

REFUGEE TRANSITION

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

SUMMARY GUIDE 2018 UPDATE

Benefit entitlement

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

Employment

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

Health care

Can I register with a doctor?

Immigration matters

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

Housing

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



This summary guide is translated into Arabic, Farsi, Simplified Mandarin and Somali. The full Refugee Transition Guide (English) can be downloaded from:

www.belfastcity.gov.uk



Belfast
City Council

REFUGEE TRANSITION – SUMMARY VERSION

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

Produced by Law Centre (NI) for Belfast City Council

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www.belfastcity.gov.uk

With thanks to Leish Dolan at Belfast City Council, staff at Extern Refugee & Asylum Floating Support and staff at Department for Communities.



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Disclaimer

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

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

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

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is a **summary version** of a **full Refugee Transition Guide**, which is available here:

www.belfastcity.gov.uk and

www.lawcentreni.org

The summary contains:

- An overview of next steps;
- A log book to help keep track of what has been done on your case;
- A form you can fill out with your personal details, which are routinely requested by government agencies;
- A transparent pocket, which can be used for keeping together any relevant letters.

This summary is translated into: **Simplified Mandarin, Arabic, Somali** and **Farsi**.

The **full version** contains:

- Detailed information on each stage of the refugee transition process including information about benefits and having;
- Information about additional financial support/help;
- A comparison of the different types of status available to refugees;
- Useful contacts.

Important note: it is illegal to provide immigration advice unless provided by a qualified solicitor, barrister or agency accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

CONGRATULATIONS

You have been granted refugee status. This gives you a number of entitlements:

Permission to work ✓

Access to social security benefits ✓

Entitlement to refugee family reunion ✓

Entitlement to hold a refugee travel document ✓

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Now that you are a refugee, you must find your own accommodation and secure your own income (through employment or social security benefits). You have a lot to do in a short space of time as your asylum support (NASS) stops after **28 days**.

- 
1. Register with Extern
 2. Receive refugee status & Biometric Residence Card
 3. Apply for housing
 4. Apply for benefits
 5. Open a bank account
 6. Consider applying for family reunion
 7. Be informed

1. Register with Extern

Extern can help you with your housing, finances and many other services. Speak to Extern as soon as you know you have been granted refugee status. You do not need to wait until you receive all your paperwork from Home Office.

Extern

Telephone: 028 9027 8424

Address: 1st and 4th Floors, Norwich Union House, Fountain Street,
Belfast BT1 5EA

2. Receive refugee status and Biometric Residence Permit

You will receive a **Biometric Residence Permit** that confirms your refugee status. This document is very important. Check that all your personal details are recorded correctly including spelling and date of birth. If anything is incorrect, tell your immigration solicitor immediately.

If you lose your card, you must report it to **Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)** and **Home Office**.



3. Apply for housing

Go to **Housing Executive Homeless Services Unit** and request a **Homelessness Assessment** and, if required, **Temporary Accommodation**.

You can request an interpreter.



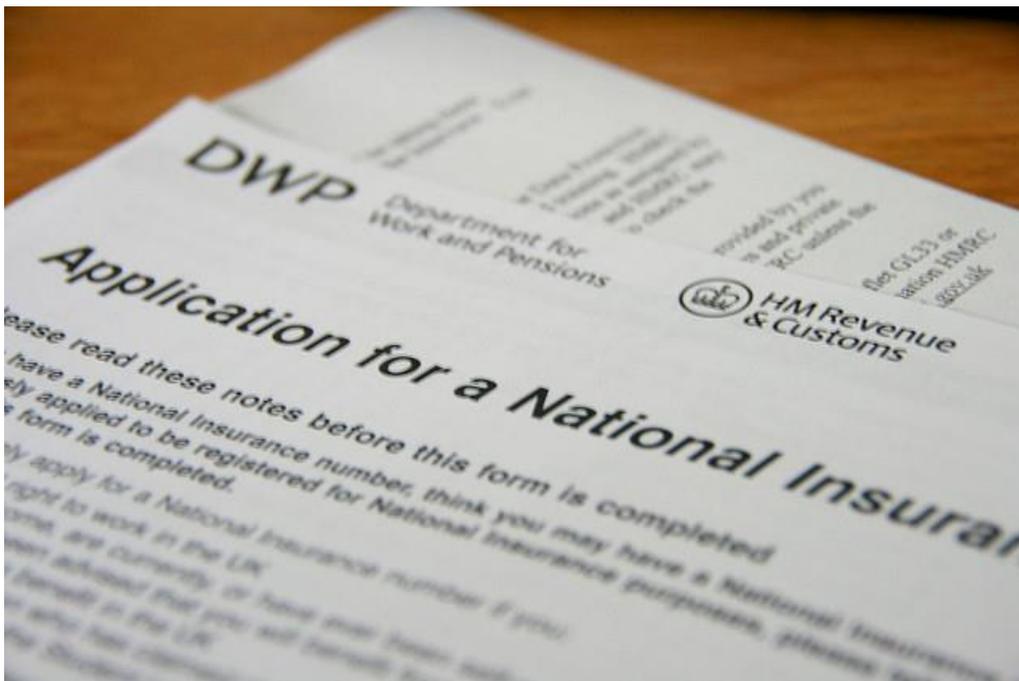
Address: The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB

Telephone: 0344 892 0900

4. Apply for benefits

Go to your local **Jobs & Benefit Office** or telephone: **0800 220 674**

- Apply for **National Insurance Number**



- Apply for benefits. Request that **tax credits** claims are processed through the fast-track process. Ask whether you are eligible to receive any **backdated benefits**.

You can request an interpreter.

5. Open a bank account

Go to a bank and ask to open a current account.

Take your **Biometric Residence Permit** as proof of identity. It is also recommended that you take **other evidence** e.g. letter from the Home Office, letter about your benefits, letter from NI Housing Executive, etc.



Photograph © Philip Veater

6. Seek help

A lot of help is available for refugees experiencing financial hardship.

The important thing is to seek help immediately.

Contact **Extern** in the first instance. The **full Refugee Transition Guide** contains details of available support.



7. Family reunion

Refugee family reunion is a priority for many refugees. Your solicitor can **help with visa applications**.

Red Cross may be able to assist with some of the logistics. Seek help **before** making any arrangements.

Telephone: **028 9032 3055**



Photograph © Gus Moretta

8. Be informed

You are responsible for making sure that you understand your entitlements and your responsibilities when living in Northern Ireland. In particular, **make sure you understand any benefit requirements** (such as the requirement to notify the benefit provider of any changes in circumstances) and **how to apply for permanent housing** (if relevant).

Your refugee status is only valid in the United Kingdom. If you wish to leave the UK, you will need to apply for a travel document in advance. You might also need a visa to enter the country you are visiting: check this before you travel. This also applies to visiting the Republic of Ireland.

Your refugee status is valid for **a limited period** (usually 5 years). It is very important that you renew your status in good time.

In the future, you might be entitled to apply for British citizenship. Citizenship is not automatic and you must meet the requirements which include being able to speak English and being of 'good character' i.e. being free of criminal convictions.

There are many sources of information and orientation projects available to help you understand your entitlements and responsibilities.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

You will often be asked to provide personal information to various agencies and organisations.

It may be helpful if you fill out this form, which will then contain a lot of the information you need to give.

PERSONAL DETAILS	
Surname	First name (s)
Date of birth	Nationality
Date of arrival in UK	Date awarded leave to remain in the UK
Type of leave granted (Refugee status, Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave to Remain)	
Biometric Residence Permit card reference number	
Expiry date of Biometric Residence Permit?	
In possession of national passport?	Yes / no
If yes, country of issue and reference number	
In possession of UK issued Refugee Travel Document?	Yes / no
If yes, reference number	
In possession of birth certificate?	Yes / no
If yes, reference number	
National Insurance Number	
Dependants	Yes / no Please fill in their details on this page and next
Interpreter required?	Yes /no
Interpreter language required	
Your telephone number	Your address
Previous addresses and dates	
DEPENDANTS	
PARTNER/SPOUSE	
Surname of partner/spouse	
First name(s) of partner /spouse	
Date of birth	
Nationality	
Date of arrival in the UK	
Biometric residence card reference	
Other identity document (for example national passport, birth certificate) and relevant reference numbers	

CHILDREN	Child 1	Child 2
Name		
Date of birth		
Nationality		
Date of arrival in UK		
Biometric residence card reference		
Identity document (for example national passport, birth certificate) and relevant reference numbers		
	Child 3	Child 4
Name		
Date of birth		
Nationality		
Date of arrival in UK		
Biometric residence card reference		
Identity document (for example national passport, birth certificate) and relevant reference numbers		
	Child 5	Child 6
Name		
Date of birth		
Nationality		
Date of arrival in UK		
Biometric residence card reference		
Identity document (for example national passport, birth certificate) and relevant reference numbers		
OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION		
GP name and contact details		
School(s) name(s) and contact details		
Legal representative name and contact details		

These pages should be photocopied before information is recorded, so that they can be re-used.

LOG BOOK OF ACTIONS TAKEN

Recording information about steps taken and recommendations for further actions may help speed up the process and identify gaps.

DATE	NAME AND ORGANISATION	ACTIONS TAKEN	RECOMMENDATIONS

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