

A short survey of Irish people using bus services to emigrate to Britain

Report

August 2012

Introduction

Crosscare Migrant Project is an Irish non-government information, advocacy and referral organisation. We are supported by the Emigrant Support Programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade to provide a service to Irish emigrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

There has been a significant increase in the emigration of Irish nationals since 2009. The Central Statistics Office has estimated that 18,400 Irish nationals emigrated from Ireland in the twelve months up to April 2009. In the following twelve month period, this figure had increased by more than 50% to 27,700 Irish nationals emigrating. When the most recent figures were released in September 2011, they showed an even more significant increase to 40,200 Irish nationals who left Ireland in the twelve months to April 2011. Of these Irish emigrants, it is estimated that approximately one third have emigrated to the UK.

Crosscare Migrant Project has a particular focus on people in the most vulnerable of situations and people who travel to Britain or emigrate to Britain with little or no preparation. This survey was an attempt to measure to what extent people used the Eurolines Bus services to Britain for the purposes of emigration, employment and more specifically the crisis type of emigration as reported in the *Still Leaving*¹ report from 2005. The survey also aimed to obtain some case studies from people in these categories. The Eurolines services are one of the cheapest ways that people can travel to Britain without basic preparation such as booking a seat. For its accessibility (no barrier of credit/debit card required) and cheapness we felt that it was likely that the Eurolines services are a mode of transport used by our target group.

Methodology

In the Republic of Ireland Eurolines services are operated by the semi-state bus company, Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann was contacted with a view to gaining permission to approach queuing passengers in Busáras Station in Dublin city centre for the purpose of asking them some survey questions. The aim was to approach people queuing for the two services to Britain that leave Busáras in the evenings, the 871² from Dublin to London and the 880³ from Dublin to Leeds. It had been previously ascertained by some observational work that there was adequate time to get some basic information from people while they queued for these particular services.

Bus Éireann granted access to Busáras but only for a total of six evenings – three Tuesdays and three Wednesdays in the month of March.

¹ See <http://www.dfa.ie/uploads/documents/still%20leaving.pdf> The research brief of *Still Leaving* focused on compiling quantitative data on the numbers of and characteristics of recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK; on the provision of qualitative data on contributing factors in decisions to emigrate to the UK; data on experiences of recent, vulnerable emigrants to the UK, including problems encountered when accessing services

² This travels via Holyhead, Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Luton

³ This travels via Holyhead, Liverpool, Manchester and Bradford

People were initially approached and asked for their reason for travelling. Attempts were made to ask all people who were queuing for the particular bus services. If the person mentioned that their reason for travelling had anything to do with employment or looking for employment then he/she was asked if they would like to answer some more questions. See the Appendix for the recording sheet for the initial responses to 'reasons for travelling' and for the list of questions that key respondents were asked when it was deemed that he/she was relevant to our research.

Key respondents were asked for their phone number and/or e-mail address so that we could follow up with them and perhaps ask them some more questions in a more private setting. Five of the key respondents replied to further questions whereas the five others did not. The non-responders were contacted at least three times before attempts were concluded.

Methodological Limitations

It is likely the limitation to Tuesdays and Wednesdays had a negative effect on the number of relevant cases we found. In our experience people tend to leave for Britain at the end of the week or over the weekend.

The amount of information and detail or even a person's willingness to respond at all may well have been negatively influenced by the location and setting where the initial interviews were carried out. People were usually approached in a queue where they were within earshot of a least one other person who they did not know. The lack of privacy may have influenced response rate and respondents' willingness to go into detail about their situation.

In terms of successfully identifying people who may have fitted the category of 'crisis emigrant' the method of approaching people also had limitations. People in situations of crisis emigration can be dealing with pressing personal issues. From our experience in dealing with people in our information and advocacy service, privacy and trust are key requirements in order for a person to talk candidly about difficult personal situations.

The non-private nature of the context and the difficulty in building an adequate level of trust within the extremely short period of time available could have meant that people who would have been relevant to our research did not divulge the full reasons for their travelling or they may have refused to speak to us. However, some people who we spoke to at Busáras and afterwards were quite forthcoming about their circumstances.

Findings

Figures

The following table shows the reasons why people were using the Eurolines services to travel from Dublin to Britain. The sections highlighted are those categories that represented the areas where we asked respondents for further information.

Of the 15 people in these categories, 3 were Slovakian, 1 was Lithuanian and one was accompanying her Irish father. This led to 10 short case studies involving 11 Irish people.

