

# THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MOBILITY OF ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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**This report** provides evidence of the degree, nature and drivers of poverty across the different ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland.

The 2011 Census highlighted some very different outcomes for ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland across various indicators related to poverty. Through focus groups and interviews with employees and employers, this study further reveals how far the labour market is segmented among different ethnic minority communities. It also reviews government legislation and strategies relevant to Northern Ireland and the impact of these on poverty among ethnic minority groups.

The report:

- highlights employees' difficulties in accessing relevant employment;
- investigates employers' procedures for recruitment, staff retention and development;
- outlines government initiatives and programmes to support employees; and
- reviews the level of uptake and success of government support for ethnic minority groups seeking employment or setting up a business.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this research was to increase the understanding of the links between poverty and ethnicity within Northern Ireland so as to enable a more effective tackling of poverty across different ethnic groups. A review conducted on this area in Northern Ireland found large gaps in the evidence base, both quantitative and qualitative, relating to the degree, nature and drivers of poverty across the different ethnic minority groups, generations and sub-groups (Wallace, *et al.*, 2013).

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The research had two parts. The first part was a desk review of recently released data from the 2011 Census of Population survey and existing published research on this area in Northern Ireland. The second part involved fieldwork: focus groups with individuals from various ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland; interviews with employers in sectors of traditionally high employment of ethnic minority and migrant workers in both skilled and unskilled roles; and, finally, consultations with representatives of the key government departments whose policies and activities have a direct bearing on outcomes relating to poverty.

## Background

There has been limited migration into Northern Ireland, but this has established longer term ethnic minority communities, namely Chinese, Indian, Irish Traveller and Jewish communities.

A recent surge in migration to Northern Ireland over the past decade has seen these existing ethnic minority communities supplemented with new arrivals, predominantly from Eastern European countries. As a result, the Polish and Lithuanian communities have become the largest ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland. Migrants come to Northern Ireland for a variety of reasons; however, the main reasons are economic, lifestyle, education or as a refugee.

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Although it is comprised of a range of factors, poverty is fundamentally linked to low income, and routes out of poverty are therefore based on labour market participation and progression. Northern Ireland, however, is one of the most disadvantaged regions in the UK, and recent international economic pressures have depressed an already weak economy. This only serves to heighten the barriers that individuals from ethnic minority communities face in finding employment paying a 'living wage'.

## Outcomes for different ethnic minority groups

Data from the 2011 Census highlighted some very different outcomes for ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland across various indicators related to poverty. The Irish Traveller community consistently displayed the poorest outcomes in relation to economic activity, labour market participation, education and health.

The recent Eastern European arrivals displayed the highest rates of economic activity and labour market participation, though this was largely in lower paying sectors of employment. The Indian and Filipino populations displayed the highest level of employment in higher paying professional sectors.

The focus groups highlighted perceptions, among individuals from various ethnic minority groups, that visible ethnic markers had a significant influence on restricting their access to the labour market and that there exists a high level of segmentation in the labour market by ethnic minority group. Barriers to labour market participation were also present through lack of networks and unfamiliarity with formal recruitment application processes.

To a significant extent, employment was achieved through employment agencies. However, focus groups revealed how agency staff did not consider individuals for the jobs they wanted, instead offering them positions with less favourable pay or hours of work. In-work poverty is problematic across all groups, as evidenced by recent JRF statistics noting the rate of in-work poverty to now be above the poverty rate in workless households.<sup>1</sup> There were indications from the focus groups that ethnic minority communities were at particular risk from in-work poverty.

## Employers

Interviews with employers further emphasised the extent of the labour market segmentation among the different ethnic minority communities. Workforce profiles across the organisations interviewed supported the trends evident in the Census data whereby the lower and less skilled sectors of employment, e.g. hospitality sector and meat/food processing, displayed high rates of employment of the Eastern European, Portuguese and East Timorese communities.

The organisations interviewed stated that opportunities for progression were open to all staff. However, many felt that some ethnic minority employees did not put themselves forward for progression, despite having the experience and expertise needed. This was largely attributed to individuals' lack of confidence. Additionally, English speaking ability was viewed as being key in supporting promotion and career progression for people from ethnic minority communities. Individuals with a low level of English found it harder to progress than those with better developed skills.

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## Government

Government policy and actions relating to access to employment, welfare and health constitute the largest influences on rates of poverty. The Racial Equality Strategy is currently being reviewed but it remains the underpinning legal and policy framework that brings together assistance for help people from ethnic minority communities. The changes to the ethnic minority landscape in Northern Ireland since 2005 mean that this new strategy is welcome in order to ensure it reflects current challenges.

Critical to any new strategy is the consideration given to the extent to which existing government supports – particularly those promoting employment or self-employment – meet the needs of people from ethnic minorities. However, data is lacking on the extent to which these supports are utilised by individuals from ethnic minority groups and/or the extent to which they are delivering successful outcomes for these groups. Those developing the new Racial Equality Strategy could consider setting and agreeing targets with the relevant departments for employment and skills development of people from ethnic minority groups.

## Recommendations

The Racial Equality Strategy is in the process of being reviewed. It provides the opportunity for a range of issues to be actioned which could increase the economic and social mobility of people from ethnic minority groups. The key recommendations emerging from this research for government include:

- ensuring that self-employment opportunities are maximised for people from ethnic minority communities through:
  - measuring the uptake of existing government funded self-employment schemes by ethnic minorities;
  - researching the extent to which these schemes meet the needs of the different ethnic minority groups/benchmarking the uptake and outcomes achieved through these schemes with best practice supports; and
  - implementing changes required to support any increase in both uptake and the outcomes achieved;
- ensuring that the Careers Service provides role models for ethnic minority workers, setting out the pathways involving education and training supports available to help them;
- ensuring that government departments involved in advising people from ethnic minority groups on employment and self-employment opportunities are equipped with the knowledge of relevant issues and provided with a best practice guide on how these issues are taken into account when designing services (in line with the *Race Equality in Health – A Good Practice Guide*, developed by the DHSSPS and the Equality Commission);
- promoting the Qualifications Equivalency service available through Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to companies employing people with high levels of unrecognised qualifications, and encouraging them to use it so that they can avail of the expertise within their workforces;
- promoting best practice approaches to supporting diversity in the workplace; and

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- ensuring there is sufficient childcare provision and that it is flexible enough to meet the needs of working parents from ethnic minority backgrounds, often employed in jobs requiring shift work/night time or weekend working.

Employers also play a significant role in the economic mobility of ethnic minority workers. The key recommendations for employers with ethnic minority employees are to:

- provide language training and support as part of their company training plan as a means of encouraging employees with low levels of English to invest in their own development;
- motivate ethnic minority workers through the use of internal mentors to work with people to encourage them to seek out and take advantage of opportunities for progression; and
- ensure agency workers from ethnic minority groups are aware of their rights relating to employment as under the Agency Worker Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 and know whom they can contact if either they are not aware of their rights or they think their employment is not in line with government regulations.

### Research

For the future there is a need for longitudinal research in tracking the numbers of ethnic minorities and the problems they face. Any research of this nature would be timely due to the implementation of further welfare reform measures in Northern Ireland. Any future actions regarding improving outcomes for people from ethnic minority communities must have a key focus on the Irish Traveller community as an ethnic minority group experiencing particularly poor economic and social mobility outcomes.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern world migration is relied upon as a means of achieving economic development (OECD, 2012). One of the direct effects of this is the establishment of diverse social groups within a locality, often with very different values and ideas about how society should be ordered.

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Significant challenges arise for localities as different social groups struggle to interact in a positive manner. This is made more complicated by the fact that established gateways are no longer the only recipients of migrants as they are settling in new areas and in rural locations (Jentsch and Simard, 2009). This is certainly the case for Northern Ireland, a place where, until relatively recently, its population was fairly sedentary.

## Background to the research

Some limited migration to Northern Ireland occurred in the past and so there are long-established ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland, including Chinese, Indians, Bangladeshis, Travellers and Jews. New migrants have supplemented these existing ethnic minority communities following a new wave of migration to Northern Ireland at the turn of the last century and in the early years of this century. During this time many migrants moved from Eastern Europe, resulting in the Polish community becoming the largest ethnic minority group. Significant changes to the population have thus been recorded in the 2011 Census.

In the previous Census, ten years earlier, just over 99 per cent of the Northern Ireland population was recorded as 'White', and at that time the overall ethnic minority population was small at just over 14,000 people. The 2011 Census revealed some noteworthy changes:

- The ethnic minority population increased from 0.8 per cent in 2001 to 1.8 per cent in 2011.
- The largest rate of growth of ethnic minority groups was in Dungannon District Council where it increased by 21 per cent.
- The most prevalent main language other than English was Polish (1 per cent, 17,700).

- The overall figure (the stock) of A8 nationals that remain was calculated to be around 34,000 in 2011 (Census 2011) as compared to 700 in the 2001 Census.

While the actual figures may appear to be small, the relative change illustrates the import of this transformation. For instance, 2011 Census data shows that the Ballysaggart ward in Dungannon includes 825 people, or 30 per cent of the population, who are EU and other migrants. Furthermore, considered in a historical context, the rate and pace of change are notable. This has resulted in significant increased diversity within Northern Ireland's population over a relatively short period of time.

Despite new Census data, estimating the size of Northern Ireland's ethnic minority population remains difficult. Thus there is no clarity on the numbers relating to some of the more recent arrivals, including Roma, Somalians and Kenyans. Nonetheless, it is now estimated that the largest ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland are from Eastern Europe – particularly Poland and Lithuania – followed by the Chinese and Irish Traveller communities. Other migrants are from Portugal, the Philippines, India and a number of different African countries including Somalia and Sudan.

These demographic changes are set against a backdrop of a predominant population of two major religious groups – Protestants and Catholics. Community relations and identities in Northern Ireland commonly continue to be considered in these binary terms. Here society is struggling to implement a good relations agenda that takes account of the different needs of an increasingly diverse society: inequalities face long-established ethnic minority and majority groups, and are emerging among recent migrants.

Demographic changes are set against a backdrop of a predominant population of two major religious groups – Protestants and Catholics.

### Impetus for the research

The expansion of migration to non-established gateways or what has been termed new destination areas is not fully understood (Bricknell and Datta, 2011; Miraftab, 2012). Increased contact through personal interaction and co-operation between majority and minority groups are important for achieving positive relations between social groups (Allport, 1954). Thus shared schooling, healthcare and access to other public services are essential features as are shared work and education spaces. Many migrants to Northern Ireland moved in the wake of labour market mobility arising from globalisation. This often entailed picking up employment in sectors facing a shortage of workers and was thus deemed to be low quality employment. Those working in meat processing and agriculture are effectively shoring up sectors that might otherwise struggle and doing jobs that are often considered by majority groups as menial. Workers in many of these sectors do not have equal status to longer standing residents. This is manifest through restrictions relating to working conditions; for example, the UK government imposed certain requirements, such as the Worker Registration Scheme, for individuals from A8 countries, operational between 2004 and 2011. More recent restrictions have been imposed in relation to working visas for individuals from outside the EU who wish to work in the UK. By imposing bureaucratic requirements, a clear demarcation is created between migrants and non-migrants.

Gimpel and Lay (2008) reveal how living in a place and having strong connections to people and places within a locality can generate resistance to diversity for a variety of reasons, not least because it provides frames of reference, often focusing on how things were in the past. They found that fear from changing social positions can cause anxiety for some members of

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the community. This influences how different groups relate to one another; social values and norms; and customs and traditions.

This has particular resonance in the context of Northern Ireland, a place where the majority Protestant community have had a long-term stake in particular localities. For instance, in East Belfast many Protestants comprised the majority of the shipbuilding workforce. This has long since been eroded and it is symptomatic of wider transitions across society that have resulted in a shifted position for the Protestant community. Northern Ireland is also a place where physical and social barriers between the two majority communities prevail. A separate education system segregates Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren. Meanwhile, 99 'peace lines' in Belfast and numerous additional divides elsewhere in Northern Ireland ensure the physical segregation of the majority communities.<sup>2/3</sup> The addition of new and diverse communities in contested places adds an additional complication to these divisions.

For a place such as Northern Ireland where history and symbolism hold so much importance, the impact of the layering of new social groups onto the established majority communities is not fully understood. This has significance in terms of processes of integration, not least of which is the way in which migrants and ethnic minority communities are able to join the labour market and avail themselves of economic opportunities.

### Research aims

This report builds on earlier research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Wallace, *et al.*, 2013) that reviewed the evidence relating to poverty and ethnicity in Northern Ireland. One of the main findings from that research was the lack of knowledge of employment patterns and experiences of people from ethnic minority communities and of the economic and social mobility of those individuals. By investigating the impediments to economic mobility for individuals from ethnic minority communities, this research examines in more detail the way in which they find their way in the labour market and the degree to which this impacts on their wider experiences in Northern Ireland. Specifically this research considers the following questions:

- How are poverty and ethnicity connected? How do other aspects of identity such as gender, age, religion, disability and health impact on poverty?
- How do employer attitudes and workplace cultures impact on recruitment and progression for those from ethnic minority communities? How can the labour market be more accessible to individuals from ethnic minority communities?
- How can individuals from ethnic minority communities make a greater contribution to the economy? What is the role of government in this process?

Additionally, the study was concerned with the way in which the labour market and public services may help to alleviate poverty.

Overall, this research aims to increase understanding of the ways in which poverty and ethnicity are linked in Northern Ireland and thereby achieve more effective policy interventions. Existing research indicates that low income is at the heart of poverty. By unpacking the interrelated factors that influence economic mobility among ethnic minority communities, this research will make a significant contribution to the knowledge of poverty and ethnicity.

## Methodology and approach to the study

The research consisted of two main components:

### Desk-based research

This involved a review of selected published secondary research from various sources to provide a detailed profile of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland. This data was used to inform the design of the fieldwork.

### Primary fieldwork

The fieldwork took place with individuals from ethnic minority communities in Belfast and in the Armagh, Newry and Portadown area, a region south of the city which experienced significant levels of migration. The majority of the sample was drawn from recent arrivals rather than settled communities: none of these participants were born in Northern Ireland although some have been living there for at least 20 years. In total, four focus groups were conducted with people from twelve different ethnic groups.

The following table provides a summary of the focus groups.

**Table 1: Summary of focus groups**

Nationality	Gender	Qualifications	Economic activity
Mixed Asian: India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan	All M (6)	Graduates and unskilled	Working in professional positions and in hospitality sector
Polish and Bulgarian	All F (6)	Graduates and unskilled	Working in professional positions, various unskilled positions or working in the home
Nigerian	7 M and 1 F	Graduates and unskilled	Working in professional positions, in various unskilled positions or seeking employment
Mixed African: Sudan, Congo, Ivory Coast	3 M and 2 F	All graduates or professionals	Asylum seekers and refugees

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve females and eight males. These included individuals working in professional positions, professionals working in unskilled jobs and unskilled workers. Some of those interviewed had multiple jobs. Most of the interviewees were Polish (N=17) and the remaining were from India, Brazil and Singapore. The interviews explored in detail issues arising from focus group discussions and some were conducted through an interpreter.

Six individual interviews were conducted with employers and representatives from agencies that provide support and advocacy to ethnic minority communities. This latter category included both government and third sector organisations. Again, these interviews were used as a mechanism to explore issues already raised as well as providing key agencies with the opportunity to identify additional matters.

The following table provides a summary of the employer interviews carried out.

**Table 2: Overview of employers interviewed**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Skill level of roles</b>
Private health and social care	Regional Director	Skilled Low-skilled/Elementary
Public health and social care	Health and Social Inequalities Manager	High-skilled and skilled Low-skilled/Elementary
Bio-medical	HR Director	High-skilled and skilled
Meat processing and production	HR Director	Low-skilled/Elementary production-line roles
Hospitality and leisure	HR Manager	Low-skilled/Elementary
Manufacturing	HR Manager	Some semi-skilled Low-skilled line assembly roles

Finally, a round-table event with key public and voluntary sector agencies provided an opportunity to triangulate the data, identify gaps and consider options for addressing the emerging challenges.

