

EMIGRANT COLLECTION

Supporting Vulnerable
Irish People Overseas



**IRISH EPISCOPAL
COUNCIL FOR EMIGRANTS**

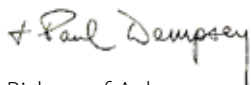
A Council of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PAUL DEMPSEY

As a Church and a people, we must continue to reach out to those who are affected by emigration. We remember and pray for all Irish people overseas – those who are recently departed and those who left our shores many years ago. We remember the families they have left behind and pray they will find strength and comfort as they cope with the pain of separation. We also think of those who have travelled from foreign lands to begin new lives in Ireland and pray that they receive the same welcome that we would wish for our own emigrants far from home.

Since 1957, the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants (IECE) has been responding to the needs of Irish emigrants around the world. It continues to do so through the work of its pastoral centres in the United States and the UK, which provide a myriad of services to the most vulnerable members of the Irish emigrant community. It also does so by providing grants to other like-minded organisations that provide targeted and specialist support to discrete categories of vulnerable emigrants – from the aged and lonely to those with addiction and mental health problems.

I wish to thank all those who generously support the collection for emigrants each year. This funding allows us to offer essential support to those organisations providing pastoral, practical outreach to the most marginalised and vulnerable groups of Irish people, many of whom are living lives of quiet desperation.



Bishop of Achonry
Chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants





IRISH COUNCIL FOR PRISONERS OVERSEAS

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

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) is a charitable organisation established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985 to work on behalf of all Irish prisoners overseas regardless of religious faith or none, the nature of the conviction or of their status. It currently supports in excess of one thousand Irish prisoners in thirty-six different countries and their families here in Ireland. ICPO provides information, support, advice and care in a myriad of ways, from modest hardship fund grants and prison visits to family and resettlement work.

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

In some countries prison conditions can be extremely poor and basic human needs are difficult to meet. Language difficulties and problems dealing with an unfamiliar prison and legal system mean that in most, if not all, cases our clients experience increased levels of isolation and loneliness.

3. What will the grant you received from the Emigrant Collection be used for?

The grant will be used to develop the existing ICPO services and increase the level of support provided to prisoners and their families.

4. How will it help them?

ICPO will be able to identify areas where additional supports are required and target these for additional services. Much has changed in prisons since the Covid-19 pandemic and it is important tailored supports are put in place.

5. What difference will the grant make to you and the people you support?

ICPO seeks to respond to the needs of its clients today. It does not wish to keep doing this the same as always. This grant, in conjunction with our recent client survey sent to Irish prisons in thirty-six countries, will allow us to target their specific needs in a pastorally sensitive and effective way.

‘I was seriously considering giving up and putting an end to more pain and abuse before I received your letter. So you can be happy and proud that at least you saved me from a long stay in hospital chained up.’

‘That letter has been the only one I've received. It's the first time in four months that I've been able to make a phone call as well. The posters and prayers have brightened up the cell and really lifted my depressed mood.’



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

Ashford Place is a charity based in Cricklewood, north-west London. We are based in the borough of Brent and border Barnet and Camden boroughs – areas that have the highest Irish population in the UK, a population affected by poverty, social exclusion and poor health. Our work involves a community-centred approach to ending social isolation, improving physical and mental health and well-being, working with our local community to increase resilience and self-determination, enabling our clients to have a decent and secure home and supporting our clients – young and older – to effectively access quality health and social care. Our work is led by our guiding principles and emphasises the key roles of the community and of individuals when it comes to creating real and long-lasting change in people's lives.

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

- » Health inequalities
- » Financial disadvantage
- » Social exclusion
- » Ageing population isolated from family and friends
- » Digital exclusion
- » Culturally sensitive responses from statutory agencies are rare

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

We received the grant in mid December 2022 and have not spent all of it at this time.

We used £150 to obtain a birth cert and passport and provide lunch and food parcels to help a 72-year-old Irish gentleman who has been rough sleeping for a number of years. We have been able to place him in hostel accommodation and will shortly help him move to private

rented accommodation and will use some more of the funds (£150 approx) to provide him with a start-up pack of bedding, towels, cookery utensils. He attends our lunch service daily and has begun to engage in social activities and with mental health support.

We have earmarked £200 to help a 76-year-old Irish woman who is in and out of prison. With this we help pay her travel costs when she is without a bus pass. We also purchased some clothing in her size into which she can change while we launder what she is wearing. We have attended court with her recently for a charge of assault. Our support meant that her personal circumstances are being taken into account. She is now in hospital and will be moved into residential care as she has had a dementia diagnosis. Due to the nature of her departure from her accommodation, she has no clothing or personal effects, hence earmarking £200 for her. Once she is in the residential home our befriending team will visit and bring new clothing and footwear to her.

