

REFUGEE TRANSITION

FULL VERSION - 2018 UPDATE

A guide for people who have just received refugee status and for their advisers

Benefit entitlement

Am I eligible to receive benefits?
How do I apply?

Immigration matters

How long is my refugee status valid?
Can I bring my family? Can I travel?

Employment

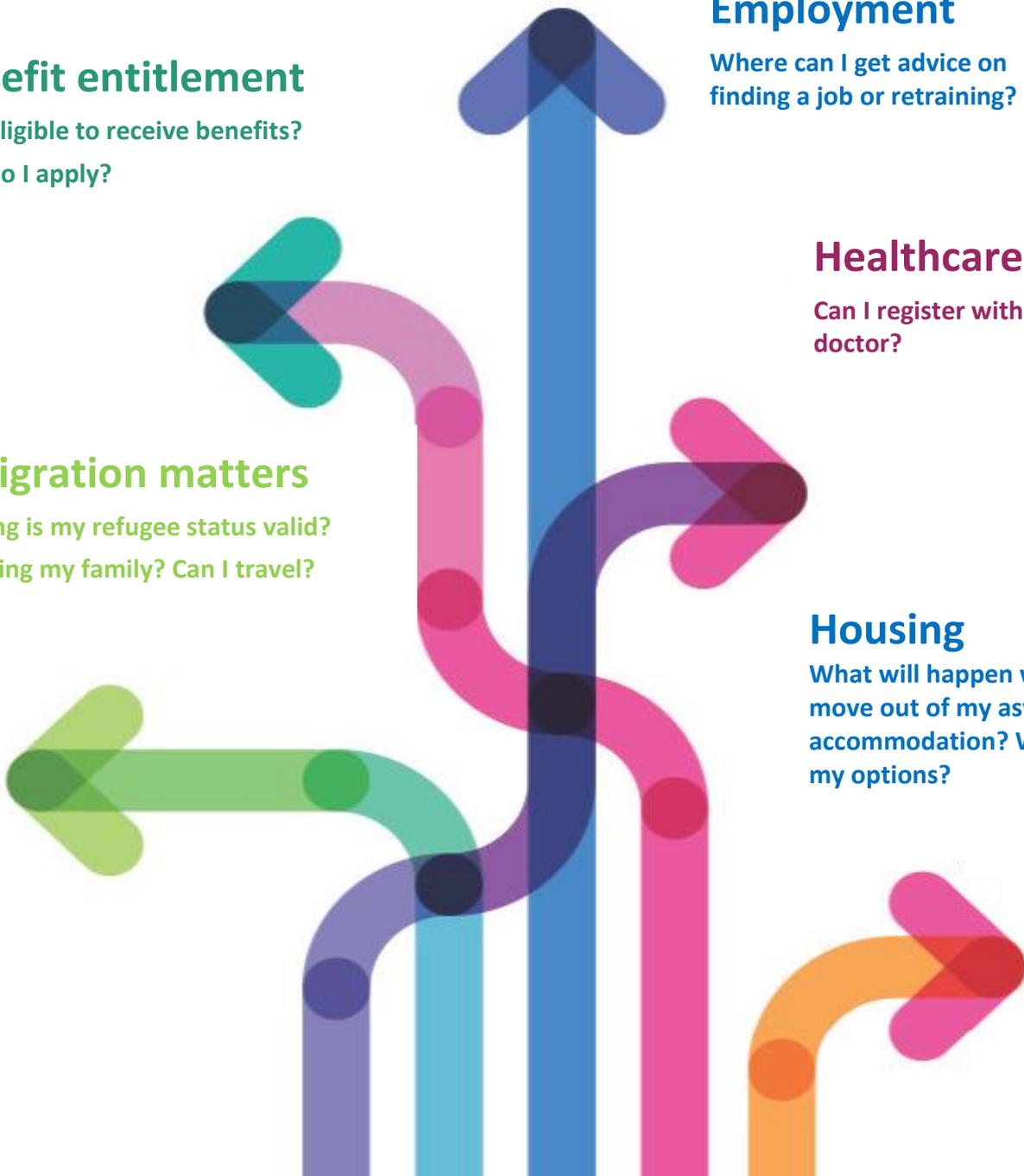
Where can I get advice on finding a job or retraining?

Healthcare

Can I register with a doctor?

Housing

What will happen when I move out of my asylum accommodation? What are my options?



A summary guide of this document is available and is translated into Arabic, Farsi, Simplified Mandarin and Somali. For copies, contact www.belfastcity.gov.uk



Belfast
City Council

REFUGEE TRANSITION

A guide for people who have just received refugee status and for their advisers

Produced by Law Centre (NI) for Belfast City Council

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Disclaimer

Although every effort is made to ensure the information in this guide is accurate and up-to-date, we cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies and their consequences.

This guide focuses on services based in Belfast where most of Northern Ireland's refugees are based. The agencies referred to in the document can refer you to services closer to where you live if required.

The legal information provided is only relevant to Northern Ireland law. It should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. Some of the legislation may have changed since it was published.

REFUGEE TRANSITION (2018 UPDATE)

A guide for people who have just received refugee status and for their advisers

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to be used by refugees and their advisers. It includes detailed information about the transition (also known as the 'move on' period) for new refugees.

The **light blue boxes** contain key information

The **lilac boxes** contain responses to key questions a refugee might have

This guide is available online only. Updates will be produced and posted online:

www.belfastcity.gov.uk

This guide is complemented by a printed **summary version**, which is a short A5 leaflet that is translated into four languages: Arabic, Farsi, Simplified Mandarin and Somalia. The summary version can also be used a case recording file as it contains:

- **A log book:** it is recommended that refugees, their advisers, caseworkers and relevant officials maintain this logbook, which records steps taken;
- **A personal information sheet:** it is recommended that refugees complete this form, which records the information most commonly requested by government agencies and advice organisations.

Contact details of all the organisations listed in this document and a map can be found in Section 5.

Important note: only advisers who are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner or who are specifically exempted (e.g. solicitor) may provide immigration advice. It is illegal for other persons to give advice.

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First steps overview



1. FIRST STEPS

1.1 Becoming a refugee

Refugees are normally granted five years Limited Leave to Remain (LLR).

You now have almost the same rights and entitlements as UK nationals. You can:

- work
- apply for benefits
- access free healthcare
- study

Advisers should check what leave has been granted and whether any restrictions apply. While refugees and persons with Humanitarian Protection are granted Limited Leave to Remain for five years, persons granted Discretionary Leave are usually granted a shorter period of leave.

The type of leave can affect eligibility to family reunion and further study for example. If you are unsure about the type of leave that has been granted, seek immigration advice.

Biometric Residence Permit

The Biometric Residence Permit is an official form of identity. It confirms that you are permitted to live and work in the UK. It is **not** a Travel Document. You should receive your Biometric Residence Permit at the same time as you receive the letter confirming you have refugee status.

Check the Permit carefully: is all the information correct?



I received a letter granting me refugee status but no Biometric Residence Permit. What should I do?

The Home Office should send you the Biometric Residence Permit with your letter granting status. If not, notify your Home Office caseowner and solicitor immediately.

The necessary biometric information should have been recorded at the main Belfast Post Office following the substantive asylum interview. If this procedure has not been completed, the refugee will need to do it immediately.

The refugee will need a letter from the Home Office that asks her to enrol her biometrics. The refugee should take the letter to the main Belfast Post Office **as soon as possible** (and within seven days) with any dependents. At the Post Office, all family members will be photographed and fingerprinted. Children who are under six years of age will be photographed only. The Home Office will send the Biometric Residence Permit to the refugee's solicitor or request that the refugee picks it up at Drumkeen House.

It is essential that the information on the Biometric Residence Card is accurate. Any mistakes should be reported to the Home Office [online](#) **within 10 days**

How do I keep my Biometric Residence Permit up to date?

See Section 2 (next steps) for important information about your Biometric Residence Permit.

Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme

Northern Ireland is participating in the [Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement](#) ("VPR") Scheme. This scheme is separate from the usual asylum system. A key difference is that the VPR Syrians have their cases assessed *prior* to arrival and so they arrive in UK with status. Since July 2017, VPR Syrians have been granted five years' Refugee Status. This means that they have exactly the same status as other refugees in Northern Ireland. VPR Syrians who arrived in Northern Ireland before July 2017 were granted five years' Humanitarian Protection, which gives slightly different entitlements. These refugees have an option of switching their Humanitarian Protection status to Refugee Status.

Another key difference is that each Syrian VPR family is allocated temporary accommodation on arrival. A Barnardo's / Extern keyworker provides extensive support to the families to help with registering with a GP, accessing benefits, enrolling children in schools, etc.

1.2 Somewhere to live

Now that you are a refugee you are no longer entitled to receive NASS financial support or accommodation. NASS will stop 28 days after your Biometric Residence Permit has been issued.

Extern can help you with your housing, finances and many other services. **Speak to Extern as soon as possible. Do not wait until 28 days have passed.**

The Housing Executive Asylum Development Unit will write to the refugee and issue a 'Notice to Quit' letter which advises that NASS financial and accommodation support will stop within 28 days. This letter will also recommend that refugees make contact with Extern and the Housing Executive Homeless Services Unit. The refugee should also receive a NASS 35 letter directly from the Home Office which contains the total amount of NASS support and the date that the NASS support ends. **This is an important document to keep.**

It is extremely important to make sure that the refugee is in possession of the Biometric Residence Permit when she receives the 'Notice to Quit' letter. If not, notify the Home Office and solicitor immediately and request that the 28 day period does not start until the Biometric Residence Permit has been issued.

Social housing

As a refugee, you are eligible to apply to go on the waiting list for social housing provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. There are two routes to get on to the social housing waiting list:

1. Complete a housing application form;
2. Present as homeless.

There is a lot of demand for social housing and you must follow the procedures carefully. **Generally**, the process on leaving NASS accommodation is as follows:

1. be assessed as homeless and eligible for support;
2. move out of NASS, most likely into temporary accommodation;
3. be placed on a waiting list for permanent housing;
4. be offered permanent accommodation (this may take months or years).

Homelessness assessment

You must be recognised as homeless in order to receive Housing Executive help with finding an immediate home. You should:

- go to the Housing Executive and request a Homelessness Assessment.

If you are assessed as homeless, eligible for help, in priority need and unintentionally homeless, then the Housing Executive has a duty to find you somewhere to live.

You should request a Homelessness Assessment as soon as you are granted leave to remain.

Do not wait until you are required to move out of NASS accommodation before you approach the Housing Executive.

