



**Belfast City Council**  
**OPENCities Local Action Plan**  
**2011**

**Annex: D - Belfast City Council Baseline 2008**

### Brief Description of City

Belfast is the capital city of Northern Ireland and the second largest city on the island of Ireland with a population of 267,000. Over the past number of years, the importance of manufacturing to the city's economy has diminished, being replaced with an increasing service sector. The port of Belfast still handles over 60% of Northern Ireland's sea borne trade and almost 20% for the entire island of Ireland. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan was adopted in 2005 and shapes the development of the greater Belfast area including plans for homes, local facilities, factories, schools and supermarkets. Belfast is divided into nine smaller urban districts, themselves divided into wards. Each of the 51 wards has its own elected councillors. The city is part of a Larger Urban Zone (LUZ) of 647,000 inhabitants. Belfast's metropolitan area has nearly 40% of its population and its travel-to-work area includes nearly half of the entire population. The city is also home to two universities; and economically, it sustains a third of Northern Ireland's jobs.

Belfast has enjoyed over a decade of sustained investment and is one of the fastest growing regional economies in the UK. As well as this sustained economic growth in Belfast, the city is also going through a period of rapid physical regeneration and development. The city skyline is rapidly changing, with large scale developments taking place at an unprecedented rate. Meanwhile phase one of Europe's largest waterfront development, the £1 billion Titanic Quarter project is now underway. Work has also progressed on improving the transport infrastructure. As the civic leader of Northern Ireland's capital, Belfast City Council continues to work with our partners in government and elsewhere to realise the vision of Belfast as a progressive twenty first century capital with a vibrant innovation led economy where people are proud to live work and visit.

Belfast has experienced the pressures of industrial decline every bit as much as other cities in Great Britain and Europe. Since the last war manufacturing industries have steadily left Belfast. By 1971 Belfast City still had 65,000 people working in manufacturing, 33.6% of the workforce. By 2001 only a rump of 16,000 was left, with almost half of these employed by one aircraft manufacturer. The fastest growing large sectors for several decades have been the financial and business services. This is true of the UK and of most other advanced economies. In Belfast, financial and business services overtook manufacturing as a major employer in 1992 and this sector now employs well over twice as many people as manufacturing. Financial and business services have grown faster in Belfast than other UK cities over the same period, albeit from a relatively small base.

In reality of course, like other major European regional capital cities, Belfast is the nerve centre of the local economy. Its importance lies in its roles as a provider of specialised services and as a centre of government, higher education, transport, communications and cultural infrastructure. It is the source of a wide range of specialised and sophisticated professional and business services. These include corporate law, tax consultancy, international banking, investment banking, advertising, public relations, major architectural practices, engineering consultants, insurance brokers and many others.

GDP Per Head GVA	€36,013 (2006) £26,792 (2005)	Unemployment Rate	3.9%
Migrants as Proportion of Local Population	2.1% (2005)		

### Economic Indicators

Belfast has almost 30% of the total employment in Northern Ireland (this figure rises to 50% for the Belfast Metropolitan Area). The public sector accounts for almost 39% of total employment. 30,000 additional jobs were created over the last decade in Belfast and close to 23,000 more jobs are forecast between 2005 and 2015.

Labour costs are 15% lower than the UK average. Almost 35% of the working age population is economically inactive as Belfast has one of the lowest working age employment rates in the UK at 65.6%. However the actual unemployment rate is the lowest in many years at 3.9% (this compares to 9.3% in 1997).

The average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Belfast has increased by 6.12% between 2005 and 2007. The average gross weekly earning of full time employees in Belfast is GBP511.20 in comparison to GBP675.20 for all of Northern Ireland and GBP537 for the rest of the UK. The increasing number of jobs in the city has had a positive effect on unemployment which has fallen dramatically in recent years (from 9.3% in 1997 to 3.9% in 2007).

