

Who is a migrant worker?

A migrant worker is a person who moves from one country to another for the primary purpose of work.

Migrants from different countries of origin have different rights. Some can work without advance permission and stay for as long as they like. Others have to leave the country if their job contract ends. Most cannot claim the main welfare benefits until they have worked here for a while. Some can only access full rights and benefits when they become residents or citizens after at least 5 years. People from the European Union usually have more rights than people from outside the EU; however, various restrictions exist for EU nationals.

How is it different for people seeking asylum?

People seek asylum if they fear persecution in their own country. Most are not allowed to work and receive accommodation and a small allowance. In 2011, a single adult received £35.52 a week.

If you would like to learn more, check out the free EMBRACE publications *Embracing Diversity* and *Who's who? Who's here?*



For more updated information on signposting visit:
www.embraceni.org/category/christian-response/advice-for-churches/

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:

EMBRACE NI

48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ

Tel: 9066 3145 (Tuesday to Thursday 10am to 3pm)

Mobile: 0796 9921 328

Email: info@embraceni.org

Web Site: www.embraceni.org



Office of the

**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk



Embrace NI | Hear My Voice Series | Leaflet 4 | Nov 2011

Hear My Voice

Finding direction

Migrant difficulties & signposts to help

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 1:17

As we seek to build a welcoming community we will encounter people who have migrated to Northern Ireland from other countries. Many settle in successfully but others encounter difficulties.

Ivan and **Victoria** came here from Bulgaria in 2010 and found a local church where they felt at home. Their first months were difficult. Because they are from Bulgaria, they had to have permission to work in Northern Ireland. They applied as soon as they could, but the process was slow. During these months of waiting they could not work and could not access government support.

Fleeing Somalia, **Ghedi** came here seeking asylum. He started attending English classes in a local church where he made new friends and began to feel a bit more secure. After several months he received a letter stating that his application for asylum had failed and that he would need to move out of his accommodation. He didn't know what to do so he turned to his friends from the local church for help.

Eileen is from here and enjoys meeting people from different countries and cultures. Through her church she has become involved with a local drop-in centre. One day at the centre she met a couple named **Crina** and **Ioan** who had recently arrived from Romania. They talked with Eileen about the difficult working conditions that they encountered in their job at a local car wash, working excessive hours for limited pay. The couple was distressed and didn't know what to do, fearing they might lose their job if they spoke up about their situation. Eileen wanted to help them, but didn't know what she could do.

When faced with a difficult situation regarding immigration, where do you go? If Ivan, Victoria, Ghedi, Crina or Ioan came to you or your church, would you know how best to support them?

Your initial reaction might be to 'fix' or to 'solve' a particular issue, but it is always best to ask an expert for advice in individual cases. It is illegal to give immigration advice without a licence.

While you might not be licensed to offer such advice, you or your church might be able to signpost people to organisations that can best help them.

For **Ivan** and **Victoria** there was a happy ending. They received the necessary paperwork and after a few months of struggling to find a job, they now have work. With church support they survived the most difficult period of their immigration. They said to their congregation: 'When you are living abroad you miss your family the most. You became our new family. Thank you for your support.'

Ghedi's situation has not been resolved yet.

Eileen was able to learn more about migrant rights, but wasn't able to change **Crina** and **Ioan's** situation. She found the one way she could support them was to listen to their story and to share a cup of tea.

Signposts

The Law Centre NI provides free advice on all concerns about immigration status and rights. They have a booklet, available in 15 languages, highlighting organisations that give free immigration advice.

Help lines are open Mon to Fri, 9:30am to 1pm:
Tel: (Belfast) 028 9024 4401 (Derry) 028 7126 2433
Web: www.lawcentreni.org

The Belfast Migrant Centre offers an immigration advice service. They run weekly advice clinics in different locations.

Tel: 028 9043 8962
email: info@belfastmigrantcentre.org
Web: www.belfastmigrantcentre.org

The Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS) is the only refugee-led organisation in Northern Ireland that represents the needs and interests of the refugee community.

143A University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP
Tel: 028 9024 6699
email: nicras@hotmail.co.uk

Citizens Advice can provide information on general enquiries. The NI list of local offices can be found at: www.citizensadvice.co.uk/en/Where-We-Are/Bureaus/

Advice NI has a referral service.

Tel: 028 9064 5919
Web: www.adviceni.net

If a person agrees, the **honorary consuls** of the home country can help in certain circumstances. For a list of honorary consuls visit: ca-ni.org/consular_list.html

