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RIGHT TO WORK IN IRELAND – GUIDE FOR REFUGEES

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Introduction

This guide explains who can work in Ireland, which documents are required, how to confirm your rights, and what steps you should take before starting a job. It is designed for people who have recently arrived in Ireland and are under international protection, temporary protection, or are still waiting for a decision on their asylum application. Its purpose is to give straightforward, practical information so that you can understand your rights and begin working legally and confidently.

Ireland offers several forms of protection to people fleeing conflict, persecution or humanitarian crises, and each form of protection has different rules for entering the labour market. Some people gain an immediate right to work once they receive their permission to remain, while others may need to wait a short period or apply for a specific type of authorisation. Because these rules vary between refugees, people with subsidiary protection, temporary protection holders and asylum seekers, it is important to understand clearly which category applies to you.

Your right to work in Ireland depends on the immigration documents you hold, such as your residence permit, your temporary protection permission, or your Labour Market Access (LMA) work authorisation if you are an eligible asylum seeker. Employers must check these documents before hiring you, so knowing exactly which permissions you have — and ensuring they are valid — will help you avoid difficulties during recruitment and ensure you remain fully protected under Irish employment law.

By understanding your status, keeping your documents up to date and following the correct steps before starting work, you can enter the Irish labour market safely and legally. This guide explains each stage clearly and provides links to reliable sources so that you know where to get help, where to check official rules, and how to prepare for employment in Ireland.

01

Understanding the different types of legal protection in Ireland



| Understanding the different types of legal protection in Ireland

To work legally in Ireland, it is important to understand which protection status you hold and what rights come with it. Ireland recognises several categories of protection for people fleeing conflict, persecution or serious harm, and each category has its own rules for accessing the labour market. Your right to work depends directly on the permission issued to you by the Irish authorities.

Refugee status

If you are granted refugee status, you receive strong protection under Irish and international law. You will be issued a residence permission known as **Stamp 4**, which gives you full access to employment. You do not need a separate work permit, and you may work in any sector in Ireland. More information is available from the International Protection Office: <https://www.ipo.gov.ie/en/ipo/pages/permissiontoremain>

Subsidiary protection

If you do not meet the full legal definition of a refugee but still face a risk of serious harm in your home country, you may be granted subsidiary protection. This status gives you the same right to work as a recognised refugee. You will also receive **Stamp 4**, which confirms your permission to live and work in Ireland. Guidance can be found through the IPO: <https://www.ipo.gov.ie/en/ipo/pages/permissiontoremain>

Temporary protection

Temporary protection is provided in specific humanitarian situations and gives immediate access to work. When you receive temporary protection, you are issued a permission confirming your legal stay and the right to take up employment without needing an additional employment permit. Updates on temporary protection arrangements are published by the Department of Justice: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

Asylum seekers waiting for a decision

If you have applied for international protection and are awaiting a decision, you do not have the right to work immediately. However, if **six months** have passed since your application and no first-instance decision has been made, you may apply for a **Labour Market Access Permission (LMA)**. Once granted, this permission allows you to work legally or become self-employed. Full information on LMA eligibility and requirements is available here: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

Understanding which category applies to you will help you know when you can begin working, which documents you must show employers, and what steps you need to take to access the labour market legally.

| The documents needed to work legally

The documents you need to show an employer depend on the type of protection or immigration status you hold. In Ireland, your right to work is directly linked to the residence permission or authorisation issued to you by the authorities. Employers must check these documents before hiring you.

For recognised refugees and people with subsidiary protection

If you have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, you will receive **Stamp 4** permission. This appears on your **Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card**, previously known as the GNIB card. Stamp 4 confirms your right to work without needing a separate employment permit. Employers only need to verify your IRP card and your identity. Information on Stamp 4 permissions: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-residence-permit-irp/>

For people with temporary protection

People who receive temporary protection are granted a permission that includes the right to work. Your temporary protection letter or permission document confirms this. You can work immediately once you receive this permission, and you do not need an employment permit. Employers will check that your temporary protection document is valid and in date. Updates on temporary protection arrangements: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

For asylum seekers with the right to work

Asylum seekers do not have the right to work immediately. However, if six months have passed since you submitted your international protection application and no first decision has been made, you may apply for a **Labour Market Access Permission (LMA)**. Once granted, this permission allows you to work or be self-employed.

