



## ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN

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### **Diocesan Safeguarding Sunday, 27 September 2026**

This year our diocesan Safeguarding Sunday coincides with the “World Day of Migrants and Refugees”. We should take this opportunity to reflect on the particular vulnerability of the children who come to this country as refugees or seeking international protection.

Most people who migrate to Ireland do so in a planned way. They come here to live on a short- or long-term basis, and they contribute to our society through their work, especially in fields such as health and social services. They enrich our lives, our culture and our Church. Many of them have brought fresh life and vigour to our parishes.

A much smaller number of people (about 10% of the total) come here as asylum-seeking refugees, often fleeing war, persecution and extreme poverty. Just like those who left Ireland in so-called coffin ships during the Famine, many endure great hardship in making the journey to Ireland. In 2025 approximately 13,000 people came here seeking international protection. Included in that number were nearly 5,000 children who arrived with family members. However, during that year 248 unaccompanied children arrived in Ireland.

Unaccompanied children are very vulnerable to exploitation, including sexual exploitation, trafficking and abuse. Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has responsibility for their welfare and protection. Younger children are placed in foster care wherever possible, while older children may be accommodated in residential settings. The availability of suitable accommodation and support for these children remains a significant challenge. Where appropriate, safe and regulated accommodation is not available, children can find themselves in settings where safeguarding arrangements may not provide the level of protection that vulnerable children require.

How do we, as a Christian community, respond to this situation?

- Crosscare, the diocesan social care agency, provides an immigration information and advice service. We must continue to support this vital work.

- We must strive to build inclusive parishes where all are welcomed, cherished and supported, especially those in difficult circumstances, recognising a sister or brother in the other.
- We must continue to emphasise the importance of safeguarding and attendance at safeguarding training. Training helps us to recognise the risks that children and young people may face and to understand how concerns for their safety should be responded to and reported.
- We must insist that all activities for children and young people are run in strict accordance with best safeguarding practices.
- We should remember that we are citizens as well as Christians and seek to influence public debate about matters to do with immigration. We should highlight the many ways in which Irish society is enriched through immigration and reject all forms of racism and xenophobia.
- We need to foster social cohesion and make sure that Ireland continues to be known as a country of “a thousand welcomes” for the people who come to our shores. We must develop a profound respect for people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. As Pope Leo said on 17 June of this year: “We are all invited to re-read the gospel in today’s world, exchanging the gifts of our respective cultures with each other”.
- We must continue to remember, and to pray for, all victims and survivors of abuse.

Safeguarding is ultimately about creating communities where every child is valued, respected and protected. On this Safeguarding Sunday, let us renew our commitment to making our parishes places of welcome, inclusion, safety and care for all.



✠ Dermot Farrell

September 2026