Throughout the project an advisory group comprising representatives of agencies, voluntary agencies and leading academics, provided a valuable sounding board to ensure the study met the needs of potential users.

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## 2 NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT

This chapter explains the key features of the economy of Northern Ireland and the demographic changes following recent migration. It shows how popular understanding of ethnicity in Northern Ireland requires adjustment so that account is taken of how new social groups join a society with entrenched divisions.

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Evidence from elsewhere indicates that ethnic minority experiences of poverty can be shaped by 'place' and by the health of the local economy (Garner and Bhattacharyya, 2011). This has particular meaning in Northern Ireland where disputes over space have been evident in the past (Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011).

The initial review indicated hesitancy among certain parts of the population in Northern Ireland to move beyond a traditional understanding of society in simplistic terms of majority and minority to one where attention is paid to other aspects of identity including culture, age, gender and qualifications.

### **Communities in Northern Ireland: an evolving picture**

Reflective of the organic and changing nature of community as a concept, the 'community' in Northern Ireland has changed substantially over recent years. Long-standing notions of identity along the unionist–nationalist spectrum are not entirely relevant to new arrivals. Nonetheless, 'by dint of living in one area or another, and sending their children to local schools, recent arrivals can become "accidental" Protestants or Catholics' (Nolan, 2013). Even so, no longer is it appropriate to consider society in terms of the two majority groups given the diverse mix of ethnic groups that represent the 'community' (NISRA, 2010). This diversity is reflected in many different aspects of everyday life including requests for interpretation. In 2012 a total of 40 different languages were requested through the NI interpreting

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service with the top five languages being Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Chinese-Mandarin and Slovak (in decreasing order). Evidently there are many different layers of community within many localities in Northern Ireland.

A complex picture emerges that can only be understood through careful examination of the particular experiences of people from ethnic minority communities. The remainder of this report considers the particular experiences of some ethnic minority groups in different public spaces, namely that of the neighbourhood and the workplace.

## Ethnicity

A miscellany of confusing language around ethnicity is evident among agencies across Northern Ireland. This is bewildering not least where a single label is used to denote quite different social groups; see, for example, the application of the label 'Roma' by the UK government compared to the European definition (Craig, 2011). The previous chapter describes how many, but not all, minority communities are recent migrants to Northern Ireland. The remainder of this section explains how ethnicity is understood within this report. However, it should be noted that ethnicity has many different definitions. Further, it is not a static or one-dimensional concept but it shifts according to many other factors such as an individual's experiences, expectations and socio-economic status; qualifications; and culture (Barnard and Turner, 2011). Even so, social structures create ethnic identities by putting people into groups. This is evident in Northern Ireland where the Census (2011) defines ethnicity according to the following categories:

- White;
- Chinese;
- Irish Traveller;
- Indian;
- Pakistani;
- Bangladeshi;
- Other Asian;
- Black Caribbean;
- Black African;
- Black other;
- Mixed; and
- Other.

In this way there is no distinction made for A8 and A2<sup>4</sup> nationals, reinforcing a commonly held belief that ethnicity refers to the non-White population alone and is therefore a physical attribute. But individuals can maintain different national identities; for example, Northern Irish, British and European, etc. Further challenges are likely to arise in the future as monitoring only takes account of language and country of origin. In other words, most aspects pertaining to ethnicity are ignored through official monitoring. Responses to issues of 'ethnicity' in Northern Ireland have in the past been undermined by the history of sectarian conflict. It has been argued that there was a perception that as the ethnic minority population was small, 'race' and racism were considered unproblematic (Connolly and Keenan, 2002). Ethnicity relates to all groups across society – majority and minority; but this is something that is not fully accepted or understood in Northern Ireland.

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Ethnic minority communities are described in this report mainly according to nationality or country of origin but in the knowledge that other markers – language, culture, traditions and religion – affect their identity. Recent arrivals to Northern Ireland represent the establishment of new ethnic minority communities or additions to longer established ethnic minority communities. This study focused on long-established ethnic minority communities and more recent migrants to Northern Ireland. Recent arrivals may be entitled to work, they may be undocumented or they may be seeking asylum. White minority groups, while less visible within society, are marked from the majority communities due to differences including language and culture. Thus in Northern Ireland ethnic minority communities include Travellers, Eastern European migrants, asylum seekers predominantly from African countries, and longer established communities from China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Consequently there are first and second generation people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

## Poverty and the labour market

Poverty is a relative measure that captures the capacity of an individual to fully participate in society. Individuals and families/households can move in and out of poverty. The way in which it is experienced in Northern Ireland is distinct from Great Britain (Horgan and Monteith, 2009), with a disproportionate number of people in Northern Ireland experiencing poverty (Maclnnes, *et al.*, 2012). Although a much contested concept (Platt, 2007), poverty is fundamentally about low income and standards of living. The nature of the labour market is therefore important if we are to understand poverty. Additionally, high levels of poverty in areas of existing diversity are predictors of lower social cohesion, and so addressing deprivation is important in securing integration and cohesion (Saggar, *et al.*, 2012).

Research on ethnicity and poverty has highlighted issues that reduce the ability of an individual from an ethnic minority community to participate in the labour market, such as problems with service delivery; equality of opportunities; ethnic monitoring; recognition of qualifications; and increased levels of vulnerability in the workplace. Meanwhile, with the exception of Ireland, all EU countries are expected to experience a decline in their working age population by 2020 (OECD, 2012). Without filling labour market shortages through migration, these economies cannot be expected to grow. Particular barriers to economic mobility exist within the EU including the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications; lack of co-operation of national employment agencies and insufficient language proficiency (EC, 2011). As a result, migrants to EU12<sup>5</sup> countries have a strong over-qualification risk compared to the native population (EC, 2009). In other words, they are more likely to have qualifications far beyond those required for their job.

The extent to which these issues of poverty and ethnicity are felt in Northern Ireland is not understood. Nor is it clear how issues pertaining to identity intertwine with ethnicity to contribute to pathways into and out of poverty, including participation in the labour market. Certainly, at the very least, the settlement of new migrants in rural areas in Northern Ireland has added significance given that, on average, people in rural areas have a higher risk of poverty (Maclnnes, *et al.*, 2012).

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## The Northern Ireland economy

Relative to the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland is one of the most disadvantaged regions on many measures. It suffers from a weak economy that is characterised by an inflated public sector, a large SME base and a lack of inward investment. More specifically, low levels of productivity are coupled with high rates of economic inactivity (2010 Office for National Statistics). It has a particularly low level of business expenditure on research and development and this is poorly spread; and the skills profile of the working age population in Northern Ireland remains weaker than the UK as a whole (Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, April–June 2010). In recent decades there has been a sectoral shift in the Northern Ireland economy away from traditional lower skilled activities such as agriculture towards the service sector and higher value manufacturing activities (Oxford Economics, 2009).

Compared to the UK overall, the economy is heavily reliant on the public sector with 28.3 per cent employed therein (Office for National Statistics, March 2013) compared with a UK average of 19.5 per cent. The public sector is perceived to be cumbersome, with phrases such as ‘over-administration’, ‘inefficiency’ and ‘layers of bureaucracy’ being used to describe it over recent years. It is not surprising that this ‘public administration backwater’ (Knox, 2009) has been undergoing major reform since 2005 when a Review of Public Administration was instigated. Combined with the peripheral geographical location of Northern Ireland within Europe, these weaknesses represent serious growth and development limitations and are danger signs for the economy (McInroy and Longlands, 2010). They may be offset to an extent by strengths including a relatively young population; competitive labour costs; excellent broadband cover; and a relatively low crime rate (HM Treasury, 2011). An active and engaged community and voluntary sector has in the past contributed to the delivery of public services while also helping to ensure civic confidence (Knox and Carmichael, 2006). This presents a valuable resource for an area facing substantial cuts in public expenditure. Meanwhile, opportunities exist elsewhere in the economy including in the agri-food industry; relating to health sector technology; and to increase FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) (NIE, 2012). Recently there has been some success in this final objective with the attraction of large corporations such as Citigroup, NYSE and Chicago Mercantile Exchange. These companies have helped to establish Northern Ireland as a place for back office technology support. But despite this achievement, the economy in Northern Ireland has few large firms and remains characterised by a large SME base. This ‘small-nature’ structure of the economy means that the area is under-represented in managerial and professional occupations (Oxford Economics, 2009). Furthermore, the SME sector has been found to render migrant workers particularly vulnerable to exploitation (Green, *et al.*, 2005).

The current Economic Development Strategy (NI Executive, 2013) highlights the following challenges that hamper economic growth in Northern Ireland:

- Living standards have persistently lagged behind Great Britain, with the main factors being lower levels of employment and productivity.
- Growth in output and jobs has tended to be in relatively low value added areas, which has resulted in average wages remaining significantly below the UK average.

The economy in Northern Ireland has few large firms and remains characterised by a large SME base.

- An over reliance on the public sector as a driver of economic growth in NI. The comparatively small private sector also contributes to a very large fiscal deficit.
- The economy has historically been under-represented in higher value added sectors such as finance and business services.
- A large proportion of the population is registered as economically inactive, with social exclusion levels well above other parts of the UK.
- Almost half of the working age population in receipt of incapacity benefit have been diagnosed with mental and behavioural disorders.
- Significant numbers of households have experienced intergenerational poverty or joblessness and are far removed from job readiness and the labour market.

It is clear that particular challenges and opportunities lie ahead for the economy in Northern Ireland. The future does not appear very promising with predictions that, compared to the rest of the UK, living standards in Northern Ireland will decrease and there will be relatively lower levels of job growth along with job cuts due to the reduction in public expenditure (Oxford Economics, 2009).

In addition, recent research has highlighted that the reforms to the welfare system, if implemented, will take £750m a year out of the Northern Ireland economy, and that the financial loss per adult of working age is substantially larger than in any other part of the UK (Beattie and Fothergill, 2013).

A range of skills are required if Northern Ireland is to make the sea change from being an economy reliant on the public sector to one with a strong private sector base that includes large-scale corporations as well as SMEs. As well as developing the skills base within the resident population, it is likely that the recent inflow of migrants will make a contribution to this development. However, previous research indicates that, across the UK, ethnic minority status can result in disadvantage in relation to recruitment, promotion, training and retention, with evidence of particular vulnerability of migrant workers regarding low-paid and low-status work (Green, *et al.*, 2005). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are the main source of employment for migrant workers to the UK (Green, *et al.*, 2005), have been shown to be more discriminatory than larger employers.<sup>6</sup> This could be particularly pertinent given the context of Northern Ireland where of the 68,525 businesses in 2010, 98 per cent had fewer than 50 employees (Equality Commission website). Previous research has uncovered exploitation in Northern Ireland including paying wages below the minimum wage; debt bondage; retention of passports; workplace discrimination and harassment; and failure to deliver on promised work contracts (Allamby, *et al.*, 2011). Indeed, the Equality Commission has identified that along with five other broad areas, employment is one domain where, despite legislative and policy initiatives, inequalities persist (ECNI, 2007). While the extent of these difficulties is only partially understood, there is anecdotal and piecemeal evidence of migrants being employed in jobs well below the level of their skills and experience across many sectors of the economy within Northern Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Research has shown that the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and experience can further hamper the economic mobility of migrants (Holder, *et al.*, 2006).

### Migrants and the labour market

Evidence from Britain notes that new migrants have higher rates of labour-force participation and pay proportionately more in taxes than

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they receive back, in terms of health, education, benefits or other public services (Dustmann, *et al.*, 2010). Labour market segmentation is apparent, with different sectors of the economy attracting different ethnic groups. Research conducted by Jarman and Byrne (2007) showed that the majority of the migrant workers seeking employment through employment agencies in Belfast work in the healthcare system, construction industry, hospitality industry or as manual/casual labour. Broad generalisations include Portuguese speakers and Eastern Europeans working in food processing; Chinese nationals employed in the catering industry; Filipino nurses recruited to the health sector; Eastern Europeans employed in the mushroom sector and in meat processing; and Indian graduates working for ICT businesses. Part of this is due to intra-ethnic connections and chain migration. For instance, many of the Chinese nationals arrived from China and Hong Kong in the early 1960s and were mostly employed in the catering industry. This led to chain migration, with friends and family moving from the same region in China to access employment. As a result, many of the Chinese community are segmented within the catering sector, but some work in other sectors such as health and social care. A similar pattern is emerging in relation to Eastern Europeans and meat processing and mushroom farming.

## Northern Ireland Census of Population 2011

Census 2011 data relating to ethnicity and poverty indicators released on 28 June 2013 shows that the population of Northern Ireland increased by 125,603 (7.4 per cent) between 2001 and 2011. In this period, the total population proportion originally born within the UK and Republic of Ireland decreased slightly from 95.8 per cent in 2001 to 95.5 per cent in 2011. This 'indigenous' population is split across two majority communities along religious lines, with roughly 48.4 per cent being of, or having been brought up in, a Protestant or other Christian background, and another 45.1 per cent being of, or having been brought up in, a Catholic background.

The number of resident individuals living in Northern Ireland but not having been born in the UK or Republic of Ireland increased over this period from 26,666 in 2001 to 80,621 in 2011. Over the same period, the number of people recorded as being of an ethnic background other than White increased from 14,259 in 2001 to 32,414 in 2011. With the exception of the Irish Traveller community, the populations of each ethnic categorisation in the Census data have increased. The most notable population increase has been among those of 'Other Asian'<sup>8</sup> origin increasing from 190 in 2001 to 4,998 in 2011. Similarly, the population of those of Indian ethnicity increased from 1,569 to 6,198.

These figures do not account for the entirety of the increase in the Northern Ireland population not born within the UK or Ireland. There has been a steep increase in the population of less visible 'White' ethnic minority groups originating from the post-2004 Accession EU states. The population in Northern Ireland originally from these states increased dramatically from 710 to 35,560 over the ten years between the two Census surveys. The most prominent nationalities among this population in 2011 are those of Polish nationality, who make up 19,658 (55.3 per cent), and those of Lithuanian nationality, who make up 7,341 (20.6 per cent).

The Irish Traveller community has decreased by 24 per cent from 1,710 in 2001 to 1,301 by 2011, making it the only ethnic group categorisation in the Census data to have displayed a decrease in actual population size.

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However, not all ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland are linked to recent inward migration trends. As explained previously in the Ethnicity section, Northern Ireland experienced past periods of increased inward migration of people from various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds; for example, 27.3 per cent of those recorded in the Census as being Chinese were born in Northern Ireland. This is suggestive of the more established nature of this ethnic minority community within Northern Ireland. A further reflection of this is apparent through the large proportion of individuals – just under 40 per cent – from the Chinese ethnic population who have English as their main language and is symptomatic of a second or third generation ethnic minority population.

In contrast, within the population categorised as ‘Other Asian’, only 12.8 per cent out of a population of 5,000 were born in Northern Ireland, suggesting a large proportion of this ethnic minority community to be more recent in nature. A further demonstration of the integration of longer term ethnic minority populations is the increased number of individuals categorised as of ‘Mixed’ ethnicity.

## Indicators of poverty

The 2011 Census data released in June 2013 contained data on ethnic minorities and migrants against key indicators of poverty. This section outlines key statistics from this data.

### Economic activity

Economic activity relates to whether an individual is an active participant in the labour market through being in work or looking for work at the time of the Census. It is an indicator of the availability of economic resource between the ages of 16 and 74. A person could be described as economically active even if not in employment but actively seeking work and ready to start. Persons would be described as economically inactive if they were not in employment and unavailable for work for varying reasons, e.g. long-term sickness, looking after home/family, etc. (NISRA, 2011).

Overall, 65 per cent of working-age people originally from the UK or Ireland are recorded as being economically active. Of this economically active population, 7.5 per cent were unemployed at the time of the Census.