To work legally, you must show your employer:

- your **Labour Market Access Permission letter**, and
- your **application receipt or asylum applicant card** confirming your identity

Without the LMA permission, asylum seekers cannot work.

Full details on LMA eligibility and application: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

Identification documents

All workers in Ireland must be able to prove their identity. You may be asked to show:

- your passport or recognised travel document
- your national identity card (if accepted)
- your IRP card or temporary protection document

Employers are legally required to confirm your identity and your right to work before hiring you.

| How to check if you have the right to work

If you are unsure whether you currently have permission to work in Ireland, there are several ways to confirm your status. Your work rights depend on the documents issued to you and the type of protection you hold.

Check your residence permission (Stamp 4)

If you have refugee status or subsidiary protection, your **Irish Residence Permit (IRP)** should show **Stamp 4**. This stamp confirms that you are allowed to work without any additional employment permit. If your IRP shows Stamp 4 and is valid, you can work immediately.

Information on residence permits: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-residence-permit-irp/>

Check whether you have temporary protection

If you hold temporary protection, your permission letter or temporary protection document will confirm that you are authorised to work. This permission usually gives you the right to work straight away. If you are unsure, you can check your documents or visit the official immigration website for updates: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

Check your asylum documents

If you are an asylum seeker, your right to work depends on two things:

1. **How long you have been waiting for your first decision**, and

2. Whether you have received the Labour Market Access (LMA) permission.

You may apply for an LMA permission if **six months** have passed since you submitted your application and no first-instance decision has been made. Once approved, the LMA letter confirms your right to work legally. If you only have your asylum application card or receipt, without the LMA permission, you are not yet authorised to work. Full LMA guidance: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

Check that your documents are valid

Your right to work is only valid if your documents are in date. An expired IRP card, temporary protection letter or LMA permission may cause your work rights to pause. It is important to check expiry dates regularly and begin any renewal processes early.

Contact immigration officials if you are unsure

If there is any confusion about your status or your documents, you can contact the relevant immigration authorities or the office that issued your permission. They can confirm whether you currently have the right to work and what steps you may need to take if a document is missing or out of date.

| What employers in Ireland must do

Employers in Ireland have legal responsibilities when hiring refugees, people with subsidiary protection, temporary protection holders and asylum seekers with permission to work. Understanding these responsibilities can help prevent misunderstandings and ensure that your employment begins smoothly and legally.

If you have refugee status or subsidiary protection

Employers must check your **Irish Residence Permit (IRP)** showing **Stamp 4**, which confirms your right to work without restrictions. Once they verify your identity and your permission, the hiring process continues as normal. No work permit or additional authorisation is required.

Official IRP information: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-residence-permit-irp/>

If you have temporary protection

If you are under temporary protection, your permission letter or temporary protection document confirms your right to work. Employers only need to check that your document is valid and in date. They do not need to apply for a separate employment permit or seek approval from immigration authorities.

Updates on temporary protection: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

If you are an asylum seeker with a Labour Market Access (LMA) permission

If you have received an **LMA permission**, employers must check your:

- Labour Market Access permission letter
- asylum applicant card or proof of identity

Once you are hired, the employer must complete the **LMA5 form**, which is a standard declaration confirming your employment. This must be submitted to the Labour Market Access Unit within **21 days** of your start date.

Detailed guidance for asylum seekers: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

If you do not yet have permission to work

If you are an asylum seeker waiting for your LMA decision or still within the first six months of the process, an employer cannot legally hire you. Working before receiving permission may affect your application or future immigration rights.

