



living in belfast

INTEGRATION GUIDE

A wide range of information on services
is available at:

www.nidirect.gov.uk

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Chapter 1

living in belfast

Access to services including:

- Health
- Housing
- Education
- Banking
- Transport
- Leisure
- Recycling and Community safety
- Individual rights
- Voting

Health

1. NHS service

Most NHS services are free to most people living here. There are some exceptions including;

- temporary visitors
- students resident for less than 6 months
- those who entered UK for medical treatment

All accident and emergency services are free to everyone. Depending on where you are from you may need to pay for your prescription.

2. Get a medical card

You will need a Medical card to register with a family doctor or a dentist. Medical cards are free. To get a Medical card, you need to fill in the HS22X form, which can be obtained from any Health Centre or from the Business Service Organisation - **www.hsc.business.hscni.net**. You should fill it in and take it to register with a doctor.

3. Register with a doctor

A list of GP's (General Practitioner-family doctor) is available from Citizens Advice Bureau, Central Service Agency and the General Medical Council. You must register to use a GP. You will need to find a GP who will accept you as a patient. The GP service is free to all residents. You can choose a female GP if you wish. If the GP accepts you, he/she will sign your HS22X form and you will receive your medical card. You will need to bring your passport, visa and ID documents as you have to prove you are entitled to live in the UK. Register with a GP as soon as possible, don't wait until you are ill.

4. When you need to see your GP

In most cases, you need to make an appointment to see your GP. Sometimes you will need to wait for a few days before you can see the doctor. If you need immediate treatment ask for an urgent appointment. All GP's have an emergency number should you need to see them outside normal hours. Generally doctors only visit patients at home who are seriously

ill. If you still feel you are dealing with an emergency you can visit the Accident & Emergency Unit at your nearest hospital.

5. Pharmacy services

Many medicines can only be prescribed by a doctor. If you need any medicine, your doctor will give you a prescription, giving you permission to get the medicine. **From 1st April 2010, the charges are free for everyone.**

6. Dentist

You must have a medical card to be able to register with a dentist.

Emergency dental treatment

If you experience sudden toothache, you can attend the dental clinic in Belfast City Hospital. This operates as an accident and emergency dental facility, treating pain or other oral trauma.

Patients are seen according to the urgency of dental symptoms. Long waiting times are likely but you will be seen and treated by a dentist.

Find out more about emergency dental clinics available in the evening and at weekends.

**[www.belfastcityonline.net/
emergencydentaltreatment](http://www.belfastcityonline.net/emergencydentaltreatment)**

7. Optician service

If you need to have your eyes tested contact a registered optician. You may also get help with paying for eye tests or with the cost of glasses.

8. Family planning services

If you need any advice on planned or unplanned pregnancy, contraception or sexual health, you can contact your GP or the Family Planning Association (FPA). The service is free and confidential. To find out where your nearest FPA is **Tel: 0845 1228687**.

9. If you cannot speak English?

You can ask for an interpreter when accessing health services. Your GP or any other health service provider has to arrange an interpreter if you need one. The Registered Interpreting service is free and confidential. If you are refused an interpreter contact the Equality Commission NI or the Law Centre NI.

10. Roles within the health service - What they do?

Midwife - Specially trained nurse to care for women and babies during pregnancy, labour and in the early days after the baby is born.

Health visitor - Every family with children under five has a named health visitor. Their role is to offer support and encouragement to families through the early years from pregnancy and birth to primary school and beyond.

District nurse - They visit people in their own homes or in residential care homes, providing care for patients and supporting family members.

11. Help with NHS charges

People who have to pay NHS charges may be able to get help under the NHS Low Income Scheme. The amount of help is based on a comparison between a person's income and requirements at the time that a claim is made or a charge was paid. To make a low-income claim, you will need to fill in the HC1 form which you can get from your doctor's surgery.

12. Emergency Services

An emergency is a serious or life threatening situation which may include loss of consciousness, severe chest pain or loss of blood. Call **999** from any telephone or **112** from your mobile telephone to contact the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI), NI Fire & Rescue Service, or an Ambulance in an emergency. Tell the operator which emergency service you need. The operator will then connect you to the emergency service who will ask you:-

Your name, the address or location and telephone number of where you are? What is happening? You may then be asked for further information.

You will need to reply to the operator and emergency services in English. Other emergency services such as the Coastguard, Mountain Rescue and Cave Rescue can also be contacted through the **999** number.

When a 999/112 non-English speaker is connected to the PSNI they will be placed on hold while the control room contact the Interpreter Service and during this short period the caller will hear "Please Hold" in 14 different languages. This is to prevent them from abandoning the 999 call and dialling again. As soon as the control room have an interpreter available the emergency call is brought off hold and all three parties can talk. The 999 services are for emergencies only. Misuse of the number could result in prosecution.

13. Non-Emergency Services

If you wish to contact the Police, NI Fire and Rescue Service, or need medical attention but your problem is not an emergency you can call your GP or the following numbers in Belfast.

NI Fire and Rescue Service Tel:- 028 9266 4221

Police Tel:- 0845 6008000

to contact your nearest station.

Information about the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) - The PSNI is committed to making Northern Ireland safer through progressive, professional policing. They aim to make their services accessible to the whole community. If you need any further information in your language please contact the PSNI.

The role of the police (PSNI) - in this country may be different from that in your own country. Their role is to uphold and enforce the law and to protect public. As a foreign national you have the same right to protection as a British national. The police have a responsibility for public safety and you should be confident in asking them for assistance

Contact PSNI - You can contact the Police Service by telephone, email, in writing and in person. If you do not speak English you will be transferred to an interpreter.

Reporting race hate crime

The PSNI has appointed **Minority Liaison Officers** in each area to respond to the increase in racist incidents and have published *Hate Crime, Racial Incidents: Protecting your Rights*. This is available in Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese.

Freephone: 0800 0132290

You can report a hate crime online at
www.urzone.com/hatecrime/hatecrime

but in an emergency you should dial **999**, and for non-emergency calls phone **0845 6008000**. The **Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)** has an Online Incident Report Form.

www.nicem.org.uk/services/support-to-victims-of-racial-harassment-and-discrimination/report-an-incident

Bilingual Community Safety Advocacy Scheme

To support minority ethnic communities in Belfast to reduce the fear of crime and improve communication between government services to help you live safely.

Chinese Welfare Association Bilingual Community
Safety Advocate Telephone: **07888 398630**

Polish Association Bilingual Community Safety
Advocate Telephone: **07916 574225**

South Belfast Partnership Board Race Relations Co-
ordinator Telephone **028 9024 4070**

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
encourages reporting to their district offices.

The PSNI Non-emergency and general enquiries
telephone number **0845 6008000**.

These services are not monitored 24 hours a day
and are not suitable for reporting an emergency

For more information about the PSNI, look at their
website - **www.psni.police.uk**. Or write to:

PSNI, Police Headquarters, Brooklyn, 65 Knock
Road, Belfast BT5 6LE.

Crimestoppers - 0800 555111

14. Parental Responsibilities

What are my parental responsibilities?

- In the UK, parents are responsible for the care and control of their children.

Parents may discipline their children but if this discipline is too severe, they may be prosecuted for assault, or the child may be taken into the care of the local authority

- It is difficult to be exact about the age when children are considered mature enough to be left unattended or given responsibility for looking after younger children. As a guide you should make arrangements for someone, normally over 16, to supervise your children if they are under 13 years of age
- According to the Children's Act (law), the local authority (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust) has a responsibility (a duty of care) to children. Hitting, starving or neglecting children and preventing them from going to school are seen as forms of abuse and the Local Authority will investigate any reports

15. How do I register the birth of a baby?

Belfast City Council website provides information on:-

- i. when to register the baby's birth
 - ii. where to register the baby's birth
 - iii. who can register the baby's birth and
 - iv. what information is needed by the Registrar
-
- A baby's birth must be registered within 42 days (6 weeks) of the date of birth
 - The birth should be registered in the district in which the baby was born. If the baby is no longer in the district where they were born, a declaration can be made at the nearest Registrar Office
 - Contact the Registrar Office to arrange a 20 to 30 minute appointment with the Registrar
 - It is usual for the mother to register the birth. If the mother and father were married at the time of the birth, then the father may register the birth without the mother present

If the parents were not married at the time of the birth:-

- The mother is not obliged to have the father's details included on the birth certificate. It may be possible for the birth to be re-registered at a later date if necessary
- The father's details can only be entered if the parents attend the registration together
- Friends or relatives cannot register the birth on behalf of the parents
- If English is not the first language of the parent(s) and they would like someone to help with the registration, they should ask a friend or relative to come with them to the Register Office. The Registrar will enter the details onto the computer and then onto the register of births. The parents need to check this information carefully and sign that it is correct. It may be helpful to bring the baby's and parents' passports and the birth certificates of any previous children. A short birth certificate will be issued free of charge. (Further copies at registration will cost £3.50 or £5.00 at a later

date). The Registrar will also supply a form for you to fill in and give to your GP.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/births/index

16. Childcare provision

NICMA the Northern Ireland Childminding Association, works to support and develop registered home-based childcare. A voluntary organisation with charitable status, NICMA provides a range of services to support childminders, parents and children. **www.nicma.org**