The assessment is conducted by the Housing Executive Homelessness Services Unit and includes four separate tests:

1. Is the person homeless or threatened with homelessness?
2. Is the person eligible for help?
3. Does the person have priority need?
4. Is the person intentionally homeless?

If all four tests are passed, Full Duty Applicant status (70 points) is awarded and the person is recognised as a homeless person who requires assistance.

A refugee who presents promptly to the Housing Executive should *normally* be awarded Full Duty Applicant status. It is not necessary for the refugee to actually be out on the street before she can be assessed as eligible for assistance. If FDA (70 points) is not awarded, consider requesting a review of the decision within 28 days. Seek advice from Extern.

How long does it take for the Housing Executive to decide if I am homeless?

The Housing Executive will issue a decision in writing on whether or not you are eligible for homelessness assistance within 33 days. However, while it is making its decision, it can provide you with temporary accommodation.

I need an interpreter to speak to the Housing Executive

You can request an interpreter. The Housing Executive provides a 24 hour telephone interpreting service through an organisation called Big Word.

At your Homelessness Assessment, you should request **temporary accommodation**.

If the Housing Executive recognises you as a homeless person in need of assistance, it has a duty to find you temporary accommodation while you are on the waiting list for permanent accommodation. There are different temporary accommodation housing options:

- Housing Executive hostel;
- Housing Executive family hostel (only available where there are children);
- Housing Executive 'single let' (available where a hostel is not suitable);
- voluntary organisation hostel (see below);
- private rental (see below);
- Staying with friends/family (see below).

Extern can advise you on the different housing options.

I have been told to present at the night shelter and wait for a bed. Is this acceptable?

Generally, refugees should *not* be sent to queue at a night shelter if a bed has not been reserved. Any refugee in this position should contact Extern or Housing Rights.

I am a female refugee and am frightened about moving into a mixed hostel. What should I do?

All accommodation must be **reasonable** and **secure**. What is reasonable depends on the individual circumstances. If a refugee is vulnerable – e.g. poor mental/physical health, previously experienced violence, etc. – a different type of accommodation might be necessary. Any refugee in this position should inform NIHE of any vulnerabilities and/or contact Extern or Housing Rights.

I want to stay with friends for a while

If you stay with friends then you may no longer be considered homeless. Check that you have an 'open homelessness application' or speak to Extern for advice first.

Temporary accommodation is in short supply and demand is high. There is no guarantee that accommodation will be offered in Belfast. Availability of temporary accommodation changes daily. The refugee can present at the Homeless Services Unit from the day she leaves NASS accommodation to find out what is available. She may need to phone the Homeless Support Unit at 9am every morning ☎ **03448 920 920**.

Most single refugees will be offered **hostel** accommodation which usually consists of single rooms. By law, the accommodation offered must be reasonable and secure.

The Housing Executive has a duty to place households together. Families are usually accommodated in self-contained **family hostel** flats. Couples are placed together wherever possible, however, in an emergency, or when there is no other availability, couples may be accommodated in single accommodation until a more suitable alternative is found.

Single-let accommodation can be available where there is no suitable hostel accommodation. Such accommodation consists of self-contained flats and is very limited so demand is particularly high. It is important that the refugee explains to the Housing Executive why hostel accommodation is not suitable, for example if the refugee has a disability or mental health need that cannot be met in a hostel. Supporting evidence, such as a letter from a GP, will be necessary. In the absence of specific information, the Housing Executive will assume that hostel accommodation is appropriate.

Access to **voluntary organisation hostels** is managed by the organisations directly. The Housing Executive has a list of these hostels and can assist. However, the refugee can also contact each organisation directly. Again, availability changes constantly.

The **waiting list** for permanent housing is based on a points system. The more points a person has, the sooner she will be offered permanent accommodation. Additional points can be awarded depending on current circumstances or needs. Points are awarded under four broad categories:

- Intimidation, for example, has the person been a victim of a life-threatening racist attack?
- Insecurity of tenancy, for example, are current living arrangements secure?
- Housing condition, for example, is the person sharing a room/facilities, etc?
- General health and social well-being, for example, does the person have any medical conditions?

It is very important that the refugee informs the Housing Executive of changes in circumstances or needs.

Private renting

You can rent accommodation from a private landlord either while you are on the Housing Executive waiting list for permanent accommodation or permanently. Renting in the private sector can be a faster option as there are no waiting lists and more availability.

Refugees who rent are responsible for finding this accommodation and for paying the deposit and rent, which is usually payable one month in advance. Housing Benefit can help pay the cost of the rent and a Discretionary Housing Payment can help cover any shortfall.

A person who signs a contract of 12 months or more may no longer be considered to be homeless and may lose all entitlement to Housing Executive homelessness assistance. It is therefore advisable that a **homeless** refugee speaks to Extern or the Housing Executive before signing any rental contract. Equally, if a refugee decides to make her own arrangements (for example live with friends for a while), it is advisable that the Housing Executive is informed first and that this is a short-term arrangement. Otherwise, the refugee may be deemed not to be in need of homelessness assistance.

I want to stay on the waiting list while renting privately

If your private rental contract is for 12 months or more, you may no longer be considered homeless. Speak to Extern before signing your rental contract.

I want to rent privately but find it very expensive. What help is available?

You can apply for Housing Benefit to cover the cost of the **rent**

If the Housing Benefit does not cover the full cost, apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment

The organisation Smartmove can help with **rental deposits**. ☎ **028 9075 7801**.

- A loan might be available through Discretionary Support to help pay the **rent in advance**. Contact Finance Support to discuss. ☎ **0800 587 2750**.

Avoid taking out any expensive loans which you might struggle to pay back.

Renting a house, a flat or a room creates a legal relationship between you and the landlord. You become a 'tenant' and should inform yourself of your rights and responsibilities.

A tenant must:

- pay rent on time. Rent is usually paid in advance, weekly or monthly;
- take gas or electricity meter readings (if necessary) and pay bills on time;
- take proper care of the property;
- not cause any damage to the property;
- not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours.

A landlord must:

- give the tenant a rent book which confirms how much rent she has paid;
- give the tenant a written Statement of Tenancy Terms within 28 days of the start of the tenancy;
- give the tenant at least 28 days notice to ask her/him to leave the property;
- maintain gas and electrical appliances;
- give the tenant privacy. Tenants should be given 48 hours written notice before the landlord accesses the accommodation to carry out repairs, except in the case of an emergency.

- use an approved tenancy deposit scheme. This prevents landlords from keeping a tenant's deposit unfairly after the tenant has moved out. **Check to make sure that the landlord is using this scheme.**

Permanent accommodation

You may eventually be offered permanent accommodation if you stay on the Housing Executive waiting list and remain eligible for help. This can take months or years. You should:

- respond quickly to any offer of accommodation.

The Housing Executive must make three reasonable offers of permanent accommodation. If the refugee rejects all three offers of accommodation, the application is deferred: she will not receive any further offers for one year. This may also affect her homelessness points.

The offer of accommodation must be 'reasonable'. The refugee can challenge any offer of accommodation that is not 'reasonable', in other words, accommodation that does not meet her needs. Seek advice from Housing Rights Service.

I am moving into new accommodation and have no fuel or furniture

You might be eligible for a grant or loan to help cover the cost of the move. See Financial Support section, below.

Race hate crime and accommodation

I am worried about race hate crime in my neighborhood

In an emergency / if you feel threatened, contact PSNI ☎ **999**. For non-emergency situations, contact PSNI ☎ **101**.

Any refugee/migrant who is worried about race hate crime can contact NIACRO STEM project for assistance. A range of support services are available ☎ **028 9032 0157**

The NIACRO STEM project is available for people from ethnic minority backgrounds who have a tenancy, or who have been offered a tenancy, in the Greater Belfast area and who are at risk of harassment or intimidation due to their ethnicity. Advisers can work with people who have, or are taking up, a tenancy with the Housing Executive, a housing association, or a private landlord.

1.3 Working

You are now entitled to work. There are no restrictions on the type of work you can do e.g. part/full time, self-employment, running a business, etc. All workers must pay tax and national insurance contributions.

An Adviser or Work Coach at the local Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office can provide information about work and training. Jobs are advertised on www.jobcentreonline.com The Careers Resource Centre can provide information and help about starting a new career, training courses and available funding ☎0300 200 7820. Belfast City Council can provide information and support to refugees wanting to start their own business ☎028 9027 0482. GEMSNI can help with completing a CV and application forms, finding a work placement, and obtaining the necessary skills and training ☎028 9033 2313.

My qualifications are from my home country. Can I use them here?

For help in getting your qualifications recognised in the UK, contact the DfC European Employment Service (EURES) ☎028 90252141 or attend the drop in service at 56-66 Upper Queen's Street, Belfast. This service is available for all nationalities.

I have a professional qualification. How can I afford to requalify in UK?

You might be eligible to apply for an interest-free loan to cover the cost of requalifying. Contact www.refuaid.org or ☎07469884564

Rights of workers

All workers have rights. This applies to full-time and part-time workers. You should inform yourself of your rights. You could speak to a Trade Union or check the Law Centre's [website](#).

Generally, all workers have the right to:

- receive National Minimum Wage (from April 2018, £7.83 per hour for workers aged 25+ years);
- receive written statement of terms;
- receive itemised pay slips;
- receive paid holidays (at least 28 days a year for full-time staff);
- have rest breaks;
- not be required to work more than 48 hours a week;
- protection against unlawful discrimination.

Voluntary work

Volunteering is a great way to obtain experience, new skills and qualifications. To find a placement, contact Volunteer Now ☎028 9023 2020

Volunteering can affect a person's eligibility to benefits in some instances. For example, if a person is volunteering full-time, she is probably unable to meet the jobseeking requirements for certain benefits. Check with the Adviser or Work Coach at a Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office or speak to an advice organisation.

1.4 Benefits

As a refugee, you are now entitled to claim social security benefits.

Your NASS money will stop 28 days after you receive your biometric residence card.

You should arrange to claim benefits **as soon as possible**. You should either:

- attend an appointment arranged by Home Office; or
- phone the Benefits Service ☎0800 022 4250; or
- speak to an Adviser at your **local** Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office.

The Home Office will screen asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status and splits them into two groups. The first group do not need assistance to make a claim and will proceed as described in this booklet. The second group are deemed to need assistance. The Home Office will liaise with Department for Communities to arrange an appointment with the refugee to make a benefit claim. An interpreter will be arranged if required. It is very important that the refugee attends the benefit appointment. If the refugee cannot attend for whatever reason, she should notify their Home Office caseworker.

I need an interpreter to help me with my benefit claim

Staff at Jobs and Benefits and Social Security Offices have access to Language Line telephone interpreting. Written information can be provided in alternative formats including minority languages.

