

### Migrant Destitution

Migrant workers who lose their jobs, or whose contracts have ended, may end up on the streets if their immigration status does not give them the right to 'out-of-work' benefits. They may have been living in accommodation that is tied to their job and have little savings, especially if they have been sending money home to their family. Friends may provide support for a while but if they do not find a job quickly destitution may soon follow.

#### EMBRACE NI on the street

In 2006, EMBRACE working alongside several Belfast churches and community organisations who work with homeless people, set up the 'On the Street' project.

This initiative offers a practical response through the donation and distribution of clothing, bedding, toiletries and foodstuffs to those on the street and in hostels, both local and migrant people.

In addition the EMBRACE Emergency Fund can finance short-term hostel accommodation and, where needed, the means to return to the home country.

It was observed originally that, with early support it was relatively easy to get destitute foreign nationals back into jobs. The recession has made this less likely.

Local charity, EMBRACE, is a group of Christians from different denominations, working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers and people from minority-ethnic backgrounds living in Northern Ireland.

For more information contact:

EMBRACE NI,  
48 Elmwood Avenue,  
Belfast, BT9 6AZ  
0796 9921 328

[www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org) [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@embraceni.org)



### Aggravating factors

Language barriers can make it difficult for people to access information about rights and services.

Many migrant workers have low-paid jobs that do not reflect their experience or qualifications.

Some employers fail to pay the legal minimum wage to foreign nationals and/or make excessive deductions.

Many people now work for agencies that deduct money from wages or withhold people's documents.

Agency workers may work uncertain hours.

People send money home to families.

Foreign nationals are often unaware of the high cost of living before they come here.

If living in tied accommodation, the loss of a job may lead to homelessness very quickly.

Foreign nationals who lose their jobs may not be entitled to welfare support.

Homelessness makes it almost impossible to obtain and hold down employment.

Foreign rough sleepers can be subject to racially motivated harassment and intimidation.

Destitution can lead quickly from an ordered life to multiple social and medical problems.

People who are not entitled to benefits are often denied access to beds in hostels if the homelessness organisation is subsidised by public money.

To read more about categories of migrants and the challenges they face, read *Embracing Diversity EMBRACE Information Update 2011*

[www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/](http://www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources/)

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Matthew 25: 35-36