



Emigrant Support Service



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

October 2019 – Issue 215

### CONTACT US:

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### Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:  
9am–5pm

Friday: 9am–4pm

**Thinking of returning or  
moving to Ireland?**

**Get in touch**

### From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings,

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, the work of Safe Home Ireland was featured on the Sean O'Rourke Show (RTÉ Radio 1). The show's 'roving reporter', Evelyn O'Rourke, shadowed our CEO, Karen McHugh, as she carried out some follow-up outreach work with recent Safe Home returnees, Violet and Liam. Both returned from the UK, Violet moved back to Dublin after over 50 years and Liam returned to Westmeath after 35 years away. It was heartening to listen to their stories and successful re-settlement. We are grateful to Violet and Liam for sharing their experiences and wish them continued good luck and health in their new homes.

Their positive outcomes are testament to the importance of making a planned return to Ireland, by linking in with Irish support services at home and abroad, before, during and after the moving process. All are to be complimented on this excellent production and we are heartened by the follow-up calls and emails, donations, offers of support and volunteering since the show. Remember also that we provide information and advice to people of all ages who are considering a return to Ireland and outreach support to those who return home, independently or via Safe Home. You can listen back to the podcast

via; <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radioplayer/html5/#/radio1/21636101>

The Brexit train still rumbles merrily along, but now with some light finally appearing at the end of the dark tunnel of a 'no –deal' 'no hope' scenario. The UK House of Commons have effectively and officially kicked Brexit (aka the Withdrawal Agreement Bill) into a place which House Speaker John Bercow calls "Limbo", pending the likely EU granting of a third extension of 'make-up-your –mind time to the UK.' This pause in the legislative process is so PM Johnson's deal can be further scrutinised and hopefully passed in to law, so finally avoiding a hard Brexit. This seems more likely now given the majority vote of 329 to 299 in favour of progressing with the legislation. We continue to live in hope that all will be well in the end.

So long for now and don't forget to get the flu shot, it won't give you the 'flu, and may very well save your life. Keep warm and watch out for that older neighbour and other vulnerable people living alone.

**Dr. Jerry Cowley**

**Chairman**



## Blind Welfare Allowance – Ireland

Blind welfare allowance is a means-tested payment from the Health Service Executive (HSE) to people, aged 18 and over, who are blind or visually impaired.

You may qualify for blind welfare allowance if you meet any one of these requirements:

- You get a blind pension from the Department of Social Protection
- You get an income maintenance payment from the Department of Social Protection or an equivalent type payment from another country and have a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmologist
- You have an income below the combined blind pension rate and blind welfare allowance rate and you have a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmologist

**Payment rates;** Blind welfare allowance rates:

- €60 per week for a single person
- €120 per week for a blind couple, where both qualify for the allowance
- €4.40 per week for each child dependant

**Confirming your level of vision;** In order to receive the blind welfare allowance, your level of vision must be confirmed and certified. This can be confirmed by a Certificate of Visual Acuity from your ophthalmic surgeon or by a letter from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI). NCBI is the national sight loss organisation and they can confirm whether you meet the criteria to register as blind/visually impaired.

The technical requirement to be registered blind/visually impaired is that you must have "best vision equal to, or less than, 6/60 in the better eye. Or if the field of vision is limited, the widest diameter of vision subtending an angle of not greater than 20 degrees".

**Where to apply;** Apply to your local health office – see [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie) for details

**For more information,** contact; National Council for the Blind, Head Office, Whitworth Road Drumcondra, Dublin 9 **Telephone:** +353 1 830 7033 **Web:** [www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

### **The Power of a Name Exhibition – A legacy for generations of Irish emigrants**

The Irish Emigration Museum (CHQ Custom House Quay, Dublin 1) honours Irish emigrants by telling their stories and keeping their memories alive. It's a place where visitors can go to acknowledge Irish emigrants, their journeys, their struggles and their achievements.

EPIC are inviting people to remember their relatives in *The Power of a Name* Exhibition by adding your ancestor's name to their Emigrant Wall. The ethos of this project is to honour those who left Ireland and to allow the legacy of their names to live on.

You can register details of a friend/family member, by calling into the museum in person or going online to; <https://epicchq.com/power-of-a-name/> enter your relative's name, where they emigrated from and the year they left in the form below. EPIC will then display these details via this exhibition.

For more information, please contact EPIC via **Tel: 00353 1906 0861**

### Some snippets from Budget 2020

The Budget was announced on 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. Most of the content had been well 'flagged' in advance, so it contained very few surprises.

