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CHALLENGING RACISM: ENDING HATE

*Dr. Richard Montague
and Prof. Peter Shirlow*



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WHAT ARE THE USUAL 'MYTHS' ABOUT MIGRANTS
BACKGROUND

POPULATION
EMPLOYMENT
HOUSING
BENEFITS
ECONOMY
HEALTHCARE
EDUCATION
CRIME
SOCIAL COHESION

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WHAT ARE THE USUAL 'MYTHS' ABOUT MIGRANTS?

Generally, a migrant is someone from outside of the UK and Ireland who is here to seek or take up work. This document challenges the many 'myths' about migrants that are damaging, false and unjust. We usually hear these myths expressed in the following ways:

- 'They're taking our jobs/houses/benefits;'
- 'They're involved in crime;'
- 'They're taking up places in our schools;'
- 'They're putting pressure on the health system;'
- 'They don't make an effort to fit in.'

To this end, we identify the following areas of concern for analysis:

- **POPULATION;**
- **EMPLOYMENT;**
- **HOUSING;**
- **BENEFITS;**
- **ECONOMY;**
- **HEALTHCARE;**
- **EDUCATION;**
- **CRIME;**
- **SOCIAL COHESION.**

BACKGROUND

Migrants are often on the receiving end of negative stereotyping and scaremongering. For example, in late 2013 sections of the British media presented stories that the UK was about to be 'flooded' by a mass influx of Romanians and Bulgarians. The Sun newspaper hysterically claimed: 'a tidal wave of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants is threatening to swamp Britain — and flood our overstretched jobs market'.¹

Such reporting came in the advent of work restrictions being removed and allowing citizens from the A2 countries (Bulgaria and Romania) access to the EU labour market by January 2014. The arrival of newcomers did not unravel as was suggested and there has been no noticeable negative impact on jobs or public services in the UK.

In fact, recent European immigrants in the UK have paid £8.8 billion more in tax than they have consumed in public services.² In Northern Ireland, migration also contributes to sustaining economic growth, filling labour shortages, bringing much needed skills and enriching our society through cultural diversity.³

Some perceptions echo slogans such as 'British jobs

for British workers'.⁴ Demanding the ring-fencing of jobs specifically for UK citizens would not only be an unlawful discriminatory exercise, it would also be counter-productive in terms of trade and investment from international businesses.⁵

It is not only political parties, politicians and the media which have reflected negative images of migrants. A 2010 study on public attitudes towards migrant workers in Northern Ireland highlighted:

- 70% of respondents felt that migrants put a strain on services (e.g. social housing, education, and healthcare);
- Almost half (48%) of those surveyed felt that migrant workers take jobs away from people born in Northern Ireland.⁶

Moreover, a 2014 Queen's University study of community workers who were challenging myths that aided hate crime in Belfast felt that community concerns were generally articulated around jobs and housing.⁷ In this way, racist hate crimes are often a crude way of 'defending' resources coupled with notions of protecting community identity from the 'outsider'.

These opinions have underpinned certain racist attacks in Northern Ireland. Between 2013 and 2014 there has been a 43% increase in racially-motivated offences, with 70% of these occurring in Belfast.⁸ During the present reporting period, the PSNI has noted that racially motivated crimes in Northern Ireland have risen by more than 50%.⁹

In the context of a perceived competition for scarce resources like jobs and housing, this may provide fertile ground for racism. Therefore, the media, political parties, politicians and even our neighbours or work colleagues can fuel negative and incorrect perceptions about migrants. When these ideas take root, they can create an atmosphere of ethnic intolerance, resentment and hostility, often resulting in hate crimes.

We need to challenge prejudices and continue to debunk myths about migrants. It is no coincidence that racist hate crimes tend to occur in areas of multiple deprivation where foreign nationals are blamed for economic and social ills. These are communities in Northern Ireland which have not felt the economic benefits of the 'peace process.' But while socio-economic disadvantage is not a 'myth', perceptions about threats to resources like jobs and housing are forms of myth-making when we look at the facts. It must not be forgotten that such racist attitudes are not unique to communities of need.

KEY FACTS

Recent European immigrants in the UK have paid £8.8 billion more in tax than they have consumed in public services. In Northern Ireland, migration also contributes to sustaining economic growth, filling labour shortages, bringing much needed skills and enriching our society through cultural diversity.

Between 2013 and 2014 there has been a 43% increase in racially-motivated offences, with 70% of these occurring in Belfast.

