

# 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 McGuckian

Dear Bishop,

As the Body of Christ, we are commanded to uphold the dignity of every human person and to walk with all who have left their home in search of a new life. We in Ireland are very 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.

As we approach St Patrick's Day, 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. And there are those people and families who have travelled to this country to begin new lives in Ireland, whether to escape war or persecution or in search of a better life. The vast majority of them are making vital contributions to the economy of this island across a range of sectors. 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 thanks dioceses for their generous contributions to the Migrants Collection in 2025. This was the first year of the new format for funding and it has got off to a very good start. Once again, the Council is inviting each diocese to consider taking up a collection in 2026 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.

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.

Finally, let us remind ourselves of the words of Pope Leo XIV, who in his Message for World Day for Migrants and Refugees 2025 told us that the presence of migrants amongst us 'should be recognized and appreciated as a true divine blessing, an opportunity to open oneself to the grace of God, who gives new energy and hope to his Church: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2).

Yours sincerely,



**Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ**  
Bishop of Down and Connor

Chair of the Council for Migrants, Refugees and  
Justice and Peace



## THE FOOTWORKS SOCIAL AT THE LUTON IRISH FORUM



### **In a couple of sentences, tell me about your organisation.**

I run an affordable foot clinic once a month at the Luton Irish Forum, we call ourselves The Footworks Social offering gentle, culturally sensitive and professional podiatric foot care for Irish elders that are members of the Luton Irish Forum. It is a welcoming space where people can look after their health, have a chat and a cup of tea and feel supported. We have three podiatrists who can see up to 45 patients on the one day of the foot clinic.

### **What are the types of challenges Irish emigrants experience in your community?**

The Irish community has the oldest age profile of any minority ethnic group in England and Wales meaning foot-care needs are significant. Older age brings mobility

issues, frailty and a greater risk of falls – all areas where good podiatry makes a major difference.

Older Irish emigrants are often reluctant to access mainstream services partly due to past negative experiences or discrimination in health settings. Sometimes they feel their cultural identity and needs are not understood, and there is stigma around certain health conditions. These barriers delay treatment and can worsen foot problems, especially when issues like calluses, infections or non-healing wounds are left untreated. Additionally, many older Irish emigrants who arrived in the 1950s-1970s, worked in physically demanding jobs and this can contribute to chronic pain, MSK problems, poor mobility and foot deformities from years of manual labour.

# Luton Irish Forum



## THE FOOTWORKS SOCIAL AT THE LUTON IRISH FORUM

### What was the grant you received from the Emigrant Collection used for?

The grant was used to subsidise the cost of a foot appointment, meaning that foot care is accessible for Irish Elders on a regular basis. Additionally, we did further fundraising within the Luton and London Irish Business community and attracted donations that pay for cream and gentle grip socks – that we can then give free to patients.

### How did it help them?

Our aim is to keep Irish Elders mobile, comfortable and pain free, so they can keep getting the public bus or walk to the Luton Irish Forum and enjoy all the wonderful events provided there. By providing regular, affordable professional podiatry care we help prevent small problems becoming serious ones. This not only supports the wellbeing and independence of your patients but also reduces the pressure on an already overstretched NHS by lowering the need for urgent or specialist care. If we spot anything concerning or we notice a decline in our patients we write directly to GPs and arrange onward referrals ensuring our patients receive timely medical attention on the NHS when they need it.

### What difference did the grant make to you and the people you support?

The difference the grant made to me.

1. Without the grant we could not run the foot clinic

2. I get the satisfaction of providing proper, unrushed podiatry in a supportive community setting where patients truly appreciate it.
3. Professional insight and early intervention, I can intervene early when I notice vascular issues, infections, neuropathy, or possible signs of serious illness and I can directly communicate with GPs.
4. Building Trust and Relationships, seeing patients on a regular basis we build up a strong relationship, this often leads to patients feeling safe enough to share other concerns – we are another pair of listening ears and with the support of LIF we are well placed to help and advise.
5. I have been able to employ senior podiatrists to work in the clinic, they both love working in this clinic – they enjoy the unhurried nature of it and the fact that we have everything we need, and we can give patients free cream or socks or whatever else they may need. Also, many of our patients are very funny and so the podiatrists really enjoy the patients. I have been able to employ a retired medical secretary to run the reception, she loves coming and has said it has given her a new lease of life – all the patients love her too and I have been able to offer volunteer opportunities to young people.
6. I used to run a magazine for the Irish in London – called The Craic is Back and previously to that I worked for the Irish Post newspaper. I have had a career change into the world of feet. And the foot clinic enables me to talk about Ireland and indulge in my Irish culture and identity – which I have missed since retiring the magazine at the end of 2022.