How long do I need to wait for my benefits?

All benefits should generally be processed within 12 Working Days. If there are any delays, phone the Benefits Service number ☎0800 022 4250 and request an update from Claims Tracker. If the issue is not resolved do not struggle alone. Law Centre can help ☎028 90244401

Welfare Reform and benefit changes

The benefit system is changing significantly. A number of different benefit changes are being introduced. A key change is the introduction of Universal Credit, which is replacing six benefits. This Guide *briefly* covers the new benefits and the older-benefits, which will become known as the “legacy benefits”.

Claimants will be informed by the Jobs and Benefit Office which benefit they should apply for; this will be in accordance with the benefit roll out.

Information can be obtained by contacting:

- Welfare Changes Helpline ☎0808 802 0020
- [nidirect](#) website
- [Law Centre NI](#) website
- Citizens Advice [Guide](#)

Do you need Welfare Reform Advice?

0808 802 0020

Call the free, independent welfare changes helpline or contact your local office for an appointment
Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm

- Personal Independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance
- Employment Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit
- Tax Credits

First steps: Applying for benefits

Check that you have received a National Insurance Number



If not, contact Extern immediately



Apply for benefits by telephone (☎ 0800 022 4250) or in person at Jobs and Benefits / Social Security Office

- Apply for Universal Credit**
- If Universal Credit is not available, apply for a Legacy Benefit**
 - Apply for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) and any other benefit as appropriate
 - Apply for Housing Benefit (shortened application in conjunction with JSA and IS)
 - If applying for tax credits, request fast track process
 - Request backdating if applying for tax credits (within 30 days of refugee status) and Child Benefit (within 3 months)

If no decision within 10 working days ring Claims tracker

☎ 0800 022 4250



Open bank account



If experiencing hardship / delays in benefits

- Contact Finance Support 0800 587 2750. See below.**
- Consider requesting support from charities. See below.**

Benefits for refugees

This table shows the most common benefits that refugees might be able to receive. It is a guide only. You may be entitled to more than one benefit, and the amount may vary depending on your age, family circumstances etc.

National Insurance Number

Benefit applicants are generally asked to provide a National Insurance Number (NINO). All refugees should receive a NINO when they receive their refugee status.

NINO is handled by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), although if necessary the application can be generated by the Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office.

I haven't received my National Insurance Number yet. Does this mean I cannot get benefits?

A NINO is not necessary for benefits to be paid. Benefits can be paid via an Internal Identification Number until the NINO is allocated. It may be necessary to request a **short-term benefit advance**. If you do not have a NINO, contact Extern

Opening a bank account

You will normally need a bank account to receive benefit payments or wages. Go to a bank, a Post Office or a Credit Union with your identity documents to open a current account and request a cash card. Credit Unions are slightly different from bank accounts; make sure you check that benefit payments can be accepted.

I am unable to open a bank account because I don't have the necessary identity documents.

Ask the Jobs and Benefits Office for information about a Post Office Card Account. Also ask Extern for advice on other acceptable identity documents.

In the past, some claimants experiencing difficulties opening bank accounts could use a Simple Payment Card. However, these payments stopped in March 2018.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a single means-tested benefit for people of working age who are either not working or are in low-paid work and replaces: Income Support, income based Jobseekers Allowance, income related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. Universal Credit is designed to be administered via online accounts.

Universal Credit will be paid differently in Northern Ireland. For example, although it is calculated monthly, claimants will be paid twice monthly. There are a number of provisions designed to protect claimants, including Transitional Protection and mitigations. Seek advice ☎ **0808 802 0020**

An award of Universal Credit consists of a Standard Allowance and, depending on circumstances, an amount for different elements.

STANDARD ALLOWANCES (per month)	From April 2018
Single claimant aged under 25	£251.77
Single claimant aged 25 or over	£317.82
Joint claimants both aged under 25	£395.20
Joint claimants where either is aged 25 or over	£498.89
CHILD ELEMENT	
First child or qualifying young person	£277.08
Second and each subsequent child or qualifying young person*	£231.67
Additional amount where child/young person is disabled:	
Lower Rate	£126.11
Higher Rate	£383.86
CHILDCARE COSTS	
85% of childcare costs up to a max of one child £646.35 or for two or more children £1108.04	Varies
LCW AND LCWRA ELEMENT	
Limited capability for work	£126.11
Limited capability for work and work-related activity	£328.32
CARER ELEMENT	
Carer element	£156.45
HOUSING ELEMENT	
Can be paid to social sector /private rental or home owners depending on circumstances	Varies

*Note the child element will be restricted to the first two children from February 2019. Exceptions apply.

Universal Credit is being rolled out across Northern Ireland.

Area	Date commenced
Limavady	September 2017
Ballymoney	November 2017
Magherafelt and Coleraine	December 2017
Strabane and Lisnagelvin	January 2018
Foyle and Armagh Omagh and Enniskillen	February 2018
Dungannon and Portadown	March 2018
Banbridge and Lurgan	April 2018
Newry and Downpatrick Lurgan, Newcastle and Kilkeel	May 2018
Falls (Belfast), Shankill (Belfast)	June 2018
Andersonstown (Belfast) Banbridge	June 2018
Hollywood Road (Belfast) Ballynahinch Newtownabbey, Newtownards	September 2018
Shaftesbury Square (Belfast), Carrickfergus Knockbreda (Belfast), Bangor Lisburn, Larne	October 2018
North Belfast (Belfast), Cookstown	November 2018
Ballymena, Antrim	December 2018

Basic conditions of entitlement to Universal Credit:

Claimants must:

- Be aged 18 or over and not reached the qualifying age for state pension credit
- Be in Northern Ireland
- Not be 'receiving education'
- Accept a claimant commitment

The financial conditions of entitlement are similar to the income and capital rules currently applied to means-tested benefits.

Legacy benefits (older-style benefits)

	LEGACY BENEFIT	AMOUNT from April 2018 – WEEKLY All benefit rates are for 25+ years
BENEFITS FOR REFUGEES WHO ARE WORKING		
If you are working less than 16 hours per week	Jobseeker's Allowance	Varies. Max £73.10 per week
If you are working more than 16 hours per week and on a low income	Working Tax Credit	Amount varies
BENEFITS FOR REFUGEES WHO ARE NOT WORKING		
If you are looking for work	Jobseeker's Allowance	£73.10 per week
If you cannot work because of ill health	Employment and Support Allowance	£73.10 / £109.65 per week depending on disability
If you cannot work because you are caring for another person	Income Support	£73.10 per week
If you cannot work because you are a lone parent with a child under 7 years of age	Income Support or	£73.10 per week
If you cannot work because you are studying English (see section 1.4.4.3 on Income Support)	Income Support or	£73.10 per week
If you are retired	Pension Credit	£164.35 per week for a single adult
If you are caring for a disabled person	Carer's Allowance	£64.60 per week
BENEFITS FOR REFUGEES WITH CHILDREN		
If you currently care for a child (whether or not you are working)	Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit	Child Benefit: £20.70 (for the eldest child) £13.70 (other children) per week *Rate of Child Tax Credit varies

BENEFITS FOR CARERS		
If you are caring for a disabled person	Carer's Allowance	£64.60 per week
BENEFITS FOR REFUGEES WITH A DISABILITY		
If you have a recognised disability (whether or not you are working)	Personal Independence Payment (those aged 16 – 64) Disability Living Allowance (aged under 16) / Attendance Allowance (aged over 65)	£22.65 - £145.35 per week depending on needs
BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE		
Benefits for young people aged 16 – 19 years who are in full-time education or on a particular training course	Education Maintenance Allowance	£10–£40 per week
Benefits for young people not working or looking for work	Jobseeker's Allowance / Income Support	£57.90 per week for single adult under 25 years
HOUSING COSTS		
If you have no income or low income	Housing Benefit	*Amount varies

Legacy Benefits for people who are not working or working less than 16 hours per week

Jobseeker's Allowance

This is the main benefit for people who are looking for work.

To claim, the refugee should contact her local Job and Benefits or Social Security Office to obtain a form and to make an appointment.

To qualify, a person:

- must not be in full time paid work (claimant 16 hours, partner 24 hours per week);
- must generally not be in full time education (there are exceptions to this);
- must normally be fit for work, be available for and actively seeking work and have a current jobseeker's agreement and 'sign on' every fortnight or as required;
- must be aged over 16 and under pension age;
- must have a right to reside and live in Northern Ireland.

Employment and Support Allowance

This is a benefit for people who have limited ability to work because of ill health/ disability.

Employment and Support Allowance is for people who have 'limited capability for work' and who are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay. To claim, call ☎0800 085 6318 Monday – Friday.

To qualify, a person:

- must be at least 16 and must be under pension age. Note that State Pension Age for women is currently 63 and 8 months but rising in November 2018 when it will be 65;
- must get medical evidence from a GP at the time of claim;
- must then undergo a medical assessment called the Work Capability Assessment during the three-month assessment period and then during regular intervals;
- must have a right to reside and live in Northern Ireland.

Income Support

This is a benefit for certain groups of people who cannot work for other reasons, including:

- carers;
- lone parents with children aged under five;
- refugees for up to nine months while studying English in the first year of being in Northern Ireland.

You can claim Income Support by phoning, writing to or calling into your local Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office.

To qualify, a person:

- must not be studying full time (there are exceptions to this rule, for example if the person is a lone parent of a child under five or if a person has started a course of full time non advanced education and is under the age of 21);
- a refugee on a course to learn English for more than 15 hours per week may qualify for Income Support for nine months if the course began when she was in the UK for less than one year;
- must not be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, including joint claims;
- must be at least 16 and under qualifying age for Pension Credit;
- must have a low income;
- must have less than £16,000;
- must have a right to reside and live in Northern Ireland.

Pension Credit

This is a benefit for men and women aged over the State Retirement Age for women.

To claim, download a claim form from the nidirect website or request a claim form from a Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office. The form can be returned to the Pension Credit Office or a Jobs & Benefits Office.

- Pension Credit is a means tested benefit for men and women who have reached the retirement age for women, which is currently 63 and 8 months and rising up to November 2018 when it will be 65 for both men and women.
- Pension Credit is more generous than working age benefits; the standard rate is £159.35 per week for a single person £243.25 for a couple.
- Pension Credit is means tested but has no capital limit.
- It is possible to claim Pension Credit in or out of work.

Legacy benefits for people working 16 hours or more per week

Working Tax Credit

This benefit is paid by HMRC although a person can apply for it at her local Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office.

There is a **Fast Track** process which considerably speeds up the processing time. The refugee should specifically request that this process is used: the Jobs and Benefit / Social Security Office receives and checks the application and then forwards it to HMRC, which should process the claim within ten working days.