We used £20 to top up an Oyster card for a young man just out of prison who did not have funds to travel to attend a housing needs assessment in south London.

The remaining £760 has been set aside for needs of the same calibre that will arise.

4. How did it help them?

It helped feed, clothe and give independence during difficult times.

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

It has enabled us to make the difficult times easier for the three people your funds have helped so far. We do not generally have funds that we can spend in this way with most of our funding being restricted.

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

The Irish Chaplaincy was established by the Irish Bishops in 1957 to support Irish emigrants arriving in Britain. Today the Irish Chaplaincy Seniors Project provides support to isolated and vulnerable older Irish in London, those emigrants of the 1950s and 1960s.

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

The Irish seniors we support in London often face loneliness and isolation with deteriorating physical and emotional health including dementia, as well as struggling to engage with local health and social care services. They also suffer with poor housing, financial issues and have worries about the end of their lives both spiritually and practically.

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

It has enabled us to support some hundred and ninety of the most vulnerable older Irish across London by regular visits and telephone calls that provide a unique service of spiritual, emotional and practical support, tailored to the personal needs of each individual.

4. How did it help them?

The grant enabled us to offer clients listening support and advocacy, assistance with practical tasks, accompaniment to medical appointments, liaison with health and social care agencies, spiritual accompaniment and reconnection with their parish communities and end-of-life care and funeral planning.

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

It enabled us and our volunteers to provide person-centred holistic support through a culturally sensitive service that ensures people get the help they need and so improving their well-being and outlook on their lives.





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

Luton Irish Forum (LIF) is a registered charity established twenty-five years ago. We provide welfare, social, cultural, employment and volunteering opportunities for the Irish community and all local communities.

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

- » Our client group is mainly older Irish people. According to the census, one in ten people living the area are Irish, three thousand of which – one in every five – live alone.
- » The number of older people is predicted to increase by 40 per cent over the next twenty years. Many are unable to meet their basic needs and consequently have poor quality of life.
- » Clients aged 60+ attend twice as often as other age groups, demonstrating that they need and choose to socialise and get support from fellow Irish men and women. Many report getting two buses (each way) to LIF services.
- » Eighty-six per cent of our clients have not accessed another welfare service and 12 per cent that went elsewhere found it did not meet their needs.

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

This grant has funded blankets, hot-water bottles and flasks for our most needy clients and group attendees. We are also using it to fund warm spaces for people to stay at LIF longer and to enjoy soup and bread and a board game in a warm and friendly space.

4. How did it help them?

Sean is a single man who is currently unemployed and is receiving Job Seeker's Allowance. He is struggling to pay bills. He is currently waiting to be rehoused but his current accommodation costs too much to heat efficiently. He is often cold, being at home most of the day, except when he comes in to us. He was very grateful for the blanket and hot-water bottle we gave him as he would not have been able to purchase it himself as he has very little money. He said, 'Thank you. I really appreciated it. They helped to keep me warm as it has been especially cold lately.'

Raymond is 65 years old. He has been unable to work since a major road traffic accident twenty years ago. This coupled with the deaths of two sons in traumatic circumstances has led to PTSD and Raymond finds it really difficult to engage. He cannot read or write and has been getting benefits support from our welfare team. Whilst spending time at LIF, Raymond told his benefit assessor, 'I don't like to be around people, but I feel better when I go there because they are so understanding.' Raymond was given a blanket, flask and hot-water bottle by our team as he had regularly complained about the cold and shared he was using a plastic bottle of hot water to warm his bed.

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

The grant helped our clients keep warm during a severely cold winter when they had to make the choice between putting the heat on or eating a meal.



EMIGRATION STATISTICS



The Central Statistics Office (CSO) published the annual Population and Migration Estimates for April 2022.

- » 59,600 emigrated in the year to April 2022
- » Of these, 27,600 were Irish citizens
- » In the last seven years 203,900 Irish citizens emigrated
- » The UK remains the most popular destination for Irish emigrants



PRAYER

A PRAYER FOR EMIGRANTS

*Bless all those who have left our country and now live in other lands.
Give them a strong faith so that they will always put their trust in you and make you known by the example of their lives.
Console those who are lonely because they are separated from those they love.
Help all missionaries who are working far from home to make your love known.
Bless our people overseas who are sick or in prison.
We pray for foreigners living in our country that they may experience our hospitality.
Grant your eternal welcome to our emigrants who have died and to all the dead. Amen.*



IECE

IRISH EPISCOPAL COUNCIL FOR EMIGRANTS

Columba Centre
Maynooth
Co. Kildare
Ireland, W23 P6D3

Phone: 00 353 1 505 3155
Fax: 00 353 1 629 2363
Email: emigrants@iecon.ie
www.catholicbishops.ie/emigrants