RESEARCHING LABOUR EXPLOITATION

GUIDE TO RESEARCH WITH HARD-TO-REACH MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE UK

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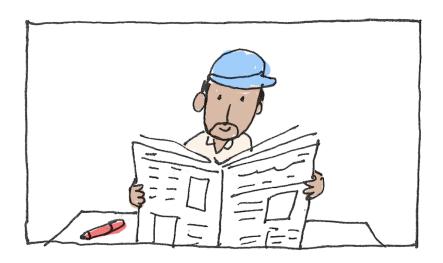
FOCUS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

RESEARCHING LABOUR EXPLOITATION:

A FLEX GUIDE TO RESEARCH WITH HARD-TO-REACH MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE UK

BACKGROUND

This FLEX guide to researching labour exploitation sets out our approach to research with hard-to-reach migrant workers. FLEX identified the need for a guide to instruct future research as we developed our approach to researching labour exploitation. However, while it is based on a FLEX pilot and some experiences might be specific to FLEX, we hope it can be a support to migrant and community organisations, trade unions and others engaging in similar projects. In this guide, we draw on insights from academic literature and conversations with academics that are expert in methodological approaches to engaging hard-to-reach groups in research. We discuss the advantages and challenges of the migrant community model and introduce practical tools developed for migrant community research.

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TEN STEPS TO RESEARCH WITH HARD-TO-REACH MIGRANT WORKERS

1 Ensure that migrant community researchers receive an in-depth briefing on the project aims and the purpose of interviews as well as training on research methodology and ethics;

2 Aim to involve migrant community researchers in the full research process;

3 Recognise the time, funding and resource required to adequately support community researchers in funding applications and project plans. Critically evaluate whether a community research approach is appropriate in cases of limited time and funding;

4 Support community researchers' personal development and career progression through mentoring, advice or signposting;

5 Develop interview schedules which combine direct and indirect questioning to encourage discussion of sensitive topics and in order to train community researchers to probe interviewees' answers;

6 Discuss potential safety issues related to recruitment through personal networks with community researchers and establish mitigation strategies;

7 Discuss informed consent in the community research setting in training and debrief conversations. Seek the permission of participants to publish full case studies;

8 Ensure that the number of interviews expected and timeframe provided are realistic;

9 Prepare community researchers for making referrals and provide them with a signposting guide;

10 Establish an advisory council with migrant representatives from relevant sectors and communities when possible.

WORKING TOGETHER: A PARTICIPATORY MIGRANT COMMUNITY APPROACH

By working closely with migrant and community organisations and involving migrant community members as researchers and experts, we aim to make our research more inclusive, to improve access to hard-to-reach individuals and to design research which is sensitive to the realities of migrant workers.

Participatory research can take various forms, however at its core is the involvement of communities or individuals in the analysis of their own experiences and realities.[1] Participatory methodologies are based on 'respect for people's knowledge and for their ability to understand and address issues confronting them and their communities'. By involving migrant community members in research, we aim to facilitate the communities'[2] control of their own stories.[3] FLEX research falls within the category of participatory action research, which aims to drive improvements to communities and individuals through collaboration.[4] The participatory research process then, in itself has value. Through the research process we aim to increase community members' capacity to carry out research and analysis, to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities and to influence policy.[5]

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE FLEX MIGRANT COMMUNITY APPROACH ARE:

- Migrant researchers are recruited through community NGOs and trained to take part in all phases of the research – ideally this includes research design, scoping, primary and secondary research, analysis, dissemination and advocacy;

- Migrant community organisations and researchers work with the FLEX staff team to define research questions and to determine research objectives. The researchers guide the research through their inside knowledge of the migrant community or sector we are researching;

- Migrant researchers are involved in the dissemination of research findings and advocacy. The findings are disseminated to research participants and their communities and to decision-makers.

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1   See e.g. Robert Chambers, *Poverty and Livelihoods: whose reality counts?* Environment and Urbanization, 1995, 7(1), p. 201.
2   Mary Brydon-Miller, Davydd Greenwood and Patricia Maguire et al, *Why action research?* Action Research, 2003, 1(1), p. 14.
3   Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights, *We want to be the protagonists of our own stories!,* 2014.
4   Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore, *Community research: opportunities and challenges*, in Community research for participation, 2012, p. 3.
5   Mary Brydon-Miller, Davydd Greenwood and Patricia Maguire et al, *Why action research?* Action Research, 2003, 1(1), p. 14.

THE FLEX RESEARCH PILOT

FLEX piloted the participatory migrant community methodology between October 2017 and January 2018. By working with migrant community researchers, we set out to research the experiences of migrant workers in the construction sector with an aim to identify structural factors which make workers in the sector vulnerable to exploitation. The research findings informed FLEX advocacy with industry representatives and policy-makers. Researchers were recruited through migrant and community organisations and received training to work on the project. They were asked to carry out interviews in the construction sector and were also invited to inform the research questionnaires and analysis. Due to budget and time constraints we were unable to involve community researchers in the full research process during this pilot. However, we see clear advantages to collaborating with migrant community researchers throughout the research process and will do so in future.

ADVISORY COUNCILS – A COMMUNITY SOUNDING BOARD

The FLEX pilot illustrated the need for migrant community researchers to have some previous academic and/or research experience. However, it also made us aware of the migrant community members we excluded from research by such criteria. To increase the representation of migrant community members in the research team, FLEX considers it important, where possible, to establish advisory councils for research projects. Advisory councils will take the form of project boards with migrant representatives from the sectors and communities in which we carry out research. [6]

The councils will be involved in the design of the research and can provide their guidance and feedback on the usefulness of the research for their communities as the project progresses. Members of the councils could include migrant workers with experience and networks in the sectors we explore, but who lack academic experience, research or English language skills. It is also possible that members of the advisory council could be future community researchers as they become familiar with research processes through their advisory council engagement.