The Early Years Teams

The two Early teams within the Belfast Trust have the responsibility for registering and inspecting all day care provision for children aged 0-12 years. You can obtain a list of your local childminders and childcare facilities from the team. **www.belfasttrust.hscni.net**

Gateway Services / Child Protection

If you are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person contact the Gateway Service. Anyone can contact this service directly in one of the following ways:

By phone:

During office hours (9:00am-5:00pm) contact Gateway on **028 9050 7000**

At all other times (all through the night, at weekends and over Bank Holidays) contact the out-of-hours Emergency Service on **028 9056 5444**

In person:

Speak to a Duty Social Worker at
414 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 3HY

Barnardo's NI - works for children first and last. For over 100 years they have helped improve the lives and opportunities of tens of thousands of children in communities across Northern Ireland.

www.barnardos.org.uk/northernireland

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) - NICCY's job is to promote and safeguard the rights and best interests of children and young people. **www.niccy.org**

Sure Start programmes have been designed specifically to reflect and respond to local needs. For that reason, each Sure Start programme is unique in terms of the services it provides and the manner in which it provides them. There are, however, core elements, which must feature in any Sure Start programme. These core elements include:

- Outreach and home visiting services, to make contact as early as possible in the child's life and draw families into using other services
- Family support, including befriending, social support and parenting information, both group and home-based
- Good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children, both group and home-based primary and community healthcare and advice
- Support for all children in the community, recognising their differing needs

While Sure Start does not itself provide specialist services, they need to ensure that their services are accessible to all families.

South Belfast Sure Start

9 Lower Crescent, Belfast. BT7 1NR

Tel: 028 9094 2525

East Belfast Sure Start

122 Albertbridge Road, Belfast BT5 4GS

Tel: 028 9096 3399

Greater Shankill Sure Start

60 Shankill Road, Belfast BT13 2BB

Tel: 028 9087 4000

Glenbrook Sure Start

Wolfhill Centre 148 Legoneil Road, Belfast BT14 8DT

Tel: 028 9039 1225

Clan Mór

Sure Start, 106 Albert St., Belfast BT12 4HL

Tel: 028 9032 7755

Smile Sure Start

168-170 Duncairn, Belfast BT15 2GN

Tel: 028 9075 6654

Saol Úr Sure Start

Top of the Rock, 689 Springfield Road,
Belfast BT12 7FP

Tel: 028 9024 0363

Beechmount Sure Start

Blackie River Centre,
43 Beechmount Pass, Belfast BT12 7NW

Tel: 028 9031 9634

There may be more Sure Starts in your local area so ask your neighbours or local community organisations.

If you're a victim of domestic abuse and you're worried about what will happen if you report it to the police, you should call ChildLine on Freephone **0800 1111**. They'll be able to let you know what will happen if you tell someone about your situation and help you work out what to do next.

ChildLine is open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Calls to ChildLine are free and they'll never appear on your phone bill. You may also be able to find useful information on their website.

www.childline.org.uk

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) protects children across the UK. They provide a wide range of services for both adults and children.

www.nspcc.org.uk

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) operates a helpline that offers confidential advice for people who are worried about cases of possible child abuse.

The NSPCC cannot investigate suspected child abuse cases, but they will be able to provide you with the contact details of the relevant local social services teams. The number is **0808 800 5000** and it's open 24 hours a day.

Housing

Housing can be privately owned, privately rented or rented from a social landlord such as the Housing Executive or a Housing Association. You can get information and advice on different types of private rented accommodation, housing rights and rules, and tenant and landlord responsibilities from the Law Centre Guide, Housing Rights Service or the Housing Executive.

www.lawcentreni.org

www.housingrights.org.uk

www.nihe.gov.uk

1. Private accommodation, renting from the private landlord:

In Northern Ireland you can rent a house, apartment, flat, bedsit or room. The cheapest option may be to share accommodation. This is when you rent a house from a private landlord and share the rent with other people. Housing in the city centre is usually more expensive, depending on the location.

Private rental accommodation can be found:

- In local papers
- Advertisements in local shop windows or on an advertisement board
- Letting/ Estate agents – Find in yellow pages Or on **www.yell.com**
- Advertised on the properties – some private landlords will put a sign in the window of the property that is available to rent
- If you are a student the Students Union will have information on property to rent. Each University will provide details of availability in their Halls of Residence. **www.nistudentpad.co.uk**

Tenancy agreement

At the beginning of a tenancy, there is a legal requirement for the tenant to be given a “Statement of Tenancy Terms” and a rent book. You will usually be asked to pay one month’s rent in advance and a deposit (usually one month’s rent). The deposit is required to cover damage to the property during the tenancy and will be returned if no damage has occurred.

Rent is usually paid monthly and may include electric, gas, rates, oil or these may be paid separately. Check with your landlord. Some landlords and Estate Agents may require guarantors. A guarantor is a person who signs an agreement to pay your rent in case you are unable to pay it yourself.

Ending a tenancy

You have the right to a minimum of 28 days written notice to end the tenancy. The Housing Rights helpline can provide you with advice and information.

Tel: 028 9024 5640.

2. Public Social Housing (Housing Executive or Housing Association Accommodation)

Social housing is accommodation provided to people in housing need. These houses are owned and managed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or Housing Associations. Not everyone is entitled to this housing.

Rent for these properties is usually less than you pay to private landlords. Due to the high demand, social housing is made available on a points system. For more details contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. **www.nihe.gov.uk**

Eligibility

To apply for social housing you must complete an application form, which you can get from any Housing Executive or Housing Association office.

General enquiries Tel: 0344 8920900

Housing Benefit Tel: 0344 8920902

3. Hostel Accommodation

Emergency accommodation can be provided by the Salvation Army, Simon Community, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or by contacting the Council for the Homeless for Northern Ireland.

Salvation Army Tel: 028 9067 5000

Simon Community Tel: 028 9023 2882

The Welcome Centre Tel: 028 9023 4387

For a full list of providers contact the Council for the Homeless. **Tel: 028 9031 7000 www.chni.org.uk**

Homeless?

Homelessness does not just describe people sleeping on the streets. It can happen to anyone, for any number of reasons. Even if you have a roof over your head you may still be homeless. If you have no home or are in danger of losing your home you should contact your local Housing Executive District Office or the Homelessness Services Unit. 32 -36 Great Victoria Street, Belfast. BT2 7BA. or telephone us on:

Main Tel: 0344 8920900

Out-of-hours Tel: 028 9056 5444

Housing Rights Service

provides specialist housing information in Northern Ireland. They aim to help people find the best possible solution to their housing problems by providing free, confidential advice and representation on a wide range of housing issues. **www.**

housingadviceNI.org is a website providing free,

reliable and practical information to the public on housing and homelessness issues. There is a section dedicated to the housing rights and concerns of migrant workers in Northern Ireland and information is available in a range of languages.

Support organisations

Northern Ireland Housing Executive - 32-36 Great Victoria Street, Belfast. BT2 7BA **www.nihe.gov.uk**

Housing Rights Service - advice on housing in Northern Ireland, please call **Tel: 028 9024 5640** Monday-Friday 9.30am to 1.30pm 4th Floor Middleton Buildings. 10-12 High Street, Belfast. BT12BA. **www.housingadviceni.org/migrant-workers**

Council for the Homeless for Northern Ireland - CHNI 4th Floor Andras House, 60 Great Victoria St, Belfast. BT2 7BB. **www.chni.org.uk**

Housing Benefit Tel: 0344 8920902

The Welcome organisation Homelessness and Support Service. Tel: 028 9024 0424
www.homelessbelfast.org

4. Private accommodation, buying your own property

An Estate Agent is a person who can advise you on property sales. Contact details can be found in local papers, the yellow pages or on the Internet.

It is advisable to secure a mortgage before you look for a property. Contact the Mortgage Advice Shop or your bank/ building society. If you want to become a homeowner you have the option of buying under Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association. You can buy part of the property and rent part.

Mortgage Advice Shop
www.themortgageshop.net

**Northern Ireland Co-ownership
Housing Association**
www.co-ownership.org

For Hostel information
www.yell.com

Education

- Nursery
- Primary and Secondary
- Further and Higher Education
- English classes

1. Nursery education

Provided on a full time and part-time status and is recommended for children from age 3 as preparation for Primary school.

Nursery schools - can be found on the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) website, local schools or through voluntary and community organisations.

Playgroups - provide part-time places. Places need to be applied for. Further information available from BELB. **www.belb.org.uk** Headquarters 40 Academy Street Belfast. BT1 2NQ. **Tel: 028 9056 4000.**

Reception classes - Some Primary Schools provide reception classes. These nursery classes are only for children who have reached their 4th birthday but are not at Primary School age.

2. Primary School

Primary School is **compulsory** for all children from age 4-5 to 11. You may be prosecuted if you have a child of that age who does not attend school.

Choosing a School and enrolment - Detailed information on the registration process can be found on the BELB website. You need to make a choice of three Schools on the application.

School Uniforms - Children in Primary and Secondary Schools in Belfast wear uniforms.

Some pupils qualify for uniform grants and free dinners, ask your school for more information.