*'There's
too many of
them here'*



There are concerns about 'high levels' of immigration into Northern Ireland and of migrants subsequently being a drain on resources. The expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004 welcomed 8 new member states known as the A8 countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. This expansion enabled citizens to work freely within other EU member states and heralded a new period of migration with foreign nationals seeking employment across Europe.

Migration into Northern Ireland reached its peak between 2006 and 2007. Since then internal migration flows have actually decreased.¹⁰ This indicates neither a 'flood' nor a sustained upward rise. This decrease proves that migrants in most instances come in search of work as evidenced by a reduction in the number of people coming to live here during the recession.

Only 2,100 extra newcomers arrived between 2008 and 2009 for instance.¹¹ There is also some evidence to suggest that more people leave Northern Ireland

than come to live here. For example, between 2010 and 2011 an estimated 3,200 more people left Northern Ireland than arrived – 21,700 came and 24,900 left.¹²

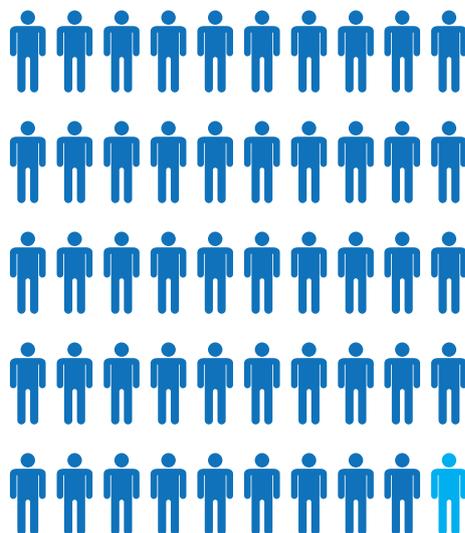
Any sustained decline in the population base will damage the economy, lead to population aging and contribute to a reduced tax base needed to support welfare provision. An aging population and the failure to reproduce the population would also affect school closures and retail-based consumption.

Citizens from EU countries account for the vast majority of migrants coming to live in Northern Ireland. Figures presented by the Northern Ireland Census in 2011¹³ indicate the following:

- Eastern European migrants (the largest migrant group in NI) make up less than 2% of the Northern Irish population;
- Asian-born immigrants make up around 1% of the Northern Irish population;
- African-born immigrants account for only 0.3%.

Table.1
Persons living in Northern Ireland in 2011, born outside UK and Republic of Ireland

Place of Origin	Total	% share of Northern Ireland population
EU	45331	2.5
Non EU countries in Europe	1876	0.1
Middle East and Asia	17293	0.9
The Americas and Caribbean	8068	0.4
Antarctica and Oceania	2468	0.1
Africa	5581	0.3
Total	80617	4.3



EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS (THE LARGEST MIGRANT GROUP IN NI) MAKE UP **LESS THAN 2%** OF THE NORTHERN IRISH POPULATION.



A close-up, high-angle photograph of a healthcare professional, likely a nurse or doctor, wearing teal scrubs and glasses. She is focused on writing on a clipboard with a black pen. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window with blinds. A white circular graphic is overlaid on the top left, containing the text.

*'They're
taking our
jobs'*

Non-UK and Ireland migrants constitute 4.3% of the population and 4% of the Northern Ireland workforce.¹⁴ There is no over-representation of these workers within the labour market. This challenges the most common myth surrounding migrants that 'they're taking our jobs'.

The notion that local people are being squeezed out of the labour market by foreign workers is, for some, a continuing area of concern. For example, a series of controversial posters, placed around Belfast in April 2014, called for 'local jobs for local people'. The posters accused migrant workers of not paying tax or national insurance and claimed that they are on higher wages than local workers, who were being denied opportunities because of them.¹⁵

These claims are simply untrue. A study undertaken by University College London¹⁶ in 2013 highlighted the following:

- Between 1995 and 2011, immigrants from European Economic Area (EEA) countries made a net fiscal contribution of about £8.8 billion;
- Between 1995 and 2011, EEA immigrants contributed to the fiscal system, 4% more than

they received in transfers and benefits, whereas 'locals' payments into the system were just 93% of what they received.

With regard to the claims of migrants getting 'higher wages' and the view that migrant workers are being unfairly favoured over indigenous workers for local jobs; **it is illegal in Northern Ireland for an employer to pay a migrant worker less than a local worker for doing the same job.**¹⁷

Far from there being any sort of favouritism towards foreign nationals over 'locals', ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland experience inequalities in employment, education, housing, health and welfare.¹⁸

In fact, these issues are what the Stormont Executive's '**Racial Equality Strategy**' aims to redress.