## THE FOOTWORKS SOCIAL AT THE LUTON IRISH FORUM

### FOR PATIENTS

#### The difference the foot clinic makes

1. Better mobility and independence
2. Early detection of problems
3. Reduced pain and improved comfort
4. Culturally familiar and trusting environment – through out the year some foot clinics are themed February – we link in to Whitefrairs Street in Dublin in that I purchase St Valentine Day prayer cards to give to patients and the Whitefrairs Street Church remember the Foot Clinic and everyone at Luton Irish Forum at Mass on St Valentines Day. March in honour of St Patrick – we have a musician and he plays the guitar and sings Irish songs, taking requests as well and we serve Irish

coffee. We observe Lent, so we only serve tea (no biscuits) at the foot clinics that fall within Lent and we also have special wet foot socks that we put on patients symbolising Our Lord washing feet. August is our anniversary of the foot clinic – so in 2026 we will be going 3 years, and we will have the Rose Wine and The Rosary, and in our Christmas clinic, last year we served Baileys Hot chocolate and put gentle grip soft top Christmas socks on patients – and will do that again for Christmas 2026.

5. Continued participation in community life, we are keeping older Irish mobile so they can continue attending the Luton Irish Forum, reducing loneliness and isolation and improving quality of life.

### Case Study

A lady first came to the foot clinic, she was very shy about coming and was persuaded to come by her friend, so we arranged that she came at the end of the day, my two colleagues had left, and it was just myself and my reception lady. The patient was aged 93, originally from Co Clare, and was brought by her friend.

We are in a large hall, so the friend and my receptionist has a cup of tea together in the kitchen, and I was at the other end of the hall with the patient.

The patient explained to me that she was very embarrassed about her feet. She said that her husband had recently died, that he had had dementia and she had been caring for him, which meant she put her own needs second. She told me she had two grown sons both in their 60s and that she saw them from time to time, but they had busy lives. She was wearing socks and sandals although it was January.

As I took the sandals and socks off the patient she began to cry. She said, “My feet are so bad, I thought I was going to die with my feet looking like this, I thought they would have to wrap blankets around my feet when I am in coffin so no-one can see them.”

I held the patient’s hands and I said, “It’s okay now, you are here and I am going to make your feet comfortable for you.” I knew the lady was practicing catholic, so I said, “Would you like to say a Hail Mary before we start?” She did and we prayed.

Her feet had been neglected, her nails were thick, curled and approximately 5cm long, painful callus had built up.

The patient’s sons had never asked their mum about her feet. And if they had she would most likely have said, “They are fine, I’m fine”.

Similarly we had an older Irish man we accommodated at the end of the clinic day, I was able to get him out of immediate pain but enucleating a painful corn, cut and reduce his nails, and gift him socks that did not mark his legs – additionally we can administer free of charge due to our funding a special ONCE treatment for athletes foot. Although we have not seen this man back in the clinic, I know it took him great courage to come, and I was pleased to play my part in helping him.

# Luton Irish Forum



‘I was sitting in the TV room when two ladies knocked at the door and handed me a lunch. I was knocked back – it was a lovely surprise. A massive thank you to everyone involved.’

‘Thank you so very much for the wonderful cabbage and bacon dinner. It was so tasty – our compliments to the chef and all the hard working helpers.’

## COUNCIL FOR MIGRANTS AND JUSTICE AND PEACE: CHRISTMAS AID

**In a couple of sentences, tell me about your organisation.**

Luton Irish Forum is a long established community organisation supporting Irish emigrants and their families across Luton and the surrounding areas. We provide practical advice, wellbeing and mental health support, social connection, and cultural activities to reduce isolation, promote dignity, and help people stay connected to their Irish identity while living in the UK.