3. Secondary Education

Secondary Education in Northern Ireland is for children aged between 11 and 16. Transfer tests are not provided by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) but by each School. When choosing a school and considering the best option for your child, get information and advice from their Primary School Principal. School prospectuses will be available free from Post-Primary Schools and contain detailed information about each school. Parents can choose at least 3 Schools. For further information go to DENI's website. **www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/6-admission-and-choice/6-transfer-procedure.htm**

Additional information can be found on the NI Direct website: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/education-and-learning**

4. Further and Higher Education

Further Education - In Belfast, Further Education is provided by Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) and a wide range of training providers. Details can be found in yellow pages. **www.yell.com**

Career Service for NI

Careers Advisers provide an all age advice and guidance service, to help young people and adults make informed choices about their future career paths. Belfast Careers Resource Centre. 56, Ann Street, Belfast. BT1 4EG. **Tel: 028 9072 8418**
www.careersserviceni.com

Higher education

Is provided by the 3 Universities in NI and a selection of courses are available in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College. As part of the entry requirement you may be required to complete an English Language Assessment.

Open University **www.open.ac.uk**

Queens University Belfast **www.qub.ac.uk**

University of Ulster **www.ulster.ac.uk**

Community Education

Community Education is available through a wide range of community centres and organisations.

For more information and contact details, **www.communityni.org/orgs**

5. English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)

A wide range of organisations provide classes and information can be obtained from the Education Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA). Training providers offer a wide range of ESOL classes at all levels. A full list can be got from EGSA. e.g. International house, Belfast Metropolitan College and a wide range of community organisations including GEMS NI.

Learning Language For Work - provided by GEMS NI, is an intensive English Language training programme designed to help you acquire the English Language Skills you need to work in Northern Ireland. The course lasts 12-weeks. If you would like more information then contact – GEMS NI on **Tel: 028 9033 2313**

International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS) is available through Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) and other training providers.

For more information:

www.yell.com

www.egsa.org.uk

www.ihbelfast.com

www.belfastmet.ac.uk

www.gemsni.org.uk

Banking

1. How do I open a bank account?

There are many banks in the UK and they offer different arrangements and levels of service. You should spend some time finding the bank which offers the best service for you. Ask friends and community members which banks they have found most helpful. When choosing a bank, you need to consider:-

- The services the bank will offer you and what charges it will make
- The documents that are required by the bank in order to open an account
- Many UK banks will ask to see an identification document and a document confirming your address in the UK (for example a contract for accommodation)
- If you experience problems opening a bank account contact the Citizens Advice Bureau (see page 62 for contact details)

2. What I will need to open an account?

Proof of Identity – An ID card such as passport, national ID issued in English and your native language or your driving licence.

Proof of address – This can be provided by a utility bill (gas, electricity, telephone bill etc) a letter or a contract from your landlord or any official mail with your name on it.

Proof of employment – A letter from your employer on company paper may also be required.

Transport

- Public transport
- Private hire taxis
- Driving in Northern Ireland

1. Public transport

How do I use the bus services?

Bus stops can be found on the roadside on all bus routes. Main bus stops will have a timetable. There are a number of different ticket types. Ask the driver about the cheapest ticket for your type of journey and pay the exact fare in cash if possible. Many buses have special areas for buggies and shopping trolleys. If the bus is very full you may have to stand/ or in extreme cases wait for the next bus. Press the bell once for the bus to stop. Check where the bus leaves from for your return journey. Further information can be found on **www.translink.co.uk**. Belfast is served by Translink's Metro service. You have a choice of tickets for the Metro service that

can be got from the Ticket Kiosk in **www.translink.co.uk**. For buses going to locations outside Belfast there are two main bus stations. **North and East** bound services from Belfast depart the **Laganside Buscentre** in Donegall Quay - **South and West** depart from the **Europa Buscentre** in Great Victoria Street. These include services to Belfast's two airports George Best Airport and Belfast International Airport.

How do I use the train services?

Buy your ticket before boarding the train from the main stations or on the train for smaller stations. If you use the train regularly you can buy weekly or monthly tickets online or at one of the main stations found at Botanic, Europa, Central or York Street. The **Translink website** is very useful in planning your journey. **www.translink.co.uk Tel: 028 90 66 66 30**

2. Taxis

You can hail a taxi in the street or order one by telephone. All taxis need to be registered and have an official badge displayed. **www.yell.com**.

3. Driving in Northern Ireland

How am I expected to drive in the UK?

If you wish to drive a car in the UK, you must be over 17 years of age and have a valid driving licence. When you are driving or are a passenger in a private vehicle in the UK, you are required by law to wear a seatbelt. Currently, children under the age of 12 years or 135cm in height must be secured into an approved child seat.

Every time you drive your car, make sure it is roadworthy and the essentials, such as brakes, all lights etc are fully functional.

It is against the law to use a mobile telephone whilst driving. There are serious penalties for doing so, you can receive a fine, points on your licence or could cause an accident.

Familiarise yourself with the 'Highway code'. This provides the rules for road users in the UK. Obtain a copy from Belfast Central Library or buy a copy in any good bookshop.

4. What driving licence do I need to drive in the UK?

Full information on valid driving licences and fees can be obtained by visiting the DVLNi

www.dvlni.gov.uk.

European Community/European Economic Area

Licences issued in the European Community and three other countries in the European Economic Area make up two groups that are treated equally. The full list of EC COUNTRIES are:-

Austria	Lithuania
Belgium	Luxembourg
Bulgaria	Malta
Czech Republic	Netherlands
Denmark	Poland
Estonia	Portugal
Finland	Republic of Cyprus
France	Romania
Germany	Slovenia
Greece	Slovakia
Hungary	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	United Kingdom
Latvia	

EEA COUNTRIES- All EC countries

Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

Visitors - If you hold a valid European Community licence and you are visiting Northern Ireland, you can drive any vehicle for as long as your licence remains valid. The appropriate full entitlement for the vehicle you wish to drive must be shown on your licence.

Residents - If you have a valid European Community licence, this will authorise you to drive in this country for the periods set out below. Alternatively, you can apply to exchange your licence for a Northern Ireland one providing you meet the specified conditions for exchange. Provided your licence remains valid you may drive in NI:

- Ordinary Licence Holders - Until aged 70 or for 3 years after becoming resident whichever is the longer period

- Vocational Licence Holders - **Until aged 45 or for 5 years after becoming resident** whichever is the longer period. If you are aged over 45 (but under 65) until your 66th birthday or for 5 years after becoming resident whichever is the shorter period
- **If you are aged 65 or over for 12 months after becoming resident** – In order to continue driving after these periods, a Northern Ireland driving licence must be obtained
- Provisional Licence - Before you can learn to drive a car, moped or motorcycle you must apply for a provisional driving licence. If you already hold a valid full driving licence and you want to learn to drive large vehicles, minibuses or buses you will need to apply for a provisional entitlement for these vehicles

5. How do I get car insurance, an MOT certificate, a tax disc?

Car Insurance

To drive in the UK, you must have a valid insurance certificate. It is advised that you gather several quotations for insurance before you decide on the appropriate insurance to purchase. These can be gathered direct from insurance companies or from insurance brokers who search for the best quotes for you. You can find insurance companies and brokers in the Yellow Pages or on the Internet. **www.yell.com**

Vehicle Test Certificate - MOT

Everyone who uses a vehicle on the road is required to keep it in a roadworthy condition. The MOT test is required by law for vehicles over three years old. Its purpose is to ensure that vehicles are checked at least once a year to ensure that they comply with key roadworthiness and environmental requirements. If your car fails the MOT, it is illegal to drive it away until the faults are corrected.

Tax Disc

It is a legal requirement for all vehicles on the road to have a valid tax disc displayed on the windscreen. Tax discs are purchased for either six or twelve months at the Tax Office in Gasworks or online with DVLNI.

If you are keeping your vehicle off of the road for a period of time you need to declare SORN (Statutory Off Road Notification). To declare SORN you need to complete a V890 application form available from Post Offices or the DVLNI website. All information on vehicle and drivers licences can be found on the www.dvni.gov.uk.

Leisure

1. What sport and leisure facilities are there available in Belfast?

Visit the **Belfast City Council Website** (Leisure and sport) to search for:-

Arts and Entertainment

Libraries

Museums and Galleries

Parks and open spaces

Sports, Clubs and Centres

Tourism and Travel

What's on Guide in Belfast?

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/leisure

www.gotobelfast.com

Art Galleries

There are a wide range of art galleries located across Belfast. To find out more go to the BCC website.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/PublicArt

The Arts Council for Northern Ireland

The lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. They are the main support for artists and arts organisations, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through their Exchequer and National Lottery funds. Arts Council of Northern Ireland

77 Malone Road, Belfast. BT9 6AQ

Tel: 028 9038 5200 E: info@artscouncil-ni.org

www.artscouncil-ni.org

ArtsEkta

Northern Ireland's leading organisation for the promotion of ethnic arts. They are an organisation that proudly promotes all cultures.

www.artsekta.org.uk

Libraries

There are a number of Libraries found across Belfast. It is free to join the library, which you can do with a form of ID. To find your nearest Library go to the Northern Ireland Library website. **www.ni-libraries.net**

Museums

There are a number of museums in Belfast with the Ulster Museum, located in Botanic Gardens, being the largest. For more information about all the museums go to the NI Museum Council Website. **www.nimc.co.uk**

Sports Clubs and Centres

There are a wide range of clubs and centres across Belfast. For details of what is available check the Sports Council website for information or call them on **Tel: 028 9038 1222. www.sportni.net**

Community Centres

are located across Belfast and provide a wide range of services and activities. **www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres**

Outside Belfast

To find out about trips and what is happening outside Belfast go to the Visitor & Convention Bureau. 47 Donegall Place, Belfast. BT1 5AD.
Tel: 028 9023 9026.

