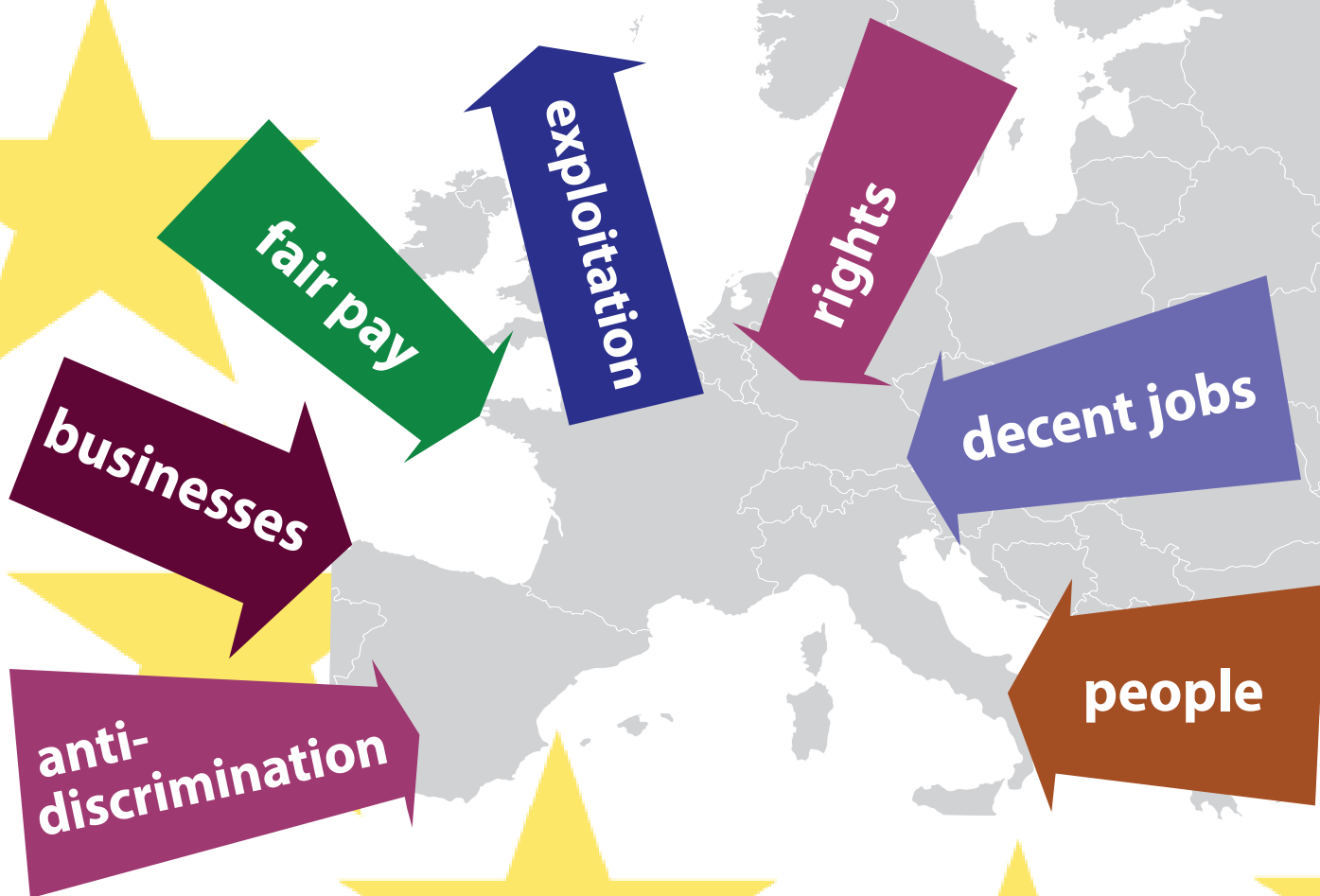


Connecting communities,
building alliances

MIGRATION MESSAGING PROJECT



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Section one

Introduction

Trade unions stand up for the rights of all workers, no matter where they come from, and have a long history of fighting against discrimination. These principles of equality and workers' rights however have come under attack in the media and by politicians in recent times. Migrants are scapegoated for problems such as lack of decent jobs, low wages and services. This rhetoric, combined with increasingly precarious conditions at work and cuts to services and benefits caused by austerity, has fuelled public concern about migration. The TUC's *Decent Jobs Deficit* report showed that the number of men in precarious employment – including zero hours contracts and agency work – had risen by 61.8 per cent to 1.06 million and women in precarious employment had risen by 35.6% to 1.08 million in 2014.¹ This rise points to unscrupulous employers taking advantage of local and migrant workers' desperation for any kind of work. Underfunding of employment enforcement bodies like the Gangmasters Licensing Authority meanwhile has meant employers are less likely to be punished for using migrants to undercut other workers and paying below the National Minimum Wage.

