

# Working and Living in Northern Ireland

## A Guide for Internationally Qualified Social Workers (IQSWs)

Northern Ireland is a vibrant and friendly place to make your home, with the National Office of Statistics recently rating it as the happiest place to live in the UK. This quick guide will help your research into making Northern Ireland the next step in your social work career.

There are over 6,600 social workers registered with the Social Care Council and approximately 70 are **Internationally Qualified Social Workers (IQSW)**.

We are committed to raising standards and apply a rigorous, transparent, and fair approach to determine Social Care Council registration and the right to practise in Northern Ireland. The Social Care Council will also apply the same standards and approach when assessing applications for registration made by social workers who qualified outside the UK.

## What's included in this guidance?

1. Immigration and Work Visas
2. Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards & Registration Requirements for Social Workers
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## 1. Immigration and Work Visas

Detailed guidance on immigration and visas is available from the UK Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

You will find information regarding visas and working in the UK

**Travelling between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland** – before you travel check the Entry Requirements at gov.uk These may change with little warning.

## 2. Northern Ireland Social Care Council Registration & Standards for Social Workers

**Registration with the Social Care Council** - It is against the law for someone to practise as a social worker without valid registration from the Social Care Council. The registration process for Internationally Qualified Social Workers can take up to 16 weeks and a social worker cannot take up social work employment until this has been completed and they have been advised that they are registered with the SCC..

**IQSW Registration Application Process** – <https://niscc.info/who-can-register/internationally-qualified-social-workers/> site It is important that you read the Guidance Notes for Social Workers who trained and qualified outside the UK. This explains the qualifications required and outlines the application process and the fee required.. Applications are, preferably, undertaken through the Portal on the SCC web site- you will need to open an account.

- **Where the Social Care Council considers that the qualification is equivalent** to that of a UK trained social worker it will grant registration. (In some cases the Social Care Council may apply a Condition to the individual's registration requiring them to complete the Assessed Year in Employment or Professional in Practice Requirements.)
- **Where the Northern Ireland Social Care Council identifies a shortfall in the placement experience in the applicant's application** they may recommend a compensation measure. This would be a period of supervised and assessed practice. The SCC can provide guidance regarding this but the arrangements and costs must be met by yourself.
- **In some cases, the Social Care Council may determine that the level of the applicant's qualification does not meet the standard required** and will advise the applicant if they wish to work as a social worker in Northern Ireland they will need to undertake the Degree in Social Work. Information regarding courses in NI is available at [niscc.info https://niscc.info/our-careers/](https://niscc.info/our-careers/)

Once registration has been granted, the social worker will be able to use the Social Care Council Online system to keep their registration details updated, pay annual fees and record their professional development.

**Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers** – The Standards set out what is expected of a Northern Ireland Social Care Council Registered Social Worker. All social workers are required to meet these standards and they will be used to regulate a social worker's Fitness to Practise. The Social Care Council will investigate and take action if necessary where it is alleged that a social worker may not have met the Social Care Council Standards for their Fitness to Practise.

- **Standards of Conduct** describe the values, attitudes and behaviours expected of workers in their day to day work

- **Standards of Practice** outline the knowledge and skills required for competent practice

More information about the Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice is available at: <https://niscc.info/registration-standards/standards-of-conduct-and-practice>

Details of the Fitness to Practise processes for regulation are available at <https://niscc.info/fitness-to-practise-and-hearings>

### 3. Finding Employment

**A checklist of things you need to consider when coming to work in Northern Ireland is available from the NI Government website at:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/introduction-working-northern-ireland>

**National Insurance Number** - A National Insurance Number is required by everyone working in the UK but the process can only be started once you arrive in Northern Ireland. Guidance is available from NI Direct at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/applying-national-insurance-number-if-you-live-northern-ireland>

**AccessNI: Criminal record checks-** You will need an enhanced check to practise as social worker in NI. You can only apply if the organisation that asked you to get the check gave you a personal identification number (PIN). <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/AccessNI/>

**Social Work jobs in Northern Ireland-** Social work offers a wide range of roles across a variety of setting, including children and families, people with a disability, older people, education, hospitals and criminal justice. Posts are available in the statutory- mainly Health and Social Care Trusts and the voluntary sector. Social workers often work as part of a multidisciplinary team alongside other professionals. There is the opportunity to develop from Newly Qualified/Entrant Level Social Worker through to Service Manager/ Director. Currently there is a shortage of social workers and there are jobs available for suitably qualified applicants.