2. Do I need a television licence?

- If you have a television, a video recorder, a set top box, a DVD recorder or a computer which can receive broadcast programmes, then you are required by law to have a valid television licence
- A television licence can be bought from a shop displaying PayPal or from the TV Licensing website. It costs £145.50 for colour and £49.00 (as at April 2010) for a black and white TV Licence. **www.tvlicensing.co.uk** Cash

Easy Entry scheme allows you to spread the payments of your television licence weekly, fortnightly or monthly

- A television licence must be renewed every year and re-registered if you move house
- If you live in a rented property with a television, you need to make sure the property has a licence. The landlord may be responsible, but the property lease should be checked in case it is the responsibility of the tenant. If there is no licence for the property then both landlord and tenant are responsible and could be fined
- If you share a house, but have a separate tenancy agreement and have a television in your room, then you need a licence
- If you share a house and there is only one television in a communal area then only one licence is needed

Recycling and Community safety

Recycling

1. What is recycling?

Recycling is the conversion of waste products into new materials, such as waste paper that can be converted into new paper goods. To order a bin or get more information contact **Tel: 0800 0328100**

2. How do I recycle?

- Recycle aerosols, cartons, food and drink cans, mixed paper and card, plastic bottles using your Blue Bin
- Recycle garden waste such as grass cuttings, leaves, shrubs, weeds, bedding plants, dead flowers, shredded paper etc using your Brown Bin.
- If you do not put the correct material in your green or brown bin, it will not be emptied until the incorrect items are removed

- Dispose of all other household waste in your Black Bin
- Only waste contained within your bins will be collected and bin lids must be shut. If you place waste such as rubbish bags and bulky items on the pavement, you may risk enforcement actions and prosecution
- Only place the correct bin(s) out on your designated collection day by 7am
- Bins should be stored on your own property at all other times

This information relates to households within the Belfast City Council area

- Recycle your glass by taking all glass bottles and jars to your nearest recycling centre. Many larger supermarkets have collection bins for glass. See Belfast City Council for a full list of glass recycling bin locations
- To recycle your large items such as washing machines, TVs, freezers etc contact the council who can collect them. **Tel: 0800 0328100.**
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recycling

3. Community Safety

Aims to reduce crime, the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Community safety wardens

Carry out high visibility foot patrols across Belfast, helping to create a safer city. Their duties include:

- tackling antisocial behaviour, for example, street drinking and rowdy behaviour
- reducing crime and fear of crime
- working with local community and voluntary groups to give feedback on environmental issues, such as litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling
- responding to issues in certain areas

The wardens carry out patrols throughout the city and spend up to three months in an area before moving on.

Bogus callers

A Bogus caller is someone pretending to be an official from an organisation. Most people who call at your home are genuine but don't be afraid to ask for identification (ID). Sometimes however, so-called 'bogus callers' can turn up unannounced with the intention of tricking their way into your home. Their aim is to distract you, often as a way of stealing money or valuables, and they are likely to strike when you are busy or may be caught off guard.

- This is particularly common at certain times of the year, especially at Christmas when there is an increased risk of burglary.
- These types of burglaries usually take place on weekdays between 8am and 6pm, the normal working hours of genuine callers.

Freephone No: 0800 0132290

Hate crime

When people abuse or attack others because of sectarianism, race, disability, faith or sexual orientation.

Safe shopping

When you're out shopping, thieves may also be looking for an opportunity to commit a crime. This is especially common during busy periods such as Christmas. You should always be aware of your personal safety when shopping. Here are some useful tips to help you stay safe:

- always be on your guard - robberies can happen anywhere, at any time
- keep your valuables hidden from view
- keep bags zipped and make sure that your purse or wallet cannot be seen. If possible, wear a small bag across your body or under your coat
- keep all your receipts and store them carefully at home as they may contain your credit or debit card details.

Alley-gates

Are helping to reduce antisocial behaviour, burglaries and fear of crime in areas of Belfast where they have been installed. As well as making neighbourhoods feel safer, they are also helping to build a cleaner environment.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB)

In the parks and leisure properties costs between £500,000 and £1 million each year. ASB can take many forms, such as drinking in public places, damage caused by quad bikes and scramblers, graffiti, vandalism and threatening behaviour.

Alcohol bye laws

Belfast City Council work with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other groups to enforce alcohol bye-laws in public areas. When you're out and about, please be aware that:

- anyone over the age of 18 caught drinking in a specified non-drinking area will be prosecuted
- anyone under the age of 18 caught drinking will have their details passed on to the PSNI Youth Diversion Officer and have a letter sent to their parents. An acceptable behaviour contract may also be used as an early intervention method to encourage positive behaviour
- alcohol at parades will be confiscated (this may be extended to include other events such as festivals).

Neighbourhood watch

This scheme operates across Northern Ireland reducing crime and the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. It is run by local volunteers to help make local areas safer. It involves:

- appointing a local scheme coordinator
- encouraging other neighbours to participate
- meeting with the local police team, and
- keeping other local residents up-to-date with crime prevention advice.

Safety for Senior Citizens

Community safety is about working together to reduce crime, the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. From time to time, Belfast City Council organise Safety seminars for older people aimed at reducing the fear of crime and giving advice to older people on how to prevent accidents and crime.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitysafety

Individual rights

1. What are my rights in the UK?

Everyone in the UK is protected by the Human Rights Act passed by the government in 1998. Every one has a right to:-

- Life
- Prohibition of torture, slavery and forced labour
- Liberty and security
- A fair trial
- No punishment without law
- Respect for their private and family life
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Freedom of expression
- Assembly and freedom of association
- Freedom to marry
- Prohibition of discrimination
- Protection of property
- Education

- Free elections
- Prohibition of the death penalty

2. Equal Opportunities

In the UK, there are laws to ensure that people are not treated unfairly because of their sex, race, religion or disability. Discrimination laws in the UK protect people in areas like work, education, shopping and leisure.

If you face discrimination you can obtain more information from (for contact details see page 62-64):-

- The Citizens Advice Bureau
- The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Labour Relations Agency
- Human Rights Commission
- Law Centre

3. Racial, Religious and Sexual Harassment

What do I do about racial, religious or sexual harassment?

In the UK, it is a criminal offence to use abusive or insulting words or actions towards another person because of their race, religion or sex. If you are a victim of, or witness such an attack, it is important to report it to the Police, who have a duty to take action against such incidents.

It is an offence in the United Kingdom to carry weapons, such as knives or guns, even if they are intended for your own protection.

4. Domestic Violence

What can I do about domestic violence?

Domestic Violence means ‘violence or threat of violence from a relative, a current or former spouse, a person you are living with, a partner or other people who live or have lived in the same household’. Brutality in the home is as much a crime under UK law as any other form of violence. The type of abuse can be physical, emotional, mental, sexual or financial. The UK has laws that protect people against domestic violence. If you experience domestic violence, it is important to get help as soon as possible. The Citizens Advice Bureau or a solicitor can explain the options that are available to you.

In Belfast there are places of refuge, or shelters, for women who experience domestic violence:-

- Belfast Women's Aid

www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk

24hr Helpline Freephone 0800 9171414

- The Police may be able to assist you find suitable places

- Emergency telephone numbers are listed in the 'Help line' section at the front of the Yellow Pages (Business telephone directory)

Citizens Advice Bureau

www.citizensadvice.co.uk

Citizens Advice Centres Belfast CAB Belfast		
Central Belfast	Merrion Business Centre, 58 Howard St, Belfast. BT1 6PJ	02890 261970
Falls	8 Springfield Road, Belfast. BT12 7AG	
Suffolk & Andersonstown	208 Andersonstown Road, Belfast. BT11 9EB	02890 301916
North Belfast	40-44 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast. BT15 2GG	02890 357990
Shankill	268 Shankill Road, Belfast. BT13 2BL	
East Belfast	The Arches Centre, 1a Westminster Ave North, Belfast. BT4 1NS	02890 223747

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

An independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. **Vision:** The Equality Commission has the vision of Northern Ireland as a shared, integrated and inclusive place, a society where difference is respected and valued, based on equality and fairness for the entire community.

