



Community Orientation **Guidebook**

IRELAND



Impressum

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Community Orientation Guidebook Ireland

INTRODUCTION

This guidebook is produced as part of a project “STIRE: Supporting the Integration of Resettled” which is carried out in Austria, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Romania. STIRE’s main objective is to support pre-departure and foster post-arrival integration of refugees that are resettled in one of the above-mentioned countries. However, the information provided in this booklet can also be helpful to other migrants/asylum seekers on their way to establish a new life in one of the mentioned EU countries.

You can find additional information about international protection (refugee status), the resettlement process and other useful information for refugees on the STIRE project website (stire.org)

This guidebook presents information about Ireland. In this guidebook you will find basic information about support services to help refugees get started, obtain social and healthcare services, learn the language and new skills, start work, get settled and successfully move forward with their lives. The guidebook does not provide detailed information but it rather provides general guidance on the main areas of importance for people that are new to a country.

This guidebook is also a source of useful information for service providers in the local communities in Ireland, who work with refugees, providing basic information and a list of resources and contacts that can help make the integration process easier for everyone involved.





1. Housing

Something important you need to know about the housing area in Ireland, is that as per 2020 year the demand for funding schemes to access a property or private renting is very high. This means that you could be put in a waiting list to access a property at a lower cost or access to a renting apartment.

1.1 RECEPTION

The initial reception of refugees in Ireland are the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs). These centres have been established to accommodate people arriving to Ireland under the EU Relocation and Resettlement Schemes. So, if you are arriving to the country under the resettlement programme, this will be your accommodation. There are three EROCs with a total capacity of 500 places.

These are located in:

- Abbeyfield Hotel EROC Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon
- Clonea Strand Hotel EROC Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
- Mosney, Co. Meath

The centres provide basic needs such as food and orientation sessions. In the EROC, you will receive cultural orientation and language training to prepare you for independent living and settle in the country.



This accommodation is meant to be only temporary, while you await refugee status. The average time of staying is 8-12 weeks. However, the total time of stay can vary according to your specific case, in particular in relation to the time that the refugee status will be granted.

Contacts & Resources	
Government: Government Website - Reception Government Resource - Reception	Organizations: Crosscare Migrant Project - Reception Citizens Information - Reception

1.2 GOVERNMENT FUNDED/SUBSIDISED HOUSING

As a resettled refugee you are entitled to avail of subsidised housing options. The different city and county councils provide different types of housing schemes. The application process differs according to the scheme and location. In general, all these schemes aim at helping people with low-income, and those that don't have a house, to access a property at a lower cost than the usual market prices. Your eligibility will be decided based on your situation in relation to for example your needs or income. However, the specific rules for eligibility will be county-based, so it is really important to find this information in relation to your place of residence within the county. There are specific points that you should be aware of:

- You will need to provide proof that you are living/working/residing on the area you want to avail the subsidy from
- The process usually involves filling application forms in English language
- The application will be assessed, and a decision will be made on your eligibility
- In the case you get accepted, you may be put on a waiting list



You should contact your local authority to see if you are in the position of applying for subsidised housing and to search for specific information on schemes in your area of residence: [Housing Local Authority Office](#). You can also get in contact with your local Citizens Information office that will be able to help you in finding this information.

Contacts & Resources	
Government: Housing Local Authority	Organizations: Crosscare Migrant Project - Reception Citizens Information - Reception Citizens Information - Types of Affordable Housing Schemes

1.3 RENTING APARTMENT/HOUSE

If you are interested in a property, you can contact the landlord directly and ask for an appointment. When doing this, you should be aware of the following:

For signing a tenancy agreement, you can be asked to provide proof of work, reference of people that know you in Ireland, and bank statements. This is a very important document.

The costs for renting in Ireland vary greatly according to the area where you want to rent. If you want to rent in the city or near a city, you can expect to pay much more than leaving outside the city. You can check the Tenancy Index to find concrete information of prices.

The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) oversees the private rental sector in Ireland. You can find rules and responsibilities of landlords and tenants on their website.



Contacts & Resources

Organizations:

You can find apartments for renting or rooms in apartments in different websites,

<https://www.daft.ie/>

<https://www.rent.ie/>

Organizations that can help you finding a home, and support you with the renting process:

[Threshold](#)

[Focus Ireland](#)

[The Irish Refugee Council](#)

[The Private Residential Tenancies Board \(PRTB\)](#)

[The Tenancy Index](#)

1.4 OWNERSHIP

If your income is enough and you have a regular source of income, you can apply for a mortgage to buy a house. The information related to mortgages should be gathered from the bank directly as this differs greatly according to your situation.





