

Suggestions for action:

A seemingly insignificant 'hello' and a smile can make a huge impact in making someone feel at home and welcome in a new community. It's worth remembering that a smile conveys the same message in all languages.

There are many opportunities to connect with new neighbours, colleagues and their families. An invitation to a church activity, such as a parent and toddler group, youth club, scouts, sports and other recreational groups might make a significant difference in making someone feel welcome.

Embrace Translation Service

People respond best to an invitation in their own language. To help churches reach and communicate with people who come here from different countries, EMBRACE offers a free translation service for announcing church events and activities (up to 60 words).

EMBRACE NI

Building a Welcoming Community

EMBRACE is a group of Christians drawn from different denominations, working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in N Ireland.

EMBRACE seeks to reflect gospel values, and equip the Church to fulfil its call to welcome the stranger, by providing information, training, and resource materials, and acting as a channel to assist those in need.

Thinking of Joining Us?

If you are not already a member of EMBRACE, please consider joining us. Subscriptions are £10.00 annually per person and £20.00 for groups. Please email or write to us at the address below.

Making a Donation?

If you would like to make a donation towards our work please send a cheque, payable to EMBRACE. Your support is greatly appreciated.

For more information contact us:

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Office of the

**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk



Embrace NI | Hear My Voice Series | Leaflet 1 | Nov 2011

Hear My Voice

As simple as
'hello'?

Stories of Welcome

The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

Acts 28:2

Some stories...

Ana came to Northern Ireland with her husband and one-year-old son. Her husband is a lorry driver and is often only at home at weekends. Her family is far away and she feels lonely and isolated. Being a new mother is a challenge in itself, but being a new mother in a strange country without family around makes it even harder.

Riveni came here as an au pair to look after her friend's children. She went to church with the family but because she looked a bit different nobody talked to her, probably not expecting her to speak English.

Monika arrived recently from Eastern Europe with her husband and two children. Her first months in the country were difficult and she remembers not feeling welcomed. She did not receive so much as a 'Hello,' not even from her neighbours or from the other mothers at her children's school.

Samir has been living here for many years. Despite the passage of time he has found it difficult to adjust to life in Northern Ireland. 'My neighbourhood is a strange place,' he says. 'People don't know each other even though they have lived on the same street for five years.'

For people who have moved to a new country it can be difficult to build friendships and find a supportive community. This challenge is often magnified when there is a language barrier.

Sometimes we are afraid of speaking to people who we perceive may not be fluent English speakers. We might be afraid of putting them on the spot or embarrassing them; however no harm is done in greeting someone.

A simple 'hello'
can make a significant
difference.

Ana was made to feel welcome when after a few months one of her neighbours noticed her and invited her to a parent and toddler group in a nearby church. This changed her life, not because she had something to do on that one morning, but because she met other mothers and began to make friends. These friendships developed and she was able to meet up at other times to go for walks and to share meals. Her neighbour's simple invitation was the first step to making her feel part of a community again.

After three months, someone at church started to talk to **Riveni** and discovered that she is a very nice girl, even though she spoke little English. The situation at church changed and more and more people began to chat with Riveni. After a while she felt embraced by her new family.

For **Monika**, after several difficult months of feeling isolated and alone, her situation began to change when people started to greet her with a 'hello' and her neighbours began to ask about how she was doing. The simple gesture of saying 'hello' made an impact on Monika's life in Northern Ireland and made her feel welcome.

The transition for **Samir** into a new life and culture was not easy. Coming from Sudan where local community spirit is very strong and knowing your neighbour is an important part of living in community, he still finds himself missing connection with his neighbours and community.