Economic activity rates within the Irish Traveller community have declined from 35 per cent in 2001 to 31 per cent in 2011. This is the lowest rate among all minority ethnic groups. The economic activity rate among all other ethnic groups has risen. The most significant rise is among those of Indian ethnicity: the rate increased from 64.7 per cent in 2001 to 80.9 per cent in 2011. It is considered likely to be as a result of the high rate of inward economic migration of Indian workers as a result of targeted recruitment by a range of employers to acquire highly skilled employees.

However, not all those considered to be economically active are in employment. Among the ethnic minority populations there have been some significant increases in those recorded as unemployed. The largest increase is among the Black community, with the rate of unemployment of 7.2 per cent in 2001 rising to 12.4 per cent in 2011.

Other notable themes relating to economic activity from the 2011 Census are detailed below. This data was not recorded as part of the 2001 Census and so no comparisons can be drawn:

- People originating from post-2004 EU Accession countries had the highest rate of employment at 72.7 per cent; in comparison, the rate for the population originating from Northern Ireland was 47.8 per cent. Conversely, the post-2004 EU population also had the lowest rate of self-employment at 4 per cent; again, comparatively the rate within the NI population was 9.1 per cent.
- The lowest rate of employment and self-employment is among those originally from the Republic of Ireland, with a rate of 58.7 per cent.
- The rate of economic activity and employment varies across the different spoken languages. The lowest rate of economic activity is recorded among those who have Chinese as their main language, at 56.5 per cent.
- The highest rate of unemployment is among those with Portuguese as their main language.
- There is a correlation between a low English speaking ability and a low rate of economic activity. Of those whose first language is not English but can speak it very well, 80.5 per cent are considered economically active. Likewise, 70.5 per cent are either employed or self-employed, with only 5.2 per cent recorded as unemployed. Among the population who have English as their main language, the economic activity rate is 65.7 per cent.
- In contrast, the level of economic activity among those who cannot speak any English is only 63.2 per cent, and 7.7 per cent are recorded as unemployed. Being able to speak English influences an individual's ability to participate in the labour market.

### Industry and occupation

Among White<sup>9</sup> ethnic groups, 16.9 per cent are employed in professional roles. In contrast, 51.5 per cent of the Indian ethnic minority population are employed in professional roles and 39 per cent for 'Other Asian'; 32.4 per cent of the Chinese community are in skilled trades, higher than the proportion of that population in any other occupation.

There were 260 people from the Irish Traveller community recorded as having an occupation in 2001; this had fallen to 168 in 2011, a decrease of 35.4 per cent.

In 2001, 449 people from a Black ethnic background were recorded as being in an occupation; 18.1 per cent of these individuals were employed in low-level elementary<sup>10</sup> or plant occupations. By 2011, 1,615 individuals of Black ethnicity were now in an occupation; over this same period the percentage of the population working in low-level elementary or plant occupations had increased to 28.7 per cent. This is the highest proportion in these occupations across all ethnic communities.

There has been a large increase in the numbers of individuals from an Indian ethnic background and Other Asian ethnic background in employment within the health and social care industry sector. Between 2001 and 2011 the number of individuals from an Indian background working in health and social care increased by over 580 per cent, from 228 to 1,338. Within the Other Asian population this increase is even more significant, with a rise of over 1,500 per cent working in health and social care: from 93 in 2001 rising to 1,468 in 2011.

Half of the Chinese group in Northern Ireland worked in the accommodation and food industry in 2011. However, this is a decrease from 2001 when 60.7 per cent of the Chinese ethnic population worked within this sector.

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Other notable themes relating to occupation and industry from the 2011 Census are detailed below. This data was not recorded as part of the 2001 Census and so no comparisons could be drawn:

- People from the post-2004 EU Accession countries have the lowest rate of employment in the top four occupation classes. Only 2.8 per cent are in occupations at a manager/director level, 6 per cent at a professional level, 4.3 per cent at associate professional/technical level and 4.5 per cent within skilled trades.
- 51.1 per cent of those from post-2004 Accession countries are employed in either lower elementary or plant occupations. This is a significantly higher rate than across other countries of origin. Note that the vast majority of this population will be recorded as being of White ethnicity, explaining why this was not reflected when looking at occupation by ethnicity.
- There is a clear correlation between a decreasing ability to speak English and a higher rate of occupation in lower level elementary or plant occupations. For those whose main language was not English, but who could speak the language well, 21.9 per cent were employed in lower level occupations. This rises to 57.8 per cent for those who cannot speak English.
- A large proportion (29 per cent) of the population originally from post-2004 EU Accession countries work within the manufacturing industry. This is a significantly higher proportion than any other population.
- Outside the population originally born in Northern Ireland, the post-2004 Accession population also presents the highest population proportion in employment within the construction industry (6.3 per cent).

From these figures it is apparent there are specific ethnic minority groups (Black ethnic minority groups and Eastern Europeans particularly) at a higher risk of experiencing in-work poverty as a result of the lower sectors of employment they tend to occupy.

### Level of education

The links between poor educational attainment and poor outcomes relating to poverty are well established. A 2012 JRF report (Taylor, *et al.*, 2012), states that those with low educational attainment are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs and are less likely than those with high educational attainment to be active in the labour market. That research showed how unemployment rates are around four times greater for those with no qualifications compared to those with university degrees.

The Census data shows that the proportion of Irish Travellers in the over-16 age group with no qualifications decreased slightly from 71.5 per cent to 67.8 per cent between 2001 and 2011. There has also been an increase in the proportion of Irish Travellers with qualifications at Level 3 or above (risen from 12.3 per cent to 16.2 per cent, over 2001–11). Despite these slight improvements, Irish Travellers have the lowest level of education of all the ethnic groups including the majority population.

The Indian population continues to have the highest proportion of individuals with Level 4 qualifications or higher, with a rate of 76.9 per cent in 2011. This is an increase from 54.4 per cent in 2001. A similar proportion of highly skilled individuals is evident within those of 'Other Asian' ethnic background: 72.3 per cent of the over-16 population of 'Other Asian' ethnicity have qualifications at Level 4 or above.

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Other notable themes relating to level of education from the 2011 Census are detailed below. This data was not recorded as part of the 2001 Census and so no comparisons could be drawn:

- People who recorded Chinese as their main language had the highest rate of having no qualifications, at 31.5 per cent of their population. This is followed by English/Irish as a main language, at 29.5 per cent; and Portuguese at 24.6 per cent.
- There is a high rate of the population with a main language from a 2004 A8 country (46.5 per cent) and Portuguese (41.4 per cent) who have other<sup>11</sup> qualifications. This suggests a high rate of people originating from these countries who hold country-specific qualifications which are unable to be classified.
- This is in contrast to the high rate of universally recognised qualifications, such as degrees, held by those with Filipino as a main language, for example, with 59.8 per cent having a Level 4 qualification or above.

### General health

The links between poverty and poor health outcomes are well established. Graham (2009) states that in both childhood and adulthood, social disadvantage is associated with a higher risk of disease, disability and death.

Census data shows a decrease in the number of Irish Travellers citing their health as being poor. In 2011, 20.6 per cent of Travellers between the ages of 16 and 64 stated they were not in good health, compared with 26.7 per cent in 2001. However, this proportion is still significantly larger than the White ethnic groups, with 5.4 per cent citing their health as being poor. This higher proportion of ill health is prevalent across all age groups in the Traveller community.

The majority White ethnic population records the poorest outcomes in terms of general health after Irish Travellers, with 10.7 per cent of the White population recorded to be in poor or very poor health. This, however, is significantly influenced by the proportion to which this population is made up of individuals in the older age groups.

The Indian and Black ethnic minority populations have the poorest outcomes of the more 'visible' ethnic minority groups, with 8.2 per cent and 8 per cent respectively recorded as being in poor or very poor health. The Chinese population sees the best outcomes in relation to general health, with 95.7 per cent of the population stating themselves to be in either fair or good health.

### Summary of emerging themes from 2011 Census data

Census data has shown that there has been significant inward migration to Northern Ireland over the last decade. There has been an increase in the population of the already established ethnic minority communities, specifically Chinese and Indian. However, the most prominent ethnic minority population increases have been among other Asian ethnicities, specifically Filipino, and 'less visible' White ethnic minority populations originating from post-2004 Accession EU states. The only ethnic minority group to witness a population decline in Northern Ireland over the period is the Irish Traveller community.

Economic activity is highest among the more recently arrived ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland. The lowest rate of economic activity is found within the Irish Traveller community, with the most common reason for economic inactivity cited as long-term sickness or disability.

Economic activity is highest among the more recently arrived ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland.

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There has been a significant decrease in the numbers of Irish Travellers in employment, but there has been an increase in educational attainment and a decrease in the number who feel their health is poor.

There has been a significant increase in the Black ethnic minority population. There is a strong tendency for this group to be employed in lower or more menial sectors of employment. A poor level of educational attainment is also prevalent among this population as well as comparatively poor health.

The White ethnic minority population from EU Accession states experienced the largest proportional increase of any ethnic minority population from 2001 to 2011. This group has good qualification levels, with very low numbers not having any qualifications. However, people in this group are also more likely than the majority groups to work in lower occupational roles. Due to the younger age profile of this population, these individuals also have a good level of general health.

Census data has shown the Portuguese community has grown from low hundreds in 2001<sup>12</sup> to just under two thousand in 2011, but data was not presented in a manner which allowed us to explore employment outcomes for this community. A high proportion of those who stated their main language to be Portuguese had no qualifications (24.6 per cent). It is therefore likely that individuals from this population would find themselves in lower occupational roles.

There was also a significant increase in the size of the Indian and 'Other Asian' ethnic populations within Northern Ireland. These two ethnic groups have a high rate (44.3 per cent) of Level 4 qualifications and a high rate of employment in professional roles (39 per cent). A large percentage of this group has a high level of English language proficiency.

There was an increase in the size of the Chinese ethnic minority population between 2001 and 2011. This population exhibits similar trends to the White ethnic population, except in terms of general health, where outcomes are better than all other ethnic groups.

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## 3 LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

Policy relating to access to employment, welfare and health is one of the largest influences on the rates at which the various ethnic minorities are likely to experience poverty. This section will review relevant legislation and strategies relevant to Northern Ireland so to assess the impact these are having or could have on poverty among ethnic minority groups.

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### Legislation

#### Immigration legislation

Immigration policy is a reserved matter for Westminster, and was until March 2013 managed and enforced by the UK Border Agency (UKBA). The agency was 'broken up' at this time into two separate bodies, with these functions returned to the Home Office. One of the new bodies, UK Visas and Immigration, focuses on the visa system while the second, Border Force, oversees immigration enforcement.

The Home Office employs Local Immigration Teams within Scotland and Northern Ireland (LITs) who 'ensure compliance with the immigration laws'. A number of changes to the Immigration Rules came into effect on 9 July 2012. These changes affect non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) nationals when they apply to enter or remain in the UK under the family migration route and these are listed in Appendix 1. Everyone who enters Northern Ireland after a prolonged absence or for the first time must show they are 'habitually resident' unless they have worked in the UK or they have the right to reside in the UK as a 'worker' as defined in European law. This will then affect their entitlements.

To claim most means-tested benefits in the UK, an individual has to satisfy the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test. These are that the person must be actually resident and there must be a degree of permanence about the residence.

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## Rights and entitlements

Rights such as Working Rights, Social Security Benefits, Housing Rights, Employment Rights, Health Care, Human Rights and Equality, Civil Liberties, Education Information, and Voting Access for Citizens are different depending on which category of immigrants individuals fall into, namely:

- EEA and Swiss nationals from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland;
- A8 nationals, who have the same rights as other EU nationals since 30 April 2011;
- A2 nationals, who gained the same rights as other EU nationals from 31 December 2013; and
- Work Permit Employees.

Guides pertaining to the rights for A2<sup>13</sup> nationals are available.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that as these guides no longer apply since January 2014, when Bulgarian and Romanian nationals gained the same rights as other EEA nationals.

Another useful and regularly updated source for information on migrants' rights in various categories such as employment, housing and health is the NI Direct website (see Appendix 2 for an updated summary of migrants' rights as at August 2013). It highlights that both workers and employees have basic rights and entitlements. Many workers from ethnic minority communities are employed as agency workers and their rights are set out under the Agency Workers Regulations. The Agency Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 were implemented as a result of the EU Agency Workers Directive. The basic premise of the Directive is that agency workers have the same protection as permanent workers: they are entitled to be paid at least the National Minimum Wage; have access to the same facilities as equivalent employees; and are granted working time entitlements such as paid annual leave. After twelve continuous weeks on assignment, agency workers are also entitled to be paid at the same rates as equivalent employees. Article 5.2 of the Directive provides an exemption to the right to equal pay; this is known as the Swedish Derogation. Agency workers who are on a permanent contract of employment with an employment agency and who receive pay between assignments do not have the right to be paid at the same rate as equivalent employees, but should still be paid at least the National Minimum Wage. The Department for Employment and Learning registers employment agencies and is currently conducting research into the agency workers and the implementation of the Agency Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011.

While immigration legislation is a reserved matter for Westminster, in 1998 the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement led to the establishment of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, which brought new legislation unique to Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Act (1998) developed a framework of statutory responsibilities and detailed safeguards for equality under Section 75, which identifies a 'statutory duty on public authorities ... to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation'. The Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (ECNI) has the responsibility of enforcement of Section 75 responsibilities. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) are required in relation to each piece of new legislation. They provide a seven-step process for reviewing a policy, examine the potential impacts

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it could have on each of the Section 75 groups, and include the need to consult with representatives of the groups and make recommendations for dealing with any adverse impacts.

The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (RRO) was amended by the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 to give effect to the EU Racial Equality Directive. It was further amended by the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, to extend the definition of indirect discrimination to include both persons who are put at a disadvantage by discriminatory provision or practice and those who would be put at a disadvantage, and by the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 in respect of seafarers. The Order outlaws discrimination on racial grounds. Racial grounds include colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. The Irish Traveller community is specifically identified in the RRO as a racial group which is protected against unlawful racial discrimination. The law covers racial discrimination in the following key areas:

- employment;
- education;
- the provision of goods, facilities or services; and
- the disposal or management of premises.

The Race Relations Order also provides that segregation on racial grounds constitutes discrimination. It permits **positive action** in favour of members of particular racial groups to enable their special education, training and welfare needs to be met. Perceptions of shortcomings relating to this legislation persist, not least of which is the fact that the Act was not amended to incorporate the criminal justice system. Structural change under this Act is limited as it is mainly prohibitive rather than encouraging of positive action regarding equality of opportunity. This is in contrast to other jurisdictions in the UK where the Single Equality Act (2010) replaced nine major pieces of legislation and addresses discrimination, equality of opportunity and the development of good relations (Hepple, 2010).

## Government strategies in Northern Ireland

### Racial Equality Strategy 2005–10

The Racial Equality Strategy is hugely important to driving change across government departments. It has the opportunity to provide direction to departments responsible for areas that can reduce poverty for many ethnic minority communities. The Racial Equality Strategy for 2005–10 still underpins the legal and policy framework in Northern Ireland and will not lapse until the point at which it is replaced by the new strategy; therefore the strategy for the period 2005–10 remains the guiding document. OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) ministers have continued to provide £1.1m per annum to build capacity in this sector. There is a need, however, for the Racial Equality Strategy to be updated to take account of the current challenges faced by different ethnic groups, many of which are detailed in this report.

A new Racial Equality Strategy is currently being developed. It is understood that it will take full account of developments concerning inward migration to Northern Ireland and the opportunities and challenges that this presents, with a robust implementation mechanism to ensure it impacts on the lives of individuals from ethnic minority communities.<sup>15</sup>

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### OFMDFM *Lifetime Opportunities 2008*

The OFMDFM – *Lifetime Opportunities: Strategy for Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion* (2008) aims to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by increasing economic opportunities, increasing the capacity of individuals to avail themselves of these, removing barriers to participation and targeting efforts to address the needs of the most vulnerable. It highlights the need to focus on the economy, to develop skills and to tackle poverty.

