

From the Chairman's Desk



Happy New Year to all of our readers at home and abroad and a big thank you to all those who sent us Christmas cards and New Year greetings. As each new year begins, it brings with it a time of reflection, often on times past and thoughts of loved ones who have left us. We had a lovely letter recently from Kathleen and her friends in North Mayo paying tribute to their wonderful neighbours, who sadly passed away during the year.

Family links can be strong but so can our friendships with others such as those who live close to us. A good neighbour is a blessing at any time, but particularly in times of trouble. They are close at hand in a crisis and reliable at other times as well to keep an eye on your property when you're out and about, or provide a grain or two of sugar if you run out. In times of trouble they are the first port of call and provide a sympathetic response and practical help when other friends and relatives are far away. We applaud Kathleen and her friends for their letter celebrating the life of their next door friends which reminds us all of the great value of good neighbours. We sympathise with them on their bereavement and trust that their sense of loss will diminish somewhat with the passage of time. It reminds us also to value and appreciate those who we know will be there for us when we need them.

The circle of life continues, and no doubt life changes and big decisions will follow us all again in 2016. For some people that may include a decision on whether to return to Ireland or not. For many, the return to Ireland after many years abroad is somewhat different to what they expected. Ireland, its people and customs have changed considerably over the years and indeed the experiences of being an emigrant will have given those who return a whole new outlook. Here at Safe Home, we recognise that the transition of the permanent homecoming brings its own challenges. We hope that in some way, we can assist people to come to the decision that is right for them.

All the very best for now, **Dr Jerry Cowley. Chairman Safe Home**

Changing Times: Readers might notice that we are jiggling things about lately! Part of this includes the new layout for our Newsletter. You might also notice that we now have a logo. In developing the logo, we considered a number of concepts and finally settled on the image of a fern. As you are aware the Head Office of Safe Home is based in Mulranny, Co. Mayo. The literal translation of Mulranny from the Irish, an Mhala Raithní, is hill of ferns. As the project was born and reared here, we felt that incorporating a 'nod' to these origins in the logo would be a nice touch.

The symbolism of what a fern stands for also fits into the ethos of what Safe Home Ireland is all about. It represents the unfolding of new life and everything being reborn and continuing as well as transformation, renewal and hope for the future. In ancient times it was believed that the fern brought rain (this is likely to be the case for those moving back to Ireland!), protection, luck, prosperity, eternal youth, health, confidence and safe shelter. We hope you like our logo and if those we work with can achieve even a few of the qualities listed above, our work will be well done!

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Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:
9am–5pm

Friday: 9am–4pm

Restorative Justice Scheme for those who were resident in Magdalene Laundries

A reminder that the Irish Women Survivors Support Network (UK) are still assisting Survivors with their applications for financial awards, with the amount given depending on how long an individual was resident in a Laundry for. In addition to the financial awards, successful applicants will get access to an Irish pension and an Irish medical card.

If you are living in the UK and need assistance in relation to this, please contact:

Irish Women Survivors Support Network
293-299 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2TJ UK
Telephone 0207 267 9997

Website: www.iwssn.org.uk

Mother-and-Baby Homes Investigation

Were you resident in a Mother-and-Baby Home in Ireland (either as a mother or a child)? Or do you know someone who was?

Currently there's an Investigation looking into the Mother-and-Baby Homes that existed in Ireland. Anyone with any information is invited to share any information they may have, in confidence. The Commission are especially keen to hear from anyone who was resident in, worked in, lived nearby or had connections with these homes.

If you have information you'd like to share, we are asking that you **get in touch as soon as possible**. You can either travel to Dublin where all of your travel and accommodation expenses will be covered, or you can speak to the Confidential Committee in **early 2016** when they will be taking evidence in the UK. The Irish Women Survivors Support Network ([IWSSN](http://www.iwssn.org.uk)) is working with the Commission to promote the Investigation in the UK, and can provide support with giving evidence. To find out more, please contact IWSSN on: 0207 267 9997 or email info@irishsurvivorsuk.org.uk Or you can contact the Commission directly: Tel: **00 353 1 6445088**.