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6   Aitor Gómez and Teresa Sordé Marti, *A critical communicative perspective on community research: reflections on experiences of working with Roma in Spain*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 27-28.

I.   RECRUITING MIGRANT COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

'Working with community members can give enhanced access to communities which traditional or 'outside' researchers find hard to reach'.[7] However, the question of who belongs to a community is a subject of debate and the distinction between "inside" and "outside" researchers can be blurry, or even non-existent.[8] A Romanian researcher may for example struggle to gain access to a Romanian community if her class, background, gender or age differs from other members of the group. At FLEX, we have chosen to prioritise community researchers with "relevant academic background as well as local community links and associated political interests".[9]

For the purpose of the case study example, we recruited researchers through migrant community organisations. We approached two organisations, the East European Resource Centre (EERC) and the Roma Support Group, and recruited one community researcher among volunteers with each organisation. We limited the number of researchers to two with the aim of facilitating project management.[10] In future, the number of researchers could be slightly higher in order to reach migrants with a wider range of backgrounds and languages.

For the purpose of the case study example, we were particularly interested in working with Romanian and Bulgarian researchers. In this instance we were interested in exploring the impact of the transitional controls placed on EU 'A2' nationals: Romanians and Bulgarians working in the UK between 2007 and 2014. Our early research into the construction sector had shown that these controls are one reason for the high number of Romanian and Bulgarian nationals who are currently self-employed in the UK, many falsely so. For this reason, we considered their experiences to be of particular relevance in the context of Brexit, where EU migrant workers in the UK find themselves in an environment of transition and insecurity.

The following recruitment criteria were communicated to migrant community organisations, who in turn encouraged suitable volunteers and contacts in their network to apply:

- The community researcher(s) must be able to access migrant communities in the construction sector and will need to be fluent in the native language of the migrant workers they aim to interview;
- Ideally native speakers of Bulgarian/Romanian (however speakers of other languages commonly spoken among migrant workers in the construction sector are encouraged to apply);
- Some higher education would be an advantage, as would familiarity with research methods and interviewing. However, (volunteer) experience working with migrant communities in the construction sector, such as outreach/casework, could be equally useful;
- It is preferable if the community researcher(s) can commit to work 35 hours a week for a for a short period of time.

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7   E. Elliot, A. Watson and U. Harries, *Harnessing Expertise: Involving Peer Interviewers in Hard-to-Reach Populations*, Health Expectations, 5, 172-178. Cited in in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 10.

8   Andrew Clark, Caroline Holland and Richard Ward, *Authenticity and validity in community research: looking at age discrimination and urban social interactions in the UK*, 2012, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 37-54.

9   Sam Scott Scott and Alistair Geddes, *Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour,* in: Siegel D., de Wildt R. (eds.) Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking. Studies of Organized Crime, vol 13, p. 21. This approach is in line with Scott and Geddes criteria for community researchers.

10   Ibid.

We were not successful in recruiting Bulgarian-speaking community researchers. While it was not essential for the purpose of the case study example to reach workers of different language groups, we recommend identifying the target community at the outset of the research. In our case we specified: Construction workers (non-managerial level) in London of Bulgarian and Romanian nationality, aged 18 and above. A specific description of the target group helps to identify researchers who have access to this group.

For the purpose of the case study example, community researchers were hired as freelancers and paid per transcribed and translated interview. They were also paid to attend training. Whether training should be paid may depend on the extent to which it has other clear benefits to researchers, such as accreditation or study credits.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Establish contact with relevant community and migrant organisations early;
- Define the target population as early as possible and recruit community researchers accordingly;
- Limit the number of community researchers to facilitate project management;
- Recruit community researchers with some relevant experience or education for the project (such as research, case work or social work experience).

Migrant community research has its theoretical foundation in emancipatory approaches, emphasising the need to provide 'socially excluded people' 'with the tools to liberate themselves'.[11] While we have problematised the idea of "insiders" and "outsiders" to a community and recognise the multiple identities of researchers and research participants alike, migrant community researchers share certain identities with the communities they are involved in researching.[12] Migrant community research, therefore, should be grounded in a commitment to, as far as possible, develop the skills and opportunities of those researchers who wish to do so, to progress into further research or advocacy work.[13]

Training is an essential part of the community research process and should be on-going.[14] It is important to recognise the time and funding required to sufficiently support community researchers and this should be reflected in funding applications and project plans.[15] To provide community researchers with a solid background in research methods and ethics, FLEX is exploring the possibility of offering researchers an accredited training course in partnership with a university. [16] By offering an accredited training, community researchers could develop and gain official recognition for research skills, which could aid their career development. For the purpose of the research pilot, FLEX developed a one-day training module in collaboration with a research volunteer,[17] which included the following:

11   Patricia Bell, Tony Addy, Melinda Madew and Sakari Kainulainen, *Universities as agents in the empowerment of local communities in Germany, Finland and Russia*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 90.

12   Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore, *Community research: opportunities and challenges*, in Community research for participation, 2012, pp. 3-20.

13   Andrew Clark, Caroline Holland and Richard Ward, *Authenticity and validity in community research: looking at age discrimination and urban social interactions in the UK*, 2012, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 37-54.

14   Philip Brown, Lisa Scullion and Pat Niner, *Community research with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK: highlighting and negotiating compromises to reliability and validity*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 64.

15   Andrew Clark, Caroline Holland and Richard Ward, *Authenticity and validity in community research: looking at age discrimination and urban social interactions in the UK*, 2012, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 50.

16   Conversation with Dr. Sam Scott; Gaby Atfield, Kavita Brahmbhatt, Hameed Hakimi and Therese O' Toole, *Involving community researchers in refugee research in the UK*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 75-87.

17   The training module was developed and delivered in collaboration with Lara Farrell at the University of Bristol and we are grateful for all her support with this project.