Tel: 028 9089 0890. www.equalityni.org

The Law Centre (NI)

Promotes social justice and provides specialist legal support to advice giving organisations and disadvantaged individuals. They deliver legal services to members in community care, employment, immigration, social security and mental health. The Law Centre works closely with their membership of independent advice giving agencies and associate members including social services and probation offices, solicitors' practices, trade unions and community based organisations. They work in partnership with Advice NI and Citizens Advice. For further information about their services go to their website. **www.lawcentreni.org. Tel: 028 9024 4401.**

Labour Relations Agency

Tel: 028 9032 1442 www.lra.org.uk

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Tel: 02890243987 www.nihrc.org

Womens Aid Support & Resource Centre

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid. **Tel: 028 9066 6049**

Open 9am - 5.30pm.

24 hour Helpline Tel: 0800917141

Police non-emergency **Tel: 028 9065 0222** to
contact your nearest station through the exchange.

Police Emergency number **999** from any telephone
and **112** from a mobile.

Voting

1. What is voting?

Voting is your chance to help to choose the people who run Northern Ireland, the UK, Europe and your local area. The time to vote is called election. It does not cost to vote.

2. Who can vote?

Almost all men and women over 18 years of age can vote. EU and qualifying Commonwealth citizens resident in Northern Ireland can register to vote. However they must have been resident in Northern Ireland for the previous three months. Registering to vote means EU citizens can vote for Northern Ireland Assembly, local government and European elections. Only UK, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizens on the electoral register can vote for elections to the UK Parliament.

3. Why should I register to vote?

It gives you a say on important issues that affect you, everything from roads and recycling in your area, to education and climate change – You may think you don't want to vote now, but if an issue comes up that you want to have your say on, if you're on the register you'll have the chance to vote on it. Remember, registering to vote doesn't mean you have to, it just means you can if you want to. If you do not register, you can't vote! To vote in any UK elections, you have to be on the electoral register.

4. How do I vote?

Most people in the UK choose to cast their vote in person at a local polling station. Voting at a polling station is very straightforward and there is always a member of staff available to help if you are not sure what to do. If you are on the electoral register, you will receive a poll card before the election telling you where and when to vote. The polling station is often a school or local hall near where you live.

On election day, go to your local polling station. Polling station opening hours are 7am - 10pm. If you are disabled and need assistance getting to the polling station, contact your area electoral office to find out what help is available. You can also ask to have a companion with you when you vote, or staff in the polling station may be able to help you. **Tel: 0800 0323700 to register.**

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Chapter 2

working in belfast

- Working in Northern Ireland
- Workers and individual rights and responsibilities
- Introduction to the role of Trade Unions
- Introduction to the benefit system
- Gaining employment support

1. Working in Northern Ireland

National Insurance Number (NINO).

In order to work in the UK you will need a national insurance number. You can apply for a National Insurance Number in Conor Buildings Jobcentre in Great Victoria Street, Belfast. What you need to do first depends on your category. **Tel 028 9054 5476 / 028 9054 5477**

2. Categories of workers

Who can work in the UK?

If you want to come to the United Kingdom to work, whether you can depends on who you are. If you are not a British citizen or a citizen of one of the European Economic Area (EEA) countries, you may need a visa before you travel here. If you have to get a visa, you'll need to be cleared by officials at a British Overseas Mission in your country of origin. Once cleared, the entry clearance certificate, or visa, will be put into your passport or travel document.

EEA nationals - Nearly all EEA and Swiss nationals are free to enter, live and work in the United Kingdom without the need to apply for permission. If you are from a new European Union (EU) member state (called 'accession states') then you may need to register or ask permission.

The EEA countries are:

Austria	Latvia
Belgium	Liechtenstein
Bulgaria	Lithuania
Cyprus	Luxembourg
Czech Republic	Malta
Denmark	Netherlands
Estonia	Norway
Finland	Poland
France	Portugal
Germany	Romania
Greece	Slovakia
Hungary	Slovenia
Iceland	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	United Kingdom

A8 countries

The countries that joined the EU in 2004 are known as 'A8 countries', these are:

Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and The Czech Republic.

If you are a national of one of these states you have to follow the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). This means you have to register with the UK Border Agency for permission to work in the UK. If you are an agency or temporary worker you will need to register to work within a month of starting work. You do not need to register to work in the UK if you are:

- self-employed
- from Cyprus
- from Malta

For further information visit the Home Office website.

www.workingintheuk.gov.uk

www.lawcentreni.org

After 12 months of continuous registered employment applicants will have full rights of free movement and will no longer need to register on the WRS, you can then obtain a registration certificate confirming your right to live and work in the UK.

Bulgarian and Romanians A2 countries

The countries that joined the EU in 2007 are known as 'A2 countries', these are:

Bulgaria and Romania.

If you are a national of one of these countries you may be subject to worker authorisation requirements. This means that you need authorisation from the UK Border Agency before accepting or starting any employment in the UK. If you want to work as an employee in the United Kingdom you will need Home Office permission before you start work. Details of the type of work you can take and how to apply for permission to work can be found in the Bulgarian and Romanian nationals section.

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/eea/bulgariaromania/liveworkuk

www.lawcentreni.org

Once you have been working legally as an employee in the United Kingdom for 12 months without a break you will have full rights of free movement and will no longer need Home Office permission to take work. You can then get a registration certificate confirming your right to live and work in the United Kingdom, although you are not obliged to do so.

**[www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/eucitizens/
bulgarianandromaniannationals](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/eucitizens/bulgarianandromaniannationals)**

www.lawcentreni.org

Refugees

If you are a Refugee and have been granted leave to remain any of the following decisions then you are able to work in the UK. Please refer to documentation on the time limits of your status:-

- Exceptional Leave to Remain / Enter (ELR) (no longer awarded but you may still be under this decision)
- Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)
- Discretionary Leave
- Humanitarian Protection

- Refugee Status
- Limited Leave

(As of 30th August 2005, refugees will be given Limited Leave of 5 years initially. After this time the case will be reviewed to see whether Indefinite Leave to Remain are awarded.

Other categories will require a work visa that has been gained by an employer prior to people coming into the UK. There is a complex tier system outlined in detail on the UK Borders Agency website.

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/comparisons

3. Deduction from Wages

Some deductions are automatically taken from your wages. **National Insurance**, you need to pay national insurance to qualify for certain benefits when you need them. **Taxes**, by paying taxes you are contributing to pay for services provided by the government such as education and health services.

If you feel you are paying too much tax, you may be entitled to claim some back. You can enquire about this by contacting Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. (HMRC) **www.hmrc.gov.uk**

4. National Insurance and Income Tax

You should have a National Insurance (NINO) number to work legally in the UK. If you earn more than £80 per week then you and your employer pay National Insurance contributions.

Income Tax

Is paid as a percentage of the amount of money that you earn. This percentage is identified by a tax code. All employees are allocated a tax code which determines the amount of tax that you pay. If you are starting your first job then you may have to pay 'emergency tax' until a tax code has been set up.

If you are offered employment without paying National Insurance or Income Tax, then this is against the law. If you take this work, you may find that you cannot enforce your working rights.

Employers do not have the right to hold your passport or identity documents. They may make copies only for their records.

5. Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage is the minimum that you are entitled to be paid for your work per hour. It is different depending on your age and is currently:

Age 16-17 £3.57 per hour

Age 18-21 £4.83 per hour

Age 22 and over £5.80 per hour

The national minimum wage is set to increase on 1st October 2010. The new rates will be:

Age 16–17 year olds £3.64 per hour

Age 18–20 year olds £4.92 per hour

Age 21 years and over £5.93 per hour

www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw

Workers and individual rights and responsibilities

1. Worker responsibilities

Everyone at work is protected by a series of basic legal rights. Changes are occurring all the time, and people should always seek detailed advice about their particular circumstances. The basic rights that give everyone some protection are known as statutory rights. These come from a government initiative or from the EU, although such rights still have to be turned into UK law. You have the responsibility to:

- Arrive and leave on time
- Listen carefully to health and safety rules
- Look after your own health and safety at work
- Be aware of the health and safety of your co-workers
- Learn as much as you can during your placement

- Follow your supervisor's instructions
- Treat others with respect
- Ask questions when you don't understand
- Work as hard as you can
- Ask for help if you need it

2. Workers Rights

If you are working in Northern Ireland, no matter what age or racial group you belong to you are entitled to rights and dignity. Employment rights are a statement of the main terms and conditions of employment - a contract between you and the employer. You are entitled to a written statement, stating the terms and conditions of your employment. It should include details of pay, working hours, holidays, notice period, sick pay, and pensions. (Make sure you have understood everything before you sign it.)

3. Time off Work

Holidays

Your holiday entitlement will vary from employer to employer and should be stated in your contract. Check with your employer. Although your employer may offer you more, the minimum rights are 24 days a year. You start building your holiday entitlement as soon as you start work. You are entitled to get paid during these holidays. When you finish a job you get paid for any holidays you have not yet taken. Your employer can control when you take your holidays. You do not have a statutory right to paid leave on bank and public holiday. If paid leave is given on bank and public holidays, this can count towards your 24 days minimum holiday entitlement.