**What are the types of challenges Irish emigrants experience in your community?**

Irish emigrants in our community experience a range of interconnected challenges, particularly loneliness and social isolation, which are most acute among older people, those living alone, and individuals who are housebound or in poor health. Many experience mental health difficulties, including depression, anxiety, bereavement, and unresolved trauma, often linked to migration, loss of family networks, or life transitions.



There are also financial pressures, including low incomes, insecure housing, pension gaps, and difficulty navigating the benefits system.

Barriers to accessing services—such as digital exclusion, limited confidence, literacy issues, or lack of awareness of entitlements—can prevent people from seeking help. These challenges are frequently compounded by cultural stigma around asking for support and a strong sense of self reliance, meaning people often reach crisis before engaging with services.



**What was the grant you received from the Emigrant Collection used for?**

The grant from the Emigrant Collection was used to deliver a targeted community wellbeing and outreach initiative for vulnerable Irish people. Funding supported the preparation and delivery of hot, nutritious meals, live music and social engagement, and volunteer led outreach to reduce loneliness and isolation.



# Luton Irish Forum



‘Mammy and daddy were delighted with their delicious meals. Thank you all for making such a difference.’

‘The lunch and music made it a memorable day. Thank you to the volunteers, staff and musicians.’

## COUNCIL FOR MIGRANTS AND JUSTICE AND PEACE: CHRISTMAS AID

Through this support, we delivered 55 meals to people who were unable to attend in person, provided an additional 12 plated dinners, and welcomed around 85 people to an in house community meal. The project brought together staff, volunteers, local partners and musicians to create a safe, welcoming space that promoted dignity, connection, and cultural belonging for Irish emigrants, many of whom are older, isolated, or experiencing poor health.

### How did it help them?

The grant helped by reducing isolation, improving wellbeing, and restoring a sense of connection and dignity for Irish emigrants who are often socially isolated or housebound. Access to a warm meal, live music, and shared community space provided comfort, routine, and positive social interaction, while home delivered meals ensured that those unable to attend in person were not left out.

For many individuals, the initiative offered reassurance that they were remembered and valued. The combination of practical support, cultural familiarity, and human contact helped lift mood, reduce loneliness,

and strengthen trust in community support services—particularly for older people and those experiencing poor health or bereavement.

### What difference did the grant make to you and the people you support?

The grant made a meaningful difference by enabling us to reach people who are often isolated, overlooked, or reluctant to ask for help, and to respond in a timely, compassionate way. For those we support, it reduced loneliness, improved wellbeing, and restored a sense of dignity, belonging, and connection through practical support, shared experiences, and culturally familiar activities.

For Luton Irish Forum, the grant strengthened our capacity to deliver responsive, community led support and brought together staff, volunteers, and local partners around a shared purpose. Importantly, delivering this work after the Christmas period provided a significant boost to morale, acting as a motivator for staff and volunteers at a traditionally challenging time of year, reinforcing the value of their efforts and renewing energy and commitment to supporting the community.



# Migration to and from Ireland in 2024–25

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND\*

In the 12 months to the end of April 2025:

- » The population in Ireland (ROI) rose by 78,300 people, compared with a rise of 98,700 people in the same period to the end of April 2024.
- » There were 125,300 immigrants into Ireland during this period - a reduction of 23,900 (or 16%) on the previous year. Still, this was the fourth successive 12-month period where over 100,000 people immigrated to Ireland.
- » Of those immigrants, 31,500 were returning Irish citizens, 25,300 were other EU citizens, and 4,900 were UK citizens. The remaining 63,600 were citizens of other countries.
- » Some 65,600 people left the State in the 12 months to April 2025, compared with 69,600

in the same period to April 2024. Of these, 35,000 were Irish citizens and 30,600 were citizens of other countries.

- » As of April 2025, non-Irish Citizens in the State totalled 888,400 people, accounting for 16.3% of the population.
- » There was a fall in emigration numbers for the first time since 2020, with 65,600 people departing the State in the 12 months to April 2025. This was a decrease of 4,300 people, or 6.2%, compared with 69,900 in the same period of 2024.
- » During the period under review there was a natural increase of 18,600 people in the State, comprised of 54,400 births and 35,800 deaths.