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FLEX MIGRANT COMMUNITY RESEARCHER TRAINING

- Introduction to the project and background to the topic
- Introduction to qualitative research
- Reflexivity & positionality
- Ethics
  - ► Assessing risks to researchers and participants
  - ► Informed consent
  - ► Anonymity & confidentiality
  - ► Signposting
  - ► Boundaries
  - ► Pay

- Interview training
- Practical aspects/administration
- Skills development and support

The training module was successful in familiarising researchers with the project. However, the case study indicated that more time should have been spent practicing follow-up questions and probing techniques. We recommend devoting two full days to training in cases where it is not possible to enrol researchers in an accredited programme and ideally to devote a day to practice interview techniques

Recognising the multiple identities of migrant community researchers and participants alike and the blurry lines of communities, it is vital that a reflection on how researchers themselves influence research is built into the training.[18] To encourage self-reflection, the piloted training module included an in-depth discussion and group tasks. During the training, the question 'are researchers objective or subjective' triggered a lively discussion and proved useful to explain FLEX's expectations of research (such as emphasising that there are no right or wrong answers). Another useful group task was to discuss how the researchers own positionalities compared to a fictional research participant, considering education, age, gender, sexuality, nationality, language, ethnicity and culture as factors.

The FLEX team further encouraged reflexivity in debriefing phone calls throughout the research. However, it proved difficult to meaningfully discuss these issues over the phone. Our pilot therefore taught us that researchers should be given sufficient training on positionality and self-reflection prior to starting the research.

Signposting, the referral of research participants to support organisations, was new to the researchers in the case study example and appeared as an important topic. During the pilot training, we devoted more time to this than initially set out. This appeared to lead to more active signposting by the researchers as they referred participants to migrant and community organisations and told them about the work rights helpline ACAS and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA). A signposting exercise with case studies piloted at the FLEX training is included in the appendix to this guide (appendix ii).

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18   Gaby Atfield, Kavita Brahmbhatt, Hameed Hakimi and Therese O' Toole, *Involving community researchers in refugee research in the UK*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 75-87.

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Community researchers should be encouraged to discuss their career aspirations and required support at the outset of the research and as far as possible they should be supported in their career progression such as through networking and references where required. [19] The training and mentoring structure developed for FLEX migrant community research is outlined below. The case study example illustrated, however, the importance of taking a flexible approach to mentoring. One researcher, for example, did not require regular mentoring but benefitted from work experience in the NGO sector.

FLEX TRAINING AND MENTORING STRUCTURE

- Training module (possibly accredited training in future): in-person training at the outset of the research;
- Community researcher handbook (annex 1): shared with the researchers at the training, contains all relevant practical information, such as FLEX contact details, a signposting guide, the interview schedule and practical advice on ethics (see appendix i & ii);
- Optional interview support/feedback: FLEX offers researchers the option of a FLEX staff member attending one or more interview(s) to support or observe and provide feedback;[20]
- Regular debriefing: Regular calls after each interview serves the purpose of reflecting on the research process, encourage reflexivity and discuss potentially traumatic accounts; [21]
- Post-research debriefing: A debrief is organised after the data collection to share learnings and discuss and evaluate the research process.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Ensure that training and mentoring for community researchers is ongoing;
- Recognise the time, funding and resource required to adequately support community researchers in funding applications and project plans;
- Explore the possibility of providing accredited training to community researchers and ensure that sufficient time is allocated to training;
- Support personal development and career progression through mentoring, advice or signposting;
- Offer researchers feedback on interviews;
- Set up calls with researchers after each interview/set of interviews to debrief.

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19   Bridget Anderson, Ben Rogaly and Martin Ruhs, *Chasing ghosts: researching illegality in migrant labour markets*, in Carlos Vargas-Silva (ed.), 2012, pp. 396-410.

20   Conversation with Dr. Sam Scott.

21   Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay, *Living on the margins: undocumented migrants in a global city*, 2016.

III.   RECRUITING HARD-TO-REACH MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant researchers bring to the research knowledge and understanding of issues within communities. They may also be sensitive to structures and differences within the group of migrant workers we are aiming to access. Therefore, by involving migrant researchers in the design and planning phase of a project we can improve the identification of hard-to-reach workers who may otherwise be overlooked. A combined approach, relying on intelligence from community researchers and initial desk research is often useful for mapping sectors and communities and to identify the targeted group of participants.[22]

In the case study example, the criteria for participating in the research was employment in construction sector in London at non-managerial level, Bulgarian or Romanian nationality and age 18 or older. While we are likely to develop more specific criteria in the future, this allowed us to learn about the different experiences of workers in various parts of the construction supply chain. However, as we decided against a more narrowly defined target group, the staff team was required to make on-going recruitment decisions based on questions that came up as the research progressed: proposed interviewees included two brothers working for the same company (accepted) and one researcher's husband (not accepted). While the research process could potentially be made more rigorous by identifying stricter criteria for participants, the case study example showed the researchers' ability to identify and raise potential recruitment issues.

The researchers identified participants through their networks, using their personal contacts and a snowball sampling system. For both researchers, this proved to be relatively straightforward and one researcher said that she would not have had a problem recruiting a much higher number of construction workers. The approach to sampling should be carefully considered for each project, depending on the purpose of the research and population targeted. 'Snowball sampling' has been criticised for relying too heavily on single networks and adding to confirmation bias as researchers may, at times unknowingly, recruit only those participants who confirm their hypothesis. The method is however highly useful for accessing hard-to-reach workers whose decision to participate depends on trust in the researcher. Snowball sampling can be improved by adding several starting points, such as 'community organisations and community law centres, faith groups, the personal contacts of the interviewers…', which is likely to result in a more diverse sample. [23]

In future research, it may be necessary to cap the number of interviews with workers in certain types of roles or with certain characteristics (such as nationality, immigration status, gender, age) to ensure the diversity of the sample.[24] This could include agreeing a maximum number of interviews with workers who were previously exploited, or with a specific immigration status.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Involve community researchers in the research planning. Use community researchers' experience and desk research to map the target population;
- Consider the most appropriate recruitment methods for the research project, use multiple starting points to achieve a more diverse sample;
- If needed, limit the number of interviews with participants with certain characteristics or job types.