General labour law obligations for all employers

Regardless of your status, employers in Ireland must:

- issue a written contract
- register you with Revenue for tax purposes
- ensure you have access to payslips and employment rights
- provide safe working conditions
- comply with national minimum wage legislation
- treat you the same as any other employee under Irish law

Information on employment rights in Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/employment-rights/>

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Step-by-step guide to start working in Ireland



Step-by-step guide to start working in Ireland

These steps explain what you should do before applying for work and what your employer must do before you begin your job. Following each step will help you avoid delays and ensure that your employment is fully legal.

Step 1 – Confirm your status

Check whether you are a refugee, a person with subsidiary protection, a temporary protection holder or an asylum seeker. Refugees and subsidiary protection holders have Stamp 4, which gives immediate work rights. Asylum seekers only gain work rights once they receive a Labour Market Access (LMA) permission after six months.

Step 2 – Prepare your documents

Gather the documents you need to show an employer. This may include your IRP card (showing Stamp 4), your temporary protection letter, your asylum applicant card and your LMA permission if you have one. Keep your passport or travel document ready for identification.

Step 3 – Check that everything is valid

Your right to work only applies if your documents are in date. An expired IRP, temporary protection letter or LMA permission may pause your work rights. Begin renewals early to avoid delays.

Step 4 – Apply for a PPS number if you do not have one

All workers in Ireland must have a PPS number for tax and employment records. You can apply online through the Department of Social Protection.

Information: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/12e6de-get-a-pps-number/>

Step 5 – Share your documents with your employer

Employers must check your identity and your immigration permission before they can hire you. Refugees, subsidiary protection holders and temporary protection holders do not need a work permit. Asylum seekers must present their LMA permission.

Step 6 – Employer completes required registration

Once they have checked your documents, your employer registers you for tax. If you are an asylum seeker with LMA permission, your employer must also submit the LMA5 form within 21 days to confirm your employment.

LMA guidance: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

Step 7 – Start working legally

After the employer completes the necessary steps, you can begin work and will be covered by Irish employment law.

| Keeping your status valid

Your right to work in Ireland depends on your immigration documents staying valid. If your IRP card, temporary protection permission or LMA authorisation expires, your work rights may pause until you renew them. Checking your documents regularly and renewing early helps you avoid problems with employers.

Check expiry dates regularly

Look at the expiry date on your **IRP card**, your temporary protection document or your **Labour Market Access (LMA) permission** if you are an asylum seeker. Begin renewal well before the expiry date. Appointments and processing times can vary, so early action prevents gaps in your work rights.

Renewing refugee, subsidiary protection and temporary protection documents

If you hold refugee status, subsidiary protection or temporary protection, you must renew your permission before it expires. Your IRP card or temporary protection document confirms your right to work, so keeping it up to date is essential. Employers may ask for proof that you have applied for renewal if your new card has not yet been issued.

Official IRP information: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-residence-permit-irp/>

Renewing work permission as an asylum seeker

If you are an asylum seeker with an **LMA permission**, you must ensure that this permission remains valid. Your ability to work depends on both your asylum applicant card and your LMA authorisation being in date. If either expires, your right to work may stop until the renewal is approved.

LMA renewal guidance: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

If your documents are lost or stolen

If your IRP card, asylum applicant card or temporary protection document is lost or stolen, you should report it and request a replacement as soon as possible. A missing document may make it difficult for an employer to confirm your identity or your work rights.

Keep digital and paper copies

Taking clear photographs or scans of your key documents helps if they are lost or damaged. These copies cannot replace your originals but are useful when reporting a loss or arranging a replacement.

Update your contact details

If you move to a new address, notify the relevant authorities. Renewal letters, appointment notices and immigration correspondence may be sent by post. Keeping your address up to date ensures you do not miss essential information that may affect your right to work.

| What to do if you change jobs

Changing jobs in Ireland is generally straightforward for people who have the right to work. Your work permission is linked to your immigration status, not to a specific employer, so you are free to move into a new role as long as your documents remain valid.