To qualify for Working Tax Credit:

- The claimant/ partner must satisfy rules about being in full time paid work. This can be either 16, 24 or 30 hours per week depending on the claimant's circumstances.
- Working Tax Credit does not have national insurance contributions conditions.
- Income must be sufficiently low – there is no capital limit.
- The claimant must be present and ordinarily resident in the UK – there are some exceptions.

Legacy benefits for people with children

Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit and Guardian's allowance

Child Benefit Child Tax Credit and Guardian's Allowance help with the cost of bringing up children.

You can apply for these benefits at your Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office.

Make sure that you:

- request that your Child Tax Credit application is Fast Tracked;
- request to have your claim backdated to the date of your asylum application within three months (Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance) or one month (Child Tax Credit).

Child Tax Credit can be claimed through the Fast Track process. . The application should be processed within ten working days.

Although it is not possible to claim Child Benefit or Guardians Allowance through the Fast Track process, the Jobs and Benefits Office / Social Security Office can assist with completion of the claim forms. The refugee needs to send her **original** documents (for example a birth certificate) with the Child Benefit application.

If the person has refugee status (not humanitarian protection or discretionary leave), she can request that Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit and Guardians Allowance are backdated to the date of the asylum application. Strict time limits apply to asking for backdating: **The person must claim backdated Tax Credits within one month and Child Benefit/ Guardians Allowance within three months of receiving the Home Office letter granting refugee leave.**

The amount of backdated Tax Credits is reduced by the amount of asylum support she received, but the amount of backdated Child Benefit or Guardians Allowance is not reduced.

Child Tax Credit is the means tested benefit that provides money to those responsible for children.

- This benefit is means tested but it does not have a capital limit.
- It can be claimed by people irrespective of whether they are in full time paid work.
- Child Tax Credit will be paid to the person who has 'main responsibility' for the child or qualifying young person. A person is eligible until 31 August after her 16th birthday, after that a person will continue to be eligible up to the age of 20 if she remains in certain kinds of full time education or training of at least 12 hours per week.
- Child Tax Credit can be paid in addition to Working Tax Credit, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit and it does not count as income for these benefits.
- Child Tax Credit has residence, presence and a right to reside rule, and the claimant must not be a person subject to immigration control. Most refugees will meet these criteria.
- Child Benefit/ Guardians Allowance can be claimed in addition to Child Tax Credit.
- These benefits can be claimed irrespective of whether the applicant is in full time paid work.
- The claimant must be responsible for a child or qualifying young person. A person is eligible until 31 August after her 16th birthday, after that a person will continue to be eligible up to the age of 20 if she remains in certain types of full time education or training of at least 12 hours per week.
- The claimant need not be the child's parent and the child need not live with the claimant. However, the claimant must contribute financially to the care of the child, so that all the amount of the Child Benefit is used for the care of the child.

Can my benefits be backdated?

Child Benefit, Guardian's Allowance and Child Tax Credit can be backdated to the date you claimed asylum. This can significantly increase your income. Speak to an advice organisation to find out if you are eligible.

Benefits to help with the extra costs of disability and care

If you are disabled, or you are caring for a family member who has a disability, you might be eligible for other benefits.

These include:

- Personal Independence Payment (people aged 16 – 64)
- Disability Living Allowance (people aged under 16)
- Attendance Allowance (people aged 65 and over)
- Carer’s Allowance.

To claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) call the PIP Centre on ☎**0800 012 1573** or textphone **0800 012 1574** for people with speech and hearing difficulties. It is only possible to get a claim form for Personal Independence Payment by ringing the PIP Centre. To claim Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, ring Disability and Carers Service ☎**0800 587 0912** and request a claim form as that will then be taken as the date of claim.

It is also possible to download a claim form for Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance or to request a form from a Jobs and Benefits Office or Social Security Office

Personal Independence Payment

- Personal Independence Payment is a benefit that helps with the extra cost of having a long term health condition or disability that is expected to last for 12 months or longer. Entitlement is based on a test for assistance required with activities of daily living and mobility rather than on the condition itself.
- PIP has a daily living and a mobility component. It is possible to qualify for one or both of the components
- PIP is not means tested and can be paid if a person is working or not working
- PIP has a rule that a person must have been present in Northern Ireland for 2 out of the 3 years prior to claiming. However this rule does not apply to refugees. Anyone affected by this rule should contact Law Centre for further advice.

Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit for children who are aged under 16 when they claim and who have a disability which causes needs for supervision, care and attention or mobility problem that a child of the same age would not have.
- Attendance Allowance is a similar benefit to DLA for those who are aged 65 or over at the time of the claim. It does not have a mobility component or a lower rate equivalent to low rate care DLA.
- DLA has two separate components, one for care and one for mobility. It is a single benefit. Each component can be paid at different rates. There is a single claim form for both components.
- DLA and Attendance Allowance are not means tested and can be paid in addition to all other benefits. They do not count as income for means tested benefits and tax credits and may lead to entitlement to higher rates of other means tested benefits.
- There are no national insurance contribution conditions.
- It is possible to claim DLA and Attendance Allowance whether the person is in or out of work.

- DLA and AA have a rule that a person must have been present in Northern Ireland for 2 out of the 3 years prior to claiming. However this rule does not apply to refugees. Anyone affected by this rule should contact Law Centre (NI) for advice.

Carer's Allowance (legacy benefit)

- It is not means tested and it does not have national insurance conditions.
- The person must be regularly and substantially caring for a disabled person for 35 hours or more per week.
- It is possible to qualify for Carer's Allowance in or out of work but if a person is in work she/he:
 - must not earn more than £116 per week;
 - must not be in full time education;
 - must be aged 16 or over - there is no upper age limit;
 - must satisfy a residence condition.
- Carer's Allowance can be paid in addition to other benefits – rules on overlapping benefits will apply. However, entitlement to Carer's Allowance may lead to entitlement to a Carer Premium in the calculation of Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- The person who is being cared for must have leave to remain in the UK.

Help with housing costs:

Housing Benefit (legacy benefit)

Housing Benefit is paid by the Housing Executive to people who are unemployed or on a low income to help them pay their rent. Housing Benefit can be used:

- to pay for rent charged by a private landlord
- to pay for rent charged by a charitable organisation
- to pay for the cost of permanent Housing Executive accommodation.

A person can apply for Housing Benefit at the same time as she applies for Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support at the Jobs and Benefits Office. This will result in a shortened Housing Benefit Application.

Alternatively, she can apply for Housing Benefit through the Housing Executive.

- This is a means-tested benefit. It has an upper capital limit of £16,000. There is no capital limit if the claimant/ partner is getting the guarantee credit of Pension Credit.
- Housing Benefit can be paid to those in and out of work who satisfy the means test.
- The person must satisfy the habitual residence test.
- The person must be liable to pay rent and it must be for a home in which she normally lives.
- It may be possible to claim discretionary housing payments to help with shortfalls in payment of Housing Benefit if the person is living in private sector accommodation.
- Note that full-time students are not eligible for Housing Benefit unless they have responsibility for a child or have a disability.

Benefit cap

The Benefit cap is an upper limit to the amount of welfare benefit that working age households can receive. It applies where Housing Benefit is in payment and it limits the total amount of benefit for a couple/ lone parent with children to £384.62 per week and for a single person to £257.69 per week. If you are affected by the Benefit Cap contact Law Centre (NI) for further advice as complex rules apply.

Finance support

There are different types of government financial support available that can help you meet living costs or emergency expenses. Claimants can contact Finance Support ☎ **0800 587 2750**

Finance Support can provide help through:

- Discretionary Support
- Short-term Benefit Advances
- Sure Start Maternity Grants
- Funeral Payments
- Budgeting Loans
- Cold Weather Payments

Avoid high street lenders if possible as they are extremely expensive.

There are different loans and grants available. Contact the local Jobs and Benefits or Social Security Office or look up NI Direct for information on how to apply.

Discretionary Support Scheme

Discretionary Support provides quick, short-term financial support in the form of loans or grants. To be entitled, a person must:

- Face an extreme, exceptional or crisis situation that puts immediate health, safety or well-being at significant risk;
- Be 18 or over (16 where the person does not have parental support);
- Have an annual income below the threshold (£15,600 in July 2018);
- Be resident of Northern Ireland and the need must occur in Northern Ireland
- Not have had more than 3 loans and 1 grant in the preceding 12-month period.

How to apply? Contact Finance Support: ☎ **0800 587 2750**

Short Term Benefit Advance

Some benefits can be paid in advance. To be entitled, a person must:

- Have applied for a qualifying benefit and waiting for the benefit to be processed/paid;
- Have an urgent financial need;
- Be able to afford to repay the advance within 12 weeks.

How to apply? Contact Finance Support: ☎ **0800 587 2750**

Budgeting loans

Budgeting loans of £100 – £1500 may be available if you are on a low income and need help with costs such as furniture or essential household equipment, clothing, footwear, or home improvements.

This is an interest-free discretionary loan and must be paid back, usually through deductions from benefits.

To be entitled a person or partner must:

- have been receiving a qualifying benefit for 26 weeks.

The 26-week benefit requirement will preclude most refugees initially. However, a budgeting loan might be useful at a later time e.g. meeting the costs following family reunion.

How to apply? Request a SP500 claim form from Jobs & Benefits / Social Security Office or download it from NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/budgeting-loan-form-sf500

Sure Start Maternity Grant

The grant is £500 payable for the first child to parents in receipt of certain benefits. This is a one off grant, does not need to be paid back and does not affect other benefits. The person must claim within 11 weeks of the baby's due date or within three months after the baby's birth.

If you already have children under 16, you can only get a grant if you are expecting multiple births.

How to apply? Request a SF100 claim form from a Jobs & Benefits / Social Security Office or download it from NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/sure-start-maternity-grant-form-sf100

Cold weather payment

This is a payment of £25 a week to persons in receipt of qualifying benefits in periods of very cold weather.

How to apply? Payment should be made automatically to the claimant. If you do not receive it, contact a Jobs & Benefit Office.

Winter fuel payments

This is a payment to persons born on or before 5 August 1953.

How to apply? Check eligibility by calling ☎ **0345915 15 15** or request a claim form from a Jobs & Benefits / Social Security Officer or download from NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/winter-fuel-payment-claim-form

Funeral Payment & Bereavement

If you are arranging a funeral and are on a low income, you might be able to receive financial assistance to cover the costs. You might also be eligible for a bereavement payment.

How to apply? Contact the Bereavement Service 0800 0285 2463

Free school meals

Some children can receive Free School Meals and School Uniforms. To be eligible:

- Your child must be in full time education.
- You must be in receipt of an eligible benefit.