22   Ibid.
23   Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay, *Living on the margins: undocumented migrants in a global city*, 2016, p. 20.
24   Bridget Anderson, Ben Rogaly and Martin Ruhs, *Chasing ghosts: researching illegality in migrant labour markets*, in Carlos Vargas-Silva (ed.), 2012, pp. 396-410.

IV.   BUILDING TRUST

We have outlined strategies for accessing vulnerable workers, however it is essential that community researchers are able not simply to reach, but to engage participants and gain trust. While language is often an important factor, community researchers may not necessarily be considered "insiders" in the communities they research. Rather, 'the relationship between researchers and interviewees (…) should be seen as situational'.[25] The situational nature of relationships is illustrated by the example of one of the researchers a research participant in the case study example as the researcher interviewed a person she had previously mentored. Their relationship was at the same time that of fellow Romanians in the UK, that of mentor and mentee, and that of researcher and participant. Class and age are other factors that define such relationships. The training and mentoring of researchers, therefore, should involve discussions of positionality and its potential effect on interviews.

Despite not necessarily being accepted as 'insiders' by their participants, community researchers have the potential to act as a bridge between them and the staff research team. Migrant community researchers may draw on shared experiences and a common language when explaining the research and its potential impact and this might encourage more participants, or a more diverse group, to engage.[26] The community researchers' ability to convincingly share information about the research will however depend on their own understanding of the project, again highlighting the importance of training.

Migrant community research has the capacity to 'lay a foundation from which greater engagement and dialogue can occur in the future'.[27] To encourage further engagement, community researchers should be involved in the analysis of findings and their dissemination in local communities, in the community languages.[28] Migrant researchers will often be able to contextualise findings and to comment on their impact on the migrant community they research. The researchers may also have interpretations of specific interview situations that differ from those of the staff team.[29] Involving migrant researchers in analysis is a way of facilitating migrant communities' control of their own stories, a key aspect in emancipatory research.[30] By involving migrant researchers in the dissemination of research, we aim to increase the capacity of migrant communities to engage in advocacy. Learning about the research findings can make participants and others more aware of their own situation and enable them to place their experiences within a larger context. Some community members may as a result be able to challenge negative practices, such as labour abuse. Migrant researchers should also as far as possible be involved in advocacy aimed at decision-makers. By involving migrant community researchers in advocacy, we bring the participants' experiences closer to decision-makers and decision-makers closer to participants.

25   Gaby Atfield, Kavita Brahmbhatt, Hameed Hakimi and Therese O' Toole, *Involving community researchers in refugee research in the UK*, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 75-87.; Gunuratnam (2003) referenced by Atfield et al, p. 72-73.

26   See e.g. Margaret M. Chin, *In the factories and on the streets: studying Asian and Latino garment workers in New York City*, in Carlos Vargas-Silva (ed.), 2012, pp. 545-559.

27   Philip Brown, Lisa Scullion and Pat Niner, Community research with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK: highlighting and negotiating compromises to reliability and validity, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 58.

28   See e.g. Gaby Atfield, Kavita Brahmbhatt, Hameed Hakimi and Therese O' Toole, Involving community researchers in refugee research in the UK, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, p. 81 for an example of community researcher dissemination.

29   See Aitor Gómez and Teresa Sordé Marti, A critical communicative perspective on community research: reflections on experiences of working with Roma in Spain, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 21-36 for an example of such alternative interpretations.

30   Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights, *We want to be the protagonists of our own stories!*, 2014.

There can be barriers to involving migrant community researchers in all phases of the research, due, for example, to restricted funding or limited time. [31] In cases of limited time and funding, it should be considered whether community research is the most appropriate method, and if yes, steps should be taken to involve community researchers as much as possible within the set parameters.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Migrant community researchers have the potential to act as a bridge between participants and the wider research team;
- Involve migrant community researchers in the analysis of research findings and their dissemination in local communities, in the community languages;
- As far as possible, involve migrant researchers in advocacy aimed at policy-makers to bridge the gap between migrant communities and decision-makers;
- Critically evaluate whether a community research approach is appropriate in cases of limited time and funding.

31   See e.g. Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore, Community research: opportunities and challenges, in Community research for participation, 2012, pp. 3-20; Andrew Clark, Caroline Holland and Richard Ward, Authenticity and validity in community research: looking at age discrimination and urban social interactions in the UK, 2012, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 37-54.

V.   MEANINGFUL RESEARCH

Research and interview questions must be carefully considered to ensure that the research yields meaningful results. Migrant community researchers are likely to have useful insights on sensitive matters in interviews with communities and may be able to develop creative ways of framing questions about such issues.

In the case study example, due to time and funding, interview questions were developed by the FLEX team and discussed with community researchers during the researcher training. Community researchers were encouraged to share feedback and propose changes which could be incorporated. The researchers were also encouraged to propose revisions of the interview questions throughout the interview process, if relevant. Prior to the interviews, the researchers identified questions related to income and national insurance as sensitive and agreed with the FLEX team to address these carefully. In future, interview schedules will whenever possible be developed by community researchers in collaboration with the FLEX team and piloted in a small sample of interviews.

The interview questions were deliberately developed to allow participants the opportunity to discuss experiences of labour exploitation and related issues indirectly. This approach was adopted recognising that participants may be unwilling to discuss personal experiences of labour exploitation. By 'using indefinite terms (for example "do you think someone, have you heard about, are you aware of")' we aimed to enable participants to speak about sensitive topics.[32] In the case study example, we combined direct and indirect questioning to allow participants who wished to discuss own experiences to do so. For example, we asked: 'Have you or someone you work with ever been treated unfairly at work? Can you tell me about a time this happened?'

