



Dear Friends of RSI

Most of you will have seen news of the widespread anti-migrant violence in Northern Ireland in 2024 and 2025. In response, RSI has now launched the pilot version of a free immigration advice service in Belfast, to signal that everyone belongs in the UK and on the island of Ireland.

After much planning, we launched the advice service in July 2025 — and demand has been high. We support around six clients each month through either advice or signposting; however, far more people need us.

We chose Belfast for a reason. Our research showed — and migrant-led groups told us — that Northern Ireland is an immigration advice desert, even though migrants in the region face some of the highest levels of racially-motivated harassment and violence in the UK, as well as intimidation by paramilitary and far-right groups. In this context, free, expert advice isn't just helpful. It's life-changing.

Our adviser describes what she's seeing every week:

"A lot of migrants are seeking to naturalise through necessity, to protect their status in an increasingly hostile immigration environment. As the cost of immigration fees continues to soar, they increasingly seek immigration assistance from the voluntary rather than private sector."

For now, we can offer free advice one day per week at Immigration Advice Authority Level 1 (that is, basic), but this is just the first step of a longer-term plan to increase our immigration advice provision. Before long, we expect to be able to handle more complex cases (for which there is much demand), to offer clinics in cities in Northern Ireland other than Belfast, and within a few years, we also hope to provide legal advice about discrimination concerns.

The service has been a beacon of hope for those who have no other options for free, reliable advice, with some clients travelling across Northern Ireland to reach us.

By offering immigration advice services in Northern Ireland, RSI provides a tangible benefit to people directly impacted by racism and lived insecurity during a time of attacks on migrants and asylum-seekers, while gaining first-hand insights that can support work to improve systems at a broader level. By identifying systemic problems and patterns, we can ensure that laws better reflect migrants' needs.

Every client who comes to see us carries uncertainty — about their rights, their future, their safety. Our service helps people cut through the confusion, secure their status and feel more rooted, safer, and more able to build a life here.

We believe that migrants make our societies stronger.

Yours sincerely

Sarah St Vincent
Executive Director



DELIVERED USING



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