The TUC developed the Migration Messaging project with Hope not Hate and Migrant Voice as a way to promote – and test the effectiveness - of progressive messages which shift the blame for workplace and social problems away from migrants and onto bad employers and lack of investment in services and welfare. These messages were developed from polling research commissioned by the TUC from Greenberg, Quinlan and Rosner Research in 2014.² This polling revealed there was a significant level of concern amongst both trade union members and non-union members in relation to migration, undercutting and impact on welfare and services. The polling suggested these views could be shifted, and support could be won for workers' rights based arguments on migration, when messages target bad employers and austerity, rather than migrants.

The key messages developed from the polling, and promoted in the Migration Messaging project, are as follows:

- Everyone's got a right to a decent job. Too many employers are taking on workers cheaply, some of them from abroad. If all workers had stable

¹ See www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/DecentJobsDeficitReport.pdf

² The results of the polling are online at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues/migration/talking-about-migration-tuc-guide-trade-unions>

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contracts and wages they could live on, employers wouldn't be able to use migrants to undercut local workers. This is what the government should focus on, not keeping migrants out of the country.

- Our country needs people to work hard, contribute and grow our economy. That means we should welcome people from abroad who are willing to invest, spend money, study and work in key industries. We will all lose out if the immigration system stops people who contribute to our economy from coming here.
- While the government is slashing spending, migrants help pay for our public services through their taxes and we see them contribute every day as nurses, teaching assistants and care workers.
- We need to target bosses not migrants and demand decent pay and conditions for all.
- Employers must not be allowed to divide the workforce so they can use migrants to undercut local workers.
- Workers need to have more power to speak out at work and call for decent treatment and fair pay for all, no matter where they come from.
- The best way for migrants to be integrated into the workforce is for employers to give them the same pay and employment contracts as other workers.
- The best way to protect jobs and wages is to crack down on employers who exploit migrants for cheap labour and make workers compete with each other in a race to the bottom.

The Migration Messaging project set out to promote these messages at the community level as people often respond most strongly to messages that are locally relevant. The project ran in three pilot areas: Corby, Manchester and Southampton. These areas were chosen as they were known to have communities with concerns about migration, as well as networks of trade unions and campaigners. Campaign groups were formed in each area, comprising trade unions, community activists, voluntary sector groups, local councillors and migrants' rights organisations. These groups developed activities which promoted progressive messages in a way that was relevant to their community.

This booklet provides case studies of the activities that took place in Corby, Manchester and Southampton over the course of the Migration Messaging project to promote these messages. These activities gained support from local communities as well as employers, councillors and decision makers. In the case of Southampton, the local popularity of these messages – that were promoted as part of the campaign against the Channel 4 documentary 'Immigration Street' – encouraged local and national media to promote these messages too.

Of course, it will take more than one project to overcome the negative portrayal of migration in the media, politics and culture. Promoting

progressive perspectives of migration requires frequent and sustained campaigning. This is why we are glad that the local groups formed for the project plan to continue running activities to promote progressive messages as well as other campaigns about community concerns. The TUC will continue to promote progressive perspectives on migration through media, blogs and campaigns for the rights of migrants at work to be respected and against discrimination. We have also produced information for migrants to know their rights at work which supports work by unions to organise migrants (see p.13).

The TUC will be sharing the outcomes of the project with unions, regional councils and on the TUC's website at www.tuc.org.uk/migration. We hope that unions, campaign organisations, community groups and related organisations can use the outcomes of the Migration Messaging project to develop their own activities to promote progressive messages on migration.

Project partners



Hope Not Hate is an advocacy campaign group that mobilises communities by providing an alternative to the politics of hate. It has considerable experience in community organising and use of local media to positively influence local attitudes towards migrants and BAME groups.



Migrant Voice is a migrant-led charity working to strengthen the voice, participation and representation of migrants in the media in order to encourage a more balanced, well-informed and inclusive debate on migration in Britain.