If you have refugee status or subsidiary protection

If your **IRP card shows Stamp 4**, you can change employers at any time. Stamp 4 gives full access to the labour market, so you do not need to apply for a new work permit or update your permission when you start a new job. Simply show your new employer your IRP card and proof of identity.

If you have temporary protection

People with temporary protection can also change jobs freely. Your temporary protection permission includes your right to work, regardless of the employer. When starting a new role, your new employer will check that your document is valid and then register you for tax in the normal way.

Temporary protection information: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

If you are an asylum seeker with Labour Market Access (LMA) permission

Asylum seekers who hold an LMA permission may change jobs as long as their LMA remains valid. You must present your LMA letter and asylum applicant card to your new employer. The employer must then submit an updated **LMA5 form** within 21 days of you starting your new job. You do not need to make a new application for permission to work.

LMA guidance: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

If your documents are close to expiring

If your IRP card, temporary protection document or LMA permission is nearing its expiry date, it is best to start renewal before beginning a new job. This avoids delays or confusion during the hiring process.

If an employer is unsure about hiring you

Some employers may not be familiar with the rules on hiring people under protection. You can show them your valid documents and direct them to official guidance on immigration permissions or labour market access. Employers should accept your IRP card, temporary protection document or LMA permission as confirmation of your right to work.

| Common situations and how to handle them

Many people under protection in Ireland face similar questions or difficulties when trying to work. Understanding these situations can help you avoid delays and deal with problems quickly and safely.

If an employer asks for a work permit you do not need

Refugees, people with subsidiary protection, and temporary protection holders do **not** need an employment permit. Your **Stamp 4 IRP card** or temporary protection document already gives you full access to work. If an employer asks for a permit, you can explain that your immigration permission includes the right to work, and direct them to official guidance from the Department of Justice: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

If you are an asylum seeker and the employer is unsure about your documents

Some employers are not familiar with the Labour Market Access (LMA) system. If you have valid LMA permission, you can show your permission letter and asylum applicant card. Employers must then complete the LMA5 form within 21 days of your start date. Clear guidance for employers is available here: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/>

If your documents expire during employment

If your IRP card, temporary protection permission or LMA authorisation expires, your employer may pause your contract

until renewal is confirmed. To avoid disruption, begin renewals well before the expiry date. Prefecture-style delays do not exist in Ireland, but processing can still take time.

If you move to a new address

Your right to work is valid nationwide, but you must update your address with the immigration authorities. Important information about renewals or correspondence may be sent to the address they have on file.

If you lose your documents

Report the loss of your IRP card, temporary protection document or asylum applicant card and apply for a replacement. While you wait, you may receive temporary proof of your status, which you can show to your employer if needed. Official IRP guidance is here: <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/irish-residence-permit-irp/>

If you have problems at work

You have the same employment rights as any other worker in Ireland. If you face issues such as unpaid wages, unsafe conditions or discrimination, you can seek support from statutory bodies and trusted organisations. The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) provides advice and handles complaints: <https://www.workplacerelations.ie/>

If an employer refuses to hire you because of your status

If you meet the legal requirements to work and hold the correct documents, employers should consider your application like any other. If you believe you have been treated unfairly because of your status or nationality, you may seek advice from the Irish Refugee Council or the WRC.

Irish Refugee Council information hub: <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/>

| Where to get help or more information

If you need guidance about your right to work, your documents or your protection status in Ireland, there are several trusted organisations and official services that can provide clear information and free support. These resources are useful if you are unsure about your documents, need help with renewals, or have concerns about work or employment conditions.