### OFMDFM *Together: Building a United Community 2013*

The *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*, published in May 2013, is based on the commitment of the NI Executive to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. It was inspired by a vision of ‘a united community based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance’.

It aims to ensure the educational inclusion and integration of children from an ethnic minority background and the inclusion of ethnic minority communities in community spaces, and promotes cultural identity and access to the arts for ethnic minority communities.

The most relevant strategies for promoting economic and social mobility for people generally, including those from ethnic minority communities, are as follows.

### Economic strategy: priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity 2012

The aim of the strategy is to improve the performance and international competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy. This strategy highlights the importance of getting companies to invest in innovation, research and development, and exporting in order to grow and create more value. It is through growth of the economy that further jobs can be created and existing jobs can be developed, hence creating the opportunity for wages/salaries to increase. The sectors with greatest growth potential are:

- business services (specifically ICT);
- financial services;
- manufacturing (including food and drink/agri-food, advanced manufacturing and advanced engineering);
- life and health sciences; and
- creative industries and digital media.

These sectors hold the most potential for growth and therefore for progression for people with the right skills and motivation.

Evidence from the Census and from qualitative feedback through organisations employing ethnic minority and migrant workers, presented in Chapter 5 of this report, indicates there is currently a high level of targeted recruitment of overseas skilled workers, predominantly within the health and social care sector, but also in the ICT and advanced science sectors. This recruitment is for occupations at a professional level, with the majority of recruitment taking place in India and the Philippines.

There is also a significant level of recruitment of ethnic minorities into lower occupational sectors. This is particularly evident among the Black ethnic minority population where 22.6 per cent are employed within elementary or process plant and machinery occupations. The rate of employment in these occupations is 51.1 per cent for the population from

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EU Accession states. The most common industry for employment of these two groups is manufacturing.

The highest rate of self-employment is evident among the Chinese ethnic community, with a self-employment rate of 13.9 per cent. The predominant sector of employment for this community is in accommodation and food service, reflective of the high rate to which initial Chinese migrants to Northern Ireland (as detailed in the section Migrants and the labour market in Chapter 2) are employed in the catering sector.

It is therefore evident that migrant and ethnic minority populations in Northern Ireland play a key role in supporting economic growth and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

### The Skills Strategy – ‘Success through Skills: Transforming Futures 2011’

The Skills Strategy highlights the importance of up-skilling people already in employment as well as ensuring that new entrants to the workforce meet essential skills requirements. The aim of the strategy is to enable people to progress up the skills ladder in order to achieve the required skills profile to enable Northern Ireland to compete globally. The strategy has four goals, namely:

- to increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 2 skills and above to 84–90 per cent by 2020, from a baseline of 71.2 per cent in 2008;
- to increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 3 skills and above to 68–76 per cent by 2020, from a baseline of 55.6 per cent in 2008;
- to increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 4–8 skills and above to 44–52 per cent by 2020, from a baseline of 33.2 per cent in 2008; and
- to increase the proportion of those qualifying from NI higher education institutions with graduate and post-graduate level courses in STEM subjects by 25–30 per cent in 2020 from a baseline of 18 per cent in 2008.

The strategy does not, however, refer to the under-utilisation of skills that already exist within the workforce. As shown in Chapter 5 below, companies recognise that there are a number of people working at levels well below their qualification levels. The focus groups highlight that some people from ethnic minorities are not making the most of their current skills and are not motivated to do so; some underlying reasons include a lack of awareness of opportunities and lack of affordable childcare. Those representing ethnic minority communities have a role to play in signposting people to services that can help them, such as those listed in the following section.

### Government initiatives and programmes

There are a number of government supports available to help those in employment, those seeking employment or those seeking to move into self-employment. There is a lack of data, however, on the extent to which these supports are taken up by people from ethnic minority groups. This is an area where action is required in order to identify where the uptake is below the expected levels.

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## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment/Invest NI

### *Regional Start Initiative (RSI)*

The Regional Start Initiative is a free business start-up programme delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland (through local delivery agents) and managed through Invest NI's regional office network. The initiative aims to provide those who are seeking to start a new business with support to help them to produce their own business plan.

Invest NI indicated its commitment to ensuring that the initiative is accessible to all. As part of the initiative, Invest NI has started recording data on the ethnicity of enquirers and participants in the RSI. The local delivery agencies have now been tasked with retrospectively entering equality data on the RSI management information system, which had been captured manually prior to March 2013. As a result of this, there are significant gaps in the data on participation within the programme by ethnicity.

Feedback from this project's advisory group highlighted that the support available from Invest NI may not be suitable for all ethnic communities; for example, the Chinese community tend to work within their own communities and save to set up their own businesses rather accessing support from others. Also, Eastern Europeans were reported to be suspicious of documents and officialdom and are therefore unlikely to take advantage of this type of initiative.

There is a need for further research into the specific barriers faced by different ethnic minority groups in setting up or developing their businesses and an assessment of the suitability of government support in meeting these needs.

### *Up-skilling – Skills Accelerator Programme and HR support*

Invest NI provides financial help to companies to up-skill their employees in line with the needs of their businesses through the Skills Growth Programme,<sup>16</sup> which requires the company to complete a comprehensive training needs assessment and develop a training/development plan. This is assessed by Invest NI, and financial support is made available for eligible costs.

Companies' training needs analysis processes focus on reviewing the training/development needs of individual employees and then bringing these together to form an overall training plan for the company. Training and development plans built on this process tend to underestimate the training needs of some ethnic minority workers due to the issues raised in Chapters 4 and 5. Work is needed within companies to support and encourage employees and make them aware of career opportunities before this process can be fully effective. The establishment of internal mentors to support ethnic minority workers, at least for the first 12 months, would be one way to help the situation.

Companies also need to have role models in place to help encourage others to consider the opportunities that exist and how to make best use of them.

Invest NI should encourage companies with ethnic minority workforces with low levels of English to include English language development as part of their training plans. They should also be provided with guidance on how to support ethnic minority employees as part of their skills and career planning process.

## Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

The Department for Employment and Learning oversees the provision of services which aim to enable individuals to enter employment and to progress within a job. As employment is key to reducing the risk of poverty for individuals, the extent to which the Department's services meet the needs of ethnic minority communities will play a significant role in influencing the outcomes for these groups.

### *DEL Employment Service*

The DEL Employment Service is responsible for supporting people into employment and providing support with up-skilling those in employment.

The Steps to Work (StW) Programme is one of DEL's main supports,<sup>17</sup> used to assist people who are unemployed or economically inactive to find work. At the end of March 2013, there were 16,565 individuals on the StW programme. Defined by equality group, 16,050 of these participants were classed as of White ethnic origins, 285 (1.7 per cent) of non-White ethnicity and 225 (1.4 per cent) unknown. If the uptake of StW is compared with the unemployment levels by ethnic group, there are significant discrepancies.

Census 2011 data has demonstrated that employment is low among some ethnic minority groups. For example, 3.7 per cent of individuals of Indian ethnic origin aged 16–74 are classed as unemployed, with 19.1 per cent in total classed as economically inactive. The rate is much higher among other ethnic minority communities, with a rate of 12.4 per cent unemployed among the Black community and 26.3 per cent in total classed as economically inactive. The rate is especially high among the Irish Traveller community, with a rate of economic inactivity of 69 per cent, and 7.7 per cent unemployed. This is demonstrated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Economic activity/inactivity by ethnicity 2011**

	White	Chinese	Indian	Other Asian	Black	Irish Traveller	Mixed	Other
<b>Economically active</b>	<b>66.1%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>80.9%</b>	<b>75.1%</b>	<b>73.7%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>70.2%</b>	<b>71.7%</b>
Employed/Self-employed	57.5%	53%	74.1%	66.1%	56.7%	20%	54.4%	58.5%
Unemployed	5%	4%	3.7%	3.7%	12.4%	7.7%	6.8%	7.3%
F/T student	3.6%	5%	3%	5.2%	4.6%	3.3%	9%	5.9%
<b>Economically inactive</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>

Source: Northern Ireland Census of Population Survey 2011

There are also extensive differences, as shown through Census data, in the skill levels across different ethnic groups. This is shown in Table 4 on the following page.

**Table 4: Qualification levels of individuals over 16 by ethnicity/country of origin 2011**

	White	2004 EU Acc.	Chinese	Indian	Other Asian	Black	Irish Traveller	Mixed
Level 4 +	23.4%	16.4%	25.9%	61.7%	54.3%	31.4%	8.9%	34.7%
Level 3	12.4%	5.5%	9.8%	6.2%	6.5%	8.8%	5.2%	14.9%
Level 2	15%	6.8%	8.7%	5.9%	6.7%	13.6%	7.7%	16.5%
Level 1	11.6%	6.3%	10.1%	5.1%	6%	10.7%	5.5%	11.7%
Apprenticeship and other	8.6%	47.7%	17.1%	15.8%	18.7%	17.4%	5%	9.9%
None	29.3%	17.2%	28.3%	5.1%	8%	18.1%	67.8%	12.3%

Source: Northern Ireland Census of Population Survey 2011

It is immediately apparent that action is needed to address the prevalence of low levels of skills among the Irish Traveller population of NI. There is also a high rate of low skills among the Chinese population as well as the majority White population. A noticeable figure is the extent to which the population from post-2004 EU Accession states possess skills or qualifications not recognised in the levels used by the Census in categorising qualification levels.

However, it appears that most ethnic minority groups include a higher percentage of their community with qualification levels at Level 4 or above than the majority White population. This issue was discussed with companies and they indicated that they find it difficult to check the transferability of qualifications. Although those interviewed were aware of the service available through DEL, they tended to do their own checks or not check the qualifications.

#### *Qualifications equivalency checks*

DEL provides a free service for migrant and foreign national workers that will check the qualification equivalents of their overseas qualifications. DEL accesses the UK National Recognition Information System (NARIC) databases on behalf of an individual in order to provide information on equivalency of qualifications. The service is provided in seven Jobs and Benefits offices across Northern Ireland and within the EURES (European Employment Service) office in Belfast.

Since the original pilot service was delivered in 2012, this service has been accessed 823 times. The greatest level of usage has been from people of Polish origin: 148 (17.9 per cent). In total, 36.3 per cent (299) of recorded utilisation of the service has been from those of post-2004 A8 origin. There were 145 (17.6 per cent) cases that did not have the country of origin of the individual recorded. Outside of the post-2004 A8 countries, the highest rate of usage of the service was from Spain, with 94 (11.4 per cent), followed by Portugal, with 65 (7.9 per cent).

DEL has highlighted inconsistencies in recording the information, attributing this to a range of possible factors including staff changes and changes to responsibilities within offices. As a result of this, it is noted that there is a need to be cognisant that the recorded statistics may not accurately reflect the true picture of service usage. However, evidence gathered from employers suggests that they did not always use it.

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### *Translation and interpretation*

Within local Jobs and Benefits offices, translation and interpretation services can be arranged when required. There is currently no data on the uptake of these services by those of an ethnic minority or migrant background.

### *DEL Careers Service/Sector Skills Councils*

The Careers Service, also delivered by DEL, aims to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance to everyone, should they be employed, unemployed, in training or in education. The service is delivered by professionally qualified careers advisers based throughout Northern Ireland in Careers Resource Centres, Jobs and Benefits offices and Jobcentres.

Activities delivered through the Careers Service include:

- provision of careers information, advice and guidance;
- provision of information on labour market trends and future job opportunities;
- help with CVs, application forms and delivery of mock interviews; and
- provision of information of post-graduate opportunities, overseas working and vacation/voluntary work opportunities.

The Careers Service annual report for 2011/12 stated that 52,663 people were engaged through individual careers guidance interviews. There is no breakdown of the level of uptake of the service by individuals of an ethnic minority or migrant background. The focus of their work is with young people at school and this could provide an important opportunity to ensure that they are aware of the link between education and employment opportunities.

Sector Skills Councils are responsible for working with employers and their partners to:

- reduce skills gaps and shortages;
- improve productivity, business and public service performance;
- increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities; and
- improve learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.

They promote the up-skilling of employees to employers within their specific sectors. This work could include the specific issue of ethnic minorities and the need to encourage them through the promotion of relevant role models.

### *DEL employment agencies*

The focus groups highlighted that some ethnic minority agency workers are not aware of their rights.<sup>18</sup> The onus is on the employer, which in the case of agency workers is the employment agency, to ensure that workers are made aware of their rights. This lack of awareness could mean that some agency workers do not ask their employer or know how to ensure that they fulfil their obligations. Other agency workers may be aware, but feel they could be putting their job at risk if they question why these rights – such as the right to paid holiday leave after being on assignment for a continuous 12 weeks or more – are not being delivered on by the employer. Focus groups highlighted that other workers not employed as agency workers tended to be more aware of their rights as set out in Appendix 1.

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## Areas for development

### Central strategy and departmental targets

Northern Ireland legislation is in place to ensure that people from ethnic minority groups are not discriminated against. The legislation and rights are being updated on a regular basis.

The new Racial Equality Strategy is under development and it provides an opportunity to ensure that ethnic minorities are able to access and benefit from all public services.

Getting into employment is a crucial step to reducing the chance of poverty. It will be important that the strategy includes performance indicators on the numbers and percentages of ethnic minorities, but also their:

- awareness of individual rights and entitlements;
- awareness of, and access to, public services to support employment, self-employment and training; and
- the impacts of actions regarding ethnic minorities, employment and economic mobility.

The Racial Equality Strategy should set targets for all relevant departments on employment patterns and skills development of ethnic minority communities.

### Employers

Employers have a significant role to play in ensuring that the processes they use recognise the specific difficulties experienced by people from ethnic minorities in identifying their training and development needs. Consideration should be given to the type and provision of supports. For example, focus groups have shown that some people need help to develop their motivation for training or for developing their role at work as they may feel overwhelmed by the challenge that this brings or be unaware of available opportunities. For those in employment, this type of support would best be provided through in-house company mentors – people who know the company, its structures and processes and who can best help individuals.

A key barrier to employment or progression within employment is often language. Employers have the opportunity to use Invest NI<sup>19</sup> training support to help up-skill any employees from ethnic minorities who do not speak English to become proficient in the language.

For those employees where this support is not available or where it does not suit the employee to learn at work, there should be a range of other learning opportunities available such as family programmes, multimedia, and open and distance learning programmes. All of these could be accessed in their local communities or at home.

Employment agencies are the employers of agency workers as defined by the Agency Workers Directive and Agency Workers Regulations. These Regulations provide agency workers with the same rights as other employees with a company. The focus groups highlight that some agency workers are not aware of these rights. Employment agencies that employ agency workers should ensure that their employees are provided with written communication on their rights. Those agency workers who do not have English as their first language and who are not proficient in the English language should have their rights translated into their first or preferred language.

Employers have a significant role to play in ensuring that the processes they use recognise the specific difficulties experienced by people from ethnic minorities in identifying their training and development needs.

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## Others

Sector Skills Councils work with employers to support the up-skilling of employees and this work should include the promotion of role models of people who have up-skilled and progressed in their careers.

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# 4 INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

This chapter presents the key findings from the focus groups and interviews. The following personal information is provided on individuals where direct quotations are used:

- FG/Interview = focus group participant or interviewee; and
- country of origin and gender (M/F) OR advocacy worker.

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## Reasons for coming to Northern Ireland

A few things are worth stating at the outset. Firstly, while it is useful to generalise about different groups in an attempt to address particular issues and to understand broad patterns, it remains the case that individual circumstances matter. It has already been established that in Northern Ireland ethnic minority communities include recent migrants, Travellers, asylum seekers and longer established ethnic minority communities. There is a range of experiences within and between different groups. Understanding the reason why individuals end up in Northern Ireland can help to unravel expectations and thus engagement in the labour market. Four main reasons for moving emerged in this research, with the potential for several to impact at any given moment in time:

- economic – to access the labour market and find economic opportunities that did not exist in the country of origin;

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- lifestyle – to access other aspects of society including general quality of life, new experiences and exposure to English language;
  - study and education – either to study or to allow children to avail themselves of an education system; and
  - refuge – to escape particular hardships, e.g. civil war, and so seek asylum.