Many migrant workers come to Northern Ireland to take up job offers from companies or agencies that are unable to fill job vacancies locally. According to a recent study, **migrants have filled vital skills gaps and labour shortages.**¹⁹ Immigration does not produce unemployment; instead it actually **creates more employment by growing the economy.**²⁰

KEY FACTS

Non-UK and Ireland migrants constitute 4% of the Northern Ireland workforce.

It is illegal in Northern Ireland for an employer to pay a migrant worker less than a local worker for doing the same job.

Immigration does not produce unemployment; instead it actually creates more employment by growing the economy.



ONLY **4%** OF THE NORTHERN IRISH WORKFORCE IS MADE UP OF MIGRANT WORKERS

 **4%**

An aerial night photograph of a densely packed residential neighborhood. The houses are illuminated from within, with warm yellow light glowing from windows and doors. The roofs are dark, and the overall scene is bathed in a cool blue light. A large white circle with a blue border is overlaid on the top left, containing the text 'Local houses for locals only' in a blue, cursive font.

'Local houses for locals only'

Migrants are often accused of 'taking houses'. In June 2014, a controversial protest emerged in a housing estate in east Belfast proclaiming 'local houses for local people'. This occurred when the Housing Executive allocated a property in the area to a Nigerian man. The protest was deemed 'blatantly racist' by the local MP.²¹

Arguably, demanding housing for 'locals only' and accusing foreign nationals of 'taking houses' are racist because it is based on a harmful mix of prejudice, misinformation, intimidation and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

In fact, most migrants in Northern Ireland rent privately and do not claim social housing.²² For example:

- 1,671 migrant worker households applied for social housing in the one year period to 31st July 2013;
- Applications by immigrants have decreased by 12%;
- NI Housing Executive figures show that between July 2012 and July 2013, there were 1,032 migrant worker households out of 89,000 households;

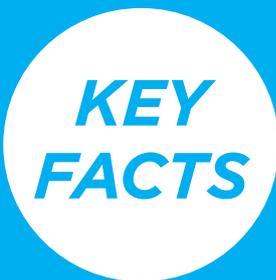
- Between 2012 and 2013, 1.2% of social housing tenants were migrant workers;²³
- The population of economic migrants at 4.3% is actually under-represented within the social housing stock.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's figures show that the majority of migrant nationalities, at 31st July 2013, living in social housing included: Polish (337), Lithuanian (209) and Portuguese (157).²⁴

An estimated 77% of migrant worker households were families and only 23% single person households.²⁵

Moreover, across Northern Ireland, only 254 migrant workers households were allocated social housing within the twelve months up to 31st July 2013.²⁶ This is a minuscule portion of the 89,000 properties the Housing Executive currently manages.

The fact is that the allocation of social housing is often misunderstood: it does not 'favour' ethnic minorities or migrant workers. Instead, it is based on a distribution system of fairness and equality - to suggest otherwise plays into prejudiced myths about migrants 'taking houses'.



In fact most migrants in Northern Ireland rent privately and do not claim social housing.

Only 2% of those who usually qualify for social housing are ethnic minorities.

The majority of migrant nationalities at 31st July 2013 living in social housing included: Polish (337), Lithuanian (209) and Portuguese (157)

However, in some cases, 'local' people claim that ethnic minorities are given preference in social housing. This is simply a myth. After all, only 2% of those who usually qualify for social housing are ethnic minorities.²⁷

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive²⁸ states clearly:

'Allocation policies do not discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity. All applicants for social housing complete the same form... The Housing Executive will award you points based on your needs and your housing situation... People do not get any additional points based on race, nationality or ethnicity.'

Based on the Housing Executive's points system for housing allocation, those most likely to score higher

on the points scale - and therefore more likely to be granted a property sooner than others - are 'vulnerable' people.²⁹

When someone applies for housing, a housing officer will fairly assess their claim to see how many points they are entitled to. For instance, vulnerable people are often people who have suffered intimidation or harassment; people who are homeless; pregnant women or people with dependent children; or people with a disability.³⁰

In this way, migrant workers may be allocated housing - depending on their individual circumstances meeting the housing criteria - before 'local' people and this in turn can create frustration and resentment. These feelings may be voiced to an extent, but they can never be an excuse for racist attitudes.

Demanding housing for 'locals only' and accusing foreign nationals of 'taking houses' are racist because it is based on a harmful mix of prejudice, misinformation, intimidation and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

A man in a dark hoodie and overalls stands in a factory, holding a yellow tool. The background shows industrial machinery and a blue and orange striped wall. Two white circles with blue text are overlaid on the image.