By encouraging community researchers to develop and critically assess interview questions, FLEX aims to address concerns about community researchers' ability to ask relevant follow-up questions to interviewees' answers.[33] Probing techniques should also be practiced during training.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Aim to allow time to involve community researchers in the development of interview schedules;
- Allow time for pilot interviews;
- Develop interview schedules which combine direct and indirect questioning to encourage discussion of sensitive topics;
- Encourage and train community researchers to probe interviewees' answers.

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32   Ibid.

33   See e.g. Andrew Clark, Caroline Holland and Richard Ward, Authenticity and validity in community research: looking at age discrimination and urban social interactions in the UK, 2012, in Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), 2012, pp. 37-54.

VI. ETHICAL RESEARCH

FLEX research should, as far as possible, be carried out in accordance with the ESRC Framework for research ethics and in full accordance with the FLEX ethical research guide. [34] Migrant community research does however raise some additional questions about what constitutes ethical research in practice. [35] A set of additional procedures have been developed to ensure the ethics of FLEX's migrant community research and to safeguard research participants and researchers.

- **Recruitment and safety:**

By recruiting through their own community networks, researchers make community members aware of their relationship with the organisation they are employed by. [36] It is important to recognise the effect of this approach on safety in research on sensitive topics, such as labour exploitation as there is a danger that participants become known to exploitative employers or individuals. While completely eliminating all risk is not feasible, training for researchers should discuss the recruitment of research participants in relation to both participants' and researchers' safety. Safety routines should be developed in partnership with the researchers. For the purpose of the FLEX pilot, researchers were asked to call their FLEX contact before and after interviews. This routine was changed, however, as researchers reported having agreed to check in with a close friend/family member after the interviews and they therefore called FLEX in the evening only if they had concerns and otherwise in the following days to discuss the interview. Research participants should be given the contact details of the researcher, a relevant community organisation, and the research organisation.

- **Anonymity:**

When research participants are recruited through personal networks, it is important to keep in mind that certain participants' experiences may be known to others within the network, and anonymity could therefore be partly compromised. The researchers should be encouraged to share any such concerns with the staff team. Permission to publish full, anonymised case studies should be sought from research participants. Extracts from interview transcripts without identifiable markers may be published.

- **Informed consent:**

While migrant community researchers may be better able to explain a research project and its purpose to research participants, this is reliant on the researchers' knowledge and understanding of the project and it is important that this is covered sufficiently in the training. Furthermore, community researchers should be trained in how to recognise a refusal to answer, also when expressed indirectly. The balance between probing and accepting a research participants' wish to skip a question must be developed through training and forms part of the FLEX training module.

- **Risk of coercion:**

The risk of coercion of interviewees in community research has been raised in relation to the financial incentives involved. It is important that the number of interviews expected from migrant community researchers and the time provided are realistic, as a perceived need to conduct a large number of interviews within a short timeframe is likely to increase the chance of coercion. Research participants should be compensated for their time and effort, but the sum paid should not be large enough to be considered a sole incentive for participation. [37]

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34   ESRC Framework for research ethics, Updated January 2015.

35   Sam Scott Scott and Alistair Geddes, Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour, in: Siegel D., de Wildt R. (eds.) Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking. Studies of Organized Crime, vol 13, p. 5.

36   Ibid.

37   See the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter Trafficking, 2008, for a discussion of the ethics of reimbursement and alternatives to cash payment.

- **Follow-up and setting boundaries:**

Researchers must be prepared to make referrals when research participants require help or support. The researcher should contact staff to discuss referrals if in doubt and should always report any referrals in the debriefs. While research participants should be able to get in touch with researchers to ask questions or report concerns, the researchers should not be required to answer such questions when they are not working for FLEX. We therefore provide researchers with phones with new sim-cards. After the research process, these phones are collected by FLEX. Participants receive cards with the researcher's work mobile, FLEX's contact details and the contact details of the community organisations through which the researchers were recruited.

PAY

- FLEX employs migrant community researchers as consultants and pays a fixed sum per transcribed and translated interviews. Migrant community researchers carry out important work for FLEX and they must be sufficiently compensated. FLEX determines pay rates on a project-basis. However, when determining pay rates, it is important to recognise the considerable time needed to transcribe and translate interviews, in particular for inexperienced researchers. To mitigate any risk of research participants feeling pressured or obligated to engage in research due to the financial incentive received by the researcher, in particular in cases where the researcher and participant know each other, it's important to ensure that the number of interviews requested is realistic within the given timeframe. Research participants should be compensated for their time and effort, but the sum paid should not be large enough to be considered a sole incentive for participation.[38]

KEY LEARNINGS

- Discuss potential safety issues related to recruitment through personal networks with community researchers and establish mitigation strategies;
- Ensure that community researchers phone their FLEX contact before and after an interview to check in and report any concerns;
- Provide research participants with cards with contact details of the researcher, FLEX and a relevant community organisation;
- Seek the permission of research participants to publish full case studies;
- Discuss informed consent in the community research setting in training and debrief conversations;
- Ensure that the number of interviews expected and timeframe provided are realistic;
- Remunerate community researchers in accordance with their work, but do not pay excessive wages;
- Acknowledge research participants' time and effort with a small compensation;
- Prepare community researchers for making referrals and provide them with a signposting guide;
- Provide community researchers with work mobiles and encourage them to channel all communication with participants through that number.

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38   Ibid.

SUGGESTED LITERATURE

Ethical research:

► UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, *Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter Trafficking*, 2008:
http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/Ethics_Guidelines_Trafficking_UNIAP_2008.pdf

► Issara Institute, *Updated Guide to Ethics & Human Rights in Anti-Human Trafficking*, 2018:
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/5bf36e_1307f698e5ec46b6b2fc7f4391bff4b6.pdf

Participatory research with domestic workers:

► Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights, *We want to be the protagonists of our own stories!*, 2014:
http://www.uni-kassel.de/upress/online/OpenAccess/978-3-86219-766-8.OpenAccess.pdf

Community research:

► Sam Scott Scott and Alistair Geddes, Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour, in: Siegel D., de Wildt R. (eds.) Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking. Studies of Organized Crime, vol 13, p. 21.