The ‘categories’ identified above aid our understanding of why individuals move to a new place; they are not mutually exclusive and their importance changes over time. Before considering specific experiences directly relating to accessing the labour market, the remainder of this section highlights important distinctions among research respondents.

Diverse factors are involved in migrants’ pathways, be they responding to emerging opportunities through open markets or escaping from harrowing circumstances. Multiple issues impact on single actions including circumstances in the host country. Many of the Asian graduates who participated in the focus group had completed Masters programmes at the University of Ulster because the fees and living costs were lower than for similar courses elsewhere in the UK. One young Indian man then met his wife while studying and, although he did not consider employment opportunities to be very good in Northern Ireland, he explained that because his wife is from there, he plans to stay. Meanwhile many of the asylum seekers did not necessarily know to which country they were destined to travel; their priority was to get out of their home country.

The Ireland-Poland Chamber of Commerce identifies different characteristics that distinguish three main groups among the Polish community in Northern Ireland. The largest group consists of very experienced skilled workers, sometimes uneducated and originally from either suburbia or poor villages. They work extremely long hours and often have family back at home. Issues of depression, anxiety, stress and well-being have been highlighted for this group. Another group comprises whole families who may be facing particular financial hardship owing to reliance on a single income or several low incomes; they may have faced redundancies in the wake of the economic recession. These individuals may struggle with English language proficiency, which in turn hampers their economic mobility. Finally, Polish professionals struggle to achieve recognition of their qualifications and thus are not afforded the full opportunity to participate in the labour market. With the Polish community being the largest ethnic minority group, it can be stated that economic opportunity is the reason why individuals move to Northern Ireland. However, other factors were cited among this group, such as the quality of life, sense of well-being, and opportunities for children and culture.

Even if individuals benefit from economic opportunities, they may not necessarily move to ‘make money’. For some people it is part of a rite of passage to spend time in another country and to develop life and language skills:

“See at the end of the day everybody is not here for enhancing our growth from a monetary point of view. We are here for the experience and to see the world also ...”

FG, India, M

Some respondents noted differences in their reception between people in Northern Ireland and in England. A discussion in the focus group with

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refugees and asylum seekers suggested that racism is manifest in different ways in Northern Ireland:

“... sometimes I go to the job centre and I have to teach them how to deal with me. The people there I think they get the jobs through friends; I don't think they get them through skills. In Belfast sometimes you meet people and they are friendly and sometimes I would like to see an educated enemy, better than friendly, stupid ... A lot of people in Belfast are not educated at all, they don't have the same experiences as immigrants.”

FG, Sudan, M

“I can give you an example, when I worked in [large home retail shop], I had good people who said they were good friends, they were smiling at me ... but when I lost my job I started to laugh and he asked me why I started to laugh. I started to see the people that I talked with and worked with did not stand up for me and say no. The people, they smile with you, but they don't stand up for you – they turn their back easily.”

FG, Ivory Coast, M

In the course of this exchange, participants suggested that much of this behaviour stemmed from ignorance and lack of interaction between minority and majority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland, something that can be expected to change over time.

## Accessing the labour market

Feelings across respondents were very mixed on the issue of access to the labour market. But it did appear that visible ethnic markers, including skin colour and clothing, had significant influence:

“... the agency will look at your CV and they will give the jobs to other white migrants, like the Polish. For example, in Primark they had many jobs and I didn't get any, but if they needed cleaners they will give me the job.”

FG, Sudan, M

There was some sense that jobs were prioritised for the majority ethnic communities especially where there is an additional cost for some groups, such as those associated with work permits and visas. Many individuals were frustrated with their search for jobs; they found the search demoralising and discriminatory:

“If you go and they see you are black, they say, no, I can't give you any work ... I have found many jobs, I went before to a restaurant and said, 'OK I need to work', and he said 'OK, give me your passport.' I showed it to him and he said, 'Come back tomorrow',

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on the Friday. When I came back at 8 o'clock to start work he said, 'Wait one week', and after one week, he still didn't call me. The restaurant is busy and he has never called me."

FG, Sudan, M

However, opinions were divided and others believed that they were offered equal opportunities within the labour market.

"I don't know how it is for these guys but when I came to the UK in 1977 it was different – things are a helluva lot better now than they were then. I actually don't believe that there is discrimination that these guys have talked about. This man has come from Nigeria and he has an absolutely amazing job ..."

FG, Nigeria, M

Routes into employment were both formal and informal. Informal means can be beneficial for some, such for one Polish woman whose (Polish) husband was offered a job by a small business owner who was a regular customer at a sandwich bar where he worked. He hadn't indicated that he was seeking another job. He had advanced his own career and is now a small business owner, having gone through the ranks of working in a shop and being a manager, before making this leap.

Conversely, informal processes can disadvantage individuals who do not have networks and who perceive the labour market to be closed.

"Most people give jobs to their friends ... they don't advertise, it's like a tribal approach."

FG, Sudan, M

Even if jobs are advertised, they can feel that it is not a fully open search.

In more formal circumstances where applications are used, they are often constructed in a way to present barriers to those who are unfamiliar with the system. The system can be off-putting to individuals if they are even slightly hesitant about making an application. Equally, overseas qualifications may not accord directly with UK qualifications such as GCSE and A levels. It is the more confident individuals who will point out how their qualifications equate to those in the UK:

"... most organisations have huge application forms ... They will ask for the qualifications, subjects and the time when you did it. This is extremely hard for people from abroad to fill in, because even if I have a similar thing the grades are not the same ... [so] I just googled everything [laughs], just as much as I can I filled in – I will put in things that I believe are the equivalent. I will say that I have what I believe is the equivalent to something and they can check if they want and if they want to refuse then that's fine."

Interview, Poland, F

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Agency workers had particular problems with accessing work. Examples include workers not being considered for the jobs they want, but being offered others with less attractive working hours or pay. Although this was similar for many other individuals from the majority communities in Northern Ireland, in that they all relied on their job and had few alternatives, this issue had particular meaning for ethnic minority communities. There were perceptions of significant levels of racism and this was articulated on numerous occasions. It was not necessarily something that was overt, but one man described it thus:

“Yes, discrimination is not something that is your fault; it is a grey area that you cannot always describe. It is not always easy to identify but you can feel it. You don’t always know exactly because you are new to a place but you can smell that there is something wrong. You cannot always tell.”

FG, India, M

Visible ethnic markers such as skin colour, dress and language were perceived to result in differential treatment among the ethnic minority population as compared to the majority communities, with insufficient attention paid to other aspects of identity including skills, experience and qualifications. One woman from the Sudan described how she felt that when people saw her hijab they were not interested in what she wanted.

Meanwhile the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications was a barrier to joining the labour market:

“I have five years of experience and lots of experience in many fields including pharmacy, and when I got my refugee status and looked for jobs I found that I should have my certificate recognised, and to do this I needed to study for a year and that costs £11,000–16,000 to do this. It’s not running here, it’s only in London, just in five universities across the UK.”

FG, Sudan, F

“I got opportunity because I worked without pay, imagine what that is for six months ... The big issue that most of the people find out when they move here is that they should have done their first degree here. Some of us who come from outside, if you don’t do your first degree here the chances are that you will need to work for free unless you are fully experienced.”

FG, Nigeria, M

There is a commonly held perception that individuals without a degree from a United Kingdom university are disadvantaged. The recognition of overseas qualifications is problematic. Regional Jobs and Benefits offices offer clients access to a national database that was set up to recognise overseas qualifications.<sup>20</sup> However, the uptake of this is not closely monitored, with only patchy data available.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, one individual described how he had brought the relevant information from his local office to an interview only to be informed by the employer that it was not acceptable and that it

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would need to come directly from the national database. Less overt barriers to recognising overseas qualifications can exist, with one professional explaining his frustration:

“I think the [professional] Society in Northern Ireland is quite closed and it is extremely difficult to fit in from the outside.”

Interview, Poland, M

The failure to recognise overseas qualifications means that there are significant numbers of individuals from ethnic minority communities who are working below their skill and qualification level. Typical examples include refugees with professional experience and qualifications working in care homes and in security roles; Eastern Europeans being employed as cleaners, even though they may hold numerous degrees from their home countries; and Indian graduates working in call centres.

Pathways to these jobs are affected by a range of structural factors that combine to influence the type of employment people end up doing. The existence of gaps or skills shortages affects recruitment patterns in unskilled and professional sectors. Migration was encouraged following the expansion of Europe in 2004 with employers actively recruiting employees within health and social care and in meat processing; in some cases this resulted in labour being imported to Northern Ireland. Furthermore, because of the focused recruitment practices in some sectors towards a particular nationality, a degree of labour market segmentation has occurred, with different sectors being predominantly populated by single ethnic minority groups. And so we see many meat-processing factories being staffed by mostly Polish workers; Eastern Europeans being employed as cleaners; black Africans working for security agencies and in care homes; and Indians working in call centres and ICT. The latter group tend to be graduates and they are subject to particular visa restrictions, which is not the case for Eastern European migrants. Recent changes to visa rules have made it more difficult for non-European migrants to access jobs as they must be employed with a certain minimum salary, which has been set beyond the level of most IT workers. This is against a backdrop of staff shortages in the IT sector in Northern Ireland. More immediately, though, labour market segmentation raises questions about the mobility of individuals if they are contained within a particular sector and so are unable to take advantage of new opportunities. One individual explained that his ideal job would be to work in the public sector but he felt that this was closed to him:

“... until you get into the public sector you do not really get the same opportunities. If you get to work in the public sector then you really get to understand this place, you get to hear about things and understand better what is going on. Also salary, pensions are very good in the public sector. It should be open to everyone.”

FG, India, M

A ‘chill factor’ was identified where front-line staff in certain supporting agencies such as housing providers or benefits agencies perform within their role but are not actually that helpful. They answer questions but do nothing more. This is significant in the context of minority ethnic groups

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who may be unfamiliar with the system and so do not know what questions to ask meaning that they are unable to access the full support to which they are entitled. Perhaps more difficult to classify are incidences of institutional racism where organisations do not provide an appropriate service due to clients' colour, ethnic origin or culture. This is not necessarily overt, but is often much more subtle. Many of the black African participants provided examples of job agency staff directing them to posts in security or social care even though their skills may have offered them opportunities to work in other jobs. Such curtailment was reinforced by a local initiative that provides employability support to ethnic minority communities, including training for work in care homes.

“I am looking for other jobs because I feel that I cannot be a pharmacist here in Northern Ireland. I contacted [employability initiative] and they said that you can work as a care assistant [laughter from the wider group]; you can do a course in September.”

FG, Sudan, F

This leads to a perception among the majority ethnic communities that these are the types of jobs that ethnic minority communities are content to undertake. These are self-perpetuating beliefs where individuals from the majority communities continue to direct people from minority communities to such jobs. In many circumstances these people are happy to take basic jobs on the premise that they can have a better life than the one they left behind. However, this limits their choices in the longer term, and such practices are therefore to be seriously questioned regarding the extent to which they actually provide assistance, especially if economic mobility is thereby restricted.

Skills shortages present opportunities for migrants, such as those arising from shortages in nursing. But the opposite is also true: when sections of the labour market are saturated, employers and the state can impose restrictions that curtail opportunities. A meat-processing factory that had in the past accepted virtually anyone to work on the production line had, around the time that this research was conducted, introduced requirements that prospective employees have basic levels of written and spoken English language. Meanwhile, many people believed that it was unfair of the state to impose restrictions on the types of visas to be issued in certain parts of the labour market.

## Workplace culture, opportunities and practices

Differences in workplace practices exist across a range of workplaces from SMEs to larger organisations and between private sector employers, including formal and informal workplace practices. It is important to state that there was evidence of good practice across all employers. Some poor employment practice was identified and this was not necessarily exclusively targeted at Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees, but by dint of their status (including sometimes limited English language skills and limited knowledge of 'the system') they were rendered more vulnerable. The importance of the behaviour and attitudes of individual managers and workers cannot be emphasised enough:

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“That has been a process and, for example, in the [meat-processing factory] situation, OK, you may have individuals who may display levels of racism, but from a management point of view you have processes and systems in place.”

Interview, advocacy worker

This was confirmed by several women; one was working in the above-mentioned factory and another’s brother worked there, and their different experiences demonstrated positive and negative experiences:

“So it depends on the manager: if the manager is nice and understanding it is no problem, he will give you everything that you need.”

FG, Poland, F

“My brother and his wife both work in [the meat-processing factory] and in January they applied for holidays in August because they wanted to get cheaper tickets, and the manager has told them to go to HR and HR has said that they have to go back to their manager. The only response that they had once was that both family members cannot take holidays at the same time, even if they are a couple. Up to now my brother and his wife, who work different shifts, don’t know if they can go on holidays or not.”

FG, Poland, F

There was ample evidence of positive experiences and these tended to occur among SMEs including farm business, agricultural engineering and hospitality businesses (small cafes and restaurants). Positive arrangements included flexibility for sick employees or family members:

“I used to work in the restaurant, maybe one or two splits in the day, but now I am not working as I am sick, but whenever I am not sick I have a job waiting for me in the restaurant ... the boss said that when I want to come back, even for a few hours, that is OK.”

Interview, Poland, F

Other individuals found support from working colleagues in the form of practising English language; basic financial and welfare help; advice on completing paperwork, and help with finding housing:

“I opened the door and I saw [my boss]. I was scared and surprised and I looked at him and he had two big boxes of groceries. He said that the wages were not very much and that is why he had brought these things – bread, butter, everything ...”

Interview, Poland, F

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“I have a lot of flexibility, so if I say I have a hospital appointment, the boss will say that’s OK.”

Interview, Poland, F

Another employer allowed a single mother to work very flexibly to accommodate the needs of her family. Although there is a degree of labour market segmentation, individuals from ethnic minority communities are nonetheless employed across a range of sectors. There is some evidence of individuals from minority communities progressing in the unskilled and skilled workplace as they are starting to fill supervisory positions. But this is patchy, anecdotal and not well documented.

However, there were reports of exploitation within different employment sectors including social care, general retail, agriculture and meat processing. Bullying, discrimination and harassment were all cited.

“Sometimes people look down on us. When [large home retail shop] was just opened I had a job there, and if you want to be a supervisor you have to have particular skills and to take a special exam, but no one wanted to do this. But I got to this level and when I did they fired me. Everybody said to me to complain ... but I said no ... I was working for two years and then they fired me [laughs], I hadn’t done anything ...”

FG, Ivory Coast, M

One man who worked in a meat-processing plant described how Polish workers were frequently shouted at if they were at all late for their shift. This was perceived to be entirely different treatment from that shown to local workers, who did not receive the same attention when they were similarly late. On certain occasions, supervisors in this factory were reported to stand over Polish workers and shout at them to work faster. In some circumstances, this intimidating behaviour was considered by interviewees to be shown exclusively to foreign national workers. In the agriculture sector there were reports of Eastern European workers being locked in their workplace and unable to leave until the boss allowed them to do so. Many of these workers were working extremely long hours for wages that were significantly lower than the minimum wage level. Employers seemed to take advantage of workers’ fear of losing their job and becoming homeless as a result (for many, their housing is tied to their employment). Advocacy staff explained how because these people have few choices in terms of housing or employment and limited support networks, their vulnerability was more heightened than among the majority communities.