## Economic Migration Issues

Belfast has had for some years a diverse range of minority ethnic and religious communities resident in the city, the most widely recognised of these being the Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Traveller and Jewish communities. However within recent years there has been a change in the nature of inward migration caused mainly by a growing economy and a demand for workers which cannot be met by the local population and by the opening up of the European Union in 2004, which enabled workers from new EU Member states access to the labour market.

Prior to 2004, Belfast had witnessed an increasing number of migrants, mainly nursing staff from South Asia and the Philippines, who were directly recruited to fill vacancies in the health services.

Migrant workers, in Belfast, come from many parts of the world including Europe, the USA and China. According to research carried out by Belfast City Council in 2007, migrant workers in Belfast are mainly from Poland, Slovakia and the Philippines. It is impossible to document the precise number of migrant workers in Belfast as there is no systematic process whereby data is collected and analysed. Research commissioned by the Council, in 2007, illustrated that between April 2004 and March 2006 a minimum of 7,506 new migrants came to Belfast. Current estimates range between 7,000 and 15,000.

Data indicates that there were 4,310 people from a minority ethnic background resident in Belfast, with the largest number being members of the Chinese community, followed by people of 'mixed' ethnic background and people from Indian, Pakistan and Bangladesh (presented in the table as 'South Asian'). The Census data indicates that 30% of the total minority ethnic population lived in Belfast, with 57% of the minority ethnic population of Belfast living in South Belfast.

The Census also reveals that Belfast had a total of 1,409 residents from six non-Christian faith backgrounds. This included 727 Muslims (out of a total of 1,943 Muslims in Northern Ireland), 224 Hindus (of 825 in NI), 202 Buddhists (of 533), 156 Jews (of 365), 58 Sikhs (of 219), and 42 people of the Ba'hai faith (out of 254 across NI). Belfast thus had 34% of the NI population of the six faiths. This data has not been broken down by parliamentary constituency.

It is also worth noting that over half of the Belfast migrants (57%) were living in South Belfast, while 21% were living in East Belfast, 15% in North Belfast and 11% in West Belfast. Finally, South Belfast had far and away the largest number of foreign born residents of any parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland, with nearly twice as many as the next highest constituency (North Down with 2,120 people). But while East Belfast had the sixth highest foreign born population, West Belfast had the third fewest number of foreign born residents and only Mid-Ulster and West Tyrone had less (Bell et al 2004: 123). The migrant population was thus disproportionately dispersed across the city.

Thus the Census data indicates that in 2001 the four Belfast parliamentary constituencies contained:

- 21% of the Northern Ireland population;
- 30% of the minority ethnic population;
- 34% of the minority faith population; and
- 29% of the total migrant population of Northern Ireland.

The recent trends in inward migration to Belfast appear to be driven by a number of factors including:

- The changing political context in Belfast and the relative peace and stability
- EU enlargement in 2004 coincided with economic expansion here
- The lack of skilled labour in certain key areas of the public and private sectors
- The push factors from sending countries, including the new EU member states, where migrant labour is sourced
- The pull factor from existing migrants who are encouraging and assisting friends and relations to access employment in Belfast
- Accessible, affordable international transport
- Continental integration and the reduction of borders
- Over the last decade, around 30,800 new jobs have been created in Belfast. This growth has been met, to some extent, by the new migrant population.

Current immigration appears to be much more rapid than previously and migrant workers are coming from countries without a recent history of immigration to Belfast.

## Key Challenges Linked to Migration

### Public Sector Policy

- No completely accurate data available to track new immigrants
- Identifying and responding to the diverse needs of new communities
- Ensuring the diverse needs of new migrants are reflected in structures and policies and in the delivery of vital services
- The ability to gain information and communicate easily with migrant communities
- Shortcomings in accurate migration and population statistics which make it harder to predict and plan for change
- Responding to local tensions and negative perceptions around inward migration
- Building links between communities and supporting leadership at a community level to address tensions: The speed of many new communities arriving into a City with a marked history of division, to areas where space is contested and where there are anxieties around limited resources has created tensions
- Constraints on the housing market serve to direct new immigrants into some of the most disadvantaged areas characterised by poor quality housing, high levels of unemployment and stretched public services. The emerging clusters of migrants can often causes tensions.
- The need to foster strong leadership in pursuing an agenda of openness, and in articulating the benefits of diversity and creating a broad sense of belonging for all people.