How to apply? Request a Free School Meal / Uniform Grant from a Jobs & Benefit Office, your child's school or from your local CAB or Contact Education Authority ☎ **028 9056 4000**

Belfast Health Trust Carer's grant

If the refugee is a carer, she can apply for a one-off grant of up to £250.

How to apply? Contact the Carer's Coordinator at Knockbracken Healthcare Park ☎ **028 9056 4937**.

Refugee integration loan

Refugees are entitled to apply for a Home Office Integration Loan. This loan is intended to help facilitate integration into the UK and can be spent on items such as:

- vocational training (training that will help the refugee get work);
- deposit for accommodation;
- buying essential items for the home;
- buying tools for a trade.

The application form must specify how the money will be spent. It cannot be used to buy travel tickets for family members. The minimum loan is £100 and there is no maximum, although in practice £400 tends to be the upper limit. To be eligible, a person needs to have a National Insurance Number and a bank account. The application form is found on the [Home Office website](#). It is **not** processed through Jobs & Benefit Offices.

I urgently need cash. Which payment should I apply for?

In the first instance, contact Finance Support. ☎ **0800 587 2750**

YOUR SITUATION	TYPE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT	ELIGIBILITY / HOW TO APPLY
You are facing extreme, exceptional or crisis situation	Discretionary Support provides loans or grants	☎ 0800587 2750
You are waiting for a benefit to be paid and have an urgent financial need	Short-term Benefit Advance	☎ 0800587 2750
You need help to buy furniture, essential household equipment, clothing, home improvements, etc.	Budgeting loan of £100–£1500 NB. 26 week qualifying period. Particularly useful for family reunion	Request a SP500 claim form from Jobs & Benefits office
You are expecting your first child and need help with costs of baby.	Sure Start Maternity Grant of £500	Request a SF100 claim form from a Jobs & Benefit Office or download from NI Direct
You are experiencing difficulty paying for heating in cold weather	Cold Weather Payment of £25 per week in especially cold weather	Should be paid automatically to eligible claimants. If not, contact Jobs & Benefit Office
You are an older person experiencing difficulty paying for heating in cold weather	Winter Fuel Payments available for those born before 5 August 1953	☎ 08459 15 15 15

You need help to pay for funeral costs	Funeral Payment and Bereavement support	☎0800 0285 2463
You need help to pay for school meals or to buy school uniforms.	Free School Meals / Uniform Grants.	Request a Free School Meal / Uniform Grant from a Jobs & Benefit Office, your child's school or contact Education Authority ☎028 9056 4000
You need assistance to organise and pay for services including emergency accommodation, care in the home, etc.	Social Services can provide a range of services (incl. financial support) to those assessed as having social care needs. Generally, the refugee must have a particular vulnerability e.g. illness, disability, caring responsibilities, etc.	Contact the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and request a Needs Assessment ☎028 9050 7000
You are a carer and need a little financial assistance	Belfast Health Trust Carer's one off grant of £250	Contact the Knockbracken Carer's Coordinator ☎028 9056 4937
You need help to pay for vocational training, buying essential items for the home, etc.	Home Office Refugee Integration Loan £100 to approx £400	Apply through Home Office website.
You need help to pay for a deposit to move into rental accommodation	SmartMove can cover the cost of a rent deposit	Smartmove ☎028 9075 07801
You need help with the costs of requalifying or to progress with education	RefuAid grants and interest free loan of up to £10,000	Contact www.refuaid.org ☎07469884564

1.5 Help from social services

If you are struggling financially and cannot access the support you need from other statutory agencies, you might be entitled to receive help from social services teams at your local Health and Social Care Trust. Generally, you first need to request a needs assessment. If you are assessed as having social care needs, the Trust may be required to help you.

To request an assessment, contact the Trust's Gateway Team in the first instance. In Belfast, the number is **☎028 9050 7000**

What help can social services provide?

Social services can provide different types of help including paying for hostel accommodation, paying rent (or some rent) to a private landlord, providing subsistence payments, for example paying for food and other essential expenses, or providing disability equipment.

Under Community Care legislation, Trusts are required to provide certain services to people with social care needs. Trusts also have considerable powers to provide services on a discretionary basis. They can respond very quickly and may therefore offer effective emergency help in some cases.

Need is assessed on an individual basis. Factors likely to be considered include: whether the refugee has an illness, medical condition, disability or caring responsibilities or if the refugee is particularly vulnerable in some regard.

For advice about community care entitlement, contact a Law Centre Community Care adviser ☎ **028 9024 4401**.

1.6 Charitable assistance

If you are experiencing destitution or hardship, the voluntary and community organisations listed in **Appendix 1: Charitable Assistance Tables** may be of help.

2. NEXT STEPS: SETTLING IN THE UK

2.1 Studying (children)

Education in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, children start school at four years old. Most people stay in school until aged 16 to 18 years. Almost all schools are publicly funded and are free to attend. There are a small number of private fee-paying schools.

All children have a right to education although parents are expected to make the necessary arrangements to get their children into school. For assistance or advice, contact Education Authority ☎ **028 9056 4080**.

Parents are expected to cover costs for school uniforms, trips, etc. A child may be eligible for free school meals. See above.

Pre-school education (2 – 4 years)

Pre-school education is not compulsory.

To apply, fill out a form from Education Authority. You should name at least 6 pre school places in order of preference. The Education Authority website allows you to search for schools in your area. You should send the completed school to your preferred school by the deadline (sometime in January).

Primary school (4 – 11 years)

Primary school education is compulsory.

To apply for a first year place at a primary school, fill out a form from Education Authority. You should name at least four primary schools in order of preference. The Education Authority website allows you to search for schools in your area. You should send the completed school to your preferred school by the deadline (sometime in January).

Post primary school (11 – 16/18 years)

Post primary school education is compulsory until 16 years.

At the age of 11 years children normally transfer from primary education to post-primary education. Parents have the right to express a preference for the post-primary school they wish their child to attend, however, because each school has a maximum number of places, it may not be possible for every child to be placed in the preferred school of choice.

I can't find a school place for my child

It is important that all school age- children get into education promptly. Contact Education Authority Intercultural Education Service for assistance. ☎ **028 9056 4080**

2.2 Studying in the UK (adults)

As a refugee, you can study in the UK. Studying can increase your skills and knowledge and can help you find a job. Studying can affect your benefit entitlement so it is important to keep the Jobs and Benefits Office updated if you do decide to study.

Further education

Refugees and people with Humanitarian Protection are entitled to free full-time vocational Further Education courses. Fees usually apply for academic and part-time courses. The rules for students with Discretionary Leave are different.

Further Education is for 16+ years and can range from basic skills training to higher vocational qualifications including A-levels, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and Foundation degrees. Further Education can be taught at college (for example Belfast Metropolitan College) or in work-based or community settings.

Higher education

Refugees and people with Humanitarian Protection are entitled to 'home student' fees status and are entitled to apply for 'Student Support'. This means financial help through a loan or grant to pay for tuition fees and living expenses. The rules for students with Discretionary Leave are different.

Higher Education is post 18 years learning beyond A-level. It is usually taught at a university such as Ulster University or Queen's University, Belfast.

Do I have to pay course fees? Am I eligible for financial assistance?

If you are a child or young person, seek advice from Children's Law Centre.

☎ **028 9024 5704**

If you are an adult (18+), seek advice from [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#)

Student Advice line ☎ **020 7788 9214** 1pm–4pm

Essential skills

Classes in Essential Skills (basic skills in reading, writing and using a computer) are available free of charge to all adults in Northern Ireland.

Essential Skills classes are available in different locations and at different times. A crèche facility is available in some places. Successful students are awarded qualifications which are accepted by employers. Details of courses are available on [nidirect](#).

Studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Asylum seekers, refugees and people with Humanitarian Protection are entitled to free ESOL classes e.g. at Belfast Metropolitan College.

Some refugees who are studying ESOL are entitled to receive Income Support (see the benefit section).

Many charities and community groups provide free ESOL classes. The Belfast Metropolitan College is coordinating ESOL teaching to Syrian VPRS refugees and is creating a network of ESOL groups within both the colleges and community sector. Details about classes can be found [here](#). Contact: Ligia Parizzi ☎028 9026 5233 Lparizzi@belfastmet.ac.uk

There is funding available to help refugees pay for the cost of government ESOL classes. NICRAS can advise members on what help is available.

Additionally, the Adviser Discretion Fund can be used to pay the cost of a basic ESOL course if it helps the refugee find work. To be eligible, the refugee must be in receipt of certain benefits and either must be unemployed or underemployed.

How to apply? Speak to your Personal Adviser at your local Jobs and Benefit Office and request access to the Adviser Discretion Fund.

2.3 Healthcare: registering with a GP

You probably already have a doctor (also called a GP, or general practitioner). Make sure you notify your doctor if you move house.

All asylum seekers and refugees and family members are entitled to register with a GP and to receive free primary and secondary care. Check to see if the refugee is registered.

Anyone who is not registered should register. This includes family members arriving through refugee family reunion.

To register, the refugee should go to a GP near to her new address and request registration. Complete form HS 200 and provide proof of address and the Biometric Residence Permit.

A NHS Medical Card will be posted to the refugee.

I need an interpreter to speak to my doctor

You can request an interpreter to help you communicate with the health service. This is known as the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS). Interpreters are available 24 hours a day and the service is free of charge.

2.4 Family reunion

Applying for family reunion

Some refugees can apply for their family members to come and live in the UK. This is known as family reunion and usually applies to the refugee's husband/wife/partner and dependent children (below 18 years). In some situations it is possible for other family members to be included e.g. elderly parents or disabled family members.

If the family member does not qualify for refugee family reunion, it is possible that the family can apply through another immigration route.

I would like to bring my family to Northern Ireland

Your family members will need to apply for a visa to enter and live in the UK. An immigration solicitor can help obtain a visa.

You will also need to make practical arrangements for bringing your family here. The Red Cross has a Family Reunion Assistance programme which might be able to arrange and pay for flights, etc.

Speak to an immigration solicitor and Red Cross as soon as possible ☎ **028 9032 3055**

Family reunion is only available for persons with refugee status or Humanitarian Protection. Persons with Discretionary Leave to Remain should seek advice. If a refugee obtains British citizenship, she is no longer entitled to refugee family reunion.

A solicitor is able to help with obtaining the Family Reunion visas.