*'They just
come here
to get
benefits'*

*'They're
all welfare
scroungers'*

Another common myth is that migrants are involved in 'benefit tourism' whereby foreign nationals allegedly come to 'take advantage' of the welfare state in the UK. The truth is that people migrate to other countries in the pursuit of available jobs, not unemployment: work remains the most common reason for immigrating to the UK.³¹ In the backlash of media scaremongering over Romanian and Bulgaria migrants, the Government has actually placed severe restrictions on the access of European migrants to welfare benefits.³²

For instance, from March 2014 European migrants (the largest migrant group here) will have to earn at least £149 a week for three months before they can access benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance or other benefits.³³

In fact, less than 5% of EU migrants claim Jobseeker's Allowance.³⁴ Only 10% of European Union migrants claim other working-age benefits.³⁵ Far from being 'welfare scroungers', data from 2012 shows the employment rate for men born in A8 countries as being 88% - significantly higher than the 76% recorded for UK-born men.³⁶

Later figures show that 81.5% of migrants in the UK

are employed.³⁷ Moreover, immigrants in the UK contribute more in taxes than they use in benefits and public services.³⁸

The myth about 'welfare scroungers' and 'benefit tourism' is further debunked by the fact that, in the UK, recent immigrants are actually 21% less likely than the established population to be receiving benefits.³⁹

In terms of Housing claims, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) states that from 1 April 2014, European Economic Area (EEA) migrants will have restricted access to Housing Benefits. This will affect the three month residency requirement before claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and have 'time-limiting' consequences 'for claims to JSA for EEA migrants to six months (unless they have a genuine prospect of work)'.⁴⁰

Asylum seekers also have limited benefits. They do not have access to welfare payments such as Jobseeker's Allowance, which currently pays £72.40 a week (for people over 25).

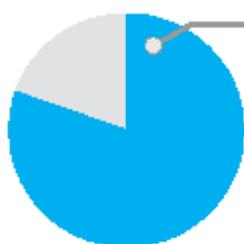
Instead, asylum seekers are given a welfare benefit of just £36.62 a week - which is half of what the 'local' population would get on Jobseeker's Allowance.⁴¹

KEY FACTS

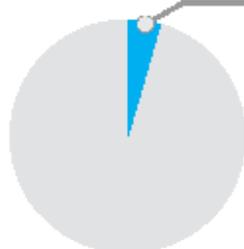
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81.5% OF MIGRANTS IN THE UK ARE EMPLOYED



LESS THAN 5% OF EU MIGRANTS CLAIM JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE

A close-up photograph of Euro currency. In the foreground, a 10 Euro banknote is visible, showing the number '10' in red and blue. Above it, several Euro coins are stacked, including a 1 Euro coin and a 2 Euro coin. The background is a blurred 50 Euro banknote. A white circular text overlay is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

*'They're
a burden
on the
economy'*

Views that migrants are a 'drain' on the economy and public services have also been debunked by recent research. For example, University College London's 2013 study suggests that EEA migrants (i.e. those who arrived to the UK since 2000) have made a fiscal contribution of £22.1 billion and that the fiscal impact of non-EEA migrants was £2.9 billion.⁴²

Therefore, the net fiscal balance of overall immigration to the UK between 2001 and 2011 amounted to a positive net contribution of approximately £25 billion.⁴³

Despite prejudiced sentiments around migrants being a burden on resources, immigrants from the European Economic Area (EEA) have contributed £8.8bn more than they have received in benefits.

This compares with a drain on the nation's finances of £604.5bn by 'local' UK citizens.⁴⁴

Far from being a burden on society, ethnic minority enterprises in the UK contribute £13 billion a year to the British economy.⁴⁵ Moreover, it is estimated that migrant workers actually contributed around £1.2 billion to the Northern Irish economy from 2004 to 2008.⁴⁶

Even refugees, often thought of as a burden, are more highly skilled than the population of Britain: 23% of refugees have a skilled trade compared with 12% of the rest of the UK population and 22% of refugees are managers or senior officials compared with 15% of the rest of the UK population.⁴⁷

KEY FACTS

Migrants (i.e. those who arrived to the UK since 2000) have made a fiscal contribution of £22.1 billion and that the fiscal impact of non-EEA migrants was £2.9 billion.

