



EMBRACE NI
Building a Welcoming Community
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CROSSING THE BORDER

EMBRACE NI Fact Sheet February 2011

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 all foreign nationals. Because of the fear of organised crime and unauthorised 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 gives some background information. We also include some 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 from the UK or from the Republic into N Ireland.
- 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.

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 UK Border Agency and detects and detains people suspected of immigration offences. Each year recently several hundred people have been apprehended in Northern Ireland, 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 can affect other people. For example, a Corrymeela Community volunteer from South America, who was invited to spend a social weekend in Dublin, was stopped on the journey and returned to Belfast where she found herself alone at Central Station late in the evening. Minority-ethnic Derry GAA supporters have been removed from buses going to matches in Croke Park, Dublin.

WARNING

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

INFORMATION & SUPPORT

If you are detained, the **Law Centre NI** (see below) can provide advice. If you are detained, or see someone being detained, out of office hours, phone the Refugee Action Group's out-of hours **Immigration Detention Emergency Helpline 0800 8400 495 (00 44 800 8400 495** from the Irish Republic) The volunteer will forward the information to the **Law Centre NI**.

Immigration advice is available only from a number of organisations registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. www.oisc.gov.uk These include:

Simple information is available from

Citizens Advice

Find the nearest office at
www.citizensadvice.co.uk

More complex immigration advice is available from other groups. For example:

The Belfast Migrant Centre

2nd Floor Ascot House
24-31 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DB

Tel: +44(0) 28 9043 8962

E-mail:

info@belfastmigrantcentre.org

STEP

(South Tyrone Empowerment Programme)

Unit T7

Dungannon Business Park
2 Coalisland Road

Dungannon

BT71 6JT

Tel: +44 (0) 28 8773 9002

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

Web: 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

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