Bank and public holidays in Northern Ireland:

New Year's Day	1 st January
St Patrick's Day	17 th March
Good Friday	Varies each year
Easter Monday	Varies each year
Early May Bank Holiday	1 st Monday in May
Spring Bank Holiday	Last Monday of May
Battle of the Boyne (12 th July)	Two closest week days
Summer Bank Holiday	Last Monday in August
Christmas Day	25 th December
Boxing Day	26 th December
If Christmas or Boxing day falls on Saturday or Sunday, the next week day after the weekend is given	

Illness

Your contract may provide details of your sick pay entitlement. If not, you may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), which is a legal minimum. This can be paid for up to 28 Weeks and starts on the 4th day of illness. If your employer does not want to pay you SSP you can contact HMRC for further advice.

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Maternity Leave

All women are entitled to paid time off for medical appointments. You can take up to 26 weeks maternity leave and you may be paid Statutory Maternity pay rate depending on how long you have worked for your employer.

Paternity leave

As a father of a new born child you are entitled to two weeks paid time off work, if you have worked for your employer for 26 weeks ending with the fifteenth week before the baby is due. Paternity pay for the two weeks is paid at the Statutory Paternity pay, not full pay.

Parental rights

Male and female employees have the right to request flexible working hours. You are also entitled to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave until the child's 5th birthday, or if the child is disabled, 18 weeks unpaid leave until the child's 18th birthday. You can also qualify for paternity leave when you adopt a child.

Time off for dependants (compassionate leave)

Compassionate leave describes time off work to deal with personal circumstances. There is a statutory right called ‘time off for dependants’ which gives you the right to unpaid time off in some circumstances.

4. Working Hours

You should not have to work any more than 48 hours on average each week. This is an average limit. For example, you may work fewer than 48 hours one week and then more than 48 hours in another week. But the average should not be more than 48 hours. If you wish, you can sign an agreement to lose the right of this protection.

Rest Breaks

If you are an adult and your daily working time is more than 6 hours then you are entitled to a rest break. The break should be during the six-hour period and not at the beginning or end of that time. If there is no written agreement about the length of this break then it should be for a period of not less

than 20 minutes and it should be uninterrupted. You are also entitled to spend the time away from your workstation.

5. Health and Safety

Health and Safety law is detailed and based on the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It relates to:

- Ventilation
- Temperature
- Lighting
- Cleanliness and waste materials
- Floor space
- Seating
- Sanitation
- Washing facilities
- Smoking
- Visual Display Units (VDUs or computer monitors)

If you see something at / in your workplace which is unsafe then you have a duty to report it to your supervisor.

6. Bullying

Is defined as behaviour of either a physical, psychological or verbal nature, which is unwelcome and unwanted. e.g. abuse, threats, intimidation sneering, spreading malicious rumours. These actions are designed by the bully to make the person feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable which often leads to an undermining of their confidence and can often lead to stress.

7. Harassment

Is defined as any act or conduct which is unwanted and unwelcome and which could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

8. Sexual harassment

Is defined as unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which violates the dignity of a person or which creates for them an intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

9. Discipline and grievance procedures

There are minimum steps that must normally be included in the disciplinary procedure – these are known as the ‘statutory minimum procedure’. Your employer must follow this procedure or the dismissal could be deemed ‘automatically unfair’.

Grievance procedures - An employee is almost always required to follow the statutory grievance procedures if s/he is complaining about action taken by an employer or which the employer is contemplating taking in relation to any issues, except those to which the statutory disciplinary and dismissal procedures apply. If the complaint(s) arise wholly from the termination of employment, the grievance procedures do not apply.

www.lawcentreni.org/EoR/rights_of_employees

www.hmrc.gov.uk

www.lra.org.uk

Introduction to the role of Trade Unions

Everyone who works in Northern Ireland has the right to join a trade union and work free from discrimination and harassment.

1. What is a trade union?

A trade union is an organisation, which represents the interests of working people. Trade unions seek to improve the pay and working conditions of their members and campaign for better living standards for working people. Trade unions are independent of the state and employers. They are run by and for the members.

2. What Trade unions do?

- negotiate agreements with employers on pay and conditions
- discuss major changes to the workplace such as large scale redundancy

- discuss their members' concerns with employers
- accompany their members in disciplinary and grievance meetings
- provide their members with legal and financial advice
- provide education facilities and certain consumer benefits such as discounted insurance

3. Why join a trade union?

- To ensure your employment rights are upheld
- To protect your pay, terms and conditions
- To receive advice and guidance about your rights at work
- To create a more inclusive and diverse work place through the promotion of equality and good relations
- To have an influence on your work environment
- You cannot be discriminated against for being a trade union member.

ICTUNI

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions NI is the single umbrella organisation for trade unions in Ireland representing a wide range of interests of almost 750,000 working people, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. In 2006, there were 64 unions affiliated to Congress, 48 unions with 543,882 members in the Republic of Ireland and 36 unions with 215,478 members in Northern Ireland. Their

Migrant Worker Unit can be contacted on

Tel: 028 9031 9644.

www.ictuni.org

The TUC

Is the voice of Britain at work. With 58 affiliated unions representing nearly seven million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad. They negotiate in Europe, and at home

build links with political parties, business, local communities and wider society. **www.tuc.org.uk**

www.unionlearn.org.uk/about/regions_info_northernireland.cfm?backhome

Unison

At Work is your starting point to see how UNISON represents and helps its members who are spread across seven service groups, covering the energy, healthcare, higher education, local government, police staff, transport, and water and environment industries. Click on the links below to find out how these job groups are organised and read the latest news and documents relating to these employment categories:

- Health Care
- Local government
- Business and environment
- Community and voluntary
- Education workforce
- Police staff

- Private contractors
- Professional registration – registration unit
www.unison.org.uk

Other unions

Unions are sector specific and include:

Ulster Teachers Union

www.utu.edu

Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union

www.tgwu.org.uk

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

www.nipsa.org.uk

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

www.usdaw.org.uk

Irish National Teachers Organisation

www.into.ie

This is not a complete list of unions available.

For a more comprehensive list go to

www.4ni.co.uk/0x878x27_trade-unions

Introduction to the benefit system

1. Get a better understanding of the benefits system

The benefits system provides practical help and financial support if you are unemployed and looking for work. It also provides you with additional income when your earnings are low, if you are bringing up children, are retired, care for someone, are ill or have a disability.

Benefits and services for people of working age, for example Jobseeker's Allowance, are dealt with by Social Security / Jobs and Benefits offices around Northern Ireland. These offices can help you with:

- finding work
- starting your own business
- managing on a low income

2. Benefits for non-UK nationals

Benefits you may be able to get are:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Housing Benefit / Rate Relief
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance/ Carers Allowance

3. How do I check if I am Eligible?

Eligibility for these benefits will depend on your immigration status and if you are looking for employment and can apply for benefits in the same way as a UK national. To find out if you are registered or need to register check the website: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/money-tax-and-benefits** or Citizens Advice Bureau. **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

4. Benefits you may be entitled to?

There are different types of non-UK nationals, the following sections tell you about some of the groups and the benefits to which you may be entitled if you are in one of them. This is not a complete list and there may be some exceptions to these rules. These rules also change from time to time.

Third country national - (nationals of a non-EU country) with limited leave including work permit holders, spouses and civil partners during the 2 year probationary period you generally won't be able to get any benefits.

Asylum seeker - who are destitute, (i.e. you are homeless or can't buy food) financial support may be provided by the Home Office, NICRAS, RAG or Bryson One Stop Service for Asylum Seekers. (see page 96 for full details)

Refugee - or someone who has been granted Humanitarian Protection/ Discretionary Leave you will be able to apply for benefits in the same way as a UK national.

Person with indefinite leave to enter/ remain -

you will generally have the same access to benefits as UK citizens unless a UK Sponsor has agreed to fund your stay in the UK, which means you won't be entitled to any benefits.

EEA national - exercising Treaty rights, for example a worker or self-employed person you are eligible to access benefits on the same basis as UK citizens, provided you meet the relevant eligibility criteria for those benefits. Those who are economically inactive, including A8 and A2 nationals may not generally be entitled to income-related benefits unless they meet the 12 month rule.

A8 national - (nationals of Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and are working and registered on the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), or if you are self employed you are eligible to apply for Social Housing or Housing Benefit. Following 12 months of continuous employment as a registered worker, you will gain full EEA status and will be eligible for benefits on the same basis as existing EEA nationals – if you meet the 12 month rule.

A2 national - (nationals of Bulgaria and Romania) and are a low-skilled worker, you will need to register with the Worker Authorisation Scheme (WAS) unless you are on the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme or have been admitted to the UK with a work permit before 31st December 2006.

While registered with the WAS you are eligible to apply for Social Housing, Housing Benefit / Rate Relief. Following 12 months of continuous employment as a registered worker, you will gain full EEA and will be eligible for benefits on the same basis as existing EEA nationals - if you meet the 12 month rule.

