



Emigrant Support Service



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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

It's heart-warming to experience the increasing stretch in the evenings of late. This is no doubt a great blessing to the candidates and their supporters as they plod from door to door seeking to get as many number 1 votes as they possibly can in the upcoming general election.

The Chinese New Year was marred by the corona virus outbreak with travel restricted from affected areas and tours cancelled. This highly contagious virus has already claimed the lives of 56 people in China and infected about 2,000. Despite the best efforts of the Chinese, modern international travel means that the virus has already reached Canada and the USA with a few cases reported.

People are marking this virus out as different, as people can spread it apparently without appearing ill themselves and it's 10 to 14 days before they get ill with upper respiratory effects. Already there have been valiant attempts to contain the virus in China.

This virus is a result of the Chinese tradition of eating exotic wild animals such as wild rats and snakes. Those particular viruses were not a problem to mankind as they were contained to the wild. Through animal markets in China where exotic animals are sold alongside live fish and raw meat and chicken, and then handled or eaten, viruses such as the corona virus enter the human chain.

If all this sounds familiar, it should be, as this is where the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) originated also and in a similar manner. SARS killed about 800 people worldwide 20 years ago. Compare this to the flu virus which killed almost 80,000 people in the USA alone in the 2017-2018 flu season.

It is ironic that as yet there is no specific treatment or vaccine available to treat the corona virus, while thousands upon thousands of people die from the flu every year although a simple vaccine will prevent it. It's especially useful for children and older people and those with chronic illness or immunocompromised people.

It's still not too late to get the flu vaccine. It could save your life!

So long for now.

Dr Jerry Cowley

## **Extension of the Passport online services**

From 1 November 2019, if you are living in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, the EU, the EEA or Switzerland you can use the [Passport Online](#) service to apply for your first Irish passport. Heretofore the online service applied to renewals only.

Also, from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019, if you are living in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, the EU, the EEA or Switzerland, you can use the online service to apply for your child's first Irish passport.

You will need access to a printer for your first online passport application and you must also be able to pay by credit or debit card. You will have to send original documents to the Passport Service after you have completed the online application form

You can also apply for your first Irish passport by post, through Passport Express or in person, through the Passport Office's counter service OR at an Irish embassy/Consulate if you are living abroad.

You can apply for a passport if you are aged 18 or over. If you are under 18, you need the consent of both parents or guardian(s) in writing to get your own passport.

**Note!** If your previous passport was issued when you were a child and has not yet expired (or has only recently expired), your application is considered a renewal application and not a first-time application

The Passport Service strongly recommends that you apply for your passport at least **6 weeks before your travel date**. You can find out more about the passport online service via:

<https://www.dfa.ie/passportonline/>

### **State Pension Age – Ireland – Changes afoot.....**

-State Pension (Contributory) is currently payable at age 66 (age 67 from 2021, age 68 from 2028) to people who have satisfied certain PRSI conditions; and

-State Pension (Non-Contributory) is currently payable at age 66 (age 67 from 2021, age 68 from 2028) as a means-tested pension for those who do not qualify for the State Pension (Contributory) based on their PRSI contribution record.

### **Hosting collaborative Returning to Ireland Information sessions in the UK**

As part of our housing application process, Safe Home staff carry out home visits with our housing applicants throughout the UK. These visits give us an opportunity to meet our clients in a relaxed 'one to one' environment, to go through the housing application process in detail and to answer broader questions on returning to Ireland and all that this entails.

As we do not have any staff based in the UK, we arrange 'rounds' of home visits in the UK to maximise the number of clients we can see and to make the most of our time there. Where possible, we always try to link in with Irish Welfare & Advice and other relevant support services in the locality to promote our services and provide information on returning to Ireland.

Safe Home has already worked successfully with agencies at home and abroad in co-hosting open information sessions in the UK for people interested in returning to Ireland. We can also develop sessions that are specifically targeted at front-line advice staff. **If your Agency works with Irish emigrants and would be interested in working with us to host an information session on returning to Ireland** for your staff or clients, please do get in touch with us.