**Social Work employers in Northern Ireland** – Most social work posts are advertised online or through recruitment agencies. Many employers only accept online applications.

- **Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs)** employ the most social workers in Northern Ireland. Jobs are advertised for all five HSCTs at <https://www.hscrecruit.com/>
- **Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations** employ a large number of social workers. Many of these jobs and links to organisations websites can be found at <https://www.communityni.org/>
- **Probation Board for NI** requires probation officers to be qualified social workers. Jobs are advertised at <http://www.pbni.org.uk/> and on Twitter at @PBNINews
- **Criminal Justice and Youth Justice NI** employ social workers in a range of roles. Jobs are advertised on local media and through their website at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/>
- **Recruitment Agencies** provide short term employment for social workers across all sectors. Contacts can be found online by searching 'social work recruitment agencies ni'
- **Private Sector Organisations** offer a small number of social work jobs. These posts are usually advertised through their websites and recruitment agencies.

**Preparing for Interviews** - An interview is an opportunity for the employer to find out if the applicant has the right skills and experience for the job. Advice on preparing for interviews is available from the NI Government website at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/preparing-interview>. When applying for social work jobs, it is important to find out about the particular service or team and to research any relevant government policy or legislation. More information is available at:

- **Department of Health NI** - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/>
- **Office of Social Services NI** - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/social-services>
- **Northern Ireland Executive** - <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/topics/work-executive>
- **NI Legislation** - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia>
- **HSC Recruit NI** - <https://www.hscrecruit.com/>
  
- **British Association of Social Workers Northern Ireland( BASW)** <https://www.basw.co.uk>
- **HSC Knowledge Exchange** - <http://www.knowledge.hscni.net/>
- **Degree in Social Work Partnership** – <http://nidswp.net/>

## 4. Finding Accommodation

Properties for sale or private rental are advertised through estate agent websites and some are also advertised on social media. Prices will vary according to location. It is a good idea to search online for property agents in the area you wish to live and contact them about your needs before you leave your current country. Make sure you get a tenancy agreement and read it carefully before signing. During your tenancy, you have housing rights as a tenant protected by law.

More advice on the range of rental options and any financial assistance for housing benefits is available from:

- **NI Government** - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/buying-selling-and-renting-home/private-renting>
- **Housing Advice NI** - <http://www.housingadviceni.org/housing-options-ni/planning-move>
- **NI Housing Executive** - <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/advice.htm>

## 5. Banking and Finances

Setting up banking arrangements in a new country can be complicated therefore it is worth talking with your current bank to see if they have a relationship with those operating in Northern Ireland as it may make this process more straightforward.

It is best to make an appointment with the bank that you wish to open an account with, you can usually do this either by visiting a branch or calling their customer service team. You will require specific documents in order to open your account, some of those typically requested are:

- **Photographic ID** - passport is best as the bank may require copies of your visa to process your application.
- **Proof of Employment** – your letter of appointment from your employer.
- **Evidence of your UK address** – where you do not have this, your employer may be able to help by providing you with a letter confirming your employment status upon request

It may also be helpful to seek independent Financial Advice regarding your personal situation; the following websites may be useful signposts to get your research started:

- <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en>
- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland/Debt-and-money/getting-financial-advice/>

## 6. Health and Social Care Services

The National Health Service, or NHS, provides health and social care for those who are entitled to live, work or study in the UK. Services are delivered by five Health and Social Care Trusts across NI. HSC Trusts manage and administer hospitals, health centres, residential homes, day centres and other health and social care facilities and they provide a wide range of health and social care services to the community. You can find out more about each Trust at <http://online.hscni.net/hospitals/health-and-social-care-trusts/>

**Health and Social Care Service Finder** at <http://servicefinder.hscni.net/> will help you locate services in your area such as GPs, hospitals, dentists, pharmacists, opticians, and some key HSC Trust services including Emergency Departments (A&E). Select the category of service required, enter a full postcode or town, and select a distance to display a list of the nearest matching services. Information includes address, contact details and scalable location map.

