

# **FAITHNETEAST AND EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL**

## **SURVEY OF FAITH GROUPS RUNNING MIGRANT WORKER PROJECTS, AND OF THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE**

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### Background

When EEFC developed the database of faith organisations in 2006 as part of its FaithNetEast programme, it also categorised them by activity and formed an email support group of faith organisations offering migrant worker projects. The intention was to bring these people together for mutual support, exchange of information etc. At the second FNE information and learning event (January 2007, Norwich) it was ascertained that most would find FNE's support useful.

However, FaithNetEast is well aware that there is a great deal of activity in the region on this subject. For example, MENTER, EEDA, TUC all have people dedicated to migrant worker issues, and there have been a number of events. EEFC does not wish to duplicate work already being done, only to ensure that faith groups are contributing to it, and benefiting from it, as effectively as possible.

### Key questions

FaithNetEast asked the researcher to investigate:

- Which regional organisations are involved in migrant worker issues
- Are they supporting voluntary groups of any sort, and if so, how
- What events are taking place
- What regional research has been done and what were the key findings
- Whether the faith-based projects feel they have gaps in the support they are offered – what are they – could EEFC set up activities to meet these needs
- If so how EEFC should work with other regional organisations

### Methodology

The research team contacted statutory, professional and voluntary bodies within East Anglia in an attempt to gather and collate relevant information relating to the Migrant Workers and Faith Group Project. This information forms the foundation of this research.

A variety of methods were used to gather this information. This included web based browsing, cold calling, referrals and personal contacts. Information was gathered verbally and in writing.

Phone calls and emails proved to be rather time consuming, as one of the problems which became evident was that not only are migrant workers transient, but also the people from the public and voluntary sector who work with them move frequently. This may be a function of the area being relatively new, so that those who develop expertise are promoted or moved into new posts. In this respect, faith groups can bring some stability to the picture. A questionnaire was also introduced to record information later in the project.

The Project was divided into three stages

1. Making general contact
2. Contacting faith groups as they came to light
3. Recording data.

#### Stage one

This involved making initial contact by way of phone calls and attending meetings.

In month one it became apparent that people in the public sector did not want to give out contact details. They gave data protection as a reason but they were also wary of interference from other sources.

#### Outcome of the first stage

Statutory bodies were reluctant to give details of their contacts quoting data protection. This resulted in the need to contact the same group on various occasions to speak to the appropriate person.

Face to face contact was by far the most productive and rewarding method. Most of the information was gleaned in this way.

The response in the meetings that were attended was open and welcoming and most were interested to hear about the project and gave me space on their agendas to speak freely.

Meetings that were attended in this first stage included

- 1 Breckland Migrant Workers Conference
- 2 West Norfolk Diversity Officer
- 3 Fenland Diversity Officer
- 4 Joint Chairs of Multi Agency Forum
- 5 Cambridge Multi Agency Forum
- 6 Ecumenical Leaders Meeting
- 7 Hate Crime Unit Meeting
- 8 Bishop of Lynn
- 9 Dr Debbie Holman
- 10 Huntington Diversity Officer

## Stage two

There are about sixteen Multi Agency Forums (M.A.F's), or diversity partnerships operating in the region; these are groups as the title implies made up of agencies and project representatives from each area. Statutory, voluntary and professional bodies attend, but very seldom with any faith representation although they are welcome and it would be very advantageous for all if they did participate.

There are two designated members from each of these groups that get together every other month to form a regional chairs forum for East Anglia. At these meetings they discuss what's happening in each area, share ideas on how they can go forward together.

There are two representatives from each MAF on the Joint Chairs Forum; one Chair and one other person. If the other person is someone from the faith Sector, then it could be represented on the JCF. It is important we encourage faith groups to work alongside statutory and voluntary bodies.

The MAF initiative is led by MENTER (Pa Musa 01603 617076)  
[www.menter.org.uk](http://www.menter.org.uk)

## Outcome of the second stage

The response from people was very positive and welcoming. I spoke at several conferences promoting our work; children's services, hate crime regional meeting, mental health group and west Norfolk Carers.

During this stage I discovered that faith groups working with new communities are working in isolation, some of these groups appear to be happy to work alone in this way, content in inventing their own wheel, not knowing what others have been doing and with others not knowing what they have been doing.

These groups appeared to not be aware of the existence of forums, and support networks. This would be true even within the same denomination. They need to be perhaps enlightened to see what's happening in a bigger picture. We should encourage them to be aware and participate and also let them know what resources are available to them. All were happy to talk and listen. During this stage I introduced a number of projects to each other; for example, the Diversity Centre in Great Yarmouth was introduced to its MAF.

Our new communities are transient not contained or restricted to our geographical borders, boroughs and counties. There is very little data on how these are composed; for example, six years ago our biggest migrant groups appeared to be Portuguese with some hidden Chinese and Polish, now the Portuguese are settled, there is anecdotal information that there are fewer Polish people, but a stronger presence of Eastern Europeans mainly

Ukrainians and Russians.

### Stage Three

This involved visiting the MAF's (diversity projects throughout the region), of which there are 12 plus one forum of all the Chairs.

These forums are open to all projects and working groups to participate and exchange info and network although not everybody is aware of their existence. The MAF details are given at Appendix B.

### Outcome of the third stage

There were sufficient data gathered to analyse the responses received from faith and non-faith groups to draw some tentative conclusions.

### **Conclusions**

The majority of work is taking place in Cambs, Norfolk and Suffolk

Most faith groups are providing for very local needs: bringing people together for support and fellowship.

There is a spread of length of time the groups have been established; the older groups clearly have experience that may be welcomed by the newer groups

The majority of groups would welcome help and advice and guidance about best practice. Some have asked how they could promote themselves and how they can find out about other similar groups in the region.