### Migrant Groups

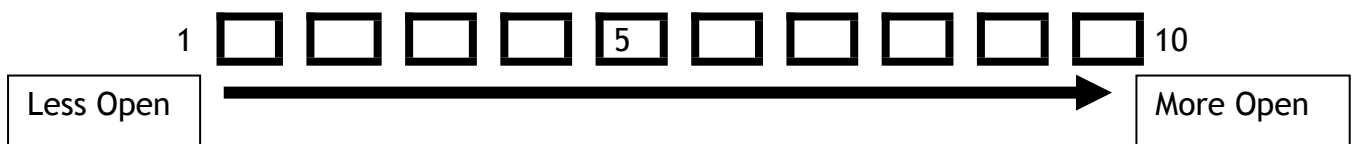
- Migrants have issues related to Equality of access to, and outcome from, service provision
- The lack of a specialised centre for recently arrived migrants to seek help and advice
- Information gap, migrants need good information and access to advice about the law and their rights, language classes, medical care, safe affordable housing etc.
- The combination of open borders and a limited entitlement to benefits means that migrants who fail to find jobs can become homeless and destitute
- Some migrant workers speak little or no English. Local arrangements for teaching English for speakers of other languages rarely meet local demand, access to a basic level of English is essential to achieving a level of participation in society
- More than half of the city's population now lives in wards that are either 90 per cent Protestant or 90 per cent Catholic. This presents challenges for migrants in terms of finding a safe niche within a city where space is contested and where territorialism is rife
- Job insecurity which can lead to pressure to work difficult shifts and long hours
- Poor quality living conditions, migrant workers often end up in multiple occupancy housing
- The difficulty of progressing in the labour market and using one's skills, some migrants are overqualified for their current jobs.
- The right of communities to participate in decisions that impact on their lives.
- Integration V Assimilation
- Risk of treating migrant workers as economic commodities

## Promotion/Management of Migration

- Migrant workers are actively sought to fill skills gaps in the labour market in hospitality, tourism, health and construction industries
- Migrants have a good work ethos and are enthusiastic whereas some residents consider some jobs as unsuitable career paths and migrants gladly fill these positions
- Businesses employing migrant workers stress the overwhelming need for migrants to fill both low skilled positions and skilled positions such as engineering
- Many employers are actively undertaking recruitment campaigns in Eastern European countries to fill skills gaps in their workforce. A number expressed a desire to pursue this route to filling labour shortages
- There is a concern that the flow of migrant workers will dissipate, particularly as their home economies begin to grow
- Compared to migrant workers some residents do not share the same work ethic or mentality - they are not as pro-active
- Migrant communities and employers have indicated a need for a centre to accommodate incoming migrants and to help integrate them into NI society i.e. accommodation, culture, healthcare systems etc.
- Important for the city in terms of assisting in the economic development of the city
- Promoting creativity and innovation within the city
- Widening the skills pool within a city
- Promoting openness to wider markets & trade opportunities
- Encouraging entrepreneurship
- Helping the city compete in the international market
- Opening business networks and global contacts
- Making the city a more attractive visitor destination

- Achieving the Council’s aim of being an open, welcoming, shared and peaceful City, where people are connected in a common citizenship.
- If the Belfast economy is to continue to grow, it needs to attract and retain migrant workers. As the flow of migrants from Eastern European countries starts to ‘dry up’, employers need to consider alternative sources in the global marketplace.
- If Belfast is to maximise the potential of migrants who are already in Belfast, migrants need to be encouraged to stay and to integrate with the local community.
- Many migrants are over qualified for the positions that they are already in. Therefore to maximise their full potential employers need to be open minded as to how migrant workers can be integrated and progressed through their business.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being less open/diverse/tolerant and 10 being extremely open/diverse/tolerant) where would you currently rate your city? This particular question should be answered following discussion with members of the Local Support Group:



**Reasons for the OPENNESS Score**

Assessing the level of ‘openness’ within Belfast is also difficult as the city is only beginning to emerge from 30 years of conflict and division. Minority ethnic communities are moving into a city still suffering from the legacy of the conflict. Some years ago Belfast was labelled the ‘Race Hate Capital of Europe’. This label was attributed to the city following a series of racist attacks. Certainly during that period it would have been hard to speak of an ‘open city’. However within recent years there have been major initiatives undertaken by various partners and community organisations across the City to create greater ‘openness’ within Belfast.

Belfast City Council organised a consultation exercise with members of the OPENCities Local Support Group to discuss current perceptions to openness. The consensus of opinion was that whereas the City was taking the lead in relation to integration of economic migrants and there was a lot of work ongoing a lot more work needed to be done.

Integration is a problem for migrants within Belfast and the city council and other public bodies have to date allocated insufficient resources to support social and economic integration activities.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The changing political context in Belfast and the relative peace and stability</li> <li>▪ Economic growth in Belfast</li> <li>▪ EU enlargement in 2004 coincided with economic expansion here</li> <li>▪ Accessible, affordable international transport</li> <li>▪ Continental integration and the reduction of borders</li> <li>▪ Belfast City Council has various Council initiatives in place for migrant workers. The Council has appointed a good relations officer dedicated to migrant workers, there is a Good Relations Policy in place as well as the Equality Policy.</li> <li>▪ A Migrants Forum has been set up by Belfast City Council</li> <li>▪ Welcome packs have been devised in a number of languages available to migrants.</li> <li>▪ Over the last decade, around 30,800 new jobs have been created in Belfast.</li> <li>▪ Migrant workers are actively sought to fill skills gaps in the labour market in hospitality, tourism, health and construction industries</li> <li>▪ Migrants have a good work ethos and are enthusiastic whereas some residents consider some jobs as unsuitable career paths and migrants gladly fill these positions</li> <li>▪ Many employers are actively undertaking recruitment campaigns in Eastern European countries to fill skills gaps in their workforce. A number expressed a desire to pursue this route to filling labour shortages</li> <li>▪ Compared to migrant workers some residents do not share the same work ethic or mentality - they are not as pro-active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No completely accurate data available to track new immigrants</li> <li>▪ The ability to gain information and communicate easily with migrant communities</li> <li>▪ Shortcomings in accurate migration and population statistics which make it harder to predict and plan for change</li> <li>▪ Constraints on the housing market serve to direct new immigrants into some of the most disadvantaged areas characterised by poor quality housing, high levels of unemployment and stretched public services. The emerging clusters of migrants can often cause tensions.</li> <li>▪ Migrants have issues related to Equality of access to, and outcome from, service provision</li> <li>▪ The lack of a specialised centre for recently arrived migrants to seek help and advice</li> <li>▪ Information gap, migrants need good information and access to advice about the law and their rights, language classes, medical care, safe affordable housing etc.</li> <li>▪ Some migrant workers speak little or no English. Local arrangements for teaching English for speakers of other languages rarely meet local demand, access to a basic level of English is essential to achieving a level of participation in society</li> <li>▪ More than half of the city's population now lives in wards that are either 90 per cent Protestant or 90 per cent Catholic. This presents challenges for migrants in terms of finding a safe niche within a city where space is contested and where territorialism is rife</li> <li>▪ Job insecurity which can lead to pressure to work difficult shifts and long hours</li> <li>▪ Poor quality living conditions, migrant workers often end up in multiple occupancy housing</li> <li>▪ The difficulty of progressing in the labour market and using one's skills, some migrants are overqualified for their current jobs.</li> <li>▪ The right of communities to participate in decisions that impact on their lives.</li> <li>▪ Integration V Assimilation</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The lack of skilled labour in certain key areas of the public and private sectors</li> <li>▪ The pull factor from existing migrants who are encouraging and assisting friends and relations to access employment in Belfast</li> <li>▪ Identifying and responding to the diverse needs of new communities</li> <li>▪ Ensuring the diverse needs of new migrants are reflected in structures and policies and in the delivery of vital services</li> <li>▪ Building links between communities and supporting leadership at a community level to address tensions: The speed of many new communities arriving into a City with a marked history of division, to areas where space is contested and where there are anxieties around limited resources has created tensions</li> <li>▪ The need to foster strong leadership in pursuing an agenda of openness, and in articulating the benefits of diversity and creating a broad sense of belonging for all people.</li> <li>▪ Businesses employing migrant workers stress the overwhelming need for migrants to fill both low skilled positions and skilled positions such as engineering</li> <li>▪ Migrant communities and employers have indicated a need for a centre to accommodate incoming migrants and to help integrate them into NI society i.e. accommodation, culture, healthcare systems etc.</li> <li>▪ Important for the city in terms of assisting in the economic development of the city</li> <li>▪ Promoting creativity and innovation within the city</li> <li>▪ Widening the skills pool within a city</li> <li>▪ Promoting openness to wider markets &amp; trade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Responding to local tensions and negative perceptions around inward migration</li> <li>▪ Risk of treating migrant workers as economic commodities</li> <li>▪ There is a concern that the flow of migrant workers will dissipate, particularly as their home economies begin to grow</li> </ul>

