

MIGRANT COLLECTION

**SUPPORTING VULNERABLE
MIGRANTS**



**COUNCIL FOR MIGRANTS,
REFUGEES AND JUSTICE AND PEACE**

A Council of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP ALAN McGUICKIAN

Dear Bishop,

The Gospel commands us, as the Body of Christ, to uphold the dignity of every human person and to walk with all who have left their home in search of a new life. As a nation, we are only too aware of the causes and impacts of emigration and the need for so many of our people to leave home and find solace in other lands.

At this time of year, and always, we remember and pray for all Irish people overseas – those who have recently emigrated and those who left our shores many years ago. There are few families in the country who do not have a loved one living overseas or that have not experienced emigration at some point. Many continue to struggle abroad with the loneliness of missing family and friends at home. We also think of those who have travelled to this country from foreign lands to begin new lives in Ireland, whether to escape war or persecution or in search of a better life. We pray that they receive the same welcome that we would wish for our own emigrants far from home.

The Council for Migrants, Refugees and Justice and Peace is inviting each diocese to consider taking up a collection in 2025 in support of migrant people, whether they are coming to Ireland or indeed those Irish who have left these shores and are still very much part of our church and communities around the world. Funds raised through this collection will be

used to support the work of the Council and other projects that provide pastoral outreach to marginalised and vulnerable communities within Ireland and among Irish people abroad.

During the past year, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference provided grant funding to a number of worthy organisations involved in the practical and pastoral support of our emigrant and immigrant communities. You will find attached a brochure giving some of the examples of how this funding was utilised and a poster promoting this year's collection. The Council will also be sharing relevant content on the Bishops' Conference website and via social media in the run-up to St Patrick's Day, around which time many dioceses choose to hold this collection, although the resource can be used at any time.

Pope Francis constantly reminds us to rediscover the Church's itinerant nature, 'as the People of God journeying through history on pilgrimage, "migrating", we could say, toward the Kingdom of Heaven' I conclude with the words from his Message for the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (29th September 2024):



Bishop of Down and Connor

‘You will never know how eternally grateful I am for your priceless help. Things were looking pretty desperate for me in trying to find accommodation, and then the miracle happened and I discovered Ashford Place. Thank you again and again.’

Ashford Place is a community centre styled charity based in Cricklewood, north west London. Our local community is among the most deprived in London and the UK and has the highest number of Irish immigrants in the UK. They are an ageing and vulnerable group often overlooked by statutory service and facing increasing marginalisation.

Some of the challenges Irish emigrants experience in this community are:

- » Access to statutory services – housing, benefits, health care – is difficult due to increasing digitalisation, lack of face to face or telephone services
- » Lack of secure accommodation – single Irish men and women on low or no income and part of an ageing population are a very low priority for social housing
- » Lack of community spaces – to meet and socialise with their peers free or at a low cost
- » Health inequalities – accessing the healthcare that is needed is

increasingly difficult due to crisis in NHS services, digital exclusion and inability to engage.

Some of the ways the grant has been used:

1. Digital support drop in sessions daily – continued help to access on line benefit accounts and related emails
2. Friendship support inpatient visits for 12 weeks from December 2024 to March 2025 (ongoing) 84yr old widowed Irish lady living with depression, and expressing suicide ideation and a history of suicide attempts
3. Continued friendship visit lady 80yrs in new supported and secure accommodation post prison release – provided toiletries, hair clips and fleece
4. Visit male 80yrs single Irish man in secure mental health unit to provide guidance to staff on managing his behaviours and in planning and encouraging move to high level supported accommodation



ASHFORD PLACE



‘Thank you for helping me with the cost of a new fridge and for your help, I am managing my money now with your help in securing pension credit for me.’



5. Arrange and made contribution to cost of deep clean of two 1 bed flats hoarding clearance pre-treatment for infestation – male 70yrs and 78yrs
6. One fridge – male 75yrs
7. Subsidised lunches on an as needed basis
8. Continuing derma therapy sessions Irish Women’s group – 12 attendees – all survivors of domestic violence and in recovery
9. Early January 2025 Oyster card and top up to allow Kathleen travel by public transport to meetings with Brent Council homeless team, showers and lunches for 10 days whilst awaiting a hostel place which she has now received

The grant allowed Ashford Place to have a pot of undesignated funds that gave that little bit of extra support and comfort to some of their more high needs clients and helped them do what was considered morally right and necessary.

CASE STUDY

MS, a 72 year old male, sought assistance from Ashford Place after receiving an eviction notice due to his landlord selling the property. Ashford Place successfully helped secure a studio flat for him. During this process, MS was introduced to the dining hall and the various activities offered at Ashford Place. He became actively involved in the walking group and discovered new parts of London despite having lived there for over 50 years.

MS has since made new friends and has proven to be excellent company. He is particularly supportive of new service users, often helping them feel at ease when participating in activities for the first time.

