

## **Newry workshops for churches seeking to engage with migrant people**

On Saturday 12th March in Bagenal's Castle a series of workshops was delivered to a range of participants from throughout Newry and Mourne District Council. This event was hosted by EMBRACE and Newry District Inter-Church Forum. The workshops were funded in part by Newry and Mourne District Council and supported by funding from OFM-DFM and churches.

The workshops presented ideas on initiatives to build relationships with new people, how to use existing church programmes and activities to engage with migrants and how to respond to difficult situations such as destitution and immigration status.

The Lord Mayor of Newry said,

'As our society becomes more diverse in culture and traditions, it is becoming increasingly important that we understand and recognise all the needs of our new growing community. Today's workshop is all about dialogue and I know throughout the morning's discussions, important issues will be addressed and lessons will be learned for the future.'

Chairperson of EMBRACE Denise Wright said,

'The workshops are a great opportunity for local church people to see the difference they can make in connecting with and providing activities for people who have migrated here. A lot of great things are already happening in the churches and in Newry; today has hopefully provided some new ideas and encouragement to continue to make people feel welcome and a part of their community.'

Aneta Dabek development worker of EMBRACE, tells a true story,

'Magda came to N. Ireland with her parents when she was just fourteen. When she talks about her experience, she describes her first four months as hell. Why was it so bad? The answer is simple; she didn't feel accepted and welcomed. She was isolated because nobody wanted to talk to her, even though her English was fluent. Then one day someone came to her and became a friend. That 'small' action has totally changed her world and her impression about this new country.'

Not everyone has the same story and many who come here have positive experiences. Lots of newcomers find this a very friendly place and people who live here incredibly nice, however, there is much more to do. We often expect new arrivals to take the first step but integration always involves both sides. It is part of our Christian ethos to transform difficulties and challenges. We can make the stranger's life much more bearable by being open and welcoming.

**If you would like to take part in an Embrace workshop or to help organise one in your area, please contact:  
Embrace at [aneta@embraceni.org](mailto:aneta@embraceni.org) or 07969921328.**