**Emergencies** - If you or someone you are with has an accident or suddenly becomes ill, you may need to visit an Accident & Emergency department. In serious circumstances, dial 999 for an ambulance, which will take you to the nearest public hospital for treatment.

**Registering with a Doctor (General Practitioner)** - GPs treat most common illnesses and promote well-being. If you require tests or suffer from a more serious medical condition they will refer you to a hospital for specialist treatment. Use the Service Finder noted above to locate the nearest health centre which will have a GP Practice. You will need to contact them to see if they are accepting new patients in their practice and confirm the documents you need to submit.

## 7. Education

Education is compulsory for children aged between five and sixteen years. Education is provided free of charge through the state system. Private schools are available in Northern Ireland but their fees and entry requirements vary so it is best to contact the school directly for information.

Comprehensive advice and information on the school system in Northern Ireland and how to apply for places is available on the Education Authority website at <http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-a-school-place-or-transfer-between-schools/#>. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland also offers help to parents on a range of educational issues including support for children for whom English is not their first language. Find out more at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/newcomers>

## 8. Childcare

Childcare in Northern Ireland is varied, both in cost and type. From nursery schools to child minders, there are a number of options available but it is always best to start your search before you move to Northern Ireland in order to find the right fit for your needs. Further information is available from:

- **NI Child-minding Association** - <https://nicma.org/>

- **Early Years Organisation** - <http://www.early-years.org/parents/pre-school-children.php>
- **Education Authority Preschool Advice** - <http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-a-school-place-or-transfer-between-schools/pre-school/>
- **Family Support NI- Family support information** <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk>

## 9. Transport and Driving

**Public Transport** – publicly operated buses and trains across Northern Ireland are operated by Translink:

- **For bus/train services** <http://www.translink.co.uk/>

**Driving** – You must drive on the left hand side of the road in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Driving rules and regulations vary from country to country therefore it is important to take some time to read the Northern Ireland regulations on driving licences, car tax and registration and insurance responsibilities. Further advice is available from NI Direct at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring>

- **Driving Licence** - A licence is required to drive in Northern Ireland. Depending on the country you come from there are different driving licence requirements. <https://www.nidirect.gov/motoring>
- **Registration and Car Tax** - If you bring your vehicle with you from your home country, then you may do so for up to six months in any 12-month period provided that it is fully registered and tax paid in the country of registration. If you wish to keep your vehicle in the UK for over six months, you will need to register your vehicle in the UK with vehicle licensing at: <https://www.gov.uk/vehicletax>
- **Insurance** - You must have at least Third Party Insurance if you wish to drive in the UK.
- **MOT** - Vehicles must meet specific technical and safety requirements, and you will have to pay for UK registration. If the vehicle is more than four years old, you will need to complete an MOT test showing that the vehicle is roadworthy-<https://www.nigov.uk/MOT>

## 10. Policing

The [Police Service of Northern Ireland](https://www.psni.police.uk), or PSNI, serves all of Northern Ireland. For more information contact <https://www.psni.police.uk> In an emergency, call 999, in a non-emergency call 101. Online is a quick and easy way to report non-emergency incidents.

**Registering with the PSNI if you have a criminal conviction;** should your entry to the UK be conditional on registering with the police, you must do so within 7 days of your arrival. If the entry clearance conditions for your dependents (spouse, partner or children) that are travelling with you are the same, they must also register within 7 days. Children under 16 do not need to register with the police.

If you need to register, you must go to the PSNI within 7 days of-

Arriving in the UK if you applied for a visa from outside the UK

The date on the letter or email you received giving you permission to stay

**After you register:**

The PSNI will give you a certificate. Keep it while your visa or permission to stay in the UK lasts.

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