

Refugee, Migration and Race

'You do not know what I have lived'

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Key areas to consider when supporting Refugees, Migrants Workers and Asylum Seekers

- Racism and Discrimination
- Access to Services and Support
- Immigration Status
- Financial Support
- Housing/Accommodation
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Documentation
- Safeguarding
- Integration
- Gender Roles

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Background

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) has been providing support to the community since 1997. The core principle of Empowerment underpins all activity regardless of changing projects and clients.

STEP's overarching aim is to contribute to building a rights-based participative, peaceful and prosperous society which provides equality of access and opportunity, embraces diversity and respects difference.

STEP is a 'mixed economy' organisation. We compete for project grant-aid from public & private funds. Currently we receive funds from Mid-Ulster Council, Northern Health & Social Care Trust, Community Fund, NIHE, The Executive Office, Department for Communities, Public Health Agency, Justice Initiatives and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.



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Myths and Misconceptions

Refugees are



- They all want to come to the UK - no evidence to suggest this, in fact more people flee to poor countries, people who come to the UK it is often because they have family or friends here, not because of the benefit system.
- FACT: The UK is home to just 1% of the world's refugees. As of 2024, the numbers of refugees in the world stands at 27.1 million.
- Migrant Workers are draining Public Services, false, in fact Migrant workers are often younger, healthier, and well qualified, contribute more to the tax and benefit system than they receive, in addition, many help to deliver key services in social care, health and education.
- FACT: Contrary to popular anti-immigration rhetoric, migrants are essential to the workforce of every country, as they fill gaps and to address the concerns of ageing population in the UK.



investors job creators entrepreneurs

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Chat Box Question

What are the key issues/challenges facing Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People in Schools?




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Key Statistics NI - Feb 2025

While Northern Ireland (at 3.4%) has become a more diverse culture over the past two decades, it still remains the least diverse region of the UK, compared with England and Wales (18.3%) and Scotland (12.9%).

Most migrants are young, with around 87 per cent under the age of 35 years. Just over half (51%) are male.

Hate crime is more prevalent in Northern Ireland than generally realised, with the number of racist incidents and crimes regularly exceeding the number of sectarian crimes.

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Key Statistics

In March 2024, there were 2,632 people receiving asylum support in Northern Ireland. Asylum support is available to asylum seekers who are destitute on arrival.

As of September 2024, 5,328 family members of refugees living in the UK have been granted entry to the UK through family reunion visas, over half of whom were children under 18. This is a UK-wide statistic; we do not have any data on the number of refugees arriving in Northern Ireland through refugee family reunion.

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Definitions

Who is a Migrant?

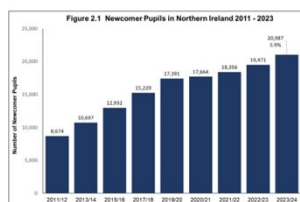
A migrant is considered a person who has left their home by choice and in search of a better opportunity because conflict or persecution did not force them from home, a migrant is not considered a refugee or asylum seeker. However, it is important to understand the complexities of their migration journey, and why they are leaving, natural disasters, etc. While migration to a different country can promise the chance of a better life, education or job, it is not without risk as many migrants can become highly vulnerable to discrimination, violence, abuse and exploitation at their destination.

Who is an Immigrant?

A person who comes to a country with the intention of taking up permanent residence is called an immigrant. While many immigrants choose to make a permanent life in a new country, they are free to return home as well.



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Definitions

Who is a Refugee?

- Refugees are seeking a safe haven after being forced to flee violence, persecution or war.
- Worldwide, there are nearly 25.9 million refugees, over half of whom are children.
- Refugees, **especially refugee children**, are amongst the most vulnerable people in the world.



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Language and Labels

- Migrant Workers
- Refugees
- Asylum Seekers
- Settlement Schemes
- EUSS Pre-Settled and Settled Status
- Displaced Person
- Family Reunification
- Illegal Immigrant
- Economic Migrant
- Seasonal Workers
- BAME Communities
- Ethnic Minorities
- Foreign Students

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Definitions

Who is an Asylum Seeker?

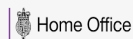
- Similar to a refugee, an asylum seeker is someone who may be in search of protection due to **dangers in their country**.
- While every refugee is initially an asylum seeker, not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee.
- The right to be recognised as a refugee is determined by law after an asylum seeker has applied for protection in the country of refuge.
- The process of applying for asylum can take years.



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Who is responsible for Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers?

- **Asylum Seekers** - The Home Office provides support to people who would otherwise be destitute whilst they await the resolution of their asylum claim: Accommodation and financial support (subsistence) is provided to a person awaiting a decision on their asylum claim under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (IAA).



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What do we need to Understand

- Culture – places, food, celebrations, national holidays.
- Values and Symbols
- Language
- Gender Stereotypes and Equality
- Faiths and Religion
- Journeys and Emigrations
- Political Conflict



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Who supports Migrant Families and Refugees in NI?

- Once you have been granted refugee status, you no longer have Home Office support and must access public funds such as NIHE housing support, Social Security benefits and entitlements.
- People are automatically moved from being fully supported with all aspects of housing, finance, education to then having to do this for themselves.



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Breakout Group

What can we do in schools to be more supportive of children and young people from Migrant and Refugee Families?



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Understanding and Knowledge of Backgrounds

Develop an awareness of the experiences, lives and cultures of people that you support

- Have they been impacted by injustice and inequality?
- Have they come from War-torn Country?
- Have they support here? Family/Friends/Network
- How long are they here in NI, in the county, in this town?
- What other supports are in place? Housing, School, GP.
- Documentation – Identification, Pre or Settled Status, Banking etc

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Recognise barriers to support

Schools:

- Cultural Competence
- Language
- Lack of Awareness of Support Services/Partnerships
- Time Constraints/Pressures
- Expertise

Families

- Not aware of services/support
- Digital skills
- Language
- Conflict with Gender Roles
- Fear – discrimination and racism
- Previous experiences
- Feeling of Isolation and not belonging
- Financial
- Complex Needs



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Racism and Discrimination

Develop rights-based approaches to and anti-racist practice in law, policy and practice.

- ▶ View support-seeking as a right and strength
- ▶ Understand your role as scaffolding children towards the realisation of their rights, their full potential and equal participation in society.
- ▶ Always ask and never assume.
- ▶ Organisations should reflect the diversity of community, celebrate bilingualism.
- ▶ Hold agencies to account.
- ▶ Support children and young people in challenging unfair treatment and discrimination.
- ▶ Represent the interests and experiences of all children in decision making fora.



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All schools to become Places of Sanctuary



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Part of Wider Eco System Supporting People



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Refugee Awareness Week
#SimpleActs
16th -22nd June 2025

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Strategies and Techniques for Engagement

- Create Welcoming Space
- Identify Needs
- Ask Questions – Life before NI
- Clear Communication using Bitesize Language
- Continuity and Consistency of Staff
- Localised Knowledge of Support Groups and Services
- Encourage the use of Interpreters
- Effective Referral Pathways

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The Executive Office
Good Relations Week



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Make Advice and Support Services Visible



Create a space in school for parents that provides them with information on key services and supports.

Ensure families are aware of welfare support staff at schools.



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Thank you for your time today

Any Questions?



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