If you are affected by this issue and wish to speak to someone in confidence, IWSSN can make referrals to a free counselling service that they work in partnership with.

Housing Opportunity



A Housing Association in **Tooreen (about 4 miles from Ballyhaunis), Co. Mayo** has a number of two bedroom properties available. The scheme is set in a rural location so would probably be most suitable for those who can drive or have family in the area

While priority will be given to people originally from Mayo and those with strong family connections in the county, applicants from other counties will also be considered.

For additional information, please contact the Safe Home office

Frequently Asked Questions

Transfer of UK State Pension

Q. I am in receipt of a UK State Pension. It is paid weekly into my bank account. Can I continue to receive the payment weekly if I transfer my pension to an Irish bank when I move home?

A. No, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will make payments into your bank account either every 4 weeks or every 13 weeks depending on your instructions.

To report a change in circumstances to DWP:

Telephone: 0345 606 0265 Textphone: 0345 606 0285
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

* To continue to receive weekly payments, you would have to continue to have your pension paid into a UK bank and access it via a bank card from here.

***Important Note!**

If you are someone who may need to apply for a means tested welfare payment (E.G State Pension – Non Contributory) when you move to Ireland, maintaining a bank account abroad may cause you difficulties when it comes to being considered habitually resident in the State.

In brief, to be considered habitually resident for welfare purposes, applicants must show that they have (a) severed all ties abroad and (b) demonstrate that they have sufficient ties to/in Ireland to indicate a long-term intention to remain here.

Q. Am I still entitled to claim UK Jobseeker's Allowance if I leave the UK?

A. There are 2 types of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) - contribution-based and income-based.

(i) You cannot continue to receive income-based JSA abroad.

(ii) You can get contribution-based JSA in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland for up to 3 months **if you:**

- are entitled to it on the day you go abroad
- register as a jobseeker at least 4 weeks before you leave
- are looking for work in the UK up to the day you leave
- are going abroad to look for work
- register at the equivalent of a Jobcentre in the country you're going to
- follow the other country's rules on registering and looking for work

Ask your local Jobcentre Plus office if there are any forms to fill out.

Moving to a country not in the EEA:

Some countries outside the EEA have social security agreements with the UK. This means that if you've paid enough National Insurance contributions in the UK, you may be able to get unemployment benefits in those countries.

For additional information, contact the International Pension Centre: Tel: +44 (0)191 218 7652

Social Welfare Rates Ireland 2016

As a follow up to the Budget, most changes to welfare rates came into effect from Jan 2016.

Social Insurance Payments:	€	€
State Pension (Contributory)	Personal Rate	Qualified Adult
Under 80 years	233.30	155.50*
Aged 80 and over	243.30	209**
Widows/Widower (Contributory) Pension		
Under 66 years	193.50	
Aged 66 and under 80	233.30	
Aged 80 and over	243.30	
Invalidity Pension	193.50	138.10*
Carer's Benefit	205.00	
Injury/Jobseeker's Benefit	188.00	124.80
Child Benefit	140.00	per month per child

Note! The above are the rates of Social Insurance Payments = Where the applicant has been in paid insurable employment and paid relevant contributions via Pay Related Social Insurances (PRSI)

Rates for Social Assistance Payments – Where the applicant has either not paid (a) enough contributions or (b) has not paid any

State Pension (Non -Contributory)	Personal Rate	Qualified Adult
Aged 66 and under 80	222.00	146.70*
Aged over 80 years	232.00	
Blind Pension	188.00	124.80
Widow's/Widower's Pension	188.00	
Carer's Allowance		
Under 66 years	204.00	
Aged 66 and over	242.00	
Disability Allowance	188.00	124.80
Supplementary Welfare Allowance ***	186.00	124.80
Jobseekers Allowance		
Short term ***	188.00	124.80

Fuel Allowance: €22.50 per week - paid from October to April each year.

Carers Respite Care Grant: Once off annual grant (paid June each year) **€1700**

Living Alone Allowance: €9 per week

Notes:

* = Under 66

** = 66 or Over

*** Job Seekers Allowance weekly rates: Reduced rates apply for claimants aged 18-24 and those aged 25yrs.