



MIGRANT HOUSING MYTHS

Information to dispel myths and assumptions around social housing support and allocation for migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and diverse ethnic communities

Housing
Executive

This leaflet aims to dispel common housing myths and assumptions about migrant worker families, asylum seekers, refugees and diverse ethnic communities.

DEFINITIONS

Migrant worker

A migrant worker is someone who comes to the UK from abroad to work. They might have come to take up skilled, seasonal or other work and will generally intend on returning to their home country after a set period of time.

<https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/claimant-compliance-manual/ccm20020>

Asylum seeker

An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country, often suddenly, because they are faced with persecution, war or violence and cannot get protection there.

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/migration-and-displacement/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/six-things-you-need-to-know-about-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

Refugee

When an asylum seeker has been officially granted asylum, they are then legally recognised as a refugee.

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/migration-and-displacement/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/six-things-you-need-to-know-about-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

Immigrant

An immigrant is a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/immigrant?q=Immigrant>

Ethnic communities

A social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality or culture.

(Ethnic group | Definition, Characteristics & Examples | Britannica)

MYTHS & TRUTHS

MYTH: Illegal migrants, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to social housing.

TRUTH:

Not all people from abroad are entitled to social housing.

People who arrive here from other countries are not automatically eligible for social housing and many migrants do not seek to be housed in social housing.

There are legislative rules which specify criteria that people from abroad must meet to be considered for social housing which defines who is and is not eligible to go on the Social Housing Waiting list. It is clear in terms of immigration status and habitual residence.

The law is different for people from within the European Economic Area (EEA), the UK and other countries around the world.



MYTH: **Asylum seekers get a free house and move to the front of the queue.**

TRUTH:
Housing for asylum seekers is the responsibility of the Home Office.


Asylum seekers are not eligible for social housing. Housing Executive and Housing Association properties are not used to house asylum seekers.

If an asylum seeker is granted 'leave to remain' they may then become eligible for social housing and related support. They will be assessed, as all applicants are, through the Housing Selection Scheme.

Asylum seekers do not have access to the mainstream benefit system. They have a parallel system of welfare support providing a weekly allowance.

In March 2023, there were 3,030 people receiving asylum support in Northern Ireland. Asylum support (sometimes referred to as 'NASS support') is available to asylum seekers who are destitute on arrival. (LCNI-briefing-refugee-statistics-July-2023-1.pdf)

This support may include the provision of accommodation pending assessment of their application for asylum.



MYTH: **New migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees are jumping the queue for Housing Executive homes.**

TRUTH:

The Common Selection Scheme for social housing does not award points based on nationality, ethnicity or religion.

All applicants for social housing complete the same application form. Individual needs are assessed using the published points-based Housing Selection Scheme. The Housing Executive will award points based on individual needs and housing situation. Those eligible are then placed on the Common Waiting List to be allocated a property for their selected areas of choice according to the rules of the scheme.




MYTH: The Housing Executive decides where migrant workers can live.

TRUTH:

Where migrant workers are eligible to apply for social housing, they are assessed under the Housing Selection Scheme.

The Housing Selection Scheme has been created to be fair and open and to give applicants a choice in where they wish to live.

When the Housing Executive has awarded an applicant points it will place them on the waiting list for their selected areas of choice. All applicants can choose as many areas as they want.



MYTH: Asylum Seekers and Refugees are the same.

TRUTH:

An 'asylum seeker' is someone who is seeking asylum. This means they are applying to be given the status of a refugee in another country on the basis that they face persecution in their country of origin.

If an asylum seeker's application for asylum is granted by immigration officials, they become a 'refugee' in that country and are given either temporary or permanent leave to remain.

Only then would they be eligible for social housing, subject to the usual process of application and assessment.



OTHER MYTHS & TRUTHS

MYTH:
Homeless people live on the street.

TRUTH:
Homelessness is not limited to those who are street homeless. It has a much broader meaning. People can be legally classed as homeless if they are sleeping on a friend's sofa, staying in a hostel, living in an overcrowded home, or living in poor housing conditions.

MYTH: Housing Executive accommodation will be available immediately if you're homeless.

TRUTH:

You are homeless if you have nowhere to live in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. The level of help we can give you depends upon your particular circumstances.

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

As part of the phased discharge of the homelessness duty temporary accommodation will be provided until such times as a permanent allocation of housing is made.

The law on homelessness and housing defines who is and is not eligible to go on the Social Housing Waiting list.



KEY CONTACTS

There are key organisations who can provide information and advice on Housing related matters. This includes the following organisations:

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)

Telephone: 03448 920 900
Email: information@nihe.gov.uk
Address: The Housing Centre,
2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB
Website: www.nihe.gov.uk/home

Advice NI

Freephone: 0800 915 4604
Email: advice@adviceni.net
Address: Advice NI,
Forest View, Purdys Lane, Newtownbreda,
Belfast, BT8 7AR
Website: www.adviceni.net

Housing Rights

Telephone: 028 9024 5640
Email: www.housingrights.org.uk/contact-us
Website: [www.housingrights.org.uk/contact-us/
get-advice](http://www.housingrights.org.uk/contact-us/get-advice)

Additional contact details for support organisations who can provide advice.

Migrant Centre NI

Telephone: 0330 088 0464

E-mail: admin@migrantcentreni.org

Website: www.migrantcentreni.org/

African and Caribbean Support Organisation NI

Telephone: 028 9043 4090

Email: admin@acsoni.org

Address: 9 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR

Website: www.acsoni.org

North West Migrants Forum

Telephone: 028 71362184 or 07912295771

E-mail: info@nwmf.org.uk,

Address: 3rd Floor, Embassy Building, 3 Strand Road,
Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT48 7BH

Website: nwmf.org.uk

NI Direct - Asylum seekers and refugees: help and advice

www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/asylum-seekers-and-refugees-help-and-advice

**This leaflet was developed
by Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Community Involvement and Cohesion
Unit, in partnership with the
Central Housing Forum.**

The Central Housing Forum is a panel made up of tenant and community representatives who work with us to codesign and shape our services. The Forum is part of the wider Housing Community Network.

For further information please visit:

www.nihe.gov.uk/community/community-involvement/housing-community-network

To request an alternative format of
this document, please contact:

Housing Executive
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8PB

03448 920 900

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