<p>opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encouraging entrepreneurship</li> <li>▪ Helping the city compete in the international market</li> <li>▪ Opening business networks and global contacts</li> <li>▪ Making the city a more attractive visitor destination</li> <li>▪ Achieving the Council's aim of being an open, welcoming, shared and peaceful City, where people are connected in a common citizenship.</li> <li>▪ If the Belfast economy is to continue to grow, it needs to attract and retain migrant workers. As the flow of migrants from Eastern European countries starts to 'dry up', employers need to consider alternative sources in the global marketplace.</li> <li>▪ If Belfast is to maximise the potential of migrants who are already in Belfast, migrants need to be encouraged to stay and to integrate with the local community.</li> <li>▪ Many migrants are over qualified for the positions that they are already in. Therefore to maximise their full potential employers need to be open minded as to how migrant workers can be integrated and progressed through their business.</li> </ul>	
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#### Key Expectations for OPENCities Project

- Advice on how to build a solid knowledge/evidence base on migrants in Belfast from the perspective of migrants, employers, service providers etc
- Better understanding of the reasons for the flows of migrants i.e. what are the issues and benefits that they bring, what jobs they are filling, what skills shortages are they addressing, what are the flows i.e. do they come and go, do they stay -what makes them stay and what attracts them, what sectors are they employed in - does this match the future growth sectors of the Belfast economy, what skills are they bringing, where are the migrant communities located in the city - what impact is this having on other communities, what demands are being placed on service providers, what is the impact on population growth/stability
- A practical Local Action Plan prepared in consultation with Local Support Group of things that can be done to make sure there is social and economic integration, exploitation of social and cultural diversity, social, health and economic equality
- Recommendations on how to minimise or maximise the impact on service provision, e.g. education, health etc and provision of sufficient advisory services
- Practical recommendations on how to attract and retain migrant workers - is it necessary to be selective or be open to all? - again linked to economic objective or population growth. Use proactive marketing campaigns or recruitment policies?
- Recommendations on a review and evaluation framework that will evaluate the impact of anything that is implemented - what difference has it made in reality to all the stakeholders
- Learning around the ingredients that create openness, the importance of strong leadership and the need for partnership work will provide an important benchmark for the future work of the Good Relations Unit in addressing issues relating to migrant workers and in working towards promoting Good Relations across the city.