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Media and advocacy workshops

At the start of the project, the TUC and Migrant Voice ran media and advocacy workshops for the local campaign groups in Corby, Manchester, and Southampton. The workshops developed the skills of participants to create progressive messages on migration that connected with local concerns and design activities that would promote these messages to a wide audience and decision makers in the community.



Media and advocacy workshop, Southampton, August 2014



Media and advocacy workshop, Corby, July 2014

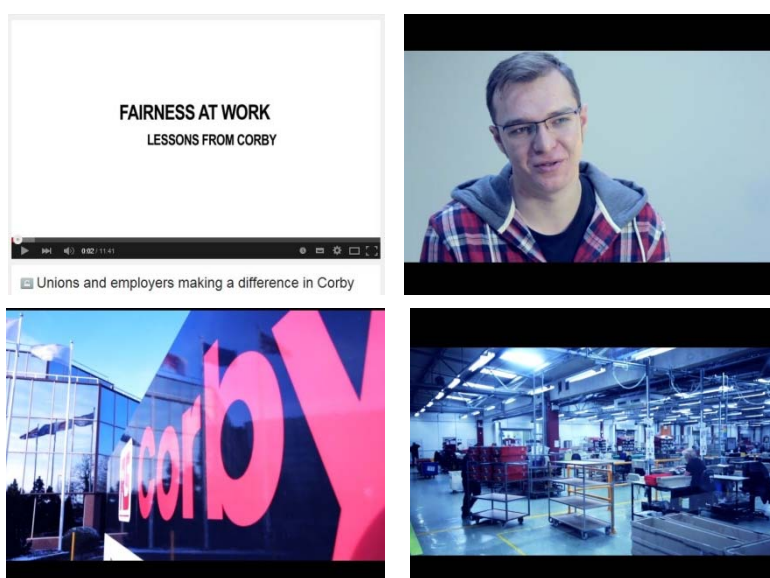
Section two

Case studies

Corby: promoting fairness at work

The Corby campaign group decided that progressive messages around migration would be effectively promoted through a film about how enforcing employment regulation and collective agreements between employers and unions are key to tackling exploitation and undercutting. The group produced the film 'Fairness at work: Lessons from Corby' which focuses on the high level of agency employment in the town in which many migrants are employed that has been associated with poor treatment and low pay. It profiles the Employment Agencies Forum Code of Conduct which Corby's MP Andy Sawford created with the leader of Corby Council Tom Beattie, as well as local employers, unions and voluntary sector groups. The Code commits those who sign it to avoid replacing permanent jobs with temporary employment and make sure the rights of agency workers are respected. The film features a local employer, RS Components that has signed the Code and has been working with the union Usdaw to ensure decent treatment of migrant and local workers. Usdaw has negotiated a learning agreement with RS Components to provide courses that train workers in literacy, numeracy and English which encourages integration between workers from different countries.

The group plan to organise screening events of the film in Corby for local businesses, unions and community groups. The TUC and unions will also promote the film at regional and national events.



Fairness at work: Lessons from Corby video clips, February 2015

Case studies

Manchester: exposing exploitation

The Manchester campaign group decided that progressive messages around migration would be best promoted through media stories which showed how both local and migrant workers were facing exploitation at work. To gather material for these stories, the group worked with Migrants Supporting Migrants, a support network of migrants based in Manchester, to collect case studies of common poor treatment at work such as unfair dismissal, precarious contracts and inadequate health and safety standards at work that migrant and local workers had suffered. These case studies were used to write stories on the importance of trade unions and employment regulation to protect all workers from exploitation and promoted to the regional media. The group plan to continue gathering case studies to promote to the media and through their online networks.



Migration messaging campaign meetings, Manchester, 2014



'No to Immigration Street' Channel 4 demo, London January 2015



Local community public meeting, Southampton, January 2015

Southampton: promoting solidarity

The Southampton campaign group decided that progressive messages on migration would be most effectively promoted in campaign materials and press for a campaign against the screening of the Channel 4 documentary 'Immigration Street'. This show had been filmed in Southampton by the same production company that made 'Benefits Street', causing concern amongst the residents that the show would represent their area in a negative light, increase social division and make migrants and BAME groups more vulnerable.

The campaign group – which named itself Southampton Communities Alliance – developed campaign messages which emphasised solidarity and the need to tackle bad employers and austerity, not scapegoat migrants for problems in the community. The group promoted these messages through local meetings, press articles and a protest in January outside Channel 4 headquarters in London. At this demonstration, a petition which called on Channel 4 to cancel the

Case studies

screening of 'Immigration Street' that had gathered over 1700 local signatures was handed in. The progressive messages on migration promoted as part of the campaign gained national and local media coverage, including in The Daily Mirror, The Huffington Post, ITV and BBC News.