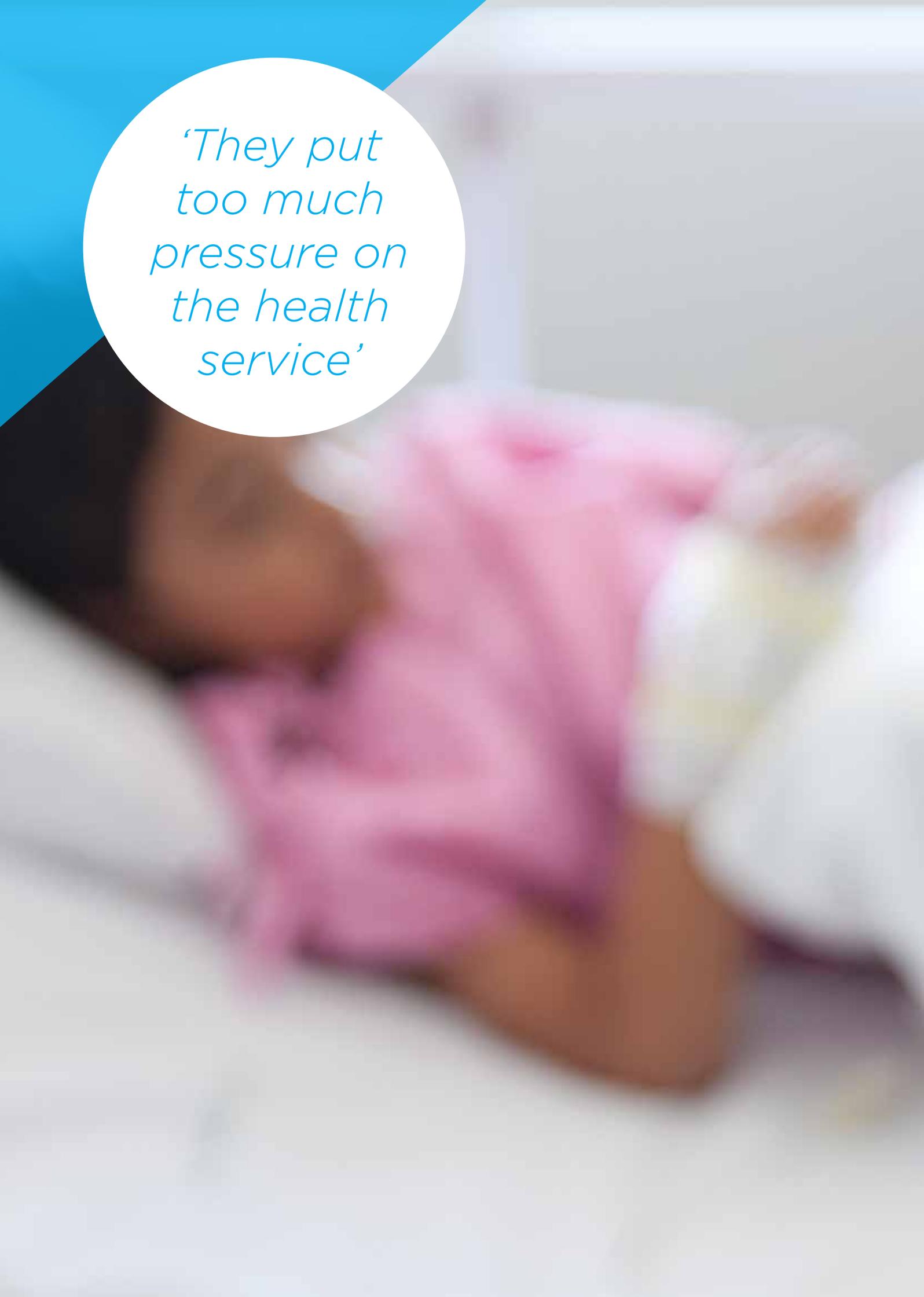
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Far from being a burden on society, ethnic minority enterprises in the UK contribute £13 billion a year to the British economy. Moreover, it is estimated that migrant workers actually contributed around £1.2 billion to the Northern Irish economy from 2004 to 2008.

MIGRANT WORKERS
CONTRIBUTED AROUND
£1.2 BILLION
TO THE NORTHERN IRISH
ECONOMY FROM 2004 TO 2008.