Less explicit forms of unequal treatment were also experienced in the labour market with certain shifts offered to local people as a priority, and the unpopular shifts and tasks reserved for ethnic minority workers as explained below by a young black African man:

“... the treatment I got in [fast food restaurant] really, really shocked me ... When I was in [fast food restaurant] I was the only coloured guy so the way I was treated, it was different. We were all brought in at the same time and the other intakes were all moved forward just before me. They put me on the grill and

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when you're on the grill you're really hot and wet [sweaty] and that is where I was most of the time. The others, they shifted around to all of the other parts of the restaurant. I complained to the manager and he just said don't worry, we'll sort it out but he didn't do anything about it. I didn't complain because I had nothing to do, I had to feed myself and put a roof over my head. What I am trying to get at is that not everything is settled; it is complicated. I can't even get the work that I got before ..."

FG, Nigeria, M

Proficiency in the language of a host country makes a huge contribution to achieving economic and social mobility. Part of the challenge faced by those in low-paid and unskilled labour is that they need to work long hours to generate sufficient income for their household. For ethnic minority individuals with low levels of English language proficiency, this becomes a vicious circle as they have no time to learn English or to develop other skills:

"I worked for most of the day; it was my sole preoccupation. I learned enough English to survive, but not enough to fill out documents or whatever. It's probably my fault, I didn't concentrate on this, so in a way it was my fault that I didn't learn English – I was so focused on my work. I worked really long hours and frequently I worked from 7am to 6pm, so then when I came back home I had no energy to do anything else."

Interview, Poland, M

Some employers seemed to operate with impunity, treating individuals from ethnic minority communities quite differently from other staff. One professional from Poland described how she discovered that she was being paid the same wage as the secretarial staff, a lower level than her peers. She also faced constant digs from colleagues, who questioned her professional competence, and she felt, as she describes, 'overworked, underpaid and underappreciated'. Consequently, she took up a post outside of her profession and earning substantially less money than her peer group. With an economy that is less than buoyant, there are limited opportunities across many sectors of the labour market. There is a general belief that jobs are given to 'locals' as a priority.

Those in low-paid and unskilled labour ... need to work long hours to generate sufficient income for their households ... [so] they have no time to learn English or to develop other skills.

## Families, childcare and well-being

The cost of childcare was an important impediment to entering the labour market. This is the case for many families from majority and minority communities. However, the issue is exacerbated for ethnic minority communities as they are less able to benefit from social and family networks – something that is particularly prevalent in Northern Ireland. Family structures and geography mean that grandparents and other family members undertake significant childcare responsibilities, particularly for those on lower incomes. Some women described the difficulties in finding part-time work that would cover the cost of childcare and so, when necessary, women in ethnic minority communities predominantly

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picked up childcare duties within the family unit. Several implications arise including issues of low self-esteem, over-reliance on one income and little opportunity for English language development for the woman at home with young children. In other circumstances, the couple managed to work different shifts, but this equated to little time at home with the family.

More generally the expense of childcare was forcing some individuals to collaborate and flex the rules of employment. This included individuals taking it in turns to report illness, but actually they were staying at home with their and their friend's/work colleague's children. These workers had been getting sick pay during the days when they were off work. However, the employer stopped this payment when sick days became very frequent. Nonetheless, it was still felt to be financially better for the women to share the childcare in this way than to pay for a childminder or for a place in a nursery.

Differences between the generations are emerging especially in cases where parents have not learned English. This can cause problems for the parents if they have children of school age who need help with homework. Unless they can access homework clubs, their children's economic and social mobility may be curtailed due to the parents' inability to help with homework. One direct ramification is in relation to the transfer test which 11-year-old children in Northern Ireland have the option of doing. This will determine whether they are able to access grammar school education, something that has the potential to ultimately affect their career path and participation in the labour market.

The remainder of this section relates to the experiences of Eastern European migrants where knock-on effects of their position in the economy are starting to emerge. If they wish to access the labour market, they need significant help with childcare but its cost acts as a barrier. Some families were managing to juggle childcare and two full-time jobs by working weekend and evening shifts. But this has a significant impact on family life and many reported how they had little time together as a family. The downturn in the labour market is impacting on this community with reports of poor mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and increased levels of poverty. The first two issues were seen to be a particular problem among young Polish men who are working in Northern Ireland and sending money home to support wives and children. Disturbingly, this is well illustrated through higher than average incidences of suicide within this particular community. Additionally, support workers reported how pride and self-respect can cause individuals to inflate the amount of money that they earn and to conceal any difficulties that they might be experiencing. The absence of wider social and family networks was considered to form a gap in terms of social support to bolster couples during difficult times in their relationship. There were cases where couples decided to separate but they were unable to move into separate accommodation due to financial challenges. Women were rendered particularly vulnerable as they were typically left with childcare responsibilities. Perhaps one exception to this is the situation where men (typically Polish) were working on building sites but are now unemployed and have taken up the childcare role. Finally, transnational childcare is used as families draw on their extended family for support. Individuals described how not only would they send their children 'home' for extended periods during summer holidays, but their parents would also come to Northern Ireland to provide intensive childcare during particular times of need.

Another relatively new issue is that of gambling among mostly young people who are ready to take up hard or dirty jobs to make money fast. It

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was suggested by various support workers that, having no one to put any restraints on them, they tend to gamble away their wages each Friday night.

## Benefits and income

Low income lies at the heart of poverty. Perceptions of migrants moving to claim benefits exist, but the reality is that most individuals from ethnic minority communities do not wish to claim benefits. Indeed, many spoke about their desire to work.

**“I have two kids and they will grow up seeing me and my husband in the house, and I can’t have that.”**

FG, Sudan, F

Within the labour market there is a serious problem with low incomes, and employers operating in a grey area regarding minimum wage and hours of employment. Although many BME households have family members who are working and have a low income, there is a general attitude that this is a relative measure and is better than that which they experienced in their country of origin. A pattern of hard work and of holding down multiple jobs so that bills can be paid exists. As for many people who are on low incomes, the benefits trap and in-work poverty are an issue. In certain circumstances the economic benefits from working full-time are either minimal or non-existent:

**“You know that work and experience is good, we should work gradually to cover all of the costs of living. It is very expensive here. If we don’t find PT work, and also for me because I’m a mother of two, I’m looking for crèche for my kids, so that’s also another cost. It’s very difficult to find a job to cover all of these costs ...”**

FG, Sudan, F

Some individuals, qualified and working in professional roles, described situations of ‘reverse remitting’ where family members were sending money to them either on a regular basis or more occasionally for specific events such as for travel back to their home country to visit relatives. However, as one Polish woman explains, this is about more than money; health and well-being issues are relevant:

**“I was at home for four years and I know that we can’t stay at home and bake cakes. We need to do something to be alive and normal women. I realised that I wish to pay for this.”**

FG, Poland, F

For those who are forced to rely on benefits, a key factor is the time delay experienced in receiving benefits. Blockages in the system can cause serious shortfalls to household income, with supporting agencies providing emergency funds to cover the period when applications are being processed.

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In fact, a large proportion of people from ethnic minority communities are not even aware of their entitlements, as one support worker describes:

“Last year they found out that if they have kids that they can get help with child tax credits. Previously they did not have that information, probably because there was a lack of information for non-English speakers and so they were struggling financially ... I have a family and there is a mother with two kids staying at home and the father is working. He is earning £150 and they have been here for two years and they are not receiving child benefit because they do not know that information and they are living on £150 per week and their rent is £80 per week. So they are having to feed and clothe the family on £70 per week. Now we have applied for them to receive child benefit and that is being processed.”

Interview, advocacy worker

## Summary

The key features that emerged from focus group discussions and interviews are as follows:

- Experiences of individuals from minority communities are uneven, changing and cannot be generalised.
- Deep-seated racist attitudes among majority communities within Northern Ireland can result in subtle forms of discrimination.
- Agency workers often have particular problems in accessing regular suitable employment and receiving minimum employment rights.
- Informal employment practices are significant influences on economic mobility.
- The lack of recognition of overseas qualifications remains a major issue. Closely connected to this is under-employment where individuals are employed well below their skills level.
- The lack of affordable childcare is a barrier to economic mobility across all groups and is particularly acute for many people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- In-work poverty is likewise problematic across all groups, with indications that some ethnic minority communities are at particular risk.
- Language skills are necessary to take advantage of employment opportunities but also to progress within the labour market. Wider mobility implications arise from language proficiency such as parental involvement in children’s homework.
- Labour market segmentation through the importing of labour can inhibit economic and social mobility.
- Employability schemes can direct ethnic minority groups to certain sectors of employment such as social care or security. These are not always appropriate long-term solutions for the well-being of workers. Limiting employment opportunities in this way can overlook opportunities to develop the economy and so they are not the best option for society at large as well as for those groups experiencing disadvantage.

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# 5 EMPLOYERS' EXPERIENCES

Northern Ireland's economy is depressed and many people are finding it difficult to get and keep jobs that pay a 'living wage'. This chapter considers the attitudes of employers to ethnic minority workers and considers how these attitudes may influence their behaviours and decisions regarding employment and promotion of workers.

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Six interviews were conducted with organisations across a range of sectors traditionally employing high numbers of migrant and ethnic minority workers. These sectors were:

- health and social care (HSC) sector (organisations in both private and public delivery of health and social care services);
- the meat-processing sector;
- the manufacturing sector;
- the hospitality sector; and
- the bio-medical sector.

This chapter presents the different employers' perspectives that exist on employing migrant and ethnic minority workers, as presented to us in the interviews.

## Workforce profiles

Ethnic minority workers comprised significant proportions of the total workforces of the organisations interviewed.

The private sector organisation in the health and social care sector estimated that ethnic minority and migrant workers made up approximately 20 per cent of its workforce. There is notable segmentation in the ethnic make-up between the various differing roles within the organisation, with

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a sizeable nursing workforce of Filipino origin and a significant level of employment of Eastern Europeans in more elementary roles.

In the public sector HSC organisation, approximately 3 per cent of the total workforce was from an ethnic minority background.<sup>22</sup> However, similar to the private sector HSC organisation, there was a discernible split between different ethnic groups in terms of job roles and status. There was a high rate of employment of Indian and Filipino individuals in professional roles, with Eastern Europeans typically in more unskilled roles.

This split in ethnicity between jobs requiring differing skill levels was a continuous theme among organisations that had a requirement for skilled workers and/or unskilled workers.

Within the meat-processing, hospitality and manufacturing sectors, there was generally little current requirement among organisations for a skilled workforce. Workers from a migrant or ethnic minority background were, to a large extent, utilised in lower skilled roles. These included lower operative or assembly/production roles in the manufacturing and meat-processing sectors, or in assistant and service roles in the hospitality sector.

The profile of migrant and ethnic minority workers in these lower skilled sectors varied, with a large proportion originating from post-2004 Accession EU countries. Other significant ethnicities were Portuguese, East Timorese and African.

There were large variances in the extent to which individuals from ethnic minority communities were utilised to fill roles across the three sectors. In the manufacturing sector organisation, it was estimated that less than 5 per cent of the total workforce were from an ethnic minority background. This figure increased to 15 per cent within the hospitality sector firm. However, within the meat-processing firm it was estimated that 65 per cent of the total workforce was comprised of individuals from an ethnic minority background.

## Recruitment policies and practices

The organisations interviewed utilised formal (e.g. targeted recruitment for specific roles) and informal (e.g. taking advantage of general demand for roles within the organisation in the immediate area population) recruitment processes differently. Generally the recruitment process used depended on the skill level of the roles being recruited for: recruitment of overseas workers for skilled roles was targeted and deliberate, while passive recruitment practices were used to fill unskilled roles.

As a result of unmet demand for qualified medical staff (nurses and carers), both organisations within the HSC sector stated they had taken part in targeted recruitment of workers from overseas to fill a skills gap. Recruitment for these roles was mainly targeted towards Indian and Filipino nationals.

A similar targeted recruitment was utilised within the bio-medical firm to fill qualifications and skills gaps within their local workforce. These skills, e.g. analytical chemistry, mathematical biology, were largely sourced from EU countries (pre-2004) and India/Pakistan. To do this, they targeted individuals through university careers fairs, through LinkedIn and through existing employees from ethnic minority communities within the organisation.

The firm also employed a significant number of post-2004 EU nationals; however, they were mainly utilised in unskilled operative, lower administration or cleaning roles. These employees were not targeted directly

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by the organisation but had been recruited through local advertisements, using agencies and/or direct applications.

None of the organisations interviewed undertook targeted recruitment toward ethnic minorities for unskilled roles. All stated that any employed in such roles were recruited through regular recruitment procedures in a 'they came to us' manner. Any higher level of employment of ethnic minorities was attributed to a higher volume of employment applications from ethnic minority individuals, possibly as a result of word of mouth via the existing workforce.

The public HSC organisation was also keen to point out that while they previously engaged in targeted recruitment for professional roles, most recently nursing, this was no longer the case as there is no longer a shortfall in labour requirements for these roles.

The manufacturing firm had no need to recruit for skilled roles from overseas. However, the interviewee indicated that this is likely to change in the near future owing to an emerging skills gap in the indigenous workforce in terms of advanced engineering roles for areas, e.g. composites, into which the firm was increasingly moving.

### Employer concerns regarding Home Office work permits

The firm in the bio-medical sector relayed concerns regarding the criteria set for the extension of the Tier 2 work visa. The concern centred around how the earnings threshold was set using the UK national average income as a guide, a figure that is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average. The bio-medical firm cannot artificially increase salaries and thus fears migrants will be unable to meet this threshold. Compliance with fair recruitment legislation determines that the organisation must afford the same recruitment processes to migrant applicants at a time when their visa has not yet expired and they are still eligible to work in the UK, usually immediately after graduation from a UK university. These individuals will regularly receive offers of employment through this recruitment process based on the merit of their ability. When there is then the requirement to extend these work permits, the earnings criterion is not met and extensions not granted, and the individuals lose their eligibility to work in the UK. Not only is this devastating for the individuals involved, but there is a large opportunity cost to the firm.

There is a likelihood that this scenario is not unique to this organisation or sector alone. There is reason to believe these same factors will be at play in other sectors requiring skilled workers from outside the EU.

### Level of education

As people from ethnic minorities are employed in a wide range of roles, the education requirements for the roles differ significantly. In skilled roles within the HSC sector and bio-medical sector, individuals seeking employment were generally required to be educated to degree level as a minimum and have a good level of English – sufficient to communicate verbally and in writing with colleagues

For unskilled roles there was no requirement for a high level of educational attainment. Usually assessment of competency for the role did not extend beyond basic literacy and numeracy assessments, and in some cases this was not required. The meat-processing organisation was aware that a significant proportion of their ethnic minority workforce was working

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at a level well below what might be expected given their qualifications. For example, qualified architects were working as operators in meat processing. The manufacturing organisation did require individuals to list any additional qualifications as part of the recruitment process while the meat-processing firm sought to bring any qualifications the individual may have to light as part of any annual review process. This information did not appear to be utilised to develop the career paths of any individuals.

There appeared to be little need for the organisations interviewed to seek UK equivalents of international qualifications, regardless of whether they were recruiting for skilled or unskilled roles. Those recruiting for skilled roles were seeking internationally recognised qualifications where no equivalent was required, e.g. degree-level qualifications. Those recruiting for unskilled roles were generally seeking basic levels of numeracy and ability in English, with no further requirement for additional qualifications.

If the requirement for other qualifications did arise, all organisations stated they were willing to accept qualification equivalents from overseas as long as they were recognised on the NARIC database. However, the private HSC firm had come across instances where a qualification did not convert. This was usually as a result of the required qualification not being recognised by the accreditation body for the profession, e.g. Royal School of Physiotherapy. Within the public HSC body, an interviewee was aware of people working as translators as they were unable to get their qualifications recognised across various sectors, e.g. architecture, engineering.

To this effect, it was her opinion there was a requirement for the NARIC database to be expanded to allow for a wider range of qualification equivalents to be recognised.

## Potential for progression

It was stated by all the employers interviewed that avenues for individual progression in the organisation were open equally to all, including the ethnic minority workforce, providing they had the desire and skills to progress.