The British Red Cross Family Reunion Assistance scheme works with the International Organisation for Migration to help arrange and fund travel for family members of refugees. In order to process the application, the Red Cross needs the following documents:

- a copy of Family Reunion visas for all family members;
- a letter from the Jobs and Benefits Office dated less than three months ago that shows the benefits received or a copy of all pay slips for the past three months;
- bank statements covering the whole of the last three months;
- a copy of the Biometric Residence Permit.
- If the children are adopted or the applicant is separated from their other parent, evidence must be provided that the applicant is the child's guardian (certificate of adoption, written consent from the other parent or, if relevant, parent's death certificate).

Red Cross can give more information and should be contacted before making any arrangements.

☎ **028 9032 3055**

How much does family reunion cost?

There is no application fee for a refugee family reunion. Legal Aid can cover the cost of the solicitor's fees. If family members apply through a different route, application fees generally apply.

Refugees are recommended to request a breakdown of fees in advance from their solicitor and to check whether they are eligible to receive Legal Aid.

Other immigration applications can be very expensive including £1000 – £2500 for settlement applications. Legal Aid does not cover the cost of the application fee. There are also strict rules that prevent family members receiving public funds. It is very important that the refugee is aware of any such restrictions in advance.

Note that only refugee family reunion applications are exempt from the Immigration Health Surcharge; this fee applies to most other applications and must be paid along with the application. .

Family reunion for Syrian VPR

A different family reunion process is available for Syrians who entered the UK through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme. VPR Syrians should speak to their keyworker in the first instance, who can signpost them to immigration advice.

A different process is available whereby extended family members of VPR Syrians can be added to future resettlement arrivals. The family members must meet the eligibility criteria to qualify. This process is managed by UNHCR, which can be contacted [here](#). This scheme is only available for VPR Syrians. VPR Syrians can also avail of the other family reunion routes.

Preparing for your family's arrival

Make sure you prepare for your family's arrival. You should notify **Housing Executive** (if you are living in Housing Executive accommodation), **Red Cross** for assistance with logistics on arrival and emergency support and **Extern** for assistance with integration.

Ideally, plans should be made in advance to avoid a crisis situation and to ensure that family members are promptly accommodated on arrival.

Accommodation is the immediate priority and any refugee living in NIHE accommodation must notify the agency in advance. Family members are usually entitled to benefits. This can be a complex process due to lack of National Insurance Number and (sometimes) lack of documentation. Long delays regularly occur, often in respect of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Law Centre Social Security Advice line can help in such cases.

2.5 Travelling to other countries

Now that you have refugee status, you are free to live anywhere in the United Kingdom. You do not have to stay in Belfast. You might also want to travel to another country to visit, work or live long term. It is very important that you check the entry/visa requirements of the country you are travelling to before making any travel arrangements. You might need:

- A Travel Document to allow you to travel by plane or ferry;
- a visa to allow you to enter and stay in another country.

Refugees wishing to apply for British citizenship should be aware of the residency requirements. Generally, a person must not be outside of the UK for more than 450 days in the five years preceding the citizenship application; and not more than 90 days in the twelve months preceding the application.

I want to visit family in my country of origin

If you are a refugee, it is very important to know that your refugee status can be revoked (taken away) if you return to your country of origin.

If you have another type of status, seek immigration advice to check any restrictions on returning to your home country.

Applying for a Travel Document

If you do not have a valid national passport, you may need to apply for a Refugee Travel Document.

There is a fee for this application and a professional person must verify the applicant's photographs. It is recommended that the refugee asks an immigration adviser to check the application.

Be aware that not all countries accept a Travel Document. Check the Home Office website or seek immigration advice before travelling.

Applying for a visa

It is likely that you will need a visa to enter another country. To find out, check with the Embassy of the country you are travelling to.

A refugee's partner, spouse or dependent child who is a European Union (EU) national and 'exercising treaty rights' is entitled to be accompanied by non-European family members under the 'free movement' principle. This allows nationals of the EU and their family members to move freely between EU countries without having to comply with national immigration laws. To benefit from free movement, the EU national must be 'exercising treaty rights', for example working, job seeking, self-employed (there are other categories).

The rules on free movement can be complicated. Further, free movement is likely to be restricted, if not halted, when the UK leaves EU through Brexit. It is strongly recommended that the refugee obtains immigration advice **before** travelling so as to protect the non-European family member.

Transferring refugee status to another country

Your refugee status is not automatically recognised by any other country. However, it is sometimes possible to transfer your refugee status to another European country, which allows you to live and work there as a refugee.

The Home Office withdrew its policy on Transferring Refugee Status in 2013 for review. In the interim, it is determining cases within the terms of the European Agreement on the Transfer of Responsibility for Refugees (1980), to which it is a signatory.

The rules are complicated and the circumstances in which a person can transfer her status are very limited. The refugee should get immigration advice **before making any travel arrangements**.

2.6 Biometric Residence Permit and extending permission to be in the UK

The information on your Biometric Residence Permit card must be kept up to date.

You must notify the Home Office of any change in circumstances – for example a change of name, gender, nationality or a significant change of appearance – within three months.

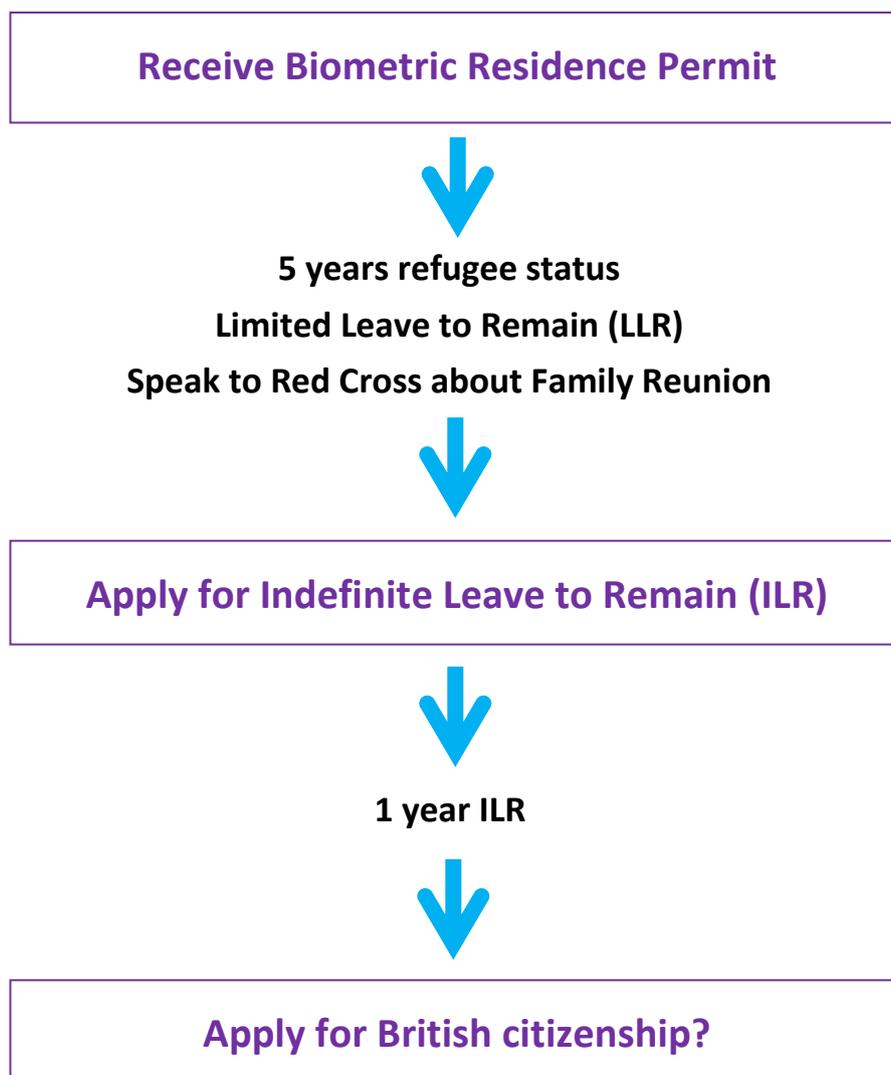
Lost or stolen cards must be reported immediately to the police and the Home Office. A refugee must apply for a replacement card within three months (or within one month if the refugee is outside of the UK). If the person does not apply promptly, she can be fined £1000.

To apply for a replacement card, use application form **BRP (RC)** on the [Home Office website](#). A fee applies.

Once I have refugee status, can I stay in the UK forever?

Your Biometric Residence Permit is only valid for a certain amount of time (usually five years). Make sure you know when your permit expires and that you apply for further leave to remain or settlement **before** your leave expires. If you do not extend your leave or obtain settlement, you risk becoming an 'over-stayer' and could be detained and removed from the UK.

Extending permission to stay in the UK



2.7 Applying for settlement

After five years of refugee status, you are entitled to apply for settlement (also known as Indefinite Leave to Remain 'ILR'). This application is free for refugees and persons with Humanitarian Protection.

This permits you to stay in the UK on a permanent basis.

The application for Indefinite Leave to Remain should be made during the 28 day period before existing leave expires. All dependents should be included on the application form. It is important not to apply too early as this can result in the application being returned.

Given the importance of this application, it is recommended to get help from an immigration adviser. A solicitor will charge. A voluntary or community organisation accredited by OISC to give immigration advice may be able to help for free. The current form is **SET (Protection route)** and is available on the Home Office website.

Only people with refugee status or Humanitarian Protection are exempt from the fee. People with Discretionary Leave to Remain should seek immigration advice.

It is recommended that anyone applying for settlement:

- makes a copy of the application form and associated documents;
- sends the application by registered post.

There is also a route through European law for family members of EEA nationals to obtain permanent residence in the UK after five years. This process is likely to change following Brexit. Seek advice.

2.8 Applying for British citizenship

After one year of Indefinite Leave to Remain, you may be entitled to apply for British citizenship.

The application is very expensive and it is recommended that you obtain immigration advice to make sure you have completed the forms correctly as fees may not be returned.

The requirements for British citizenship change frequently. For example, applicants must meet residency conditions and pass the Life in the UK and English language tests. The applicant must also be of 'good character'; anyone with a criminal record should check to see whether they qualify.

All applicants must pay considerable fees (the total cost of the application and tests is approaching £1,500 per adult; fees are slightly lower for children).

Note that incomplete application forms are not accepted and the fee will not be returned.

2.9 Applying for Irish citizenship

If you have an Irish child or an Irish partner/spouse, you may be entitled to apply for Irish citizenship.

There are residency requirements, a 'good character' condition and other requirements for Irish citizenship. The application fee is relatively low (€ 175 as of March 2017) and can be waived in some instances. Contact: Immigrant Council of Ireland www.immigrantcouncil.ie ☎ 00353 1674 0200

3. INTEGRATION

The Northern Ireland Executive is keen to ensure that refugees can build a new life and realise their full potential in Northern Ireland .