*'They put
too much
pressure on
the health
service'*



There is a perception that newcomers to Northern Ireland are a burden on the National Health Service (NHS). However, migrants tend to be young and healthy and therefore less in need of medical care.⁴⁸

Sections of the press like to scaremonger about the spiralling costs of so-called 'health tourism' - i.e. temporary migrants 'taking advantage' of a free health service. However, the cost of temporary migrants using the Health Service amounts to around 0.01% (£12m) of the £109 billion NHS budget.⁴⁹

The Health Service has also benefitted from the skills and experience of highly-skilled doctors and nurses from India and the Philippines.⁵⁰

In fact, the Chair of the Council of the Royal College of GPs, Dr Clare Gerada, states that 'you are much more likely to have an immigrant caring for you than sitting up in front of the emergency department'.⁵¹

Migrants therefore make a vital contribution in accessing health care: around 30% of the doctors

and 40% of the nurses working in the NHS were born abroad.⁵²

Migrants do not 'put pressure' on the Health Service. To the contrary, the Health Service could not function without the many doctors, nurses and ancillary staff from other countries.⁵³

In terms of accessing healthcare in Northern Ireland, under current legislation only people who are 'ordinarily resident' in Great Britain or the Channel Islands and who have been living legally in the UK for 12 months are entitled to receive free healthcare.⁵⁴

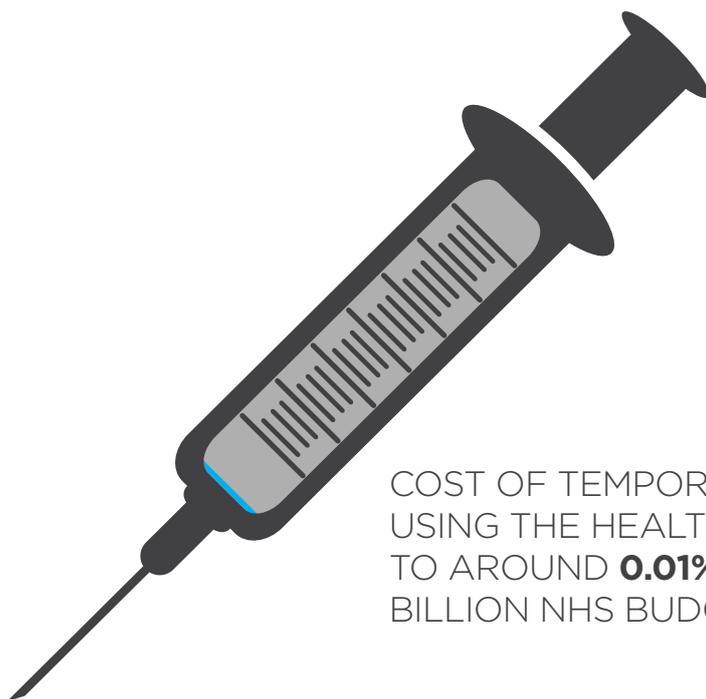
The family and dependents of 'ordinarily resident' migrants are entitled to free healthcare services like anyone else.⁵⁵ However, according to Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP), there is currently a lack of official clarity on the rights and entitlements of migrant workers in accessing health care, with some feeling that the present rules on exemption are discriminatory.⁵⁶

KEY FACTS

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COST OF TEMPORARY MIGRANTS USING THE HEALTH SERVICE AMOUNTS TO AROUND **0.01%** (£12M) OF THE £109 BILLION NHS BUDGET.

*'They take
up places
in our
schools'*



There have been some claims that migrant school children are having an adverse effect on the education system. Some suggest that migrant pupils either 'hold back' the other pupils because they cannot speak English or that they are 'taking up places' in schools.

According to the Department of Education, there has been an increase in the number of school children without English as their first language. These children from migrant families are now recorded in the school census data as 'newcomer' pupils. For example, the data shows that over 67% of 'newcomer' pupils in the 2012/13 year were based in primary schools and the schools listed below had the highest intake of migrant children:⁵⁷

- Presentation Primary, Craigavon: 69%
- St Patrick's Primary, Dungannon: 58%
- Botanic Primary, Belfast: 46%

At post-primary level, both St Patrick's College in Dungannon and Drumcree College in Portadown had the highest percentage of 'newcomer' pupils at 30%. It is important to note that while 'newcomer'

children's first language may not be English, this does not mean that all these pupils cannot speak English nor will learn it quickly. A 2008 study on migration in Dungannon⁵⁸ stated:

For many new arrivals, and particularly for young people from A8 countries, the motivation to migrate centred on the desire to learn English and improve their educational opportunities. In some cases, there was a realisation that, for them to succeed in their own countries, being able to communicate in English would benefit their future employment opportunities.

