

# Human Rights and Housing

## Guide for refugees and asylum seekers in Northern Ireland



## Speaking up for human rights

Record details about your situation.



Raise the issue informally and work with services to find better solutions.



Submit a formal complaint (e.g. with the Housing Executive).



Seek legal advice.



The Human Rights Act gives you power when you interact with public services. Asking for your human rights to be met is simply asking for the law to be followed. If this doesn't happen, you can bring a legal case to your local court in Northern Ireland. But, knowing and claiming your rights can help resolve the issue without involving a lawyer.

**The Human Rights Act (HRA) is a law that protects everyone in the UK, including the refugee and asylum seeker community.**

The HRA makes it the law for public bodies to take care of your human rights.

This guide was made together with refugee and asylum seeker women in Northern Ireland to help people to know and claim their human rights. It was produced by the Northern Ireland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Women Association (Bomoko NI) and BHR.

Scan the QR code for more information, including translations of this guide, or go to <https://linktr.ee/bhr1>



This guide is for information purposes only. It is not intended as legal advice. Published November 2024

## About this guide

Refugees and asylum seekers can often come into contact with public services responsible for housing, health and social care, and education.

This guide focuses on housing, recognising that issues with where you live can negatively affect other parts of your life. For example, people can be moved to new accommodation too often and without notice, without being told why this is happening, and without being offered any support.

**This guide explains how human rights can be a powerful tool where decisions made by public bodies are impacting your (and your family's) life.**

## Your Human Rights Act

Public bodies are services provided by the government. This includes the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland.

Other types of organisations also have to meet your human rights if they are providing a public service. This means housing associations may have a duty to meet your human rights.



## Know your human rights

The Human Rights Act protects **16 important rights**. We have included two rights in this guide which are relevant for the refugee and asylum seeker community.



You can **scan the QR code** on the back of this guide to find out about your other rights.

Public bodies **must...**

### Respect your rights

Not take away your rights in the first place.

### Protect your rights

Take proactive steps to make sure your rights are not taken away.

### Fulfil your rights

Investigate when something has gone wrong.

## Your right to private and family life, home and correspondence

### Article 8 of the Human Rights Act

This right protects your privacy, physical and mental wellbeing, relationships, community, enjoyment of your current home and ability to make decisions about your own life.

This is a non-absolute right, which means sometimes public bodies can make decisions which affect this right. They can only do this if their decision is:

1. **Lawful** – there is a law which allows public bodies to make that decision
2. **Legitimate** – it is for a good reason, like to protect you or others from harm
3. **Proportionate** – other options have been thought about and this is the least restrictive one

### Human rights in real life

Scan the **QR code** on the back of this guide for a real-life story of a refugee family who were moved into unsanitary accommodation miles away from where the children went to school.



## Your right to be free from discrimination

### Article 14 of the Human Rights Act

This right is about ensuring that everyone can enjoy their human rights equally. This right must be raised with one of your other human rights, like the right to family life.

Discrimination can be for any reason, like being a woman and an asylum seeker. Discrimination could be about being treated worse than others because of something about yourself, or not being treated differently when you are in a very different situation to others.



This right works with other equality laws in Northern Ireland that prohibit discrimination. You can **scan the QR code** on the back of this guide to find out more.

### Human rights in real life

Scan the **QR code** on the back of this guide for a real-life story of a mother seeking asylum with her children who was placed in temporary housing where their religious beliefs were not being thought about.

