

Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

Migration Briefing

The Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP) works across the spheres of government and between the public, private and third sectors to ensure that Northern Ireland effectively welcomes, supports and integrates new migrants in a way which contributes to economic growth and vibrant, cohesive communities. It provides a regional advisory and consultative function, enabling our partners and other stakeholders to develop an appropriate approach to the management of migration in Northern Ireland. NISMP is hosted by NILGA.

www.migrationni.org

A briefing on issues relating to migration

1. NISMP Update

Sustainable Communities & Demographics Working Group

The newly established NISMP Sustainable Communities and Demographics Working Group takes its membership from elected members and officers from all 11 councils. The group has now met three times and its action plan for 2019/20 addresses the issues relating to migration that were prioritised at the inaugural meeting in November, notably, ensuring that new migrants are aware of local services and feel welcome, and that good practice within councils is shared and developed.

For more information on this group, or on any of the NISMP working groups please contact us.

2. Brexit

Settlement Scheme for EU Citizens

The EU Settlement scheme will be fully open by 30 March 2019, although EU nationals who meet the criteria can apply now. Fees for the scheme have now been waived and anyone who has already applied and paid a fee can get this refunded. More details on the scheme can be found [here](#).

The Home Office will also be delivering workshops across Northern on the scheme in late February. More information about these workshops and details on how to register can be found [here](#).

Details of how the rights of EU nationals under the Settlement Scheme will be affected in a 'no deal' scenario can be found [here](#).

The Home Office has developed a [toolkit](#) for Local Authorities and community leaders to help them more effectively support EU nationals to understand and navigate the EU Settlement Scheme.

Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal Bill)

This bill is currently passing through parliament. It aims to make provisions relating to immigration law that will come into force after Brexit. It repeals EU law relating to free movement and would place EEA nationals (apart from Irish nationals) and their families under UK immigration control. More information on the Bill, including how to submit your views, can be found [here](#).

Government White Paper on Post-Brexit Immigration

The government has published its plans relating to immigration control post-Brexit in [“The UK’s future skills-based immigration system” white paper](#). It primarily outlines plans for a single skills-based immigration system which will apply to EU as well as non-EU migrants, but also covers student migration and family migration for EEA nationals who migrate to the UK post-Brexit. The paper commits to a 12-month programme of engagement to seek feedback on these plans. NISMP will work with partners to collate and communicate viewpoints of stakeholders to government and to elected members within Northern Ireland.

Shortage Occupation List for Northern Ireland

The government has requested the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to consider whether there should be a separate Shortage Occupation List for Northern Ireland. MAC will be meeting employers in Northern Ireland on 26th February. Details of this meeting are yet to be confirmed but please contact us for more information.

3. Asylum and Refugee Issues

Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation Scheme

Councils in Northern Ireland have contributed significantly to the Vulnerable People Relocation Scheme by committing to supporting the relocation to the UK of some of the most vulnerable Syrian families living in refugee camps. Currently 1,258 Syrians have been relocated to Northern Ireland. Updated information on the scheme can be found [here](#).

Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract

Asylum accommodation and support is funded by the Home Office and delivered through a contract known as COMPASS. COMPASS will be replaced in September 2019 by a new contract which will be delivered in Northern Ireland by Mears Housing. All asylum accommodation is in Belfast. NISMP is working with the Home Office, Mears Housing and local stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition for asylum seekers between contracts.

4. Research and Reports

Migration Advisory Committee

In September the MAC published its final reports on [EEA migration in the UK](#) and on the [impacts of international students](#). These reports will help inform government policy on migration.

National Conversation on Immigration

Also in September the findings from the biggest ever public consultation on immigration was published. Almost 20,000 people engaged in this debate with 60 locations visited, including 4 in Northern Ireland. More information on this National Conversation can be found [here](#).

Knowledge Economy Report

Ulster University has published its [2018 Knowledge Economy Report](#), which highlights the characteristics of the Northern Ireland knowledge economy and the factors that need to be addressed to encourage further growth. These include the need for immigration policy to facilitate the recruitment from abroad when required.