For further advice - If you are in doubt over which category you fall into or if you need further information contact:

- Your local Social Security/Jobs and Benefits office or the Employment Support Allowance centre **www.jobcentreonline.com**
- the Disability and Carers service for disability benefits **www.jobcentreonline.com**

- The Northern Ireland Housing Executive or Land and Property Services for help with housing costs / rate relief **www.nihe.gov.uk Tel 0344 8920900; www.lpsni.gov.uk Tel 028 90251515**
- Her Majesties Revenue and Customs for Tax Credits **www.hmrc.gov.uk Tel 0845 3000627**
- The UK Border Agency to find out about your immigration status or about working in the UK **www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk; Belfast Public Enquiry Office Tel 0870 6067766**
- Asylum Support Customer Contact Centre on **Tel: 0845 6021739** between 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays
- Refugee Action Group – RAG **www.refugeeactiongroup.com**
- NI Community for Refugees and Asylum Seekers - NICRAS **www.nicras.org.uk Tel 028 9024 6699**
- Bryson One Stop Service for Asylum Seekers **Tel: 028 9043 9226** 24hour emergency contact **Tel: 028 9024 2025**
- Multi-Cultural Resource Centre - MCRC **www.mcrc-ni.org**

5. Illness or disability

If you cannot work because of an illness or disability visit the ill or injured benefits information page for more information. Illness or accidents caused by work are dealt with by Industrial Injuries Branch. Industrial Injuries Branch of the Department for Social Development, 9-5 Mon-Fri **Tel 028 9033 6000**

Pensioners and people planning for their retirement. The Pension Service, which is part of Department of Social Development (DSD) provides services to:

- Anyone planning for their retirement
- People approaching retirement
- People who have already retired
- Employers
- Pension providers and advisers

The Pension Service looks after State Pension and Pension Credit.

www.nidirect.gov.uk/pensions-and-retirement-planning

6. Families and children

Social Security / Jobs and Benefits offices look after benefits and services for families, including those:

- Bringing up children, including children with special needs
- Managing on a low income, including help with health costs
- The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division part of DSD and is responsible for running the child maintenance system - it assesses, collects and pays child maintenance.

7. People with disabilities and carers

The Disability and Carers Service, which is part of DSD, is responsible for benefits and services for people who are sick or have a disability, and their carers. (i.e. Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance)

8. Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit is a social security benefit paid by the Housing Executive. It helps people on a low income pay their rent and rates. You do not need to be unemployed to get Housing Benefit or to be a Housing Executive tenant. Anyone who has to pay rent or rates for their home can claim. If this is the case, the Housing Executive will then compare your income with the amount that the government says you need to live on to decide how much Housing Benefit you may be entitled to. (Housing Executive **Tel: 0344 8920902**) **www.nihe.gov.uk**

Try the Benefits Adviser Service - Get benefit advice, for you/your family or for someone else. Simply answer questions anonymously online about your savings, income and outgoings. **www.nidirect.gov.uk/money-tax-and-benefits**

Gaining Employment Support

Employment Support Organisations

Ask for help from your local employment support organisation.

South Belfast and City Centre – GEMS NI, East – Oasis and Stepping Stone, West – Job Assist Centres on the Shankill Road and Springfield Road, North – Ashton Community Trust and North City Training (see page 101). Each organisation has Mentors or Guidance Practitioners who will be able to help you with job search, application forms, completing CV's and interview technique.

These organisations will help you present and market yourself both on paper and throughout the interview process. In the current employment market competition for jobs has increased.

For example employers and companies are receiving more applications than before, which means they have more of a choice of potential employees.

South Belfast and City Centre – GEMSNI Ltd

www.gemsni.org.uk

Greater Shankill – Impact Training

www.shankilljac.org.uk

West Belfast – Upper Springfield Development

Co Ltd., West Belfast JAC's, Top of the Rock, 689

Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7FP. **Tel: 028 9032**

2003

East Belfast – Oasis Caring in Action

www.oasis-ni.org

East Belfast – Stepping Stone, 240 Newtownards

Road, Belfast BT4 1HB. **Tel: 028 9073 8989**

North Belfast – Ashton Community Trust

www.ashtoncentre.com

North Belfast – North City Training, 503 Crumlin Rd,

Belfast BT14 7GA. **Tel: 028 9071 2408**

1. What you have to offer?

Start by asking yourself honestly what skills and experience you have. Think about the skills you have developed in the jobs you have had before, and in your life outside of work.

a. Employment skills and experience

Ask yourself the following questions to think about skills you have developed, including those built up in jobs you have had before:

- Did you develop any skills that will be useful in the job you're looking for?
- Did you work as part of a team?
- Did you gain experience of sharing information with others?
- Did you follow or give instructions well?
- Did you get any qualifications?
- Did you receive for any part of your job?
- Do you have IT skills?
- Are you a good timekeeper?

b. Personal and social skills

Ask yourself the following questions about life outside work:

- Do you get on well with people?
- Are you on a local committee or a member of a community organisation?
- Are you part of a team, (for example, a sports or quiz team)?
- Do you have skills from caring for your family, (for example, organisational skills)?
- Have you done any voluntary work?
- Have you been to any evening classes or training?

2. How to find a job

Employment Support

Job Centre - is able to provide a list of current vacancies and methods of application. Job Centre is also available online: **www.jobcentreonline.com**

Newspapers - Check your local newspapers for jobs in your area: e.g. Belfast Telegraph on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Irish News Job Finder on Thursday.

The Internet - Some companies advertise current vacancies on their website.

Useful Websites

www.hscrecruit.com	www.belfastcity.gov.uk/jobs
www.belb.org.uk/jobs	www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk
www.jobcentreonline.com	www.nijobfinder.co.uk
www.nijobs.com	www.recruitni.com

**GEMS NI ACCEPT NO RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE CONTENT OF THESE WEBSITES.**

Notice boards/ Windows - Advertisements: on windows, billboards, in shops and restaurants.

Word of Mouth - It is important to talk with friends, colleagues or community members to find out if they know of job vacancies and to request them to let potential employers know that you are looking for work.

Employment Agencies - Many agencies are listed online and in the Yellow Pages. They can be found on **www.yell.com**. These agencies must not charge you money for finding you a job. It is better to register with a few to increase your chances of finding employment.

4. The application process

This can vary from applying by CV, online or paper based application.

Application Forms - Attention to detail - Read the job description or advertisement carefully. This will give you a good idea of what the employer is looking for; you should aim to reflect this in your application form and CV. Check you are doing the right thing, e.g. do you have to call for an application form, write a letter of application, send an email or download an attachment. Follow instructions exactly, e.g. use black ink, and write in BLOCK CAPITALS, if told to do so.

References - Try to get a written reference before you leave a job, and (or) ask your line manager can you use them for a reference.

Electronic Applications - Make sure the format stays the same. Ensure you are typing in the correct field/box.

5. Are my qualifications valid in the UK?

If you have obtained qualifications from another country and you wish to find out how they compare to similar qualifications in the UK, you can do so by contacting the National Academic Recognition Information Centre. (NARIC) This Centre can issue you with a document stating the equivalent UK qualification you have obtained. To receive this document, you will need proof of your qualification and it will need to be recognised. For further details, visit. **www.naric.org.uk**

What is a Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A CV is a document commonly used in the UK to quickly show your qualifications and experience. It normally is no more than 2 sides of A4 paper to enable an employer to find out quickly whether a person is suitable for the job. Your CV is a draft that is always being updated. CVs can be changed to be more specific to the job that you are applying for. How you present your job duties can be constantly tailored to directly link to the job you are applying for.

Interview Preparation - It is important to match your skills, experience and interests to the job you are applying for. Find out about the position you are being interviewed for and if possible carry out some research on the company, as it will demonstrate that you are interested in the job, company, and the interview itself. Dress sensibly and go to the interview in clean, well-pressed clothes. The interviewer should be concentrating on you and not what you are wearing. Contact your employment support organisation to arrange a practice interview. (see page 101)

It is extremely important to be honest about yourself, on your CV, application form and in any interview you may have. If you give false information and this is later discovered, you may lose your job.

For further information on seeking employment look at the NI Direct website. **www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/employment**

Chapter 3

integration into belfast community

- Understanding the History of ‘The Troubles’ and its impact on Belfast
- Governance issues including local government
- How to get involved in the local community

Understanding the History of ‘The Troubles’ and its Impact on Belfast

1. Why is there a Northern Ireland and a The Republic of Ireland?

Up until 1922, Ireland and Britain were a single political entity ‘The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’. The island of Ireland contains 32 administrative counties. In 1922, 26 of these counties were given independence from Britain to become ‘The Republic of Ireland’. The remaining 6 counties remained as part of the United Kingdom.

For Nationalists and Republicans, the issues were about uniting these 6 counties that remained part of the United Kingdom, with the other 26 counties in the rest of the island.

For Unionists and Loyalists, the issues were about retaining the link with the United Kingdom.

2. The Troubles

The term 'The Troubles' is used to describe the recent conflict in Northern Ireland, which lasted from 1969 until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Over 3,500 people died as a result of the conflict, and roughly half of those who died were from Belfast.

The troubles followed a period of rising tensions over issues to do with civil rights. Community tensions, marches and protests had resulted in rival groups clashing with each other. Up until 1972, Northern Ireland had its own parliament, but because of the increasing security problems, this was suspended. In 1972, Northern Ireland was ruled directly from London and the British Army were brought in to keep order.

3. Legacies of The Troubles

The Troubles had a significant impact across Northern Ireland, but particularly in Belfast. As a result of increased violence across the community, many people fled their homes to be in areas where they would feel safe. Even today, most public sector/ social housing contains over 90% of either Catholic or Protestant communities. Many of these areas remain separated by interface or ‘peace’ walls.

