1. A number of clients living in Govanhill have sought advice from Govanhill Law Centre, Czech CHCP workers and Crossroads regarding an employment agency/letting agent who operates in the area. Detailed evidence and statements have been passed to the police, the Gangmaster Licensing Authority, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and Glasgow City Council.

- We currently represent over 20 clients from Czech Republic and Slovakia who are in this situation.
- They have no work and no English skills- the agency advertise that English is not required. The agency advertise on the internet and in newspapers in Czech Republic and Slovakia.
- The company change their name regularly, which presents problems to enforcement agencies trying to bring the agency to justice.
- Our clients they have been conned to arriving in the UK with the promise of a job, but arrive here, pay £450 and are not given jobs.
- Our clients are forced to sign documents they do not understand as they are in English. The terms of the written agreement differ from their understanding of the agreement.
- Our clients have no way of paying their rent to their landlord and are totally destitute. Local private landlords appear to have entered into informal arrangements this agency, allowing them to act as “landlord”.
- This arrangement has been going on for some years, and evidence from advisors in the area indicates that hundreds of workers have been coming here over many years. Workers are still arriving, with the most recent arriving two weeks ago.
- When the workers are unable to pay their rent, the letting agent/ owner of the property tend to harass and intimidate the workers, in breach of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 s22. Several of the workers have been threatened with assault; they have had their gas and electricity cut off too. Several workers have insect bites on their bodies due to insect infestation.
- Workers are still arriving under the promise of work.
- Workers are scared, frightened of being assaulted and do not know where to turn

2. We are concerned that
- Workers are being left destitute- Glasgow City Council states that the workers have no rights to homelessness assistance, nor financial assistance. Unless children are involved, the Council are also refusing to assist workers to pay for a ticket home.
- The Czech Consulate have stated that if someone has come here voluntarily, they cannot be assisted with repatriation.
• Whilst not being experts in the field human trafficking legislation and law, we believe that what is happening to our clients may be considered human trafficking, because they have been lured abroad with promises of work, that are unfulfilled. Clients are left in a very vulnerable position.
• Landlords, some of whom are unregistered, are being allowed to breach the law routinely. All incidents have been reported to Glasgow City Council Private Landlord Registration Team, but to our knowledge, no action has been taken.
• Glasgow City Council HMO Unit are interested in pursuing a prosecution in some cases, but others are not within the remit of the HMO Unit.

3. In general, we would also like to make the following points:
• In relation to the degree of awareness of rights of migrants, many clients have sought advice from us in relation to the Workers Registration Scheme. Often, clients have registered for work, worked for that employer for less than a year, and then moved to new employment. They are unaware they are required to register again when they commence new employment. Some clients have tried to register again, and their employers have told them they are not required to register. The consequence of this is that clients have been prevented from completing one year continuous service, which would give them increased access to social welfare benefits and social assistance.
• Some clients have worked for over three years, paid taxes and national insurance contributions, but when they find themselves out of work, they find they are not entitled to benefits.
• We believe that the Worker Registration Scheme is a huge barrier for migrants, and if the scheme continues, there should be better information given to applicants, in their own language, which advises of their responsibilities because the consequences of non-compliance can be disastrous.
• In relation to the degree of awareness of rights of migrants, we employ a Slovakian speaking caseworker who receives telephone calls from all over Scotland seeking advice on employment and housing rights. It appears that there are people throughout Scotland who are seeking advice, and cannot access it.
• Also, we have some degree of frustration that the rights clients do have are not enforced, for example landlords have a duty to register with the local authority under the Landlord Registration Scheme, but when breaches of this law are discovered, we have found local authorities are reluctant to take any action.

4. Our work with migrant workers is ongoing, and we are happy to provide further details on our comments, either in writing or verbally. If appropriate, we would welcome a visit by members of the Committee to Govanhill Law Centre to learn about the distressing situations our clients have found themselves in. We would be able to facilitate a meeting with a Czech client lured here under the promise of work, if this would assist the Committee to learn more about this situation.

Govanhill Law Centre
June 2010