There were no changes in the weekly payment rates for most social welfare payments (including State Pensions). However, increases were announced in the income disregard for the One Parent Family Payment, Job Seekers Transition payment and the income thresholds for Working Family Payment and Qualified Child Increase for certain welfare payments.

Other **welfare changes**, coming into effect from January 2020; the Living Alone Increase/Allowance will increase by €5, bringing it from €9 weekly to €14; the Fuel Allowance will increase by €2, from €22.50 to €24.50. The number of hours that someone in receipt of Carer's Allowance/Benefit can work outside of the home has been increased from 15 hours to 18.5 hours per week.

**Health related changes;** Free G.P care/visits will be extended to children under 8 years (currently in place for children under 6) and there will be free dental care for under 6's. Prescription charges are to be reduced for all people by .50 cent. This will bring prescription charges to €1 per item prescribed for people over 70 years and €1.50 for those under 70; The monthly threshold for the Drug Payment Scheme will be reduced by €10, from €124 to €114. This means that people will pay a maximum of €114 a month themselves for medicines.

**Note!** all of these changes, apart from reduction in prescription charges (to be introduced from July 2020) are set to come into effect from September 2020.

We will be covering more aspects of budget changes in up-coming issues of the Newsletter

### Housing Opportunities – Co. Mayo



**Ballycastle Social Housing**, situated in North Mayo, approx. 26KM from Ballina, currently have a two 2 bedroom bungalows available. The maximum weekly rent is €80



**Tooreen Housing Association** have two 2 bedroom properties available. This Housing Association is situated in a rural location, approx. 6 KM from the market town of Ballyhaunis. Maximum weekly rent €74

**Notes!** Both schemes are set in rural locations (particularly, Tooreen), and would therefore be most suitable for people who can drive/have family living in the area. Priority will be given to people originally from /with connections to Co. Mayo. However, both Housing Associations will also consider applicants from other counties. Qualifying tenants on low income, who are registered and approved by Mayo County Council, can apply for help with the rent costs.

**For more information, please contact the Safe Home office**

## Police Checks/Garda Clearance requirement by social housing providers in Ireland

**For Safe Home housing applicants;** We are once again highlighting the fact that most Local Authorities and social housing providers in Ireland will require prospective tenants to have Police/Garda clearance (or the equivalent, depending on the country you are currently living in).

These checks can often take some time to be carried out. For example; In the UK, the relevant clearance is known as a Subject Access Request (S.A.R). There is no charge for the S.A.R, applications, whether online or by post, take up to 30 days to be processed.

When you submit a S.A.R application you will need to include copies (not originals) of at least two different documents which confirm your identity, current address and signature. These could be:

- A passport or driving licence which shows your date of birth and signature
- A utility bill, bank, mortgage or credit card statement which is dated within the last six months and which shows your current address

More information on UK Subject Access Requests, including the application form can be obtained via: **[www.acro.police.uk](http://www.acro.police.uk)**

To request an application form; **Tel:** 02380 47 9920

**Email:** [customer.services@acro.pnn.police.uk](mailto:customer.services@acro.pnn.police.uk) Applications can be made online or by post.

Some people may already have police clearance or the equivalent, if you have this and want to give your housing application the best chance of being successful, please forward to our offices to include on your housing file.

**Important Note!** In our experience of dealing with Housing Associations throughout the country, particularly in most recent times, only applicants who have ALL of the required paperwork in order will be considered for vacancies that arise.

We understand that some applicants may have difficulty in applying for the required checks so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries whatsoever. If you live close to an Irish Welfare & Advice Centre abroad, they too will be happy to offer assistance.

### Free Returning to Ireland Information Session – Luton

In conjunction with the Luton Irish Forum, Safe Home Ireland will be carrying out an information session on returning to Ireland on **Tuesday 19th November, from 1.30- 3.30pm**

It will take place at the **Luton Irish Forum**, Kathleen Connolly House, 102 Hitchin Rd, Luton LU2 0ES

The session will cover a range of topics, including housing, health care, entitlements in Ireland and more.

If you live in the Luton area and you or someone you know is thinking of returning or moving to Ireland, why not pop along.

For more information, **Tel:** 01582 720 447 or email: **[info@lutonirishforum.org](mailto:info@lutonirishforum.org)**

Safe Home Ireland is supported by the Emigrant Support Programme via:



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