2. Health care

2.1 RIGHTS

Public health services are supported by the state and delivered by the Health Service Executive (HSE). You are entitled to receive public health services if you are living in Ireland or intend to live here for at least one year. This is known as being ordinarily resident in Ireland.

2.2 HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance is used to pay for private care in hospitals or from various health professionals in hospitals or in their practices. Some health insurance requires that you pay in advance and get reimbursed for your expenses, and some have agreements with hospitals to pay at the hospital directly. You should check with your own company as to exactly what procedures they use. You may wish to get private health insurance if you wish to receive private healthcare from hospitals or other private health practices. There are a wide range of companies who provide voluntary health insurance in Ireland. These companies provide a wide range of health care cover depending on your needs and means to pay. The Health Insurance Authority (HIA) regulates the health insurance industry in Ireland.

You must apply directly to the health insurance company that you wish to join. Each company must abide by the general rules described but, after that, they are free to make their own rules. The level of cover available and the rates of cover vary from one company to another.



At present, every health insurance company must accept anyone who wishes to join. Each health insurance company has detailed policies related to pre-existing conditions or age.

The costs vary according to the services included in the health insurance scheme.

Contacts:

Contacts & Resources	
Government authorities: Health Insurance Authority Department of Health	Organizations: Citizens Information

2.3 PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Primary Care services mean all of the health or social care services that you can find in your community, outside of the hospital setting. Primary Care includes General Practitioners (GP), Public Health Nurses and a range of other services provided through your Local Health Office.

You may be entitled to a medical card which entitles you to free healthcare across a range of services (doctor visits, dental care, eye care and more). Your eligibility for this medical card is based on your means. If you are not eligible for a medical card, you may be entitled to a GP Visit card which gives you free doctor visits. If you qualify for a medical card, you will need to check if the doctor is accepting new patients. You can register for medical card via the GP or by way of an online/written application. Your medical card will be reviewed every year. The HSE will send you a review form in the post or a letter asking you to renew online.

If you need to find a doctor, you can access the HSE website (contact below) to find you nearest primary health care centre, or attend your local HSE Health Offices to get further information (contact below)



A person living in Ireland for at least one year is considered by the HSE to be 'ordinarily resident' and is entitled to either full eligibility (with medical card) or limited eligibility (without medical card) for health services.

Medical Cards allow people to get a wide range of health services and medicines free of charge. People without medical cards can still access a wide range of community and hospital health services, either free of charge or at reduced cost.

Contacts & Resources	
Government authorities: Primary Health Care Centre Finder List of Health Offices Eligibility for a Medical Card	Organizations: Citizens Information

2.4 SECONDARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Specialist health care services will always require an appointment. To get access to a specialist, you need to be referred by your GP. They will refer you to the local specialist either in the nearest city or regional hospital. The waiting time for an appointment can differ if you have private insurance or not.

If you live in a rural area and require specialty care, you may need to travel to a city hospital to receive the specialised treatment you need.

Contacts & Resources	
Government authorities: Health Insurance Authority Find your nearest GP	Organizations & Resources: Tips on saving money on health insurance HSF/ Irish Life Health/ Laya/ VHI



2.5 EMERGENCY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

There are 29 emergency departments (EDs) across Ireland. Some of these departments will only treat adult patients. You should attend EDs in the case of serious emergencies including accidents, injuries or in cases where your life may be threatened. EDs are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To receive treatment, you can visit the EDs directly or call 112/999 free of charge to request the Ambulance Service. When speaking to an Emergency Call Taker over the phone it is important that you remain calm and follow their instructions.

2.6 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Mental health services are widely available through face to face contact, telephone and online services provided by the HSE. Some NGOs (such as [Spirasi](#)) offer services which works with refugees who have experienced significant trauma or are victims of torture. Your doctor can refer you to these organisations if requested.

There are different phone lines where you can call at any time if you need to talk to someone:

Contacts & Resources	
Government authorities: HSE Mental Health Line Freephone: 1800 111 888	Organizations & Resources: Samaritans . Freephone: 116 123 Spirasi Jesuit Refugee Service





3. Social services and welfare

3.1 FINANCIAL BENEFITS/SUBSIDIES

Having been granted refugee status, you are in the position of applying for any social welfare benefit on the same basis as an Irish citizen.

