

## Integrating Migrant Workers in South Somerset

### Organisations Involved & Contact Details

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[www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=6150299](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=6150299)

### Aims & Target Group

**Aims:** The increase in migrant agricultural workers can be challenging for rural communities. District councils can play an important role in improving local understanding to help migrants and their children. This project aimed to increase community cohesion through education, participation and engagement.

**Target Group:** Migrant agricultural workers

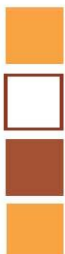
### Project Description & Components

The Langport Area Development Trust (LADT) was aware that in some communities across the country, racial tension had led to violence. Therefore it wanted to be proactive in developing good community relations. LADT was already established to develop the community locally. It consists of partners from: the town, county and district councils local businesses, and many community-minded local residents. Meanwhile, migrants wanted to integrate into the community, while encouraging their children to celebrate their heritage.

LADT sponsored drop-in events to determine the needs of newly arrived migrant workers and their families, who were mainly from Poland. This identified key needs such as education, religion, leisure and social activity, and English language tuition.

#### Practical help to meet needs

- Help was on hand to register the families with medical services and schools.
- In association with the main employer, activities were set up, or people were signposted to courses where they could improve their language skills.
- A key aim was to reduce family stress and boost community spirit.
- Children and their parents were informed of the range of activities available locally, including: sports sessions cooking lessons yoga parenting classes dance courses mother and tots groups





## Celebrating diversity using International Week

In May 2006, the LADT project team sponsored an International Week. This aimed to increase community cohesion through education, participation and engagement. By taking the project out to the communities, LADT raised the awareness of the assets that a multicultural society brings to the community as a whole. The event was based around eight sites, mainly schools and community centres, with different events on every day of the week.

LADT development manager Ric Caldicott says:

*“The idea was to make it fun for migrants and local people – particularly children – to take part. By improving understanding and dispelling myths you build new relationships and break down barriers. It is all about making migrants and their children feel welcomed by the community. We tried to fit the event around the people using it. And it seems to have been a success.”*

National dishes were prepared in village halls. Local primary schools engaged with foreign chefs as part of their curriculum. Langport hosted the ‘Unofficial World Cup’ by organising an international football competition. Music and dance from overseas, and traditional music including local morris dancers, entertained visitors at open air events in and around the town.

Although the event was aimed at people of all ages, many of the 3,000 attending during the course of the week were young people.

Gerard Tucker, Community Development Officer at South Somerset District Council, says:

*“This was an event-based project, not a longer-term engagement strategy. It didn’t set out to target a sector with clearly identified problems. It was a proactive event to bring people together and raise awareness of local cultural diversity. Young people were a very important audience, and the programme was planned around the ideas generated by the migrant community. There was certainly enough variety to keep people interested. And that was a giant stride towards integration.”*

## Process

The LADT takes a multi-agency approach to maximising the opportunities for developing children, consistent with the Children’s Act 2004 agenda. A Polish migrant link worker was taken on for 12 hours a week for a year. The post was funded through a Global Grants application to the Social Inclusion Fund.

## Outcomes

South Somerset District Council already had first-hand experience of the effect that a relatively large influx of foreign workers can have on another community in the district.

Tucker says:

*“Many lessons were learnt from the experience, particularly how to make people feel welcome, communicating with local people and supporting both the migrant workers and the businesses they came to work for. South Somerset recognised that the well established LADT was strong enough to take on this task with our support.”*





The LADT collected data to see what sort of impact the initiative had on the local population. If feedback comments are anything to go by, it was an overwhelming success. LADT chairman Paul Heim says:

*“To date, the integration of migrant workers into the Langport community has failed to expose any tensions. In fact, many locals would say they have found them a welcome addition and have established new friendships.”*

Multicultural events are not a new thing in Britain. But rural Somerset does not have a tradition of visible events of this sort. This is why it had more impact than if it had been done in a more obviously multicultural area. Overall, Ric Caldicott feels that this event was good value for money.

*“Local people’s perceptions were changed, and migrants who participated in the programme say it has had a huge impact on their lives. It exceeded the expectations of the Trust and everyone else involved.”*

Agnichka, a local migrant worker said:

*“Many of my friends are in other parts of the country, they did not like the idea of abattoir work. Now they can see how much happier our lives are than theirs. We cannot thank the local community enough for making us so welcome.”*

## Challenges & Obstacles

## Funding

## Images

