



# NI Hyatt

**FOCUS GROUPS WITH THE REFUGEE COMMUNITY  
ARMAGH, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL AND NEWRY, MOURNE  
& DOWN COUNCIL AREAS.**

**FEBRUARY 2020 | KEY FINDINGS**



**NI HYATT LTD  
45 MARKET STREET  
LURGAN  
BT66 6AA**

REGISTERED WITH COMPANIES HOUSE  
UNDER THE COMPANY NUMBER NI664331.

## ABOUT US...

### AIMS

NI Hyatt Ltd is a social enterprise focused on supporting vulnerable members of the refugee and migrant communities mainly within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down Council areas. We aim to provide a voice and assist families and individual newcomers with professionally regulated bilingual signposting, training, integration and well-being opportunities.

### VISION

Led by representatives of the local community who are catalysts for change, NI Hyatt Ltd confers a central role to our beneficiaries. Involving the community directly through its income generation activities, providing a meaningful support system based on empowerment principles, and fostering co-operative working practices.

### MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that every refugee or migrant coming to Northern Ireland (initially focusing on the ABC and Newry Council areas) can fulfil their potential and integrate through accessing key information, creating social bonds and connections, having access to learning opportunities and receiving recognition for their skills, experience, and aspirations. This way, as integral members of the community, everyone can provide a meaningful contribution to society and build an independent living.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the year 2000, Northern Ireland became the destination for a significant number of migrant workers due to local labour shortages within the meat processing, health and agriculture sectors. In May 2004, the EU expanded from 15 to 25 countries with the Accession of eight central and eastern European (A8) countries. The A8 Accession proved to be the trigger for an unprecedented wave of

migration. Since 2004, Northern Ireland has welcomed a significant number of A8 citizens (particularly Polish citizens) compared with the rest of the UK.

The A8 stock population is estimated by official statistics (NISRA) to have risen from 30,000 in 2007 to 39,000 in 2009. With the economic recession beginning in 2008, inward migration stagnated and many A8 and EEA migrants decided to return to their country of origin. However, many settled migrant families are still living in Northern Ireland and have no intention of returning to their countries of origin. In geographical terms, although migrants are dispersed throughout the country, they tend to be more concentrated in the West and South-West of Northern Ireland. In particular, within the ABC and NMD Council areas, as well as Belfast and Mid-Ulster.

Up to 2015, the vast majority of asylum seekers and refugees were settled within the Belfast area.

In December 2015, with the height of the Syrian crisis, the NI Executive made the decision of joining the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) and welcome up to 2000 refugees from Syria during a period of four years.

The VPRS prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in the neighbouring countries of Syria: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence. Individuals will be assessed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the countries where refugees fled to and if accepted under the scheme, they are granted five years refugee status and have access to employment and public funds and rights to family reunion comparable to other refugees. At the end of five years, if individuals are not able to return to Syria, they may be eligible to apply for resettlement in the UK. According to statistics published by the Department

for Communities in December 2019, the biggest concentration of Syrian families resettled in Northern Ireland outside Belfast, is located between the ABC and NMD Councils.

When people flee and arrive in Northern Ireland as a migrant worker, asylum seekers or as a refugee via the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), they are not automatically free or safe. They are at the mercy of a bureaucratic system that may provide a robust support only for the first few months, followed by a floating service (as and when available). This system does not allow a full hand-over into mainstream access to community support in order to establish a sustainable independent living for families. Although a successful reception and resettlement model, once getting through the initial hurdles of a challenging system and meeting their basic needs, refugees remain trapped by their circumstances; relying on limited benefits or often in low-paid work and not fully utilise their skills. Refugees and migrants are forced to navigate a new city, job market, culture and language, often with little knowledge of mainstream support services and established networks. The organisation aims to bridge that transitional gap of long-term integration for locally settled families.



## FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The first 2 focus group sessions were planned in partnership with the Social Enterprise Hub in Lurgan and took place in its premises' training room.

Participants were contacted via links within the community (mainly refugee VPRS families resettled in the areas of Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Portadown and Lurgan) invited to voluntarily participate and contribute to the sessions.

**There were 2 focus group sessions delivered into this area (one for male and another for female members of the community, as per their request):**

### Session 1 -

16th November 2019 – from 5pm to 7pm at the Social Enterprise Hub training room - Lurgan

Participants: 10 male VPRS refugees attended.

### Session 2 -

23rd November 2019 – from 5pm to 7pm at the Social Enterprise Hub Lurgan training room - Lurgan

Participants: 11 female VPRS refugees attended.