► Lisa Goodson and Jenny Phillimore (eds.), Community research for participation, 2012.

FOCUS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

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FLEX COMMUNITY RESEARCHER HANDBOOK

November 2017

Community Research with Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

Thank you for carrying out community research with FLEX. We look forward to working with you and hope that you find the research interesting and that it gives you valuable experience.

In this handbook, you will find all the documents you need for the research. Some of the documents you will need several copies of, and you should have received these in a separate folder.

Before starting the research, you will have attended the FLEX training and will be familiar with the research project and process. We aim to assist you as much as possible during the research, and are available to discuss ways of supporting you in your future career development when relevant.

If you have any questions about the research, please call _____ at FLEX on _____ or email _____.

If you have an urgent question or you are carrying out research outside FLEX office opening hours, please call _____ on _____ .

FOCUS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

ANNEX I:

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ANNEX 1:

The research process: step-by-step

Before an interview
- For safety reasons, inform your FLEX contact about where you are going and at what time, remember to inform about any last-minute changes
- Use the FLEX phone to make appointments and answer any questions from participants
- Assess the risks to your own and the participants' safety: think about the type of location and time of interview, will there be other people around? Are you meeting in a safe and neutral place? Do you have an emergency plan in case the situation becomes unsafe?

Interview
- Brief the participant about the research and interview, using the Informed Consent Form. Make sure that they understand the form and sign it before the interview. Give one copy to the participant and keep one yourself. Ask for consent to record the interview
- Let the research participant know how much of their time you are going to take up and make sure they are happy with this. Let the participant know that they will be compensated £20 for their time.
- Start recording if you have permission, make notes simultaneously
- Ask interview questions according to the schedule, ask follow-up questions if helpful
- End the interview by asking if the participant has questions

Immediately after the interview
- Give the participant the £20 contribution, thanking them for their participation and ask them to sign the Confirmation of Received Payment Form
- Explain who to contact with questions and give the participant both cards - one with yours and FLEX's contact information and another one on support services
- If the participant asks you for advice, use the signposting guide and call FLEX if you are unsure
- Ensure that the data is transported and stored in a safe way. Only you and the FLEX team can have access to the data
- Call your FLEX contact to debrief

After the interview
- Anonymise the interviews and develop a list with acronyms and real names
- Transcribe and translate

ANNEX 1:

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Mapping positive intervention pathways for migrant workers in exploitation

Background information

You are invited to take part in a research study into the interaction between business models, working conditions, social attitudes, and migration and employment status in relation to migrant worker exploitation. This research seeks to understand how and why people are exploited, and what are the social attitudes towards migrant workers and exploitation. This piece of research is being conducted on behalf of Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX), a registered UK charity working to end labour exploitation. The responses you give will be used to inform a piece of research on this subject that will include policy recommendations for change. Your responses will be anonymous and all information will be stored securely and shared exclusively with select FLEX staff members. Your participation will not in any way influence your application for residency/immigration in this country. If you are in need of assistance at this time I will not be able to provide such assistance but can provide information about other organisations that help people who are facing abuse or exploitation. This part of the research is being conducted from November 2017-January 2018.

1.   I confirm that I have read and understand the above statement. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered fully.
2.   I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without my legal rights being affected.
3.   I understand that my participation in this research is not intended to have any negative or positive impact on my current situation but that the information I provide will be anonymised once given and used to influence the way that laws are made in the United Kingdom.
4.   I confirm that the possible effects of my participation in this research have been explained to my satisfaction.
5.   I understand that information collected during the study will only be accessed by the person conducting this interview and if information is shared with others it will be in a completely anonymised form.
6.   I understand that personal data will be stored in secure storage and will be anonymised.

Based on the above, I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant _____ (printed)

Signature _____ Date _____

We kindly ask you to keep a copy of this signed consent form. An electronic copy of the current form will be encrypted and stored in a secure storage by the Research team. Thank you very much for taking part in this study.

Formular De Consimțământ Informat

Titlul proiectului: Trasând căi de intervenție pozitivă pentru muncitorii imigranți exploatați

Informații generale

Sunteți invitat/ă să participați la un studiu de cercetare a interacțiunii între modelele de afaceri, condițiile de muncă, atitudinile sociale și migrație și statutul ocupațional în privința exploatării muncitorului imigrant. Cercetarea caută să înțeleagă cum și de ce sunt exploatați oamenii și ce fel de atitudini sociale există față de muncitorii imigranți și exploatare. Această parte de cercetare este condusă în numele organizației „Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)", o organizație de caritate înregistrată în Regatul Unit care lucrează pentru a pune capăt exploatării. Răspunsurile pe care le dați vor fi folosite să informeze o parte a cercetării asupra acestui subiect, care va include recomandările politicii pentru schimbare. Răspunsurile dumneavoastră vor fi anonime și toate informațiile vor fi păstrate în siguranță și partajate exclusiv doar unor membrii selectați din cadrele FLEX. Participarea dumneavoastră nu va influența în nici un fel cererea dumneavoastră de rezidență/imigrare în această țară. Dacă momentan aveți nevoie de asistență, eu nu voi fi în măsură să ofer astfel de asistență, dar aș putea transfera informația către alte organizații care oferă ajutor oamenilor care se confruntă cu abuzuri sau exploatare. Această parte a cercetării se efectuează din luna noiembrie 2017 până în ianuarie 2018.