While Dungannon has had to adapt to 'newcomer' pupils, some educators suggest that migrants enhance the learning experience for children because they can make schools a more diverse and culturally rich community.⁵⁹

Moreover, the skills base of teachers and classroom assistants has developed as they respond to a more culturally rich teaching and learning environment based upon welcoming and settling 'newcomer' children into our society.⁶⁰

KEY FACTS

- 5.5% of nursery pupils were 'newcomer' pupils;
- 3% of children attending primary schools were 'newcomer' pupils;
- Only 2% of post-primary children were 'newcomer' pupils.

This also provides employment and new transferable skills for 'local' educators and highlights further examples of the many positive benefits migrants bring to our society. Another positive effect of migration is that children from other countries have helped save some schools from closure⁶¹ – particularly schools with declining attendance or low qualification output.⁶²

School census figures show that 'newcomer' numbers for the whole of Northern Ireland are indeed very

small. For example, the school census shows that in total:

- 3% of children attending primary schools were 'newcomer' pupils;
- 5.5% of nursery pupils were 'newcomer' pupils;
- 1.7% of pupils at post-primary were 'newcomer' pupils;
- Only 2% of post-primary children were 'newcomer' pupils.⁶³



ONLY **3%** OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS ATTENDING SCHOOL IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE ETHNIC MINORITIES.

 **3%**



Crime

A further myth is that as immigrants come into a society, crime grows. This is based upon a false assumption that immigrants cross borders to engage in crime, develop criminal networks and undermine social cohesion and respect for law and order.

There will always be examples of criminal elements in any population and, of course, some sections of the media relish crime stories that depict immigrants as a criminal class. Less common has been any analysis of the link between crime rates in electoral wards in Northern Ireland in which significant immigrant communities live.

As shown in Table 2. (right) those wards in Belfast in which at least 10% of the population stated in the 2011 Census that their nationality was neither British nor Irish have generally experienced a fall in crime.

In 2002 there were 19,287 recorded crimes within these wards. By 2013 the number of offences recorded within those wards fell to 14,636, an overall decline of 24.1%. Only one of the 12 wards witnessed a growth in recorded crime.

Evidently in wards in which there has been an increase in those from non-Irish or British national backgrounds, there is a completely opposite trend in

terms of the link between immigration and crime as supposed by some.

Thus, in places of high in-migration there is no link between rising crime levels and migration. In fact, evidence shows that crime has actually decreased in these areas with higher percentages of migrants.

One feature of recorded crime that has changed in Northern Ireland due to immigration has been the persistence of incidents and offences recorded with a racist motivation. Between 2004 and 2013 there were 15,701 incidents and offences that included 9,070 incidents (907 per year) and 6631 offences (663 per year). Moreover, we do not have a statutory definition of 'hate crime'.

The PSNI has implemented the classification for racially motivated crime as commended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, namely: 'any crime, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'. Given that there is an obligation to satisfy the evidential standard, not all cases relating to hate crimes are considered by the Public Prosecution Service to be 'aggravated by hostility'. Therefore, the classification of hate crime is perception-based, even if there is evidence of an aggressive act.

Table.2
Change in Recorded Crime in Wards in Belfast in which more than 10% of the population stated in the 2011 Census that their nationality was neither British, Northern Irish or Irish (2002-2013)

Ward	Recorded crime - Offences - 2002	Recorded crime - Offences - 2013	% Change
Ballynafeigh	976	482	-50.6
Blackstaff	812	755	-7.0
Bloomfield	919	732	-20.3
Botanic	2821	2492	-11.6
Duncairn	2338	1421	-39.2
Island	1071	917	-14.3
Ravenhill	745	391	-47.5
Shaftesbury	6160	4758	-22.7
Stranmillis	689	319	-53.7
The Mount	765	916	+19.7
Windsor	1374	916	-33.3
Woodstock	617	537	-12.9
Total	19287	14636	-24.1
Average	1607	1219.6	-24.1

Source: Author's calculation from NISRA datasets.

KEY FACTS

There is no link between rising crime levels and migration. In fact, evidence shows that crime has actually decreased in these areas with higher percentages of migrants.

Table.3
Incidents and Offences with a Racist Motivation 2004-2013

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Incidents Recorded with a Racist Motive	813	936	1047	976	990	1038	842	696	750	982
Offences Recorded with a Racist Motive	634	746	861	757	771	712	531	458	470	691
Total per Year	1447	1682	1908	1733	1761	1750	1373	1154	1220	1673

Source: Author's calculation from NISRA datasets.

According to the Human Rights and Racial Equality Benchmarking Report⁶⁴, only 12 people have been convicted under hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland over the past 5 years. The same report stated

that the clearance rate for race hate crimes 'are greatly disappointing' with a mere 8.3% of reported cases being prosecuted between January and April 2014.