There are different social welfare benefits, and the eligibility depends on case by case.

As a refugee, you can apply for social welfare benefits, but it is important to be aware that social welfare payments may affect the renewal of your refugee status or an application for citizenship. Based on this, it is necessary that you get in contact with your local social welfare office so they can provide guidance on your benefits.

Some examples of financial social welfare benefits are:

For Individuals:

- If you are unemployed, but are looking for a job you can apply to a jobseeker allowance to support you on your search (details on the contact & resources section)
- If you have a disability and are 16 years old or more, you can apply for a disability allowance
- If you do not have sufficient income to your needs or the needs of your family, you can apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance

For families or carers:

- If you are a lone parent (female or male) under 66 years old you can apply for a One-Parent Family Payment
- If you have a child under 16 years old which is in full-time education, you can apply for Child Benefit.



Information & Resources of financial Social Welfare benefits:	Government Resources
Social Welfare Local Offices Jobseeker's Allowance Information Disability Allowance Information Information on One Family Payment Child Benefit Information Supplementary Welfare Allowance	Social Welfare government website

3.2 SOCIAL SERVICES (NON-FINANCIAL)

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), which is a governmental office, coordinates and ensures integration for refugees across different government departments and areas. The office has a programme in place designed for the integration of refugees into their local communities. This programme is called the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). Under this programme, different resettlement officers allocated throughout the country provide integration support to individuals and families that just arrived to the country.

Contacts & Resources for Government Programmes
Irish Refugee Protection Programme Government website for Integration



Different organisations provide services that foster the integration of the resettled. Some of these services include:

- Advocacy, supporting people to access information they need as well as access to their rights
- Assistance and Support, directly with people that are in need and cannot wait for official or organisational supports
- Integration of refugees as soon as they arrive into the country

Contacts & Resources for Organizations that work in Social Services

[Irish Refugee Council](#)

[Irish Red Cross](#)





4. Education

The Irish education system includes primary, second, third-level and further education. This education is funded by the government at all levels with private education also available. People who have been granted refugee status have the right to access education and training in the same manner and to the same extent in all respects as an Irish citizen.

4.1 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Preschool

Children can start preschool when they are 2 years old and 8 months of age and continue until they transfer to primary school. Children of preschool age have access to preschool education on the same basis as Irish children under the Early Childhood Care Scheme (ECCE). There is no charge to parents for the playschool or daycare hours provided under the ECCE scheme. However, there are other services available such as extra hours or activities, which could be charged. There are more than 5,000 pre-school running under the scheme. You may want to find one that is nearer you, and when you do, you can contact them directly. Most pre-schools will have either a waiting list or an enrolment procedure.

Contacts & Resources for Organizations that work in Social Services

[Citizens Information](#)

[ECCE Scheme Website](#)



Primary education

Children can enter primary education no earlier than the September following their fourth birthday. Irish is a mandatory subject although some children who come to live in Ireland may be exempt. Primary education is provided in primary schools. All children must stay in school until 16.

Primary education is free of cost. There are a small number of private primary schools – called non-recognised schools, for which you have to pay fees every year. The schools can vary in terms of religion, or if it's a male only, female only school, or mixed school. There are extra resources in schools for non-English speaking children. Children may have free access to mother tongue support.

All schools have their own eligibility policy. To enrol a child in primary school you can find the school that is closest to you, or you like the most and present an application directly with the school. The school will provide information about eligibility criteria, time of year to present application and waiting periods. The application process is usually done through an application form or a letter directly to the board of management.

Contacts & Resources:

[Find a school here](#)

[Citizen Information](#)

[Information about schools](#)

[Resources for non english speaker](#)

[Citizens Information](#)

[Refugee and Access Programme \(RAP\)](#)

Secondary education

Children attend secondary level education in Ireland between the ages of 12 and 18.

This cycle last 5 years and comprises of two state exams:

Junior Certificate (end of Year 3) and Leaving Certificate (end of year 5).

In Ireland, all children are entitled to free secondary education. Most secondary schools are funded by the State and most children attend these schools. There are extra resources in schools for non-English-speaking children. Children may have free access to mother tongue support.



All schools have their own eligibility policy. To enrol a child in primary school you can find the school that is closest to you, or you like the most and present an application directly with the school. The school will provide information about eligibility criteria, time of year to present application and waiting periods. The application process is usually done through an application form or a letter directly to the board of management.

