1. We provide a brief, non-exhaustive, synopsis of some recurring issues highlighted by the work of the Association in its role as a voluntary organisation and registered charity whose aim, as expressed in its constitution is *inter alia* “to promote the benefit of the inhabitants of Inverness and area and in particular the Polish Community without distinction of sex or of race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary or other organisations in a common effort …… to enhance good race relations between people of different ethnic groups by endeavouring to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race and encouraging equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups”.

**Relations with national authorities:**

2. It has been recognised, in particular by COSLA, that migrants enhance cultural diversity, contribute economically and in some cases make the continued provision of services viable; that migration is a key mechanism for counteracting the problems associated with an ageing and declining population.

3. In contradiction to the above they appear to bemoan the fact that local authorities face additional costs from translating materials providing English language support to children in schools and adapting services to the needs of growing populations.

4. Notwithstanding they state that the benefits of migration generally outweigh the costs to local authorities we submit that the perception, rightly or wrongly, in the migrant Community, with respect to Highland Council, in particular, is that the Council “makes it difficult” to access services and benefits to which migrant workers and their families are entitled. This also extends to central government agencies such as HMRC and DWP.

5. Following from the above there appears to be a general lack of trust as regards public services and “persons in authority” There may be a number of reasons for this ranging from, on the one hand, differing cultural mindsets, perhaps resulting from the experience of differing regimes in different Member States, to, on the other, language difficulties. In any event this we believe is one of the main reasons individuals will first consult with voluntary organisations such as the IPA. Feeling vulnerable if dealing with the authorities, (e.g., local/national government or the police), direct it is perhaps a stepping stone where persons feel less at risk of losing whatever it is they have already achieved in exercising their EU Treaty rights.
Employment

6. The feeling of vulnerability extends to the workplace. There seems to be a fear to exercise employment rights. Experience shows that this is exploited by employers. While many local employers espouse the “hard-working and reliable” migrant worker (as compared to their indigenous counterparts) they seem equally capable of using them through unscrupulous employment practices and conditions of work. An inevitable off-shoot of this is a growing attitude among indigenous workers that “they are coming over here and taking all our jobs”, with the concomitant growth of resentment and then animosity between communities promoting “ghetto-isation” and restricting integration (which we suggest the latter should be a common goal). This is obviously exacerbated by the current unemployment situation.

Housing

7. The difficulties outlined above are also prevalent as regards housing. Migrant workers are overwhelmingly in the private housing sector. Unfortunately there are many examples of landlords resorting to the tactics of slum landlords of the last century. We need only cite the example of the recent events in Govanhill Glasgow. This we believe is a nationwide problem.

Examples of cases dealt with by the IPA

8. Examples of specific problems dealt with by the IPA as a first port call because there is a perceived lack of trust in the national authorities, employers, private landlords:

- A family being intimidated in their home by local youths with the acquiescence of their parents. Charged by police for defending their home. Charges dropped by Procurator Fiscal;
- Refusal by HM Revenue and Customs to allow a resident migrant worker child benefit for children in this country (case pending). We refer to the recent ruling of the English High Court allowing benefits for children of a Portuguese national residing here whose children live in their home country;
- Three cases within as many weeks of employees giving due notice to quit or having their contracts terminated and the employers refusing to meet valid claims for final remuneration due and holiday pay. All settled on intervention of the IPA;
- Landlords attempting to evict tenants notwithstanding they are protected under short assured tenancies.; refusal to return deposits at end of tenancies.

9. We thank the Committee for consideration of this submission. We shall be pleased to collaborate with the Committee further, should they deem it useful to their proceedings, and provide it with any further information it may request.

Zosia Wierzbowicz Fraser, Chairman, Inverness Polish Association
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