Only half the faith groups interviewed were providing 'spiritual' services – but this may be because some interviewed were primarily places of worship, while others were support groups inspired by, or based within faith

Faith groups are receiving very little external funding for this work; most are funded from within faith structures or by congregations. A substantial minority appear to have no funding. However, funding is not perceived as their main need

The main perception by faith groups of their need is for information and networking

There may be more scope for faith groups to be supported by VCS or public bodies – either through funding or by establishing support networks

Not all faith groups would welcome support (or 'interference')

The Red Cross is talking about intending to do a mapping exercise to find out if there is a need for them to be involved in the needs of migrant workers in the region.

## **Recommendations**

EEFC should:

- Make contact with key organisations in the field (especially EEDA and MENTER) to ensure that any actions taken are consistent with, and complementary to current activity.
- Find out more from key organisations about how faith groups can access funding for this particular work
- Consider an event (in the near future) that would assist faith groups in sharing good practice, information and networking, especially trying to draw in those who feel they are working alone.
- Consider how else networking could be facilitated (we have attempted this in the past through meetings – which have not been well attended due to time and travel costs)
- Consider how it should respond to the evidenced need for some kind of co-ordinator or support worker to give guidance

### **As a direct result of our research:**

- There is now going to be a regular meeting of Christian leaders with Migrant Workers, first meeting to be held on 6th Aug Diocese House Norwich
- We were also asked to contribute an article to Country Way Magazine August edition
- New Frontiers are going to plan a new church in King's Lynn with a focus on Portuguese speakers

### **As an indirect result of our research:**

- The Methodist denominations for the East of England have employed a migrant workers missionary for the East of England starting in September (the author of this report)

## **Appendix A. analysis of the interviews conducted and recorded**

*1. How many interviewed?* **27**

No of faith groups **18**

No of non-faith **9**

*2. How long (roughly) have they been established (analysis for faith groups only)?*

More than 10 years **2**

5 – 10 years **5**

2 – 5 years **8**

Less than 2 years **3**

*3. How do the non-faith groups interviewed support migrant workers ?*

Guidance/ information **9**

Funding **7**

Networking/introductions **6**

Training **3**

Support/involvement with faith groups **3**

Drop-Ins **2**

Events **2**

*4. What do the faith groups interviewed provide for migrant workers?*

### **Majority provide fellowship and/or group meetings for local support**

Guidance and advice **1**

Drop-in centres **1**

Help with bureaucracy **3**

'Spiritual' services e.g. worship, study of sacred texts **9**  
(5 in mother tongue)

Language (translation, classes etc.) **3**

Health issues **1**

Accommodation issues **1**

Cultural events **1**

Community cohesion **3**

*5. What are the sources of funding for the faith groups interviewed?*

Grants from public sector **1**

Grants from Trusts etc. **1**

Funding from faith groups e.g. Church of England **7**

They fund themselves (e.g. from donations from congregation) **2**

They don't appear to have any funding **7**

6. Looking only at the needs of faith groups, what do they say they require?

Guidance/information	8
Networking/meeting others/support groups	8
Co-ordination with other projects	2
Training	0
Funding	1
Premises	0
Administrative staff	3

7. Geographical statistics for faith groups interviewed

East Anglia (2)  
Fenland (1)  
Norfolk (8) – Kings Lynn (2), Dereham, Stalham, Gt Yarmouth (2), Norwich and Thetford  
Suffolk (1)  
Cambs (4) – Wisbech and Peterborough (3)  
Beds (2) – Dunstable and Luton  
*Lincs (1), Sutton Bridge*

**Appendix B. Contacts for the local MAFs**

1. **Bedfordshire New and Emerging Communities Forum.** Contact person: Stephanie Bennett (Chair) 07966598293 email: Stephanie.bennett@bedfordshirepct.nhs.uk or Lindsay Mitton (rep). Tel: 01234276918. Email:Lindsay.Mitton@bedscc.gov.uk
2. **Cambridgeshire Migrant Workers & Asylum Seekers and Refugees Network.** Contact person: Stephen Vartoukian. Tel: 01223717031. Email: Stephen.vartoukian@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
3. **Fenland Diversity Forum.** Contact person: David Bailey. Tel: 01354 622566. Email:dbailey@fenland.gov.uk
4. **GYROS Great Yarmouth Multi-Agency Forum.** Contact person: Des McKeating. Tel: 01493745260. Email:desmckeating@gyros.org.uk
5. **Hertfordshire Migrant Worker Multi-Agency Forum.** Contact person: Valdis Belinis. Tel: 01992531605. Email:Valdis.belinis@eastherts.gov.uk
6. **Luton Multi-Agency Asylum Forum.** Contact person: Paul Wiltshire. Tel: 01582 547188. Email: Paul.Wiltshire@luton.gov.uk
7. **Norwich Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Forum.** Contact person: Sue Gee. Tel: Email:Sue.Gee@norfolk.gov.uk Tel: 01603729279
8. **Peterborough Multi-Agency Forum.** Contact person: Andy Hewett. Tel: Email:ahewett@redcross.org.uk Tel: 01733557472
9. **Suffolk Multi-Agency Forum for Asylum-Seekers, Refugees and New and Emerging Communities.** Contact person: Allison Coleman. Tel: 01473 265160. Email: Allison.coleman@csu.suffolkcc.gov.uk
10. **West Norfolk Diverse Community Forum Contact person: Daisy Line.** Tel: 01553 760568. Email:daisy@westnorfolkvca.org

11. **Norfolk Migrant Worker Partnership.** Contact person: Jo Richardson.  
Tel: 01603 223 816. Email: Jo.richardson@norfolk.gov.uk

Contact has been made at each of the groups listed above this was done by attending their meetings.