Contacts & Resources:[Find a school here](#)[Citizen Information](#)[Information about schools](#)[Resources for non english speaker](#)[Citizens Information](#)[Refugee and Access Programme \(RAP\)](#)**Higher education**

Higher education courses are run in universities; institutes of technology; colleges of education; and private third level colleges. To access higher education courses, you need to have a secondary education recognised. All the courses will be run in English language, which in some institutions is part of the eligibility criteria to have. There is some financial support available. They differ in criteria and the application process can be different according to the grant. It is important to get in contact directly with the funding institution to ask for more information.

Contacts & Resources:[Financial Support for Students](#)[Financial supports for students](#)[Applications to Higher Education](#)

4.2 ADULT EDUCATION

There are programmes and courses for adults that are passed the age for attending secondary school and would like to go back to training and education. Some of these are Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses; Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme; (VTOS) – this is second-chance education for unemployed people; Youthreach programmes for early school-leavers; literacy and basic education programmes; evening classes for adults in second-level schools. These are not part of the higher education system.

The enrolment system depends on the institution, and its requirements.

4.3 RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications that were obtained outside Ireland can be presented to the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), which is the agency responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland. This process is done when higher education courses require specific qualifications for enrolment. This process is very country and qualification dependent. You should explore the QQI website to find more information.

Contacts & Resources:

[Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#)
[Citizens Information](#)





5. Work

5.1 RIGHT TO WORK

If you have been waiting for refugee status for more than 9 months, you can apply for a permission to access the Irish labour market by the Labour Market Access unit in the Department of Justice.

Once you have been granted international protection, you are entitled to the same working rights as Irish citizens. This means that they have free access to the labour market and do not need a work permit. You are also free to start your own business within the State. If you are unemployed, you are also entitled to the services and benefits provided by the government.

If you currently have social benefits and you find a job, you can receive the benefits for up to 12 weeks later you find the job. Your situation will be assessed again in relation to how much you earn, and your benefits could be reduced.

5.2 HOW TO FIND WORK

There are different services and options for looking for a job:

- Your local INTREO office can provide advice on how to look for a job in your area
- The Jobs Ireland website lists jobs available in Ireland. You can search by location, type of work and sector. The website can be found here.
- You can search in the classified job section on local Newspaper
- Recruitment agencies can support in the job search. There are many recruitment agencies in Ireland. You can search online for the names of them.



Contacts & Resources:[INTREO office](#)[Jobs Ireland](#)

List of Irish newspapers: Irish Daily Mail/Irish Daily Mirror/Irish Daily Star/Irish Examiner/Irish Independent/Irish Sun/Herald/The Irish Times.

You can find your nearest employment services offices which can support you to write a CV, job applications, and prepare for an interview.

There are non-for profit organisations that support to set up a cv, preparing for interviews, etc, for example:

Contacts & Resources:[Local Employment Services](#)[RISE Programme](#)[Irish Refugee Council- Employment Programme for Women](#)[Citizens Information](#)**5.3 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS**

Contracts should include:

- The place of work
- The title of the job or the nature of the work
- The date the employment started
- Pay intervals (for example, weekly or monthly)
- Any terms or conditions relating to hours of work (including overtime)
- Paid leave (other than sick leave), including annual leave and public holiday entitlement
- Sick pay
- Pension and pension schemes
- Period of notice to be given by employer or employee
- Details of any collective agreements that may affect your terms of employment
- Termination of contract needs to be clearly specified on the contract, meaning who can terminate the contract, under what circumstances and with how much time in advance.



Contacts & Resources:[Differences of contract](#)

Complaints about termination of contract can be found here:

[Complaints](#)**5.4 SALARIES, SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND TAXES**

As of February 2020, the minimum wage in Ireland is €10.10 per hour. This rate is lower if you are aged 19 or younger. Your employer can pay you more than this but, by law, cannot pay you less.

When you begin to work, you will have to pay tax. The Revenue collects tax on behalf of the government. The Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system is used by employers to deduct tax directly from your wages and pay it to the Revenue. There are two other charges deducted from your earnings: Pay Related Social Income (PRSI) and Universal Social Charge.

Salary is calculated and paid according to the specific arrangement with your employer. This can be monthly and weekly.

5.5 RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES

As a worker, there are some rights and obligations you should be aware of. These laws are in relation to minimum rates of pay, working hours, leave, health and safety, changing jobs and employment rights. You are also entitled to have a contract within three months after you start to work.