Eurolines passenger survey: Busáras March 2012							
Date of survey →	Tues 13th	Wed 14th	Tues 20th	Wed 21st	Tues 27th	Wed 28th	TOTAL
Reason for travel ↓							
Holidays	6	5	4	1	8	2	26
Visiting family/ friends in Britain	16	19	14	12	14	18	93
Return trip to Britain	12	25	34	18	21	32	142
Commuting to/from Britain	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Looking for work in the Britain	3	1	1	-	-	3	8
Moving to Britain	3	-	-	2	-	-	5
Other	2	1	10	2	2	1	18
Did not respond	6	-	1	1	1	-	9
Late arrivals (no interview)	4	4	-	2	8	-	18
TOTALS	52	56	65	38	54	56	321

Other and more specific reasons (18 in total) that people provided in terms of their reason for travelling were as follows: to attend a funeral, college interview, conference, football match or simply travelling/backpacking.

Not surprisingly one of the most common reasons for people using the Eurolines service was to visit family and friends in Britain. While not recorded in detail a large number of the 'Return trip to Britain' category involved people who had been visiting family or friends in Ireland. These two categories underline the tight familial bonds that exist between people in Ireland and Britain and this became more evident in the ten short interviews that were carried out.

Non-responses were quite low – (9 out of a total of 321). Some people arrived after most people had boarded the bus thus there was no queue and inadequate time to approach the person before they boarded the bus. These are recorded as 'late arrivals' in the above table and they constitute the second group of people on whom we have no further information.

Based on the sample of 321 people we can say that at least 1 in every 20 people who use the two Eurolines bus services to Britain use them for work purposes.⁴

⁴ 'Work purposes' being defined as 'travelling to work, looking for work or emigration'.

The case studies

1. **Keith** (38) was travelling to Liverpool looking for a 'break' and employment opportunities. He worked in the construction industry in Ireland (as a banksman and concrete finisher) until the recession and has been finding it difficult to get work since then. He has been promised work in Liverpool but it had not materialised when we followed up with him a month later. He is over and back between Dublin and Liverpool hoping to find work.

Keith's ex-partner and two children live in Dublin. He would prefer to stay in Dublin but nothing is coming up for him here as regards employment and he thinks that he has a better chance in Liverpool. He is looking into apprenticeships and traineeships in Liverpool and is hopeful that he may get one. He is planning to stay with his sister in Liverpool where he also has other family members.

2. **Aidan** (nearly 50) is a general construction labourer from Leitrim. He was travelling to Stratford in London (location of the London Olympic Park) to look for work. If that does not work out he will travel to Leicestershire where he says he is 'guaranteed' work. Aidan is single and has travelled to Britain many times for work. He initially plans to stay in London with friends.
3. **Eamon** (23) from Dublin travels to Britain every few months, he has done so three times in the last year since he finished college. He does not have employment arranged but he works in special effects in the film industry and hopes to get employment in that sector. He is staying in a private rented room in London.
4. **Dave** (52) was travelling to Birmingham. He is a contractor decorator and has pre-arranged employment in Britain with HSBC. He travels to Britain regularly for such work. He has a daughter living in Birmingham and when he travels around Britain for work accommodation is provided by the employer.
5. **Tim** (39) from Laois is travelling to London. He lived there for 7 years in the past and has been over and back for the last 6 months on a permanent job. He was let go from a job in Ireland without a redundancy payment. He works in the area of quality control in manufacturing. Tim is married and has two children aged 7 and 10 and his wife is working part-time. Tim and his wife are paying a mortgage in Ireland for the family home. Tim said that if he did not emigrate they would have fallen behind on mortgage payments. He says that he will have to continue working in Britain until he can get full time permanent work in Ireland. He tries to get home once a month for a weekend but it is not always possible due to travel costs and work commitments.

Tim says he has very little money left after paying all the bills at the end of the month. Tim says 'My kids don't really understand why I have to work in England but they try. It is hard on my wife coping alone but she has her family around her and these things have to be done. I don't want to sit at home on the dole'.

6. **Peter** (33) from Galway is a tiler by trade. He owns a flat in London and is travelling to a prearranged job there. He has been over and back for 10 years.
7. **James** (44) from Kilkenny is married with three children (17, 12, 11) and travelled with one of his daughters. He spent 20 years working in the construction sector in Ireland and has been out of work for the last two years. He said the future for his family would be bleak if they had stayed in Ireland. He has work arranged in the construction sector in Birmingham and he and his family are all moving to Birmingham. They sold their house in Ireland and have recently bought a house in Birmingham. On following up with James he said that they are 'coping ok' with the move although his children have left grandparents, other family and friends behind in Ireland.
8. **Wayne** (22) from Dublin was travelling to London to look for work. He is looking for work in the area of carpentry or related. He will stay with his sister in London and he has been over and back of late and was there for 8 months last year.
9. **Ed** (19) from Offaly is travelling to London for an interview for a summer job.
10. **Barry** (21) from Mayo is travelling to London. He is a third (of four) year engineering student and he has got a job placement in Britain for 5 months via his college course. He will stay with family there first and then move out after a while. Barry chose to go to Britain for the placement due to family connections but also because the particular type of experience that he could get in Britain was more beneficial than what was available in Ireland. Barry will return to Ireland in September to complete his degree and he says it is likely he will then pursue a master's course.