3.1 Orientation

There are a couple of orientation projects taking place around Belfast, which help newcomers navigate the city and better understand what services are available. Orientation also helps newcomers understand their responsibilities – this is important because laws in Northern Ireland might be different to those in the refugee’s home country. Orientation is especially useful for newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees arriving through refugee family reunion.

Contact [BURC](#) or Red Cross for more details.

3.2 Volunteering

Volunteering, which is available to everyone regardless of immigration status, is an excellent way to get to know other people, make a contribution, maintain and develop new skills, obtain experience, etc. Volunteering is widely recognised across society including employers and so can be an asset for jobseekers.

There many volunteering opportunities available. [Volunteer Now](#) can help prospective volunteers find a suitable placement:

Volunteering can affect benefit entitlement. See benefit section

3.3 Meeting people

There are many initiatives available free of charge for people wishing to make connections in their local area. Local community centres, women’s centres, places of worship, etc. are a good place to find out what is available. Also see:

- South Belfast: [Belfast Friendship Club](#) and [International Meeting Point](#)
- [East Belfast Friendship Club](#) at Globe Café
- [North Belfast Friendship Club](#) at R City Centre

4. TYPES OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

Appendix 2: Types of immigration status compares three different types of immigration status and the various entitlements afforded by each: asylum seeker status, refugee status and humanitarian protection status.

Discretionary Leave to Remain (often issued to unaccompanied minors as well as non-asylum exceptional case) is more complicated as entitlements can vary.

5. USEFUL CONTACTS

There is a map of Belfast city centre after the list of contacts. Look out for numbers like this (1) beside organisations' addresses. The numbers on the map tell you how to get there.

Emergency / help in a crisis

Emergency services

Emergency call for police, fire or ambulance ☎️ 999

Non-emergency police ☎️ 101

Health

For emergency health treatment, go to an Emergency Department

For a doctor, call the [GP Out-of-Hours](#) (nights and weekends) Service:

☎️ 028 9079 6220 (in South and East Belfast)

☎️ 028 9074 4447 (in North and West Belfast)

Mental health – Regional Emergency Social Work Service. Out-of-hours service (nights and weekends): ☎️ 028 9504 9999

Dental health (relief of dental pain clinic) ☎️ 028 9063 8486

Well-being and safety

Domestic violence – [Women's Aid domestic and sexual violence helpline](#): ☎️ 0808 802 1414

Depressed, suicidal

[Samaritans](#) ☎️ 116 123

[Lifeline](#) ☎️ 0808 808 8000

Help if you are homeless or in need of emergency practical support

(1) NIHE Homeless Services Unit (HSU). 32-36 Great Victoria Street. During office hours ☎️ 03448 920 900. Out-of-hours service run by Regional Emergency Social Work Service: ☎️ 028 9504 9999

Belfast Social Services Gateway Team. During office hours: ☎️ 028 9050 7000

Out-of-hours service (nights and weekends): ☎️ 028 9504 9999

(2) [Extern Refugee Floating Support Team](#). 1st and 4th floors, Norwich Union House, Fountain Street, Belfast, BT1 5EA ☎️ 028 9027 8424

(3) [Homeplus](#). 113 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP. ☎️ 028 9031 1836

(4) [Hosford House](#). 239 Newtownards Road, Belfast. ☎️ 028 9046 3482

(5) [International Meeting Point](#) 133A Lisburn Road, Belfast. ☎️ 079 6466 3916

St Vincent de Paul. Groups (known as 'conferences') exist throughout Northern Ireland. See [here](#) or contact ☎️ 028 9035 1561

[Simon Community](#). ☎️ 0800 171 2222

(6) [Storehouse](#). 17 Castle Arcade, Belfast BT1 5DG. ☎️ 028 9023 6333

[British Red Cross](#). Same address as (9), 1-5 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT71JG. ☎️ 028 9073 5350

- (7) [Belfast Islamic Centre](#). 38 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6DN. ☎ 028 9066 4465. Advice on housing, provide information on available health services, schools, education and help to integrate into the wider society

Refugee support

- (8) [Chinese Welfare Association](#). 1 Stranmillis Embankment, Belfast BT7 1GB, ☎ 028 9028 8277
- (9) [Horn of Africa People's Aid](#), 1-5 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT71JG. ☎ 028 9043 6445
- (10) [Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#) (NICRAS)
143a University Street, BT7 1HP. ☎ 028 9024 6699.

Getting a biometric card

- (11) Belfast Main Post Office, Bridge Street, Belfast BT1 1LS
Collect at: Drumkeen House, 1 Drumkeen Complex, Upper Galwally, Belfast BT8 6TB

NASS support for asylum seekers

- (12) [Bryson Intercultural](#), Bryson House, 28 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7FE. ☎ 028 9032 5835

Getting a national insurance number or claiming benefits

- (13) Jobs and Benefits Office Conor Building, 107 Great Victoria Street, BT2 7AG. ☎ 028 9013 8286 for a national insurance number, ☎ 0800 022 4250 for benefits.
- (14) Disability and Carers Service, Castle Court, Belfast BT1 1DF. ☎ 028 9049 0059

Advice

- [Migrant Centre NI](#). Provides bilingual service to people who have been victims of racist hate crime. ☎ 07827 299 347.
- (16) [Citizens Advice Belfast Central CAB](#). Provides advice on housing, benefits, employment, immigration, money advice etc. Merrion Business Centre, 58 Howard Street, BT1 6PJ. ☎ 03001 233 233
- (17) [NIACRO STEM project](#). Provides advice to tenants/prospective tenants from minority ethnic background at risk of race hate crime or intimidation. 4 Amelia Street, Belfast. ☎ 028 9032 0157

Independent advice centres. Provides advice on housing, benefits, employment, money advice. Get the address of your local independent advice centre from [Advice NI](#)

- (18) [Law Centre \(NI\)](#) Provides legal advice and representation on social security, employment and forced labour and community care. By appointment only: Middleton Building, 10-12 High Street, BT12BA. ☎ 028 9024 4401, 9.30am to 1pm.
- (19) LGBT Centre. Provides advice on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered rights, 9-13 Waring Street, Belfast BT1 2DX ☎ 028 90319030. In these offices you can find [Here NI](#), ☎ 028 9024 9452 and [Rainbow Project](#), ☎ 028 9031 9030

Local community centres and women's centres can also be a good source of support and advice.

Find your local community centre [here](#)
and your local women's centre [here](#)

Housing

[NI Housing Executive](#) ☎03448 920 900.

(20) [Housing Rights](#), Middleton Buildings, 10-12 High Street, BT1 2BA. ☎028 9024 5640

Looking for work

www.jobcentreonline.com or visit your local Jobs and Benefits Office

(21) [Careers Resource Centre](#), 56 Ann Street, Belfast BT1 4EG. ☎0300 200 7820

(22) [Gems NI](#) ASCOT House, 24-31 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DB. ☎028 9033 2313

(23) Getting your qualifications recognized – [European Employment Services \(EURES\)](#). 55-66 Upper Queen's Street, Belfast, BT16FD. ☎028 90252141

Immigration information

Independent immigration advice. Contact the [Law Society NI](#) to find an immigration solicitor. STEP NI can provide immigration advice in all areas but has limited capacity ☎028 8775 0211. Some Citizens Advice Bureaux can provide basic immigration advice.

Immigration advice related to the Republic of Ireland. [Immigrant Council of Ireland](#):
☎00353 1674 0200 or [Free Legal Advice Centre](#) ☎00353 1890 350 250

Finding a school

For information on schools and colleges and on how to enrol, contact:

(24) [Education Authority](#) – Intercultural Education Service . 40 Academy Street, BT1 2NQ. ☎028 9448 2210

Registering with a doctor (GP) / Health

For details of your nearest GP, dentist or other health service: <http://servicefinder.hscni.net>

(25) [Positive Life](#). Provides advice and support for people living with HIV and their families.
20 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast, BT96FN ☎0800 137 437

Learning English

For details of English classes available in NI, see [ESOL NI](#) or contact: Ligia Parizzi ☎028 9026 5233 lparizzi@belfastmet.ac.uk

(26) [Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre \(BURC\)](#) provides free English classes and orientation. 45-47 Donegal Street, Belfast, BT12FG ☎028 9096 1111

Meeting people

- (27) [Belfast Friendship Club](#) meets Thursday 7-9 pm at Common Grounds Cafe, 22-24 University Avenue, BT7 1GY
- (28) [International Meeting Point](#) . Daily drop in at 133A Lisburn Road. ☎ 078 5065 1137 or 079 6466 3916
- (29) [East Belfast Friendship Club](#) Globe Café meets Tuesdays 7.30pm – 9.30pm Eastside Visitor Centre
- (30) [North Belfast Friendship Club](#) meets Tuesdays 6-8pm at R-City Café, 432 Crumlin Road

Volunteering

- (31) [Volunteer Now](#), 34 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT27DB. ☎ 028 9023 2020

Finding a place of worship

[NI Inter-Faith Forum](#).
[Irish Council of Churches](#)
[Humanist Association of Northern Ireland](#) ☎ 028 9145 0990

Information about a driving licence

Driver & Vehicle Agency. ☎ 0300 200 7861. Check NI Direct website for details

Registering to vote

- (32) [Electoral Office](#) for Northern Ireland
 2nd Floor, St Anne's House, 15 Church Street, BT1 1ER ☎ 0800 432 0712

Useful guides

[Belfast City Council](#) New to Belfast? A guide to support services

Housing Executive, 'NI Community Welcome Pack' (2013). This pack gives useful information about getting settled in Northern Ireland including a useful addresses and contact details:

www.nihe.gov.uk/index/community/community_welcome_pack.htm

The [NI Housing Executive](#) has also published a series of Local Services Directories for different parts of Belfast and other cities. The Directories including details of all the local schools, libraries, etc.

NICRAS Refugees and Asylum Seekers in NI: An Essential Guide

Law Centre (NI) guides to [migrant workers' rights](#) (2011).