\* Source: CSO statistical release, 26 August 2025

## NORTHERN IRELAND\*

- » Around 293,000 long-term international migrants have arrived in Northern Ireland between the years 2001 and 2023. During the same period, 231,000 left, leaving a net migration flow of 62,000 people.
- » Census 2021 showed that the total number of people belonging to a minority ethnic group stood at 65,600 people (3.4% of the population). This is small, compared to

the rest of the UK, and reflects the relative levels of economic opportunities in Northern Ireland.

- » Most migrants in Northern Ireland are young, around 87% of them being under the age of 35. However, it is expected that migration will continue to have an impact on population change and the delivery of public services into the future.

\* Source: Northern Ireland Assembly, 'International Migration in Northern Ireland: an Update' by Dr Raymond Russell, (Paper Ref NIAR 9-25, February 2025).

## OTHER DATA\*

- » A total of 13,160 people applied for asylum in Ireland in 2025, compared with 18,552 in 2024, which was highest number ever recorded. More than 1,600 asylum seekers voluntarily left Ireland in 2025, up from 934 in the previous year.

- » Somalia, Nigeria and Pakistan represent the top 3 nationalities of those seek international protection in Ireland.
- » As of December 2025, the State is housing just under 33,000 people under the International Protection Programme.

\* Source: International Protection Office 'Monthly Statistical Report, December 2025 and Irish Times 6 January 2026)

# Migration to and from Ireland in 2024–25

The Council for Migrants, Refugees and Justice & Peace of the Irish Episcopal Conference continues to support Irish Emigrants overseas through a variety of chaplaincies and organisations. Similarly, the Council supports the work of a range of Catholic-based organisations who welcome and assist those coming to Ireland to seek refuge or to find a new life and contribute to our communities and to our economy. Indeed many sectors of our economy depend on them.

The Council for Migrants, Refugees and Justice & Peace thanks dioceses for their generous contributions to the Migrants Collection in 2025. Once again, the Council is inviting each diocese to take up a collection in 2026 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.

As Christian people, we have a duty to uphold the God-given dignity of every human life and to accompany all who have left their home in search of hope and a new life. Indeed, migrants and refugees remind us of our own journey as pilgrims of hope. As many parishes throughout our country know, they bring us so much life, joy and hope through their participation in the church and in our communities. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that:

**‘the communities that welcome them can also be a living witness to hope, one that is understood as the promise of a present and a future where the dignity of all as children of God is recognized. In this way, migrants and refugees are recognized as brothers and sisters, part of a family in which they can express their talents and participate fully in community life’.**

*Message for World Day for Migrants and Refugees, 2025*

We invite you to be a living witness to hope in the present and the future by supporting the Migrant Collection in your Diocese this year.

## Population and Migration Estimates April 2025

**5,458,600**

Ireland’s estimated Usually Resident Population

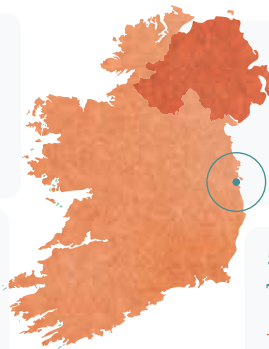
**4,570,200**

Irish citizens (83.7%)



**888,400**

Non-Irish citizens (16.3%)



**1,568,000**

Population of Dublin (28.7% of total population)

**59,700**

Total Net Migration in the year to April 2025

**65,600 emigrants**



**125,300 immigrants**



**861,100**

people aged 65 or more an increase of 159,700 (22.8%) since 2019



**Migration of Irish Citizens**

31,500 returned to live in Ireland



35,000 left to live abroad





**MRJP**

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

**A Council of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference**

**Columba Centre,  
Maynooth, Co. Kildare  
Ireland, W23 P6D3**

**Phone: 00 353 1 505 3000**

**Email: [MRJP@iecon.ie](mailto:MRJP@iecon.ie)**

**[www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie)**