are fluent English speakers—and even they experience difficulties.

[151] **Mr Malik:** Perhaps I could break it down in this way: based on our experience from our work, there are examples of people who have been through this who use that experience to inform people from their communities. When you are working with Black or Asian families, the skills and experience required are the same, and we are best placed to do that kind of work. However, the important thing is that when we are trying to access the Chinese community, for example, we have someone from that cultural background who is able to get the access to start with and who has the ability to feed back the information so that we can work out what some of the policy or resource implications are. I think that the same thing applies, whether or not we are dealing with economic migrant workers.

[152] In Swansea, it has certainly happened through the setting up of the Saturday school. It facilitated the whole thing and said, 'Right; it is possible to do it. Let us go and see Pentre Hafod School.' so it became a self-organised group. Having organised themselves, they are beginning to share some of their experiences, but when it comes to doing something about it, that is where the pressure or the bottleneck is, and you are not able to go in any direction because of the lack of resources.

[153] **Ms Vedi:** There is a great deal of good practice around, and perhaps that could be collated in order to set the ball rolling. There is a great deal to be learned from the voluntary sector, but the information is not all in one place. With regard to child poverty, it is a key issue for outcomes in the next Communities First programme, so perhaps it needs to be highlighted in that context too.

[154] **Ann Jones:** Are you happy with that, Nick?

[155] **Nick Ramsay:** Yes.

[156] **Ann Jones:** Fine. I therefore thank you all for your evidence—it has been a long session, but a very interesting one. You will receive a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy; if we have misquoted you in any way, please let us know. Thank you all for attending and for your time this morning.

[157] I advise Members that this is the last scheduled evidence session on this inquiry. We hope to prepare a paper for the last meeting of term, on 16 July, with emerging issues. Therefore, if anyone thinks that we have missed out any points, perhaps you could communicate that to the committee secretariat, and we will look at it to see whether there is an issue.

[158] **Bethan Jenkins:** What will happen next, Chair? Will there be a draft paper?

[159] **Ann Jones:** Yes. We will bring a paper to the last committee meeting, on emerging issues and draft recommendations, for us to go through.

[160] **Bethan Jenkins:** So that will just be the preliminary stage of the process?

[161] **Ann Jones:** Yes, very much so.

[162] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. So if I have anything else, I can let you know?

[163] **Ann Jones:** Yes. If you think of anything else in the next week or so, or if you think

that we need a little more on something, when you look back at the evidence that we have taken, there may be an opportunity to slide in another evidence session.

[164] **Eleanor Burnham:** Following on from that, will we be having a full-scale debate in Plenary?

[165] **Ann Jones:** We will submit a committee report, in the usual way—

[166] **Eleanor Burnham:** Will that be before the summer recess?

[167] **Ann Jones:** No, the report will not be written by then.

[168] Thank you all once again. I remind Members about our 2 July meeting, when we will have a formal session, and then a private session. I urge you to block your diaries out to cover the two-hour block rather than just the hour block for the formal session.

[169] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is at 9 a.m., is it?

[170] **Ann Jones:** It will be from 9.15 a.m. until 12 p.m..

[171] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do we have that down anywhere?

[172] **Ann Jones:** Yes, we will have.

[173] **Eleanor Burnham:** So is 2 July our next meeting?

[174] **Ann Jones:** Yes, that will be our next meeting. Therefore, I thank you all very much, and I thank the witnesses again for their evidence. That brings the meeting to a close.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.27 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.27 a.m.*