



## EMBRACE NI Fact Sheet Spring 2009

For those of us who were born on the island of Ireland crossing the border is easier now than in the past, as transport and roads are better and violence is no longer an every-day occurrence.

Travel is not so easy for foreign nationals. Because of the fear of organised crime and illegal migration the authorities, north and south, co-operate in monitoring cross-border travel and difficulties can arise for people, even when they think their paperwork is in order.

This sheet does not give immigration advice, just some background information. We also suggest some common sense principles to apply, as well as organisations where people can go for help in N. Ireland.

### Some facts

- A visa for the UK does not entitle you to visit the Irish Republic.
- Foreign nationals with visas and/or work permits in the south also need to get permission to travel north.
- Applications for asylum should be made in the country where people first arrive.
- Most people who are claiming asylum must ask permission before travelling into the Republic.
- Breaking immigration law can lead to detention, deportation, and a ban on re-entry to the UK.
- Foreign appearance may lead to arrest. Minority-ethnic people, even from the EU, will find it easier if they carry documentation.
- The UK Borders Act of 2007 has intensified some of these difficulties and a new Bill proposes to make crossing the border even harder for some people.

### Official Action

**Operation Gull** is a cross-border operation headed by the United Kingdom Immigration Service and the Garda National Immigration Bureau. It involves the Gardai, PSNI, and the Borders Agency and detects and detains people suspected of immigration offences. Each year recently several hundred people have been apprehended in N.I., taken to police stations, and then on to removal centres in Scotland or England. It is difficult for people to contact friends or legal support during this process. The project is meant to stop criminal gangs, people trafficking, illegal working etc. but affects other people.

### Sports Fans

Minority ethnic Derry GAA supporters have been removed from buses going to matches in Croke Park.

### Victims of torture

The Christian group, SPIRASI, which works with survivors of torture in the Republic has had difficulty bringing people from Donegal to its Dublin centre. As the law stands people need permission to undertake the bus journey of 7 hours because the bus goes from Donegal via Enniskillen to Dublin.

### Individuals

One example is of a Corrymeela Community volunteer from South America who was invited to spend a social weekend in Dublin. She was stopped on the journey and returned to Belfast where she found herself alone at Central Station late in the evening.

### WARNING

**People extending social invitations or sending people to conferences or training courses south of the border should remember that getting permission takes time. Travelling without proper papers can have very negative consequences. It is no good just saying 'Sure it will be all right.'**

## USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

**Immigration advice** is available only from a number of organisations registered with the Immigration Services Commissioner. These include

### **Citizens Advice (CAB)**

Web: [www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk)

### **STEP**

(South Tyrone Empowerment Programme)

Unit T7

Dungannon Business Park

2 Coalisland Road

Dungannon BT71 6JT

Tel: +44(0)28 8773 9002

A major source of advice and support is the **Law Centre**, especially where people are already in difficulties. If someone is discriminated against because of their race or ethnicity this can be challenged with the help of the Law Centre or the other organisations mentioned here.

### **Law Centre (NI)**

124 Donegall Street

Belfast BT1 2GY

Tel: +44(0)28 9024 4401

Fax: +44(0)28 9023 6340

Textphone: +44(0)28 9023 9938

E-mail: [admin.belfast@lawcentreni.org](mailto:admin.belfast@lawcentreni.org)

Web: [www.lawcentreni.org](http://www.lawcentreni.org)

### **Law Centre (NI) North West**

9 Clarendon Street

Derry BT48 7EP

Tel: +44(0)28 7126 2433

E-mail:

[admin.derry@lawcentreniwest.org](mailto:admin.derry@lawcentreniwest.org)

### **Law Centre advice lines**

Belfast: +44(0)28 90244401 or Derry/

Londonderry: +44(0)28 71262433

### **Children's Law Centre**

**CHALKY** free-phone for children and young people: +44(0)28 9024 5704

People applying for Asylum should contact

### **Bryson One Stop Service for Asylum Seekers**

9 Lower Crescent

Belfast BT7 1NR

Tel: +44(0)28 9043 9226

**24-hour emergency line:**

+44(0)28 9024 2025

E- mail: [info@brysononestopservice.com](mailto:info@brysononestopservice.com)

who can also help to advise on cross-border travel for refugees. The **Law Centre** (Col 1) can also help with general advice, and legal support especially if people have been detained.

### **Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

is another source of advice and support for refugees and people seeking asylum.

### **NICRAS**

One Vision Offices

Unit 2, 129 Ormeau Road,

Belfast BT7 1SH,

Tel: +44 (0)28 90246699

E-mail: [nicras@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicras@hotmail.co.uk).

## INFORMATION SOURCES

The **Refugee Action Group (RAG)** has published an *Information Pack for Asylum Seekers in Northern Ireland who May be Detained* which is available from support organisations and online: [www.refugeeactiongroup.com/publications.jsp](http://www.refugeeactiongroup.com/publications.jsp)

*Embracing Diversity: EMBRACE Information Update 2008* carries background information on immigration and asylum. It can be found on the EMBRACE web site [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org), which also carries background information on immigration and asylum.

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