4. The Peace Process

‘The Peace Process’ is the term used to describe the efforts of politicians and others over the years to reach an agreement in relation to the political future of Northern Ireland. In the mid 1990’s, the violence decreased markedly with the paramilitary ceasefires. The resulting talks between the political parties from Northern Ireland and the British and Irish Governments, chaired by Senator George Mitchell, resulted in the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement resulted in a new devolved parliament for Northern Ireland, as well as establishing political

structures between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A Council of the Isles was also established to include parliamentary bodies from all of the UK and Ireland.

Following the Good Friday Agreement, responsibility for several areas of government were taken over by local politicians, such as health, education, transport and the environment. Policing was reformed and paramilitary bodies decommissioned their weapons and disbanded.

5. Equality and Good Relations

A significant focus of the new Northern Ireland Government is in the promotion of equality and good relations. All statutory bodies have a duty to promote equality and good relations between people of different religions, races and political opinion. This is seen as one key way of healing the divisions of the past and promoting reconciliation amongst the wider community.

6. Groups

Unionists: those within the community who value the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, which makes up the United Kingdom.

Nationalists: those within the community who want to see a United Ireland.

Loyalists: generally those within the community who pledge loyalty to the Crown and to defend the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

Republicans: generally those within the community seeking the abolition of the monarchy and seeking the creation of a United Ireland.

Paramilitary groups: groups such as the IRA, UDA, UVF, INLA and Red Hand Commando who were involved in armed conflict during The Troubles.

Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council is the largest of the 26 councils in Northern Ireland. It is the local democratic institution for the city with 51 elected councillors representing nine electoral areas. The councillors elect a Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor who serve a ceremonial function for one year.

The role of a councillor is to represent the interests of their constituents and electoral areas. They aim to ensure that the interests of the people of Belfast are reflected in council decisions and in the way services are delivered.

The council is responsible for providing and delivering an extensive range of services which play a key role in improving the quality of life of our citizens by helping to make Belfast a better place to live in, work in, invest in and visit.

For more information **Tel 028 9032 0202**
or go to **www.belfastcity.gov.uk**

Governance issues including local government

1. The Northern Ireland Assembly

Was established as a result of the Belfast Agreement on 10th April 1998. The Agreement was the outcome of a long process of talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish Governments. The Agreement was endorsed through a referendum held on 22nd May 1998 and subsequently given legal force through the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It led to the creation of a series of interrelated bodies, in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, which has full legislative and executive authority for all matters that are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government Departments and are known as transferred matters. Excepted matters remain the responsibility of the Westminster Parliament. Reserved matters are also dealt with by Westminster unless it is decided by the Secretary of State that some of these should be devolved to the Assembly.

2. The Work of the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. It is responsible for making laws on transferred matters in Northern Ireland and for scrutinising the work of Ministers and Government Departments. The Assembly sits at Parliament Buildings and Stormont Estate and in Belfast. Members (MLAs) meet to debate issues; question Ministers; and make laws for the benefit of people in Northern Ireland. Each MLA represents her or his constituency, and there are 6 MLAs for each constituency.

3. How The Northern Ireland Assembly Operates

The Northern Ireland Assembly consists of 108 elected Members - six from each of the 18 Westminster constituencies. Its role is primarily to scrutinise and make decisions on the issues dealt with by Government Departments and to consider and make legislation.

A First Minister and a Deputy First Minister are elected to lead the Executive Committee of Ministers. They must stand for election jointly and to be elected they must have cross-community support by the parallel consent formula, which means that a majority of both the Members who have designated themselves Nationalists and those who have designated themselves Unionists and a majority of the whole Assembly, must vote in favour. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister head the Executive Committee of Ministers and acting jointly, determine the total number of Ministers in the Executive.

The parties elected to the Assembly choose Ministerial portfolios and select Ministers in proportion to their party strength. Each party has a designated nominating officer and the d'Hondt procedure is used for the appointment of Ministers.

Statutory Departmental Committees are also established to advise and assist each Minister in the formulation of policy for his/her Department and to scrutinise the work of that Department. Committee Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons are elected using the d'Hondt procedure. There is also a

number Standing and Ad Hoc Committees. **www.niassembly.gov.uk**

4. First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2009)

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is a fully functioning department of the Northern Ireland administration with a wide range of responsibilities. **The strategic objectives of the department include:**

- supporting Ministers and the institutions of government
- building a programme for government and modernising government programme
- promoting better community relations, a culture of equality and rights
- and targeting social need and promoting social inclusion

The two Junior Ministers will assist them in carrying out the work of their department. They will be jointly accountable to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

How to get involved in the local community

Community

1. Define Community

noun (pl. **communities**)

1 a group of people living together in one place.

2 (the community) the people of an area or country considered collectively; society.

3 a group of people with a common religion, race, or profession: *the scientific community*.

4 the holding of certain attitudes and interests in common.

5 a group of interdependent plants or animals growing or living together or occupying a specified habitat.

ORIGIN Old French comunete, from Latin communis 'common'.

2. How do I become involved in a community?

Being part of a community is an important part of many people's lives. When you arrive from another country it can be very difficult to feel part of a community.

Community Groups - Many community groups in Belfast have formed their vision of how they would like to see their communities and are making things happen. They provide a wide range of activities and events open to everyone living in their area. To find your local community group follow the links below:

**[www.communityrelations.org.uk/services/
community-relations-groups](http://www.communityrelations.org.uk/services/community-relations-groups)**

www.communityni.org/orgs/listing?keys=Belfast

In addition, your local libraries will have information about community groups and local activities. Faith organisations or places of worship will also have information about community groups and local activities.

Minority Ethnic Groups in Belfast - While not as cosmopolitan as many large UK cities, as a regional capital and headquarters for many regional and international organisations and businesses, Belfast has attracted a higher proportion of resident ethnic minority groups than other local authorities in NI. There are a wide range of country and language specific organisations that provide a range of information, advice and cultural and social events. **www.belfastcity.gov.uk/migrants/MigrantsSupport**

Community Centres - In Belfast there are a wide range of community organisations and Belfast city council has 23 community centres across Belfast. Activities at centres include play groups, homework clubs, after-school groups, keep-fit sessions, parent and toddler clubs, drama organisations and young people's groups. **www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres/index**

Further information about what events or activities are happening in your local community are usually advertised in your local library.

www.librariesni.org.uk/libraries/copyof-libraries

There are a wide range of National Associations and you can find these through the following websites:

**[www.community-relations.org.uk/services/
community-relations-groups](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/services/community-relations-groups)**

www.communityni.org/orgs/listing?keys=Belfast

**[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/migrants/docs/
SupportServicesMigrantWorkers.doc](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/migrants/docs/SupportServicesMigrantWorkers.doc)**

www.nicem.org.uk

Belfast Friendship Club - 'a social peg to hang a conversation on'. Since its launch in April 2009, the Belfast Friendship Club has attracted more than 200 people from 35+ different nationalities within which a regular membership is developing. It attracts people from many different walks of life and a wide range of ages are represented. It also attracts those who have lived here for many years and may be indigenous.

Those who attend, whether occasionally or regularly, benefit in numerous ways from the connections made possible by its existence. As a direct result, conversations are often conducted in different languages around the tables, ranging across

fascinating topics and also providing an excellent opportunity to practice conversational language skills! Other events and activities are also organised from time to time.

Whether you are new to the city or have lived here all your life, why not come along and meet somebody different? All welcome from across Belfast.

7-9pm every Thursday at Common Grounds Cafe, 12-24 University Street, Belfast. BT7 1GY

Places of Worship and Faith Organisations -

There are a wide range of Places of Worship and Faith Organisations in Belfast for further details please contact:

The Irish Council of Churches
48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ.

Tel: 028 9066 3145

www.irishchurches.org/about/icc

The Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
41a Rosemary Street, Belfast BT1 1QB

www.niinterfaithforum.org

Volunteering

Define Volunteer?

Volunteering and volunteers refers to individuals and the work or action they undertake for the benefit of others or the community (outside one's immediate family), undertaken freely and by choice and not directly in return for wages. (source Volunteer Now)

Volunteer Now. www.volunteernow.co.uk

How do I volunteer?

You can volunteer in a wide range of organisations in a range of ways. Contact the organisation you are interested in working with or the Volunteer Service Board (VSB). **www.vsb.org.uk**

Other organisations that can facilitate volunteers include:

- The Welcome Organisation Homelessness and Support Service. **Tel: 028 9024 0424**
www.homelessbelfast.org
- Chinese Welfare Association (CWA)
www.cwa-ni.org
- Corrymeela **www.corrymeela.org**
- EMBRACE **www.embraceni.org**
- MCRC **www.mcrc-ni.org**
- NICRAS **www.nicras.org.uk**
- Refugee Action Group (RAG)
www.refugeeactiongroup.com
- Simon Community
www.simoncommunity.org

This is not a complete list but a representative sample of the types of organisations with volunteering opportunities.

What are the benefits of volunteering?

Volunteering can enable you to:-

- Learn new skills
- Boost career options
- Improve your CV
- Meet new people
- Build self confidence
- Improve English Language skills