

Working and Living in Northern Ireland

A Guide for Internationally Qualified Social Workers (IQSWs)

May 2017

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.

Social workers who are trained and qualified in the European Economic Area (EEA) have the right to practise anywhere in the EEA as long as they are appropriately trained and qualified. NISCC is committed to Directive 2005/36/EC and will ensure a transparent and fair approach is used to determine whether a social worker can gain NISCC registration and the right to practise in Northern Ireland.

NISCC will also apply the same standards and approach when assessing applications for registration made by social workers who qualified outside the EEA.

What's included in this guidance?

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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/browse/visas-immigration>

EU/ EEA/ Swiss Nationals – have the right to live, work or study in the UK. They will have to provide evidence to confirm their nationality. Acceptable documents include:

- **Passport**
- **National identity card**
- **Residence permit**

Croatian Nationals - remain subject to immigration restrictions and must provide a registration certificate (purple, blue or yellow) as evidence of their right to live and work in the UK unless they meet exemption criteria. If you require a certificate then your employer may be able to sponsor you.

Travelling between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland - non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals must be aware that they must not travel to Northern Ireland via the Republic of Ireland unless their visa explicitly allows travel within the Republic of Ireland.

2. NISCC Registration & Standards for Social Workers

Registration with NISCC - It is against the law for someone to practise as a social worker without valid registration from the Northern Ireland 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.

IQSW Registration Application Process - IQSWs must complete an electronic application form and pay an application fee. (Details of current registration fees are available online at <https://niscc.info/registration-standards/fees>.) The application form asks for details to confirm identity, good character, the social work qualification and work history. All of this information is assessed by the registration team in accordance with to ensure the applicant has social work skills and qualities required to practise in Northern Ireland. in their job role. Copies of the IQSW application form and guidance is available from the NISCC website at: <https://niscc.info/registration-standards>

- **Where the NISCC considers that the qualification, or training, or practice of the social worker is equivalent** to that of a UK trained social worker it will grant registration. (In some cases NISCC may apply a Condition against the individual's registration requiring them to complete the Assessed Year in Employment or Professional in Practice Requirements.)
- **Where the NISCC identifies a shortfall in the applicant's application** compared to the NISCC social work qualification, they will advise the applicant of the shortfall in their training/experience of the individual and may recommend a compensation measure. This would either be an exam to test knowledge or a period of supervised and assessed practice.
- **In some cases, the NISCC may determine that the level of the applicant's qualification is too low** and will advise the applicant that they will need to undertake the full NISCC Degree in Social Work Training to be eligible to practise in NI.

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

NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers – The Standards set out what is expected of a NISCC 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. NISCC will investigate and take action if necessary where it is alleged that a social worker may not have met the NISCC 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 NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice is available from the NISCC website 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 comprehensive 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 and can be requested from the Social Security Agency (SSA) but the process can only be started once you arrive in Northern Ireland. Further guidance is available from NI Direct at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/applying-national-insurance-number-if-you-live-northern-ireland>

Social Work jobs in NI - Social work offers a wide range of job roles across a variety of settings in social care, education, hospitals and criminal justice. Social workers often work as part of a multidisciplinary team alongside other social care, health care, medical, education and housing professionals. There is the opportunity to develop from Newly Qualified/Entrant Level Social Worker through to Service Manager or Director. Social workers are required to assess and manage the care and protection needs of people affected by disability, health issues, mental ill health, homelessness; age related illnesses, alcohol or drugs dependency. They need to be able to listen, support and help people face difficult and distressing problems while respecting dignity, choice and confidentiality.

Social Work employers in NI – 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/>
- **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.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en>
- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland/Debt-and-money/getting-financial-advice/#/>
- <http://www.unbiased.co.uk/>

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). Simply pick 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.

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 institution 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/>

9. Transport and Driving

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

- **For bus services in Belfast, visit the Metro section at:**
<http://www.translink.co.uk/Services/Metro-Service-Page/>
- **For bus services across the rest of NI, visit the Ulsterbus section at:**
<http://www.translink.co.uk/Services/Ulsterbus-Service-Page/>
- **For all train services, visit the NI Railways section at:**
<http://www.translink.co.uk/Services/NI-Railways/>

Driving – You must drive on the left hand side of the road in the UK 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.
- **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:
- **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.

10. Policing

The [Police Service of Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring), or PSNI, serves all of Northern Ireland. For more information and to find your local station, go to: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring>. In an emergency, dial 999 and request 'Police'.

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.

In order to complete your registration with the police, you will need to bring the following items with you:

- **Two passport-sized photographs**
- **A letter confirming your employment**
- **Your passport**
- **A registration fee, payable in cash, of around £34**

Northern Ireland
Social Care Council