*'They don't
make an
effort to
fit in'*



INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

There are prevalent negative stereotypes about migrant groups in terms of how they integrate into Northern Irish society. For example, Embrace NI⁶⁵ helpfully sheds light on some of these stereotypes:

- 'They have loud parties';
- 'They're aggressive and violent';
- 'They're heavy drinkers';
- 'They're disrespectful towards women'.

At times, the media exacerbates negative perceptions of migrants. Finger-pointing at migrants for behaviours that occur throughout society is hypocritical and only serves to perpetuate hostilities within society.

Other views such as 'they all stand together in street corners and this intimidates people' are arguably

based upon prejudice and misunderstanding of foreign nationals. Concerns about migrants 'sticking together' may be explained by the desire for safety within familiar and secure settings. In April 2014, a local news broadcast on the rise of racism in Northern Ireland asked: "Are ethnic minorities doing enough to 'fit in'?"

This is an alarming point to raise given the volume of racist attacks evidenced across the region. We cannot complain about some migrants apparently being reluctant to socialise when they are sometimes left frightened and intimidated by an upsurge in racist hate crimes. Negative comments about migrants not making enough effort to 'fit in' are arguably tantamount to blaming the victim for racism.

KEY FACTS

A 2008 study showed that in Dungannon, education became one of the key spaces of social interaction for new migrant groups. 'Newcomers' therefore felt that education provided the opportunity to both mix and participate within local society. The report also claimed that 'children's involvement in education often acts as a positive catalyst encouraging parents' own participation in the wider society'.

Hickson, M. et al. (2008) 'Immigration and Social Cohesion in the UK: The Rhythms and Realities of Everyday Life', York: Joseph Roundtree Foundation

Despite negative perceptions of migrants among some or media claims about the 'hate capital of Europe', there is a willingness in Northern Ireland to accept minority groups.

For instance, The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2012 showed that:

- 83% of those surveyed would be willing to accept Eastern European migrants as residents living and working here;
- 88% would be willing to accept minority ethnic groups as residents living and working here. (However, this percentage did not include Irish Travellers, who were in fact the 'least welcomed' minority group in Northern Ireland.)

The 2012 survey⁶⁷ also reported on the impact of immigration for cultural life in the region:

- 4% thought it was 'Very bad';
- 17% said 'Bad';
- 30% replied 'Neither good nor bad';
- 39% answered 'Good';
- 11% suggested 'Very good'.

Although the above views may not indicate a wholly positive view on the cultural contribution of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland, their positive role may

yet help us transcend old sectarian barriers. With an increasingly diverse society, we might hope to move towards a more shared and equal society of 'us all' rather than 'us and them'. After all, the legacy of conflict continues to be a heavy burden, politically and financially. For example:

- A report in 2007 showed that sectarian divisions cost Northern Ireland £1.5 billion each year;⁶⁸
- Between 2012 to 2013, the Flag Protests and the ensuing disruption to public life in Belfast cost the local economy £50 million;⁶⁹
- Policing the Flag Protests cost £20 million;⁷⁰
- In 2013, protest and riot policing cost the PSNI over £3 million a month.⁷¹

This is in stark contrast with the generally positive contributions of migrants to society:

- Job creation;
- New skills and talents;
- Economic boost;
- Vibrancy in culture;
- Saving schools from closure.⁷²

Sectarian conflict and division are the major burdens on our society - not migrants or ethnic minorities.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

Racism is not only morally wrong - the views which attempt to justify it, in terms of 'threats' to resources, are also factually wrong. People do have genuine concerns about scarce resources, particularly in times of recession. But we also have to look at the facts and not fall for anti-immigrant scaremongering or myths about migrants 'taking our jobs'.

It is important that we do not allow socio-economic concerns to manifest as prejudice. When such negative attitudes become 'acceptable' in a given context, perpetrators of hate crime can feel that it

is therefore 'OK' to attack newcomers to Northern Ireland.

Moreover, migration is not threatening 'our way of life'. To the contrary, our own divisions in Northern Ireland continuously threaten political, economic and social stability. We must accept that Northern Ireland is a changing place.

In this way, there is a stark choice to make between remaining mired in exclusion and division and embracing a more peaceful and prosperous society - which is not only welcoming to newcomers but significantly benefits from them too.



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PCSP aims to build safer, shared and confident communities by:

- engaging and consulting to help improve policing and community safety
- working in partnership with local communities, partners and agencies
- monitoring our performance and being transparent about what we have achieved, and
- encouraging cooperation with, and inspiring confidence in, the justice system and, in particular the police.

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