Under the pressure of the campaign, Channel 4 announced the documentary would be reduced from the six episodes it had hoped to screen, to just one episode, which partly focused on local opposition to the filming.

The group plan to continue campaigning on issues affecting workers and local residents in Southampton.

Local and national coverage of SCA's Channel 4 rally, February 2015



Section three

Conclusions

The Migration Messaging project developed a new way of working at the community level for the TUC and unions which produced new and creative ways of promoting progressive messages on migration.

The support that the project and campaigns attracted from communities showed that trade union messages on migration connect with the concerns in Corby, Manchester and Southampton about exploitation at work and discrimination. This is an important challenge to media and politicians – if their negative portrayals of migration are no longer popular, then they will use them less regularly. This in turn allows progressive narratives on migration to become stronger.

The project provides a number of lessons for trade unions for their future campaigning work to promote progressive messages on migration:

1. Local relevance: the local project groups attracted support for progressive messages on migration, and encouraged local people to promote them too, by making these messages relevant to community concerns.
2. Media interest: the most extensive and high profile media coverage the project generated occurred when it appealed to the media on a number of levels. The campaign against 'Immigration Street' combined a national level target – in Channel 4 – with deeply felt local concerns and a campaign that was supported strongly amongst local groups and nationally by the TUC and unions.
3. Size: in Southampton and Corby the groups found it was possible to identify a key issue that brought together diverse parts of the community. In Manchester, the group found it difficult to bring together the many campaigns groups already operating in the city under one campaign. This suggests that, when resources and organisers are limited, focussing on a smaller area or community is vital for identifying and campaigning on a key issue for a community.

Conclusions

4. Alliances: the groups in all three areas were comprised of broad alliances of trade unionists, voluntary sector groups, community groups, local councillors and migrants rights activists. In Corby, the group also worked with a local employer. This allowed each group to pool the resources and expertise that these different groups brought. It also demonstrated that union concerns chime with other constituencies as well as the public more generally.
5. Relevance to unions: Trade unions with more members from migrant or BME backgrounds seemed to be more likely to take part in campaign activities, suggesting that when migrants are union members, issues around migration become more important to union agendas. Many unions have looked into ways to organise migrants. This is also important to tackle the exploitation these groups disproportionately face at work which is connected to concern that local workers feel about migration.

The TUC will be sharing the lessons learnt from the project with unions, regional councils and the TUC's website at www.tuc.org.uk/migration. We hope these are useful to unions, campaign organisations, community groups and related organisations in planning their own activities to promote progressive messages on migration.

Section four

Further information

TUC Migration webpage

The outcomes of the Migration Messaging project, as well as other updates and resources on migration can be found online at www.tuc.org.uk/migration

Talking about Migration presentation

The TUC has developed a PowerPoint of the results of polling we commissioned into attitudes around migration and labour market concerns. This has been developed for unions to use this in their branches to understand concerns and develop ways to promote messages on migration based on solidarity and workers' rights. Download the presentation at:

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues/migration/talking-about-migration-tuc-guide-trade-unions>

TUC Working in the UK online guide

This guide provides essential information on issues such as pay, employment contracts, working hours, sick pay, and health and safety in 13 languages to tackle migrant worker exploitation including Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian.

www.tuc.org.uk/workingintheUK

TUC blogs

Blogs on migration policy can be found at the TUC's Touchstone site at <http://touchstoneblog.org.uk>

Blogs on migration and trade union organising can be found at the TUC's Stronger Unions site at <http://strongerunions.org>

Social networks

Migration Messaging project Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/TUCmigrationcampaign

Southampton Communities Alliance Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/southamptoncommunitiesalliance

Further information

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the organisations and unions who took part in the Migration Messaging project and supported the activities, in particular we would like to thank:

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Corby Borough Council	SERTUC
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Corby VSC	Southampton City Council
GMB BAME	Southampton Communities Alliance
GMIAU	Southampton Connect
Hope not hate	Southampton Solent University
LASNET	Southampton University
Migrants' Rights Network	Third Age Community Centre
Migrants Supporting Migrants	TSSA
Migrant Voice	TUC Midlands
Migrant Workers North	TUC North West
MISOL	UNISON North West
Newtown Residents Association	Unite Community
PCS	Unite the Union
RAPAR	USDAW



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