**“Progression comes down to the individual’s aspirations and potential, not ethnic origins.”**

Interview with bio-medical firm

There were, however, wide variances in the potential level of progression that could be achieved across the varying sectors and, indeed, the level at which the individual was initially employed.

A greater potential for progression was evident among the higher skilled roles filled by ethnic minority and migrant workers.

Similarly, among lower skilled roles there was some anecdotal evidence of relatively significant progression among the ethnic minority workforce, such as an Eastern European employee who had managed to progress to production manager level in a meat-processing plant. Interviewees described how progression was often connected to proficiency in English language and attitude to work.

The promotion of individuals to supervisory roles had facilitated better communication between different groups on the production floor and therefore this was felt to be very beneficial for the organisation concerned.

Within the hospitality sector, there were opportunities to progress to supervisory or lower management roles within their respective function,

The promotion of individuals to supervisory roles had facilitated better communication between different groups on the production floor.

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e.g. bar work, housekeeping, etc. However, there was a sense that these may be the highest likely attainable positions for ethnic minority people. In many cases, this was due to the fact that higher-level roles just did not exist within these functions. However, in other cases, progression was dependent on role-specific qualification and certification requirements, e.g. Food Hygiene certification is a requirement for anyone wanting to work in a kitchen, and it was reported that many ethnic minority workers did not tend to pursue these.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, it was perceived that there was a 'glass ceiling' present within the sector.

There were notable differences in terms of the perceived 'culture of progression' among different ethnic minority communities. In the bio-medical firm it was noted that the Indian workforce had a cultural expectation that they keep improving their work performance. However, in the meat-processing sector, lack of confidence was perceived to be a significant barrier to ethnic minority workers pursuing higher roles within the organisation. It appeared that many people, even those with high-level qualifications, needed a greater level of encouragement from the employer and from peers, in order to seek such progression. Across the other organisations, the interviewees were unaware of any real or perceived barriers to progression.

Within all organisations, new positions and opportunities for progression were openly advertised to the workforce and it was the responsibility of the individual to apply for these opportunities. However, the report by Hudson *et al.* (2013) has highlighted that while the intention may be to ensure equal opportunity in recruitment and promotion, there can be a big gap between intentions, policy and practice. Issues include a lack of monitoring of access to development opportunities and promotion, unequal access to development such as good-quality training and mentoring, and unsupportive line managers.

## Training and development

Across all organisations it was stated that training and development opportunities were available for all workers should they wish to pursue them. The extent to which training and development took place for all workers varied by organisation.

Within the hospitality sector, the organisation recognised that training opportunities for lower-level staff in unskilled roles were generally limited. Bespoke programmes were set up for those seeking progression in the kitchen function through a Chef Development Programme delivered by the BMC<sup>24</sup> outside of working hours. There was also a trainee manager programme to which all staff could apply.

Within the bio-medical sector and the manufacturing sector, both organisations stated that training followed standard operating procedures and a set curriculum based on a core set of skills required for the role. The organisations were confident that their recruitment processes were able to identify those best suited for the role. The annual review process was used to identify any requirements for additional training. However, Hudson *et al.* (2013) highlighted the weakness of performance review process in practice, despite the confidence that HR staff had in it. Both organisations recognised they operated in a dynamic industry which was continually changing in tandem with advancements in technology, materials and techniques. Training for new areas of work was identified through collaboration with the line

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manager and facilitated on an 'as and when needed' basis. This reinforced the pivotal role played by line managers, as demonstrated by Hudson *et al.* (2013) as a key factor contributing to lack of progress and unequal opportunities for low-paid workers. This collaborative approach was also used in the meat-processing sector, with each manager being in charge of their respective department's training needs. However, the organisation is moving to a centralised training programme in an effort to reduce costs. This could make it more difficult for those workers who lack confidence to put themselves forward for training and development. Where it did happen, it was often the manager's encouragement that resulted in people going forward.

Within the HSC sector, both organisations espoused an adoption of a collaborative approach to the training needs of staff but that this was very dependent on perceptions of the individual's willingness to seek and to utilise such training, as well as availability of funds to provide the training.

In the private HSC sector organisation, it was considered that both skilled and unskilled overseas staff had a tendency to take advantage of such training on offer so that they could develop their skills and so enhance their progression potential. The health and social care sector is particularly interesting as the profession brought in a requirement that all health and social care workers need to complete a set number of continuous professional development days per annum in order to remain on the register. Therefore it is in the employer's interests to facilitate this training, otherwise their employees could become deregistered.

**“Some Eastern European employees in low-skilled roles have taken advantage of the training on offer in order to gain an NVQ in social care and are now registered with the NISCC.”**

Interview with private health and social care provider

## **Cultural issues**

All employers interviewed were keen to put across a very positive image of their organisation in its management of cultural issues relating to its ethnic minority and migrant workforce. Much of this, however, was in contrast to the experiences described by ethnic minority and migrant workers (see Chapter 4) whereby both positive and negative experiences of cultural competency were described. These experiences included employees' interactions with management as well as working relationships with the 'indigenous' workforce.

### **Organisation cultural competency**

In terms of accommodating cultural differences between workers of differing ethnic origins, the organisations interviewed believed they were generally successful at this while keeping levels of conflict low.

Within the meat-processing sector, the interviewee stated that the organisation had only ever encountered minor concern surrounding Muslim employees participating in Ramadan. Health and safety issues were raised, concerning their fitness to work around heavy machinery, owing to the fasting involved. These concerns were addressed collaboratively between management and the employees concerned in order to avoid possible conflict. Indeed the organisation was looking at utilising such cultural

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diversity to its benefit, citing the involvement of two Muslim employees as Halal butchers to enable movement into a growing market for Halal meat.

The public HSC provider was aware of issues that had arisen previously relating to regulation staff uniforms and cultural dress codes. Nevertheless, due to the requirements of the roles, for health and safety reasons, it believed there was little in the way of concessions the organisation could make on this issue.

Companies appeared mindful of the need for awareness of cultural competency and to avoid 'cultural blindness'. This was especially noted by those organisations anticipating a greater future need to recruit from overseas. However, there was little evidencing of any practical measures or steps that were being taken to ensure the organisation remained 'culturally competent'.

### Conflicts within workforces

In spite of the overall positive image portrayed of interactions with ethnic minority employees, a number of the organisations interviewed were aware of previous incidents of conflict.

Within the bio-medical firm, the interviewee was aware of three occasions, involving staff at both skilled and operator level, whereby several people of the same nationality were speaking their own language in the work environment. This had given rise to feelings of the emergence of cliques and a perceived atmosphere of intimidation within the workplace. The organisation felt compelled to issue guidance relating to the language spoken in the workplace, i.e. that the language of the firm was English and that this alone was to be used within the working environment.

The interviewee from the hospitality sector felt it was only natural that cliques would form among people of similar ethnic or national origins. This was tolerated within the workplace during break times at least, and those working in back-room functions such as housekeeping were allowed to converse in their own language. However, in customer-facing roles, the workers were required to speak in English at all times.

Only the public HSC provider provided evidence of the provision of training for cultural awareness across its workforce to facilitate better integration and reduce conflict.

In an effort to encourage a greater level of integration, the meat-processing company stated it ran English language classes for migrant and ethnic minority workers outside working hours at the company's expense. It was currently seeking a way in which to allow those taking these classes to receive accreditation at the end.

### Cultural interaction outside the workplace

Two organisations interviewed felt that in their experience the problems with interaction were mainly outside the workplace and within a community context.

The bio-medical firm interviewed was aware of some migrant workers who had experienced difficulties in settling in to the local communities. The interviewee cited an incident in which a German national had left the organisation as a result of intimidation experienced outside the workplace. As a result of this, the company now takes a more proactive role in advising newly employed migrant workers where to locate on arrival in order to minimise any possibility of friction with the local community.

In the public HSC provider, the interviewees were also aware of incidents of conflict occurring outside the workplace, citing an example of Filipino nurses having their houses attacked with paint. They were also aware

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of incidents where people in their care had refused to deal with specific members of staff owing to their cultural or national origins. Again, these incidents were described as being very isolated and not reflective of the wider community in general.

## Future plans

There were noticeable differences, between the different employers, as to the extent to which they felt there would be a future need to recruit ethnic minority workers from overseas. It was perceived that the future needs for skilled workers would continue to require recruitment from overseas.

The Department for Employment and Learning is currently reviewing skills shortages within the manufacturing sector and it is expected that it will consider the need to recruit from overseas for specialist engineering roles. For other organisations such as the HSC provider, overseas recruitment may not be as prevalent as in the past (the immediate shortage of qualified nurses has been met), but gaps in qualified personnel still exist (including those listed in the Home Office Shortage Occupation List<sup>25</sup>). The public and private HSC providers differed in their views on the future availability of nursing staff. The public HSC provider did not anticipate this to be a future problem, in direct contrast to the private HSC provider who stated there was likely to be a high level of need to recruit from overseas for these roles for the foreseeable future.

All organisations interviewed indicated that they would continue to employ people from the local communities including from ethnic minority communities. In this respect, the interviewee in the hospitality sector noted a decreasing level in the number of migrant or minority ethnic workers applying to work in the organisation; this he attributed to a perceived increasing rate to which current employees were returning home.<sup>26</sup> He largely attributed this to recent exchange rates reducing the level to which it was beneficial to work outside of the Eurozone.

Going forward, the public HSC provider, in partnership with Business in the Community, has signed up to an 'Employers Charter for Employing Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland'. The employer engaged with migrant staff to develop an action plan based on the charter. A steering group has been put in place to oversee its implementation. The steering group comprises representatives from HR, nursing, primary care and trades unions.

## Summary

The key features that emerged from the discussions with employers are that:

- There is significant labour market segmentation among the migrant and ethnic minority workforce in Northern Ireland. People of Indian or Filipino ethnicity are employed to a large extent within professional medical roles, contrasting with the high degree to which individuals of EU A8 and East Timorese, for example, are employed within elementary and manufacturing roles.
- There is evidence that those individuals not specifically targeted for professional roles as part of a deliberate recruitment process can find themselves 'shoehorned' into more menial sectors of employment. This would appear to be the result of two factors:

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- a lack of transferability and equivalency of qualifications that may have been gained overseas; this is particularly true of professions requiring qualifications from a particular professional governing body; and
  - a lack of willingness on the part of many employers to investigate the extent of qualifications held by their current ethnic minority workforce and seek ways to utilise these qualifications.
  - There is much lower scope for progression into higher roles in the firm among those working in elementary and manufacturing roles. This would appear to be particularly true within the hospitality sector. There was evidence that there was a proportion of migrant and ethnic minority workers who were happy working at the level they were at, but it was also clear that there is a substantial number who are seeking progression.
  - Organisations and HR managers were providing training opportunities in order to facilitate progression, but it was also clear barriers do exist, e.g. confidence issues, to individuals taking up these opportunities. There was little effort to actively encourage ethnic minority workers to overcome these barriers.
  - All organisations were keen to present a positive image of their actions to ensure cultural awareness regarding their ethnic minority workforce, as well as their ability to mitigate potential conflict scenarios. However, besides the public HSC provider, there was little evidence of specific actions to ensure cultural competence and understanding.

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## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting other research (Aldridge, *et al.*, 2012), this research shows the importance of employment as a route out of poverty for working-age people. But this is not guaranteed. There are situations in the Northern Ireland labour market where barriers prevail for many ethnic minority workers.

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### Lack of ethnic minority data

While the Census data, previously analysed in Chapter 2, is the most accurate dataset available on ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland, there is still likely to be an underestimation of the numbers of the ethnic minority population in Northern Ireland: many research participants indicated that they were not registered through the Census.

There exists a lack of local-level data as to how individuals from different ethnic minority communities are living, what sector they are employed in, what level of jobs they have and what training they have completed.

### Irish Travellers experiencing poorest outcomes

Based on available data, the Irish Traveller is the ethnic minority group experiencing the poorest outcomes in relation to poverty. The Irish Traveller population has a very low rate of economic activity. Economic inactivity and worklessness have been identified as two of the key drivers of social exclusion. A previous study conducted by Pemberton and Mason (2007) found that widespread barriers to employment and economic activity were exacerbated among the Irish Traveller community in the UK. Key barriers experienced by Travellers were reported to be perceived discriminatory attitudes from employers, preventing them gaining meaningful employment, as well as from government employees, which was discouraging many from accessing the social security benefits they are eligible to.

The Irish Traveller is the ethnic minority group experiencing the poorest outcomes in relation to poverty.

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With 67.8 per cent of Travellers lacking any qualifications, it is critical that this situation is changed radically if employment is to increase.

## Barriers and pathways out of poverty

Our primary research highlights how the experiences of individuals across minority communities vary significantly depending on individual circumstances. Factors influencing this include English language proficiency, modes of entry into the job market, family circumstances, self-esteem and personal motivation to progress. Education is important, but as many ethnic minority workers are highly skilled and under-employed, it is not always the most important factor influencing access to employment or progression within the labour market. A key exception to this is those sectors requiring professional qualifications to work.

The route used to enter the labour market will often strongly influence the extent to which individuals have the opportunity to earn on a regular basis and ultimately to progress their careers. Those who have been able to take up employment in professional roles have greater opportunities available to them for progression. For others who have taken advantage of whatever opportunities of employment were available, usually in more menial sectors, opportunities for progression are much more limited. The same would appear to apply also to longer established ethnic minority populations whereby later generations find themselves 'shoehorned' into the same sectors of employment as preceding generations, a key example of this being the Chinese community and the catering sector. Individuals may find opportunities to progress out of this are limited.

Individuals from ethnic minority communities who are employed directly by companies are afforded protection through the NI Race Relations legislation.<sup>27</sup> Effectively this gives them the same protection as the majority communities. However, the focus groups highlighted that many workers from ethnic minorities are unaware of their rights, and some who were aware of them felt that they could not exercise them as it could put their jobs in jeopardy. Workers need to be aware of their rights under the NI Race Relations legislation and processes for managing situations where these rights are abused. Employers need to be aware that some individuals may feel wary of exercising their rights and that there is an onus on the employer to ensure employees are aware of their rights and that these are put into practice.

Companies often use agency workers to build flexibility into their resourcing process, so that they can bring on additional resources at peak times and reduce employment numbers when they are not needed. This means that agency workers can lack employment security, although rights have been recently extended to agency workers to ensure they have many of the same rights as other employees. Again, the focus groups highlighted that a number of people from ethnic minorities employed as agency workers were not aware of their rights.

There are barriers to economic mobility which are experienced by both the majority population and ethnic minority communities; for example, the lack of affordable childcare and the lack of childcare to support unusual shift patterns. Likewise, a lack of training, development and progression opportunities traps many people across all ethnicities in low-paid work and poverty.

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Barriers more specific to individuals from many ethnic minority groups include:

- lack of proficiency in spoken or written English;
- the lack of a network as support for family responsibilities;
- under-employment due to the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications;
- lack of role models and encouragement to pursue training and development opportunities;
- stereotyping by some support workers and employers; and
- racism and favouritism among some managers and co-workers as well as in wider society.