1. Eu confirm că am citit și înțeles declarația de mai sus. Eu am avut ocazia să mă gândesc la această informație și să pun întrebări la care mi-a răspuns completamente.
2. Eu înțeleg că participarea mea este voluntară și că sunt liber/ă să mă retrag oricând, fără să dau vreo explicație, fără ca drepturile mele legale să fie afectate.
3. Eu înțeleg că participarea mea la această cercetare nu este destinată de a avea vreun impact negativ sau pozitiv asupra situației mele actuale, dar informațiile pe care le dau vor fi folosite să influențeze modului în care sunt făcute legile în Regatul Unit.
4. Eu confirm că efectele posibile ale participării mele la această cercetare mi-au fost explicate satisfăcător.
5. Eu înțeleg că informațiile colectate în timpul studiului vor fi accesate doar de persoana care conduce această intervievare, iar dacă informațiile vor fi partajate cu alții, vor fi într-o formă complet anonimizată.
6. Eu înțeleg că datele personale vor fi stocate în arhive securizate și vor fi anonimizate.
   În baza celor de mai sus, eu sunt de acord să iau parte la studiul de mai sus.

Numele Participantului _____ (scris cu litere de tipar)

Semnătura _____ Data _____

Noi vă rugăm să binevoiți să păstrați o copie a acestui formular de consimțământ semnat. O copie electronică a formularului prezent va fi criptată și stocată într-o arhivă securizată de către echipa de Cercetare. Vă mulțumim pentru că ați luat parte la acest studiu.

ANNEX 1:

Interview Questions

Pre-interview
• Age, nationality, gender

Employment: general information
• Could you tell me where you work?
• What type of work do you do?
• How long have you been in this job?
• How did you find out about the job?

Personal
• How long have you been in the UK?
• Have you had other jobs in the UK construction industry before?
• Could you tell me a bit about what you usually do when you're not working, for example on a Sunday?
  o Where do you go to meet other people?
• What is your living situation?
  o How many people do you live with?
  o How did you find the accommodation?
  o What are the conditions like?

Working conditions: a day at work
• Could you tell me about your day at work today?
  o When did you get into work?
  o When does your shift start?
  o How did you get into work? How long does that take you?
  o What did you do in the morning?
  o Did you have a break? When was that? What did you do during the break?
  o What did you do in the afternoon?
  o How many hours did you work?
• Is this day similar to most days at work? If not, what's different?
• Is this similar to other jobs you have had before? Why/why not?

Employment relationship
• Are you employed directly by [RESEARCHER TO INSERT COMPANY NAME]? If not, how are you employed? (e.g. through an agency, self-employed)
• Do you have an employment contract?
  o Do you feel that you understand the contract?
  o Was it explained to you in a language you understand well?
• At your work, do you feel that you are treated differently than anyone else in the workplace? Do you see anyone else being treated different from others? Why do you think that is?
• If you work for an agency, how do you feel you and others are treated by the agency that employs you?

ANNEX 1:

Working hours

- Do you have guaranteed working hours? How many hours does your contract state that you should work?
- Are you satisfied with the working hours set out in your contract? Why/why not?
- If you don't have guaranteed, full-time hours, how much notice do you receive that you are needed/not needed at work?
- How many hours did you work this week, and how many in the last 4 weeks? How do you feel about working these hours? Do you know someone who works more hours than you do?

Pay

- How much do you earn per hour in your current work?
  - o Is that the amount stated in your contract?
  - o Are you always paid that amount?
  - o Does that amount cover your accommodation, food, travel and other expenses?
- How much were you paid last month?
  - o Is that about the same as the month before that?
- Are you paid for all the hours you work?
- How are you paid?
- Are you aware of colleagues doing similar work who are earning more or less than you?
- Are you responsible for paying your own tax?
- How does this compare to other jobs you have had before?
- Are you in debt?
  - o Did this influence your decision to accept this or previous jobs? How?

Working conditions and advice

- Was it easy to find this job?
- Do you think that you will be able to stay in this job if you would like to? Why/why not?
- If you want to keep this job, what do you do to make sure that you will be able to?
- Have you or someone you work with ever been injured, if so what happened?
- Have you or someone you work with ever experienced violence at work, if so what happened?
- Have you or someone you work with ever experienced verbal abuse (such as shouting, swearing, racism) at work, if so what happened?
- Have you or someone you work with ever worked in unsafe conditions, can you tell me about a time this happened?
- Have you or someone you work with ever been treated unfairly at work, can you tell me about a time this happened?
- If you have experienced problems at work, who would you ask for help or advice?
- If you ever experienced problems at work, how did you complain?
- If not, imagine you were treated unfairly, how would you complain?
- Are you aware of UCATT, the union for the construction industry? Do you know of and are you a member of a different union?
- Are you aware of any helplines where you might go for advice and support if you faced labour abuses in the workplace?
- Are you aware of the UK labour inspection authority – the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority or any other labour protection authority in the UK?
- Has anything changed at work or in other areas of your life since the Brexit vote?
- Do you think Brexit will change anything about your life in the UK?

FOCUS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

ANNEX 1:

Confirmation of received payment for FLEX research interview

Thank you for participating in a research interview for Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX). We very much appreciate your time and effort speaking to us.

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher on the mobile number they have given you, or FLEX on +44 (0) 203 752 5517.

By signing the below, you confirm that you have received £20 after having participated in a research interview with a researcher for Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX).

Place and date: _____

Research participant's name: _____

Research participant's signature: _____

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

ANNEX 1:

Signposting Guide

While carrying out research, you may meet people who have been, or currently are, in abusive or exploitative situations. As a researcher with FLEX, you may be asked for help or you may feel that you should seek help.

If a person is in immediate danger, you should tell them to call the emergency services on 999, or call 999 if you have the person's consent to do so (police non-emergency number is 101).

FLEX does not provide support services, but you should tell the person that you may be able to direct them to someone who can help. If you are unsure what to do or who to refer to, call your FLEX contact to discuss.

When making a referral, please mention this in the debrief call with your FLEX contact.

