

MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE WORKER REPRESENTATIVES LIAISON GROUP– 13 AUGST 2009, HELD AT LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, LINCOLN

Present:

Paul Whitehouse	Chairman, GLA
Alison Fairman	Boston Citizens Advice Bureau
Tadeuzs Stenzel	Federation of Poles in Great Britain
Szymon Bialek	Polish Consulate
Chris Burke	Catch 22
Marysia FiliP	Catch 22
James Lazou	Unite
Sean Bamford	TUC

Apologies:

Dave Watson	PCS
Dianne Clay	South Holland CAB
Jane Betts	NACAB
Nick Clark	Working Lives Research Institute London
Don Flynn	Migrants’ Rights Network
Richard Dunstan	CAB
Gerard Crofton Martin	CAB
Gill Rice	Bolton CAB
Hannah Reed	TUC
Andrew Hewett	British Red Cross

In attendance:

Almut Gadow	Policy Officer, GLA
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1	Minutes of last meeting	Note • Agreed
2	GLA update	Note • Update noted by the Group
3	Treatment of workers after licence revocation	Note • Workers and their representatives need certainty that workers will not lose out as a result of reporting gangmasters’ breaches to the authorities. • Members of the Group are very concerned about instances in which HMRC has closed down gangmasters’ businesses without prior warning to workers or to the GLA. In some instances, this has left workers without work or income, and with outstanding wages unpaid. In other instances, workers were taken on by another gangmaster almost immediately and continued in their previous roles with the same labour user, but lost unpaid wages and accrued statutory entitlements. • Where the GLA revokes a licence without immediate effect, workers

		<p>are generally not aware that their employer may be about to stop trading.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF to check whether Citizens Advice raised relevant case with HMRC previously. GLA to raise with HMRC if it not. • GLA to consider possible ways of notifying workers about pending licence revocation.
4	Third party reporting and GLA feedback of outcomes	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GLA does not currently provide feedback to unions, advice agencies, etc. who have reported gangmasters' breaches. While actions are ongoing, no information is shared so as not to jeopardise investigation. After cases are concluded, resource limitations require investigators to focus on current cases. • Case workers find this unsatisfactory as they need to update their clients on action taken and outcomes. • MF raised the case of a gangmaster whom she had reported to the GLA for assaulting workers and providing tied accommodation. • MF aware of workers who reported breaches by gangmasters to Lincolnshire Police only to be told that this was a civil matter. <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GLA / Unions to consider feedback in the context of the Trades Unions Protocol. • GLA to write to MF with update on the case raised. • GLA to contact Lincolnshire Police about possibility of offering training to frontline officers.
5	GLA and Trades Unions Protocol	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GLA/ Unite did some productive work towards producing a GLA and Trades Unions Protocol last year. No progress has been made recently, as result of staff changes in both organisations. <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG to send JL draft of the protocol and discuss way forward • GLA to raise again at next meeting of the Group
6	GLA requirement to check workers' immigration status	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Group are concerned about UKBA's increasing influence over various institutions which were set up to protect migrants' welfare but are now required to supply intelligence to UKBA. • The association with UKBA might discourage vulnerable workers and their representatives from reporting exploitation to the GLA.
7	Any other business	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB reiterated his suggestion for GLA to hold an event targeted at Community Cohesion Partnership and wider local community in Lincolnshire. • GLA would be happy to speak at any event arranged by the partnership.
8	Date of next meeting	Nov/Dec 2009, Evesham