Contacts & Resources:[Minimum Rates of Payment](#)[Working Hours](#)[Health and Safety](#)[Changing Job](#)[Employment Right](#)

- If you need support in protecting your rights you can contact:

[Agency for Workers](#)[Local Citizens Information Agency](#)



6. Learning the language

The national language of Ireland is Irish (Gaelic). However, it is not spoken by many people. English is the most commonly used language in Ireland. In order to be able to function within Irish society, you will need to be able to communicate in English. Learning English will increase your ability to find work, join clubs, communicate with service providers (doctors, teachers etc.), build relationships and integrate into communities. Irish people have a unique way of speaking English with many different accents and many phrases or sayings which are only used in Ireland.

6.1 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Young children can learn English at school. Children that are not English native speakers and have little English language are placed in the same classes as Irish children as this allows them to learn very quickly. Primary schools as well as secondary schools provide additional support and English classes to children that need to learn the language quickly in order to continue with the education process.

The type of support may differ from school to school so you can contact your children's school directly to find out the additional support for language.



6.2 ADULTS

When you are located in an EROC centre, you will have access to English language classes. This is a free service available during your time in the centre.

Fáilte Isteach offers free conversational English classes around the country for all types of migrants.

If you are unemployed and receiving social welfare payments, you are entitled to free training which can include English language training. You can contact your nearest Social Welfare Office or visit [Fetchcourses](#) to find out more.

There are many private English Language Schools all over Ireland which are fully accredited. Fees will vary according to each school.

Contacts & Resources:

Free English Classes:

[FáilteIsteach](#)

[Spirasi](#)

You can find paid and accredited courses here:

[FET Course Hub](#)

6.3 ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING

You can also learn the English language online. The benefits for learning the language online is that it will not create many costs as course fees, transport or materials. However, as this would be a course made in isolation, it could be difficult if you need extra support.

Contacts & Resources:

Examples of websites where you can learn English language:

[Coursera](#)

[Duolingo](#)





7. Community engagement

Taking an active role in community engagement could be beneficial for your integration into the community. There are different ways where you can engage in community participation in your local community.

Here are some examples of what you can look for:

- Community resource centres usually have different cultural activities, arts, and technology courses and activities
- Volunteer opportunities
- Sports in local clubs
- Women groups
- Men groups
- Religious - there are different mosques in Ireland, located around different regions.



Contacts & Resources:

[Map of services for young people](#)

[Find your nearest community resource centre here](#)

Syrian Communities:

[Muslim Sisters of Éire](#)

[Irish Syrian Community](#)

Volunteer Opportunities:

Volunteer Ireland: www.volunteer.ie

Dublin Volunteer Centre: www.volunteerdublincity.ie/

For different activities:

www.spirasi.ie/

www.newcommunities.ie/

Mosques:

[Mosques](#)





8. Free legal aid

A person applying for asylum can register with the Refugee Legal Service (RLS), a specialist part of the Legal Aid Board and an independent body. The Legal Aid Board is an independent statutory body providing legal services in civil matters. You will be required to have an independent level of English language in order to fill in applications with your information. Assistance in this regard will not be provided by this service.

Further information: [Legal Aid Board](#)

There are a few organisations in Ireland where you can get legal aid. In order to access legal aid, you will need to provide some information such as address, names of your family, and details of your situation.

In Ireland, the legal advice you can expect for refugees is in relation to:

- The family reunification process (how to bring your family to Ireland)
- Refugee legal status process (for having updates on the process, supporting appealing the process)
- Deportation matters

There are a number of different organisations that provide different types of support.



These are:

[The Independent Irish Refugee Centre Law Centre](#)

[Legal Aid Board](#) - You will be required to give a financial contribution for the services. This will depend on your situation, and can be up to €150

[FLAC](#) - legal advice

www.migrantproject.ie/immigration-information/ - legal advice and advocacy services

[IOM](#) - Provides assistance with voluntary return, family reunification, counter-trafficking and resettlement

[Spirasi](#) - Provide support with navigating Ireland's legal system

[Crosscare Services](#) - Provides information and advocacy services

[Jesuit Refugee Service](#) - Provides information and advocacy services

Migrant Rights Ireland - Provides advice service and works in particular on issues of rights for undocumented migrants; identification and protection of victims of trafficking for forced labour; employment rights and protections





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