Ashford Place also provided support when M was hospitalised following an accident when he was feeling anxious and experiencing short-term memory loss. They assisted him by retrieving necessary items from his flat and providing regular friendship visits, offering emotional support during a difficult time.

LUTON IRISH FORUM



‘Thank you Luton Irish Forum for your thoughts and kindness. My mum was thrilled to think that someone was thinking about her. She really enjoyed the lovely dinner the bacon and cabbage went down a treat.’

The Luton Irish Forum is a charity that provides welfare, social, cultural, and volunteering services to improve the quality of life for the Irish community and others in Luton.

Some of the challenges Irish emigrants experience in this community are:

- » Many older people experience isolation and loneliness, with a significant number living alone and struggling to meet basic needs
- » Access to services can be difficult, with many relying on public transport to reach support networks
- » The prevalence of anxiety and depression has increased, particularly during and since the Covid 19 pandemic
- » Irish Travellers face health disparities, with shorter life expectancies and higher rates of poor health compared with other ethnic groups
- » Younger generations often feel disconnected from their Irish heritage and community activities

How the grant has been used:

For the second year running, Luton Irish Forum funded by the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, has provided bacon and cabbage meals on Blue Monday 20th January 2025. Sixty-four local people sat down to a meal cooked by

Luton Irish Forum and volunteers from locally sourced providers. Fifty meals were cooked at the Globe Pub in Luton and delivered to housebound and other seniors across the town by Luton Irish Forum volunteers. Music was provided, impromptu singing and dancing rounded off the day.

- » The grant allowed Luton Irish Forum to bring people together for a meal and activities, it provided a sense of belonging and reduced feelings of isolation among older Irish residents.
- » The home visits and meal deliveries ensured that even those who couldn't attend in person felt cared for and included.
- » Regular participation in community events encourages individuals to seek out and utilise other available support services
- » Consistent engagement in community activities can lead to sustained improvements in mental well-being, reducing anxiety and depression

‘I had a lovely lunch today it was a great day thanks to the amazing staff and volunteers at Luton Irish Forum. It really helps me get out and meet others and the loneliness is not so bad now.’

POPULATION AND MIGRATION ESTIMATES

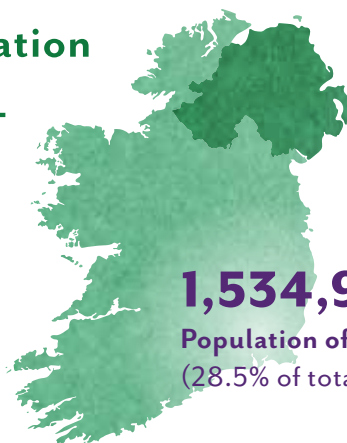
In the 12 months to the end of April 2024:

- » The population in Ireland rose by 98,700 people which was the largest 12-month increase since 2008.
- » There were 149,200 immigrants which was a 17-year high. This was the third successive 12-month period where over 100,000 people immigrated to Ireland.
- » Of those immigrants, 30,000 were returning Irish citizens, 27,000 were other EU citizens, and 5,400 were UK citizens. The remaining 86,800 immigrants were citizens of other countries.
- » Over 69,000 people departed the State in the 12 months to April 2024, compared with 64,000 in the same period of 2023. This is the highest emigration figure since 2015.
- » There was a natural increase of 19,400 people in the State comprised of 54,200 births and 34,800 deaths.

Population and Migration Estimates April 2024

5,380,300

Ireland's estimated
Usually Resident Population



1,534,900

Population of Dublin
(28.5% of total population)

4,544,100

Irish citizens (84.5%)



836,200

Non-Irish citizens (15.5%)

79,300

Total Net Migration in the year to April 2024

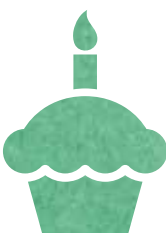
69,900 emigrants



149,200 immigrants

833,300

people aged 65 or more
an increase of 156,800
(23.2%) since 2018



Migration of Irish Citizens

30,000 returned
to live in Ireland



34,700 left
to live abroad



PRAYER

A POPE'S PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANTS

Merciful God, we pray to you for all the men, women and children who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life. Though many of their graves bear no name, to you each one is known, loved and cherished.

May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice with deeds more than words. We entrust to you all those who have made this journey, enduring fear, uncertainty and humiliation, in order to reach a place of safety and hope.

Just as you never abandoned your Son as he was brought to a safe place by Mary and Joseph, so now be close to these, your sons and daughters, through our tenderness and protection.

In caring for them may we seek a world where none are forced to leave their home and where all can live in freedom, dignity and peace.

Merciful God and Father of all, wake us from the slumber of indifference, open our eyes to their suffering, and free us from the insensitivity born of worldly comfort and self-centredness.

Inspire us, as nations, communities and individuals, to see that those who come to our shores are our brothers and sisters.

May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand, and recognize that together, as one human family, we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home, where every tear will be wiped away, where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

by Pope Francis





MRJP

**Council for Migrants, Refugees
and Justice and Peace**

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