If the person wishes to report abuse or exploitation in the workplace:
• Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority: 0800 432 0804 (calls can be made anonymously)

If the person has questions about their rights at work:
• ACAS helpline: 0300 123 1100 (calls can be made anonymously).

If the person needs help accessing the ACAS helpline or is in need of other types of advice:
• East European Resource Centre: 020 8741 1288
• Roma Support Group: 020 7511 8245

If the person has been sexually exploited or is a victim of serious organised crime:
• UKHTC 08447782406

For advice on different forms of exploitation:
• Modern Slavery Helpline 08000 121 700 (24 hours a day, calls can be made anonymously).

For legal advice:
• Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU) 0207707311
• If a European national - AIRE Centre 02078314276
• If the person needs help accessing legal advice: Hope for Justice 0845 5197402

For homelessness:
• Shelter 08081644660 (emergency advice line)

For concerns about children:
• NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000

ANNEX 1:

Guidelines for Ethical Research for Community Researchers

Introduction
Research involving vulnerable persons such as victims of human trafficking and exploitation raises ethical questions and concerns around the safety of the researcher, direct participants and others who may benefit from or be impacted by the research.

It is of key importance that the risk of harm (actual or potential) is minimised. You can expect from FLEX, as those responsible for the project, that we will do all we can to minimise the risks to you, the participants and others. If you have concerns about the way the project is managed or believe there are risks which have not been addressed, we will always listen and do our best to resolve the issues.

When doing research with FLEX, we expect that you do everything you can to avoid putting yourself, your participants or others you meet during the research into danger.

Below we set out some key principles for ethical research, which we believe are particularly relevant for community researchers.

Key principles for ethical research

1. Do no harm
- Always respect and protect research participants' rights and dignity
- Be careful not to make assumptions or judgements about participants
- Research participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time
- Your own and participants' safety is very important:
  - o check the social and physical environment for potential risks
  - o make sure that conversations or interviews do not pose security, social, emotional or economic risks to the participants

2. Assess the risks
- Safety and security are the first priority. Be aware of risks to yourself and others and take steps to address them
- When assessing risks, remember that the research participants could be in abusive, exploitative or traumatic situations which have impacted their physical or mental health, ability to make choices, personal safety, or perception of their own ability to change the situation
- Risks for the participant can include:
  - o re-traumatisation
  - o threats or penalties from current/former employer, trafficker or community
  - o social stigma
  - o unwanted attention from authorities or media.
- Risks for the researcher can include:
  - o aggression or harm from participants, employers, traffickers or community.

ANNEX 1:

Precautions to address these risks are:

1. Consider the location and timing of data collection. For example, where sites are isolated, research takes place after dark, or contact with potential aggressors is likely, ensure that emergency plans and contacts are in place should the situation become unsafe.

2. Inform your FLEX contact about the interview time and place, including any last-minute changes. Call your FLEX contact after the interview.

3. Ensure that interviews are conducted in a safe and neutral environment.

4. Ensure that the participant understands the purpose of the interview, and that their expectations are known.

5. Ensure that the participant knows they can ask questions, skip questions, or withdraw at any time.

6. Ensure that confidentiality is maintained and that data is transported and stored securely.

3. Ensure informed consent

- All research participants must take part of their own free will without coercion or influence.
- All participants should be told how long the interview will take and informed that they will be compensated for their time.
- Participants should be made fully aware of the potential risks and benefits involved in order to give informed consent. This information is given by discussing the information on the informed consent form with the participant and ensuring that they understand it.
- Information should, if possible, be given in the participant's own language.
- Participants' right to withdraw or their consent to participate at any time must be respected.
- Be aware of how your status and behaviour may influence the participant's decision to take part in the research and ensure that they aware of their right to withdraw.

- The contribution offered to participants for taking part in the research should be mentioned prior to the interview to emphasise that they will not incur costs (such as travel). It must however not be used to influence participants to take part.
- At the informed consent stage, make sure that the participant understands what they can expect in terms of confidentiality and anonymity.

4. Ensure anonymity and confidentiality

- To maintain security and privacy, measures should be taken to ensure the security of data.
- Confidential data should be stored securely and not be shared with anyone without consent. The data you gather may only be shared with your FLEX contact, and FLEX's Policy Director, who may share it with selected FLEX staff.
- Details of individual cases should always be anonymised. You should anonymise at the transcript stage, but keep a confidential list of actual names and acronyms to be shared with your FLEX contact.
- Where recording interviews, always ensure informed consent is given.

5. Be prepared for referrals and emergencies

- While carrying out research, you may meet people who have been, or currently are, in abusive or exploitative situations. As a researcher with FLEX, you may be asked for help or you may feel that you should seek help. Use the FLEX signposting guide to make referrals when required and ask your FLEX contact for your advice if you are unsure. Always report any referrals in the debrief call.

FLEX SIGNPOSTING EXERCISE

Using the Signposting Guide in the Community Researcher Handbook, what would you do in the following cases:

- M thinks the agency she is employed by might be withdrawing too much of her salary. She is asking you for advice.

- P is telling you that he is forced to work outside in really cold weather and is not given health and safety equipment when doing work that could be dangerous. He wants to know if this is legal.

- T is telling you that she is working more than 12 hours a day and that she is paid less than the minimum wage. She seems very down and you are worried about her mental health.

- A is earning very little and has just been thrown out of his room because he was unable to pay rent. He is saying that he will have to sleep on the street tonight.

- Y is asking you about her right to work in the UK and wants to know if she may bring the rest of her family to the country.

- X tells you he is afraid of going back to his house after the interview as a man he lives with is after him. Last night the man threatened him with a knife. He does not want the police involved.

- During an interview, you are interrupted by a man who shouts at C in a threatening way. C leaves the interview to follow the man without giving an explanation. He seems scared.

phf Paul Hamlyn Foundation

RESEARCHING LABOUR EXPLOITATION:
A FLEX GUIDE TO RESEARCH WITH
HARD-TO-REACH MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE UK

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