Case study findings

1. Despite a number of people not having prearranged employment none of the respondents had ever looked into **entitlements to social welfare benefits** or housing prior to departure. This is likely partly due to the fact that the majority of journeys being made were not with a view to a long term move to Britain. It may be that if the people in question got into financial or accommodation difficulty they would return home to Ireland.
2. None of the people that were willing to speak to us indicated their situation was one of vulnerability, at least in terms of how it is defined in the *Still Leaving* report. The clearest indicator in this respect was the fact that **all ten key respondents had accommodation arranged** in Britain. Some people indicated that they also had family support in Britain. One respondent (Peter) owned a residence in Britain.
3. All but one key respondent was **travelling alone**. All key respondents were **male**, which was likely influenced by the fact that many were formerly employed in the construction industry (a largely male industry).
4. There was only one case (James) where the person was emigrating in the long-term sense, in that he was moving with family to Britain and had intentions of staying there long term.
5. One of the most notable findings from the interviews was the **complex nature of labour related migration to Britain**:
 - a. Six of the respondents were travelling with the hope or knowledge of short term or contract work. Four of those six have an established pattern and record of getting short-term or contract work in Britain.
 - b. One respondent (Tim) was effectively commuting to work in Britain in order to financially support his family and pay the mortgage for their house in Ireland
 - c. As mentioned one respondent (Peter) owned a residence in Britain while another (Tim) had previously lived for a long period of time in Britain.
6. It is significant but not surprising that five of the respondents had previously worked in the **construction industry** in Ireland.
7. For confidentiality reasons home place names are changed in this report. We can say that of the ten key respondents, three were from the Dublin area, three from the West of Ireland and three from Leinster not including Dublin. One person did not offer a place name.
8. While not part of the ten key respondents group it is notable that five people indicated that they were travelling to Britain for an interview for a college place.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Britain is near, cheap and easy to emigrate to and to travel to for short term employment. In some of the cases mentioned 'temporary cross channel commuting' would seem to better describe some of the arrangements that people have as there would seem to be little integration or intention to settle in Britain.

There is a **risk** in such situations (particularly those with no friends or family in Britain) that people may not be prepared or adequately informed if they do find themselves in a situation of **vulnerability**. The message must be conveyed nationally that while the UK is very near, cheap and easy to emigrate or even commute to it is nevertheless a different jurisdiction with different public services that have their own specific access criteria and requirements.

2. More specifically the lack of knowledge of entitlements to social welfare and housing supports in Britain continues to be an on-going concern. The Migrant Project recommends a **joint British-Irish government campaign** to inform new Irish emigrants of their entitlements in the UK. Such a campaign could be supported by the EU Commission in terms of its role in promoting freedom of movement and co-operation on social security matters.
3. **More comprehensive research** is needed on awareness levels of new Irish migrants to Britain on their social security and housing rights in the UK. Indications from other small scale Crosscare research would suggest that some new Irish emigrants to Britain are arriving poorly informed and ill prepared and ended up in situations of considerable vulnerability.
4. Further research is required to ascertain to what degree are **people are emigrating in order to support a mortgage for a family home in Ireland** and the impact this is having on families that are split by situations such as Tim's. Efforts were made to obtain this data from the CSO and Central Bank but it does not appear to be data that is centrally recorded by a state body.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire on emigration from Ireland to Britain

Crosscare Migrant Project is a non-governmental organisation that provides an information and advocacy service to people who are thinking about emigrating. We are supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade Emigrant Support Programme.

This questionnaire is part of a research project aimed at finding out more about people who are emigrating to or commuting to Britain from Ireland.

What is your reason for travelling to Britain?

Please mark one or more where relevant, indicate the number of people travelling and their nationalities.

Holidays																	
Visiting friends /family in UK																	
Return trip to Britain																	
Commuting to/from work																	
Looking for work in Britain																	
Moving to Britain																	
Other																	
Did not respond																	
Late arrivals (no interview)																	

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

- *What is your final intended destination?*
- *Is it your first time travelling to Britain?*
- *Do you have any links/contacts/supports in Britain? If so, can you outline them:*
- *Do you have accommodation arranged in Britain?*
- *Do you have employment plans after you arrive in Britain? If so, can you outline them:*
- *What part of Ireland are you from?*
- *Are you travelling alone or with friends/family?*
- *Have you looked into your entitlement to benefits and/or housing in Britain?*
- *Why are you leaving Ireland?*
- *Profile: Age_____ Gender _____ Marital status_____*
- *Would you be open to further contact?*
Yes / No

If yes, can you please provide your name and a phone number and/or e-mail address?

Do you consent to us including the information you provided in our research?

Yes / No

Your name or other identifying details that you specify will not be used.

THANK YOU!