You can contact the following organisations for reliable assistance:

- **International Protection Office (IPO)** – The IPO handles asylum applications and provides official information on refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain. Their website includes updates on procedures and documentation. <https://www.ipa.gov.ie/>
- **Department of Justice / Irish Immigration Service** – This is the official source for immigration rules, temporary protection updates, IRP cards, Labour Market Access permission and all residence-related information. <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>
- **Irish Refugee Council (IRC)** – The IRC offers advice and practical support for refugees and asylum seekers, including help with work rights, documentation and employment problems. <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/>
- **Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)** – MRCI supports migrant workers and provides advice on workplace rights, exploitation, discrimination and access to employment. <https://www.mrci.ie/>
- **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)** – The WRC provides information about employment rights and can deal with concerns about working conditions, unpaid wages or discrimination. <https://www.workplacerelations.ie/>
- **Department of Social Protection** – This department manages PPS number applications, social welfare and supports related to employment. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments/departments-of-social-protection/>
- **Citizens Information** – Citizens Information offers clear explanations of immigration permissions, employment rules, social welfare and public services. <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/>

| Frequently asked questions

Many refugees and people under protection have similar questions about working in Ireland. Below are answers to some

of the most common concerns, explained in a simple and practical way.

1. **Do I need a work permit if I am a recognised refugee in Ireland?**
No. If you have refugee status, your **Stamp 4 IRP card** already gives you full permission to work.
2. **What about people with subsidiary protection?**
You also receive **Stamp 4**, which includes full access to the labour market.
3. **Can I work if I have temporary protection?**
Yes. Temporary protection gives you the right to work as soon as your permission is issued.
4. **When can asylum seekers work in Ireland?**
Asylum seekers may work only after **six months** if they have not received a first-instance decision. You must apply for and receive the **Labour Market Access (LMA) permission** before starting work.
5. **Can I work with only the asylum applicant card?**
No. The card alone does not give you the right to work. You must have the LMA permission.
6. **Do I need to renew my LMA permission?**
Yes. Your work rights depend on the LMA remaining valid. If it expires, you must renew it to continue working.
7. **Can I change employers freely?**
Yes. If you have Stamp 4, temporary protection or a valid LMA permission, you can change jobs without applying for new permission.
8. **Will I lose my job if my documents expire?**
Your employer may pause your employment until you provide renewed documents. Start renewals early to avoid interruptions.
9. **Do I need a PPS number to work?**
Yes. All workers must have a **Personal Public Service (PPS) number** for tax and employment records.
10. **What should I do if my IRP card or LMA letter is lost or stolen?**
Report the loss and apply for a replacement. Until the new document is issued, you may need temporary proof of your status.
11. **Where can I find official guidance?**
You can check the Irish Immigration Service website for the most accurate information:
<https://www.irishimmigration.ie/>

| Practical checklist for refugees preparing to work

This checklist helps you prepare for legal employment in Ireland. You can use it before applying for jobs or starting a new role.

- Confirm your legal status and whether it gives you the right to work.
Refugees and subsidiary protection holders have **Stamp 4**. Temporary protection holders have permission to work. Asylum seekers need an **LMA permission**.
- Check that your documents are valid.
Make sure your IRP card, temporary protection document or LMA permission is in date. Renew early to avoid gaps in your work rights.
- Prepare your identification.
Employers may ask for your passport, travel document or national ID, along with your IRP card or temporary protection letter.
- Gather documents that prove your right to work.
This includes your Stamp 4 IRP card, your temporary protection permission or your LMA letter if you are an asylum seeker.
- Apply for a PPS number if you do not already have one.
A PPS number is required for tax, employment and social protection services.
Guidance: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/12e6de-get-a-pps-number/>
- Make digital and paper copies of all important documents.
Copies help if something is lost, damaged or requested during a job application.

- Update your address with immigration authorities if you move.
Renewal letters and official notices may arrive by post, so it is important to keep your contact details correct.
- Be ready to show your documents when applying for jobs.
Employers must verify your identity and your right to work before hiring you.
- Contact trusted organisations if you need help.
Groups such as the Irish Refugee Council or Migrant Rights Centre Ireland can support you with questions about documentation or employment.