## Work quality and progression

Employers are central to reducing poverty across all ethnicities and particularly among ethnic minority groups. The key features that emerged from the discussions with employers are as follows:

- There is significant labour market segmentation among the ethnic minority workforce in Northern Ireland. People of Indian or Filipino ethnicity are employed to a large extent within professional medical roles, contrasting with the high degree to which individuals of EU A8 and East Timorese, for example, are employed within elementary and manufacturing roles.
- There is evidence that some highly qualified individuals from ethnic minority populations are employed in menial or low-skilled occupations. The reasons for this were highlighted by workers in the focus groups, who noted:
  - the lack of time spent by either employers or, in some cases, the ethnic minority workers to check the transferability of their qualifications;
  - the lack of recognition of some overseas qualifications, where it is not clear to employers how they translate to NI qualifications;
  - ethnic minority groups taking up occupations below their educational level as a result of workforce shortages in those sectors; and
  - targeted recruitment towards particular nationalities/ethnic groups in the locality.
- There is much lower scope for progression among those working in elementary and manufacturing roles. Focus group participants highlighted that the hospitality sector has a high percentage of people from ethnic minority groups employed in back-of-house roles, e.g. housekeeping, where progression is limited to supervisory levels. While this is the case for all working in these sectors, barriers for progression appear higher for those from an ethnic minority background.
- There is evidence that a proportion of migrant and ethnic minority workers, particularly those with lower education/skills, feel uncomfortable going for promotion and therefore wish to stay in their existing positions. This was noted within the meat-processing sector whereby ethnic minority workers on the floor were noted to be hesitant in pursuing advertised opportunities for more progressed roles. This was in contrast to the Indian professional workforce in the HSC and bio-medical sectors who were believed to show a strong desire for progression.

- The main barriers to progression highlighted by HR managers were confidence issues and lack of motivation/ambition to progress as well as family responsibilities. However, there was little sign of any attempts to create role models or improve confidence and access to opportunities.

All organisations were keen to present a positive image of their actions to ensure cultural awareness regarding their ethnic minority workforce, as well as their ability to mitigate potential conflict scenarios. However, besides the public HSC provider, there was little evidence of specific actions to ensure cultural competence and understanding.

## The role of government

The review of government supports and the feedback from our primary research highlight a number of areas for development.

### Racial Equality Strategy

The Racial Equality Strategy for 2005–10 still underpins the legal and policy framework in Northern Ireland and will not lapse until the point at which it is replaced by the new strategy. Therefore, the strategy for the period 2005–10 remains the guiding document. OFMDFM continues to provide £1.1m per annum to build capacity in this sector. There is a need, however, for the Racial Equality Strategy to be updated to take account of the current challenges faced by different ethnic groups, many of which have been detailed in this report.

The strategy should address some deep-seated issues such as the attitudes towards ethnic minority communities. It should also ensure that the policy coherently encourages action on the areas below. The strategy should provide a broad framework for society and convey a strong message about tolerance, integration and issues relating to equality.

The strategy should include:

#### *Outcome-based targets*

Currently, central government measures the number of people who move from unemployment into employment, self-employment or training, but there are no specific measures set for the number of people from ethnic minority communities moving into employment, self-employment or training. Targets are needed in these areas and performance against these should be measured on an ongoing basis. The Racial Equality Strategy provides the ideal opportunity to cover these issues.

#### *Ethnic monitoring data*

There is a need for appropriate collection and presentation of data relating to ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland. In particular, this should include the extent to which people from these communities access government supports for training/development to increase their qualification levels and/or set up in business, and the outcomes that are achieved.

#### *Self-employment*

The Regional Start Initiative is the business start-up programme which aims to provide those who are seeking to start a new business with support to help them to produce their own business plan. Information on the numbers from different ethnic minorities using the support and then setting up in business is needed, to ensure that at least the same outcomes as the White

There is a need, however, for the Racial Equality Strategy to be updated to take account of the current challenges faced by different ethnic groups.

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majority are being obtained. In particular, Invest NI should investigate any low uptake levels by any specific minority groups as this could be a signal that the support is not relevant to their needs. This monitoring should distinguish between White minorities and the majority.

#### *Careers advice*

The Careers Service works mainly with young people, and its annual report for 2011/12 stated that 52,663 people were engaged through individual careers guidance interviews. There is no breakdown of the level of uptake of the service by individuals of an ethnic minority or migrant background. Sector Skills Councils work with employers and partners<sup>28</sup> on skills issues. They should provide role models and guidance to workers on the opportunities for development and the specific skills frameworks that exist within each of their sectors. They should also work with employers to help them recognise and make better use of the skills within their workforces and promote equal opportunities policies and practices.

#### *Training government employees*

DEL/DETI should consider providing a guide to service provision, similar to the one produced by the DHSSPS with the Equality Commission *Racial Equality in Health – A Good Practice Guide*. This was developed after dialogue with ethnic minority groups. The aim of this guide is to provide practical advice for all those HPSS staff whose role it is to design or deliver services and to assist them in anticipating and overcoming such barriers.

#### *Improving government support to promote economic mobility*

Government departments (e.g. DETI/DEL) must ensure that the employment and training supports they have available are suitable for the needs of all potential users including ethnic minority communities. There is a need for further research into the specific barriers faced by different ethnic minority groups in setting up or developing their businesses and for an assessment of the suitability of government support in meeting these needs.

#### *Recognition of overseas qualifications*

The research shows that some companies find it difficult to check the transferability of qualifications. Even though they were aware of the Qualifications Equivalency service available through DEL and had used it, they tended to do their own checks or not check the qualifications. Promotion of the service needs to be improved, particularly with those groups with high levels of unrecognised qualifications – namely, those from the post-2004 EU Accession states and the Black community, who are particularly employed in low-level manufacturing roles.

#### *Childcare provision*

The provision of childcare in Northern Ireland needs to be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient support available to help all parents, including increasing the availability of childcare to support shift work across Northern Ireland. This will help all workers but particularly those from ethnic minority groups without family networks and support.

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## The role of employers

There is a significant role for employers in order to ensure that they maximise the contribution that employees from ethnic minority communities can make to their organisations and the economy as a whole.

### Language support

A key barrier to employment or progression within employment is often language. Employers have the opportunity to use Invest NI<sup>29</sup> training support to help up-skill any employees from minority ethnic communities who do not speak English to become proficient in the language. Employers need to be stimulated to include English classes in their training programmes for those workers that are not proficient in this area. Invest NI should make employers aware that this area will be covered in any training funding. For those employees where this support is not available at work or where it does not suit the employee to learn at work, there should be a range of other learning opportunities available, which can be accessed in their local communities or at home. Options include family programmes, multimedia, and open and distance learning programmes.

For those not in employment, other options exist to learn English through government-funded training schemes or training provided to those who are unemployed.

### Individual motivation

People need to want to work or be motivated to develop their language or other skills in order to improve their social and economic mobility. However, this research illustrates how some may lack motivation to get even basic levels of support, or they may lack awareness of relevant opportunities. For those in employment, this type of support would be best provided through in-house company mentors – people who know the company, its structures and processes and who can help at the individual level.

Invest NI could target those employers with high numbers of ethnic minority workers and provide them with information and guidance on how to improve the development and use of skills among their workers. The guidance should include:

- the importance of ensuring that all their workforce speak English proficiently;
- how to implement English-speaking training support; and
- how to motivate and support ethnic minority employees to continue training/education through use of internal mentors and role models.

BITC's campaign Race for Opportunity<sup>30</sup> provides an excellent model, which could be used in Northern Ireland to promote best-practice approaches that can be used to promote diversity in the workplace. It provides examples of best-practice tools that companies can use and provides the opportunity for employers to share their experiences and learn from each other.

### Awareness of rights

There is a need to ensure that workers from ethnic minority communities are fully aware of their rights under the Agency Worker Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 and that they are fully aware of the conditions of their contracts as agency workers. Employers should make any agency workers 'employed' in their companies aware of these rights.

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## Implications for further research

The research has highlighted the need for further work.

In particular, there is a need to carry out longitudinal research to track a number of individuals from ethnic minority groups to better understand the difficulties they face in getting into employment, staying in employment and accessing relevant training and development. A longitudinal study of a sample of ethnic minority workers employed in different sectors and of some who are unemployed and seeking work over a three-year period would provide rich data on the extent and features of economic and social mobility in Northern Ireland. The research would be particularly timely as further welfare reform measures start to be implemented in Northern Ireland.

The Irish Traveller sector has low levels of skills and economic activity. Research is needed on the most effective supports that will help Irish Travellers increase their self-employment and/or employment rates.

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# NOTES

- 1 See <http://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/2012/11/work-poverty-outstrips-poverty-workless-households>
- 2 See <https://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/interfaces-map-and-database-overview>
- 3 Providing a definitive number is problematic as there is no set definition as to what actually constitutes a 'poverty line'; 99 refers to all categories of barriers owned by DoJ and NIHE. DoJ uses figure of 55 as a good relations indicator.
- 4 A8 and A2 nationals refer to individuals originally from the post-2004 Accession EU countries. A2 specifically refers to individuals from Romania and Bulgaria. From 31 December 2013, all post-2004 Accession nationals are eligible for the same rights as other EU nationals.
- 5 EU12 refers to the European Union of 12 member states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom
- 6 See, for instance, Heath and Chung (2005).
- 7 See for instance, Martynowicz and Jarman (2009); McAreavey (2010).
- 8 Made up of 16 differing categorisations from Filipino (2,053), as the largest, through to Burmese (10), as the lowest.
- 9 Categorisation within the Census. Includes those of European origin.
- 10 International Standard Classification of Occupations, Major Group 9, including cleaners and helpers, labourers in mining and construction, refuse collectors, etc.
- 11 This refers to qualifications outside the UK system.
- 12 Presented in 'other western Europe' in 2001 Census; unable to extrapolate exact figure.
- 13 Romanian and Bulgarian nationals.
- 14 *My rights as a Bulgarian or Romanian student or self-employed person* (2009).
- 15 OFMDFM *Together: Building a United Community*, Strategy Document.
- 16 Support focused on improving key higher skills of staff, e.g. team-working, problem solving.
- 17 The Steps to Work (StW) Programme is due to be replaced by Steps 2 Success (NI).
- 18 EU Agency Workers Directive sets out that agency workers have the same protection as permanent workers: they are entitled to be paid at least the National Minimum Wage; have access to the same facilities as equivalent employees; and are granted working time entitlements such as paid annual leave. After 12 continuous weeks on assignment, agency workers are also entitled to be paid at the same rates as equivalent employees.
- 19 Invest NI Skills Growth Programme.
- 20 NARIC – National Academic Recognition Information Centre, <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/Default.aspx>

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- 21 Personal communication from DEL to author, 25 July 2013.
  - 22 Employment data provided at interview.
  - 23 Reasons given for not pursuing opportunities in the focus groups included family responsibilities and lack of willingness to take on additional responsibilities.
  - 24 Belfast Metropolitan College.
  - 25 Currently the only nursing role included on the shortage occupation list is nurses for neonatal intensive care units.
  - 26 NISMP *Mapping the Deployment of Migrant Labour in Northern Ireland* (April 2013), p. 3, states that A8 workers are now leaving Northern Ireland as a result of better economic conditions elsewhere.
  - 27 The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (RRO) was amended by the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, to implement the EU Framework Employment Directive 1, and the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. The Order outlaws discrimination on racial grounds. Racial grounds include colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.
  - 28 Specifically to address four key goals: reduce skills gaps and shortages; improve productivity, business and public service performance; increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities; and improve learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.
  - 29 Invest NI Skills Growth Programme allows employers to identify their training needs against their business objectives. The training needs analysis should include an assessment of the extent to which employees from ethnic minority groups need support to bring their English to a proficient level.
  - 30 Race for Opportunity stands for: diverse leadership on boards and at senior level; diverse representation and progression in the workplace; and reduction of ethnic minority youth unemployment. See more at: <http://raceforopportunity.bitc.org.uk/about-race-opportunity/campaign-aims#sthash.6YTQug4i.dpuf>
  - 31 *Your Rights in Northern Ireland: A Guide for Migrant Workers* (2011).
  - 32 For example, High Skilled Worker.
  - 33 Tier 1: Highly Skilled; Tier 2: Skilled; Tier 3: Unskilled (yet to be introduced); Tier 4: FRT Students; Tier 5: Temporary.
  - 34 Habitual Residence Test.
  - 35 European Economic Area.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Recent changes in Immigration Rules

A number of changes to the Immigration Rules came into effect on 9 July 2012. These changes affect non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) nationals when they apply to enter or remain in the UK under the family migration route. The changes include:

- introducing a new minimum income threshold of £18,600 for sponsoring the settlement in the UK of a spouse or partner, or fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner of non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationality, with a higher threshold for any children also sponsored; £22,400 for one child and an additional £2,400 for each further child;
- publishing, in casework guidance, a list of factors associated with genuine and non-genuine relationships, to help UK Border Agency caseworkers to focus on these issues;
- extending the minimum probationary period for settlement for non-EEA spouses and partners from two years to five years, to test the genuineness of the relationship;
- abolishing immediate settlement for the migrant spouses and partner where a couple have been living together overseas for at least four years, and requiring them to complete a five-year probationary period;
- from October 2013, requiring all applicants for settlement to pass the Life in the UK Test and present an English language speaking and listening qualification at B1 level or above of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages unless they are exempt; and
- allowing adult and elderly dependents to settle in the UK only where they can demonstrate that, as a result of age, illness or disability, they require a level of long-term personal care that can only be provided by a relative in the UK, and requiring them to apply from overseas rather than switch in the UK from another category, for example as a visitor.

# APPENDIX 2

## Migrants' rights

The critical points are summarised in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Migrants' rights<sup>31</sup>**

Area	Summarised rights
Employment	<p>EEA nationals have the right to enter the UK as workers, without the requirement from the UK authority for permission to enter the UK, and can look for work immediately upon receiving a National Insurance Number. A2 nationals do not need to ask permission but prospective employers will require a Letter of Approval from UKBA and an Accession Worker Card, unless exempt.<sup>32</sup> Once working legally in the UK for over 12 months, uninterrupted full, free movement rights are granted. Outside the EEA, workers must seek permission to work in the UK with work permits assessed through the Points Based System. Workers may enter the UK under five<sup>33</sup> distinct tiers. Under all tiers there is no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>In the context of UK employment law, an important distinction is made between the term 'worker' and 'employee', with key differences between the two. This is unrelated to the term 'worker' when describing someone coming to work from outside the UK. Both workers and employees have basic rights entitlements as listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• paid the National Minimum Wage with no unlawful deductions from pay;</li><li>• working hours and holidays in line with working-time laws;</li><li>• not to be unlawfully discriminated against;</li><li>• to join a trade union;</li><li>• to health and safety protection; and</li><li>• rights relating to pregnancy, and the right to Statutory Sick Pay.</li></ul>
Social Security	<p>Nationals from the EEA are entitled to state benefits through the Social Security Agency providing they satisfy the eligibility criteria and certain residence and presence tests,<sup>34</sup> which differ depending on the benefit sought. For A2 nationals to claim benefits without restriction, they will have to be authorised to work under the Accession Worker Card Scheme for 12 months of uninterrupted employment.</p> <p>If access to Social Security Benefits is blocked due to having 'no recourse to public funds', help in an emergency may be available from Social Services.</p>
Education	<p>If a child is not fluent in English, they are entitled to extra support from the school or Education and Library Board.</p> <p>For adults seeking educational opportunities, any subsidy available to those on Social Security Benefits that is provided to indigenous students should also be available to other EU workers, including those from Accession states.</p>

Area	Summarised rights
Health	<p>Emergency and immediate necessity treatment is provided through the health and social care services free of cost to everybody regardless of nationality and immigration status.</p> <p>Full access to free routine treatment requires the individual to be 'ordinarily resident' and includes all asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers, resident family members, most students and other persons who are settled in the UK. Individuals have a right to an interpreter when using the health and social care services.</p>
Housing	<p>Nationals from the EEA<sup>35</sup> who work can apply for rented accommodation provided by NIHE. A2 nationals will be required to be registered with the UK Border Agency under the Worker Authorisation Scheme.</p> <p>Migrants from outside the EEA who have 'no recourse to public funds' as a condition of their stay are ineligible to apply to the NIHE.</p> <p>If you are an EEA national, the NIHE has a duty to provide you with accommodation if you are unintentionally homeless and eligible for assistance under NIHE rules.</p> <p>The NIHE has a duty to provide advice to those who are homeless and originate from outside the EEA but is unlikely to provide accommodation if there are conditions restricting access to public funds.</p>

Source: *Your Rights in Northern Ireland: A Guide for Migrant Workers (2011)*

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