### Session 3 -

The third focus group session was planned in partnership with the Newry, Mourne and Down Council's Good Relations Officer through their Arabic-English bilingual advice service and took place at the Newry Leisure Centre.

Participants were contacted via links within the community (mainly refugee families resettled in the areas of Newry, Warrenpoint and Bessbrook) and invited to voluntarily participate and contribute to the sessions.

Participants: 26 (male and female) refugees attended.

### THE FORMAT OF SESSIONS

Conducted by 3 NI Hyatt facilitators (in Arabic language), the sessions consisted of a brief introductory presentation about the aims, objectives and mission statement of NI Hyatt Ltd and a contract of ground rules was agreed by participants.

### What is the purpose of today's meeting?

- Introduce the NI Hyatt Ltd initiative and team;
- Opportunity for community representatives to express their views about life in Northern Ireland and in your specific town – positive and negative;
- Opportunity to hear the opinions of others and to collectively develop resolutions to problems.

Participants were then given flipchart sheets and markers and divided into groups. They were asked to respond the following questions (either as a group on a flipchart sheet or into individual multi-coloured revision cards).

1. How has your experience of living in Northern Ireland been so far? (positive and negative)

*i.e. access to services, community life, education, housing conditions, neighbours and general social life*

2. What would you like to see improving?

*i.e. training and employment opportunities, social and leisure activities suitable to your culture etc.*

3. What are your suggestions for the future of our community?

4. Is there anything you are really good at? Any particular skill you would like to acquire, improve or practice?



# KEY FINDINGS

## SESSION 1 - ABC COUNCIL - MALE REFUGEE PARTICIPANTS

- We would like to get involved in the local Councils & Government
- A locally based venue or a building for cultural and social activities for the Syrian community
- Legislation and immigration: drop-in or by appointment clinics for legal issues
- Provision of a Islamic Bank
- Provision of appropriate conditions and employment pathways for Syrians, to encourage getting into employment.
- Clarity on the process for Syrians to obtain the British nationality
- Attendance of political parties' seminars to learn the internal rules of each party
- More English language courses (more hours per week)
- Change the way of teaching English to older people (conversational classes mainly)
- Provision of intensive courses to integrate into society and the work in NI
- Provision of employment trial placements or shadowing opportunities for Syrians to adapt to local working practices and leading to employability pathways
- Provision of funding opportunities in order to set up businesses and projects i.e. trades, agriculture and manufacturing focused initiatives, CSR training and HGV and LGV driving licence training for Arabic speakers
- Guidance on how to access local government services and access to political party representatives
- Provision of capacity building training on the required skills for setting up business and wider integration initiatives
- Support with a community accessible centre for religious practices (local Mosque)
- New born ( babies ) access to Irish nationality

- Family reunion information
- Sessions about working rights with specialists

- We aim to become a fully productive and positive community
- More intercultural integration initiatives with British and Irish citizens

### COMMUNITY SKILLS SUMMARY

An owner of a shop for housing tools ( glass – plastic – Porcelain ) I would love to study management in order to start some projects

Printing on clothing and fabrics, I've 35 years' experience. I worked with all types of printing, different materials such as Nylon – Plastic – Carton. I owned a school in Turkey and managed teachers. I worked as a Turkish teacher ( I taught Turkish language )

Sculpturing for all types of buildings

I worked as a tailor. I would love to learn more and become an electrician

Electricity and plumbing trade (technician). I do Almost everything related to the construction field and building trade

I worked in agriculture all my life. I need construction courses and how to use computer

I am a joiner , I would love to help others with my experience

Applied Chemistry Science Degree. I would like to get a lab technician course - training

Welding and working with steel extensive experience

Sewing needs – retail experience (I owned a shop). I would love to get into the Civil Engineering field



## SESSION 2 - ABC COUNCIL - FEMALE REFUGEE PARTICIPANTS

### EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN NI - POSITIVES -

- Freedom of dressing however you want
- Not facing racism
- Friendly people who deal well with other religions
- Good childcare services and education for children
- Feeling safe and secure
- A system that works everywhere
- Financial and housing support
- Support to organisations that care for vulnerable people
- Psychological support from local people
- Good health services

### EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN NI - NEGATIVES -

- Long health service waiting lists
- No ESOL support for the children at school
- No places to run social events
- Difficulty to access adult education services
- No convenient job opportunities – part-time working mothers, appropriate environment to Muslim ladies, childcare through work
- Close to none support for Arabic language teaching (adults and children)
- Difficulty accessing public transport
- Need for more English classes
- Need for more social and integration activities
- No understanding of the Universal Credit service
- Difficulty accessing information on family reunion
- Difficulty getting a reasonable service for home repairs

### WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE HAPPENING IN FUTURE

- Weekly meeting for women
- Local supermarkets to provide halal products
- Support with Arabic language in schools
- Hair and beauty courses / training
- Crochet courses
- ICT basic courses
- Sewing courses / training
- Especially tailored driving courses for Muslim women
- English conversational courses
- Nursing and Care worker training
- Integration with other communities – intercultural initiatives
- Hairdressing courses for women only
- Sports and swimming for women (suitable for Muslim women)
- Leisure centre catering for women only activities
- Leisure trips and hoping to get some knowledge about Northern Ireland's history.

- 'Life in the UK' course and B1 English level intensive courses
- English courses in particular occupations
- First aid courses
- Events focused on Islamic religious festivals (i.e. Eid Celebrations locally)
- More integration for older people with other communities
- More social events to keep in touch with each other
- Explain through training our culture to other communities

### COMMUNITY SKILLS SUMMARY

#### Skills we have to offer -

- Sewing, professional hairdressing, cooking skills (i.e. support with opening a hairdressing salon appropriate for Muslim women, beauty treatments)
- Teaching Arabic language
- Catering business - making desserts
- Experience looking after the children



## SESSION 3 - NMD COUNCIL - MALE AND FEMALE REFUGEES

### EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN NORTHERN IRELAND - POSITIVES

- A welcoming reception when we came to Northern Ireland
- People here are very good
- Attention to school vaccines
- It is safe here, financial stability

### EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN NORTHERN IRELAND - NEGATIVES

- Housing conditions are not appropriate
- The health services are slow
- Language difficulties and lack of more English courses. If the lessons exists, there is no nursery locally
- There are very few job opportunities, not enough
- Lack of professional training courses to give professional certificates in order to enter labour market
- There is no mosque
- There is no place to teach the Arabic language and the Quran to children
- Lack of sports activities suitable for the community, entertainment and social activities
- It takes a long time to get a permanent house
- There is no extra help in school in terms of GCSE or A levels for newcomers (an ESOL teacher for terminology specific to Physics, Science and Chemistry)
- No support or funds in order to study high level English (ESOL)
- There is no financial support to school trips to either outside the country or inside it
- Single mothers with their children should not be placed in an area with no neighbours around her
- They're asking people to work, even those who don't speak the language, the requirements from work coaches (JBOs) are unrealistic

### WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE HAPPENING IN FUTURE -

- We need activities for children to teach them Arabic language
- Public transport locally is very poor – improvement is needed
- English classes with childcare
- Activities for women only (it's really boring sometimes)
- We need a mosque locally
- Summer trips to get to know the country
- After schools and homework clubs for children – ask teachers to repeat explanation of the lessons to newcomers
- Professional courses such as carpenter and painting & decorating
- An appropriate salon, specific for men and another for women (barbers, beauty and hair treatment for Muslim women i.e. waxing and hairdressing)
- An organisation in constant contact with families, identifying problems and resolving them directly
- Family reunion guidance and information



## COMMUNITY SKILLS SUMMARY

I need painting and decorating courses or job opportunities in this field. I worked in the field of painting and decorating for several years, artistic paint, gypsum, and wallpaper.

I am good in psychology because of my extensive experience and previous qualification, I hope to improve my skills in this field. I need a level 2 in counselling, but I cannot study it or continue my studies because there are not enough students at the College locally. We want extra lessons at school (physics, chemistry and science) because of their difficult terminology at the Abbey Grammar school. We need financial support for Arabic and Turkish subjects at the GCSE for my children.

I have no experience but would like to learn how to cut and style hair.

I am an Arabic and Quran teacher, but I would like a course dealing with children or hairdressing courses.

I need carpentry courses, furniture, upholstery, or even any business opportunity for me and my son.

The chances of studying for university are weak and remote here. I need help for my daughter to obtain a place of study at a university in Northern Ireland.

I would like to have some part-time courses for childcare

Carpenter and furniture builder - if there is any organisation to volunteer with?

I am good at (ICT) or computer science and I want to improve these skills. I also want to practice these skills by going to some courses. I can speak three languages Arabic, Turkish and English.

I am good at Maths and Art. I want to improve my other subjects Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics. I would like to learn computer science in future. I would like to learn Spanish as well.

I want to develop on arts and makeup. I would also like to develop on sports such as football and basketball



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