## Social Welfare changes –January 2020

A number of changes announced in the 2020 Budget came into effect here in early January. There was no increase in most weekly social welfare payments. However, there are some changes to Jobseeker's Allowance for people aged 25 and people aged under 25.

**Jobseeker's Allowance:** Jobseeker's Allowance for people **aged 25** increased to the maximum rate, from €157.80 to €203.

Jobseeker's Allowance for people aged **under 25** increased to the maximum rate, from €112.70 to €203, if they are living independently and getting a state housing support such as Rent Supplement, RAS or Housing Assistance Payment.

**Supplementary Welfare Allowance:** Supplementary Welfare Allowance for people **aged 25** increased to the maximum rate, from €157.80 to €201.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance for people aged **under 25** increased to the maximum rate, from €112.70 to €201, if living independently and getting a state housing support such as Rent Supplement, RAS or HAP

The weekly rate for a **qualified child** increased by €2 from €34 to €36 for children under 12 years of age. It will increase by €3 from €37 to €40 for children aged 12 years and over.

**Fuel Allowance:** The Fuel Allowance increased by €2 per week from €22.50 to €24.50

**Living Alone Increase:** The Living Alone Allowance was increased by €5 per week from €9 to €14.

## Housing opportunity for Safe Home applicants – Co. Mayo



Mulranny Day Centre Housing (St. Brendan's Village), Co. Mayo has a one-bedroom property available. Maximum weekly rent is €79. St. Brendan's Village in Mulranny is a sheltered housing scheme designed for older/disabled people who can live independently. The village offers secure affordable tenancies in a community setting.

While preference for this scheme will be given to Safe Home applicants originally from Co. Mayo or those with strong family links to the county, applicants from other counties may also apply. Qualifying applicants who are registered and approved by Mayo County Council can apply for assistance with their rent. Those who are not on the Council list will have to meet the full rent costs from their own income.  
**For more information, please contact the Safe Home office.**

## **Banking in Ireland – Dormant Accounts, Frequently Asked Questions:**

**What type of account can be called a dormant account?** A dormant account can be an account on which there has been no transaction by the account holder for **15 years** or more (the year begins September 30) in: a deposit, share or current account in a bank or building society, a deposit receipt or fixed deposit; or, an account, saving certificate, savings bond or instalment saving scheme with An Post.

**What responsibilities are placed on institutions about dormant accounts?** If the amount held is more than €100 then the institution must first contact the account holder explaining their rights and the institution's obligations under the Dormant Account Act. This does not apply if there is a standing instruction on the account not to issue any correspondence, or if the institution had previously been unable to contact the account holder. Institutions are obliged to publish a notice in two national newspapers in October each year about the transfer of funds under the Act. **Details of accounts designated as dormant are kept at the institution so they can pay out any funds claimed back at a later time.**

### **What should you do if you think you have a dormant account?**

Contact the institution (the branch, if possible) where you have the dormant account. If the institution with which you had the account no longer exists, contact the Banking and Payments Federation Ireland. Where an account has been designated as being a dormant account (where on the 30 September a transaction has not been passed by the account holder in the previous 15 years) - the account holder has until the 31 March of the following year to reactivate the account by contacting their institution and carrying out a transaction on the account. After the 31 March, the funds are transferred to the Dormant Accounts Fund.

**What happens to the funds held in dormant accounts?** The money held in designated dormant accounts is transferred to a Fund administered by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA).



### **Feedback on our services**

Whether you are involved in an agency abroad, a client of Safe Home or just someone with an interest in the work that we do, we are asking that you get in touch with us to give your opinion and feedback.

What do you feel we do well, what can we do even better?

Your input will help us shape our service and help those who avail of our service in the future.  
**Please contact the Safe Home office directly or complete and return our feedback form, via our website:** <https://safehomeireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Feedback-Form-.pdf>

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



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