Law Centre (NI) [Rights Guide](#). Detailed information on benefits, tax credits, employment rights, community care and mental health law, and on family aspects of immigration:

[NI Direct](#), the website of the Northern Ireland government

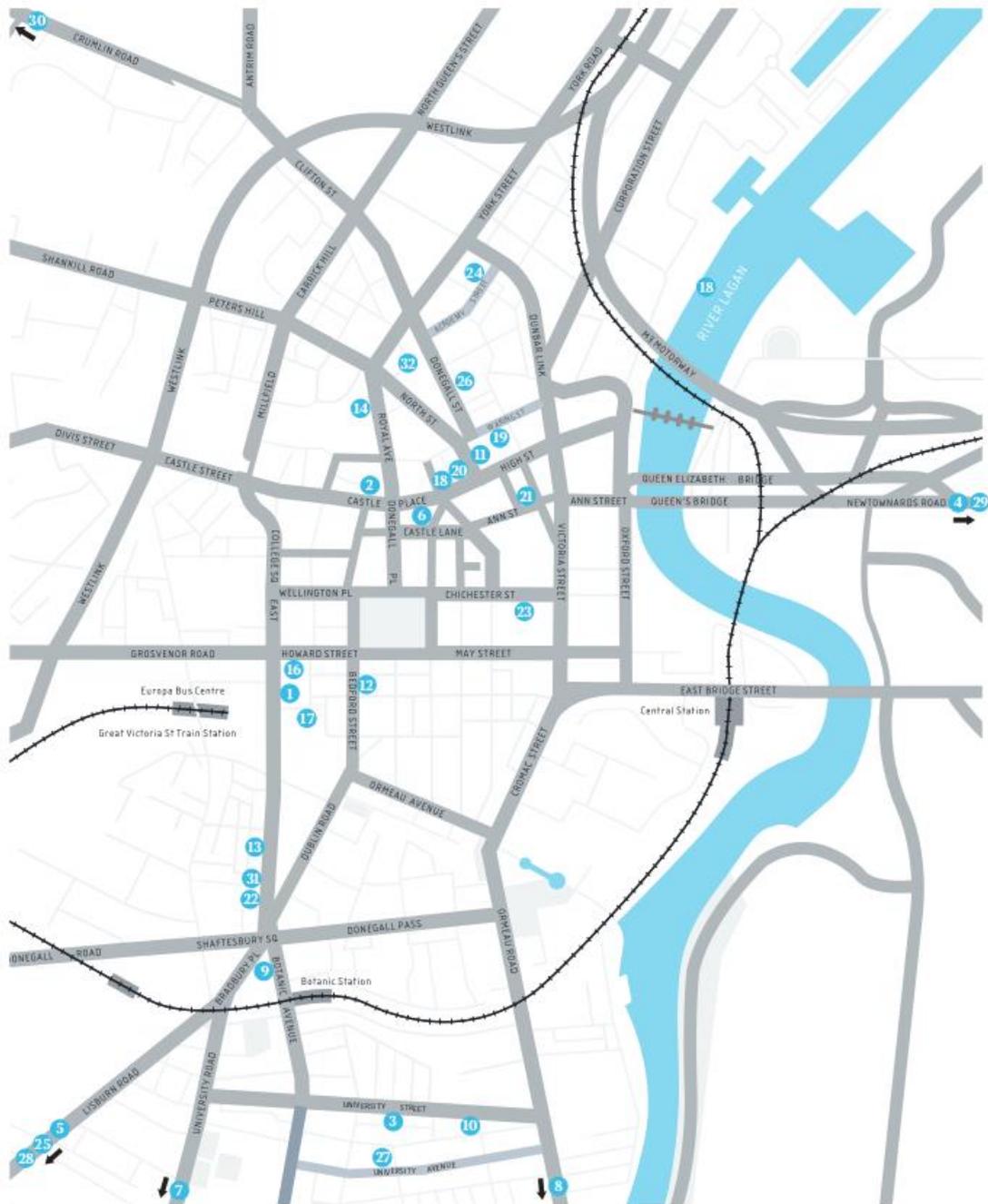
[Citizens Advice guide](#). Information on benefits and welfare rights:

[EMBRACE NI](#) has produced a range of information leaflets and publications on migration in Northern Ireland

MAP

WHERE DO I FIND IT?

Look out for the numbers in 'Useful contacts' pages. This map tells you where in Belfast you can find most of the organisations that you need.



APPENDIX 1: CHARITABLE SUPPORT

Organisation / contact details	What kind of support?	Who is for?	When is the support available?	How long is it available?	Can a refugee access it directly or through referral
British Red Cross Botanic House 1-5 Botanic Avenue Belfast, BT71JG ☎028 9073 5350	Cash, Vouchers, Clothing, Other support: Service for vulnerable new mothers or those in later stages of pregnancy. Limited ability to provide short term accommodation in hostel depending on need. Welcome to Belfast Guides in Arabic, Somali and English. International family tracing service, family reunion service and volunteer opportunities	Vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers	Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 10am – 4pm	Depending on need: usually £10 per week for 4 weeks	Directly or on referral
Belfast City Mission 3 Glengall Street Belfast BT12 5AB ☎028 9032 0557	Various support Provides services including outreach, homework clubs, mother and toddler groups, English classes, links with foodbanks. Also religious services e.g. bible study and prayer fellowships	All vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers	Week-days	Varies	Directly
Belfast Islamic Centre 38 Wellington Park Belfast BT96DN Tel: 028 9066 4465	Advice on housing, provide information on available health services, schools, education, integration, etc. Financial support where necessary	Muslim Community and family members	Week-days	Varies	Directly
Extern Refugee Floating Support Team 9-11 Brunswick Street Belfast, ☎028 9033 0433 Kim McGarry (manager)	Assistance with housing/ homelessness issues Practical support including food vouchers Advice, guidance and information. Referral to other services. Advocating on service users behalf. Basic resettlement packs Extern Works Training	People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in the Belfast area and those who need support in their own tenancy	Monday to Friday 9 – 5pm. Clinic on Mondays	Up to 2 years	Referral by self or any agency. Can be made in person at office, by phone or by referral form.
Homeplus 113 University Street Belfast, BT71HP Ryan Doherty (manager) ☎077 7381 0665 ☎028 9031 1836	Meals Clothing Other support: Shower and washing facilities, TV room, internet access. Haircuts once a week, massage treatments once a month. General practical advice, help with form filling, finding jobs and accommodation, emotional support etc.	Aged over 18 Must be homeless	Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday from 11.30 to 2pm.	No time limit	Directly or on referral

<p>Hosford House Skainos, 239 Newtownards Rd, Belfast, BT41AF</p> <p>Contact Aidan Byrne (manager) or Andrea Doonan (project assistant) ☎ 028 9046 3482</p>	<p>Somewhere to sleep: 26 bed hostel (including move-on apartments) One to one support service for tenants to help people keep their home and avoid homelessness</p> <p>Community projects: Literacy, counselling service, history, gardening, cookery, football, art and crafts</p>	<p>Hostel for single people experiencing homelessness Tenancy Support: for people at risk of homelessness in Belfast area</p>	<p>Hostel: 24 hour support. Tenancy Support Service: 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday</p>	<p>Hostel: available 1 night up to 2 years Tenancy Support: up to 2 years</p>	<p>Directly: by phone (028) 9046 3482 or in person</p>
<p>International Meeting Point 113A Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT97AG</p> <p>Keith Preston ☎ 07850651137 Michael Sentence ☎ 07964663916</p>	<p>Food parcels, meals, clothing, English classes, free internet</p>	<p>No exclusions</p>	<p>Monday-Thursday 11am – 3pm</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Directly</p>
<p>NICRAS 143 University Street Belfast BT71HP</p> <p>☎ 028 9024 6699</p>	<p>Food parcels, somewhere to sleep, cash, other support including: assistance/referral for fuel, baby clothing and furniture/kitchen appliances</p>	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees waiting for benefits</p>	<p>Food: Tuesday or Thursday. Emergency support Monday – Friday</p>	<p>Benefits waiting for benefits: ongoing support for 4 week periods. Somewhere to sleep: 1 or 2 nights max when no other options are available</p>	<p>Directly or on referral</p>
<p>St Vincent de Paul Ring head office: ☎ 028 9035 1561</p>	<p>Food parcels, clothing and furniture /kitchen appliances</p>				<p>Directly or on referral from NICRAS. People are put in contact with their local lead volunteer who does a needs assessment.</p>
<p>Simon Community Central Access Point ☎ 0800 171 2222</p>	<p>Somewhere to sleep – subject to availability. Support to access other sources of help</p>	<p>24 hours a day</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>Contact freephone number</p>	
<p>Storehouse 17 Castle Arcade Belfast BT1 5DG ☎ 02890236333</p>	<p>Can provide food parcels and furniture and clothing at Storehouse discretion</p>	<p>Anyone experiencing financial poverty</p>	<p>Mon: 10am – 12.30pm Wed: 1 – 3.30pm Fri: 6 – 7.30pm</p>	<p>Food parcels – 6 parcels in a 6 month period.</p>	<p>Referral only</p>

STEM (NIACRO) Project ☎028 9032 0157	advice and support	Anyone from ethnic minority background with tenancy / offer of tenancy at risk of intimidation	Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm	According to need	Directly or on referral
South Belfast Food-bank C/O City Church University Ave Belfast, BT7 1GY ☎07743332489	Food parcels Signposting to relevant agencies for further help	Anyone experiencing food poverty	Contact foodbank to check locations	3 parcels in a 6 month period but may be able to meet additional demands	Clients need a voucher from a referral agency to access food-bank

APPENDIX 2: TYPES OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

4.1 Immigration status table

Immigration status	Asylum seeker	Refugee Status	Humanitarian Protection
Permission to work	X	✓	✓
Free healthcare ¹	✓	✓	✓
Education 0-16 years	✓	✓	✓
Free ESOL ²	✓	✓	✓
Free Essential Skills ³	✓	✓	✓
Social Security benefits	X	✓	✓
Register to vote	Commonwealth nationals only	Commonwealth nationals only	Commonwealth nationals only
Eligible to apply for UK Travel Document ⁴	X	(Refugee Convention) Travel Document	Certificate of Travel
Family reunion	X	Limited ⁵	Limited ⁶
Return to country of origin?	X	X ⁷	✓ ⁸

¹ Free healthcare includes free primary and secondary healthcare

² Free ESOL classes are available at FE colleges. See section on ESOL in guide in Chapter 3.

³ Essential Skills include English, Maths and ICT and are usually provided at FE colleges free of charge

⁴ A UK Travel Document is useful for persons who do not have a valid passport. Note that a Travel Document is not a visa and does not permit entry into another county.

⁵ In general, family reunion rights are restricted to spouse/partner and dependent children < 18 years. However, extended family members can be admitted through family reunion in exceptional/compelling circumstances. Seek advice.

⁶ See footnote 5

⁷ A person's refugee status can be revoked if s/he returns to their country of origin.

⁸ Humanitarian Protection permits a person to visit their country of origin without the risk of their status being revoked, however, it is advisable to check other restrictions (e.g. length of time outside of the UK)