



Emigrant Support Service

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**Safe Home office hours:**

Monday–Thursday:  
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Friday: 9am–4pm

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

**Get in touch**



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

### Welcome from our CEO

It has been another busy month for us as we continued to modify our services in order to respond to the increased demand for our support. COVID is having a profound impact on all our lives and many Irish abroad are having to review their lives and futures, with some considering returning/moving to Ireland sooner than they had planned. For some, who have found themselves in difficult, sad and challenging situations, returning home has become a lot more urgent. We have supported a number of people return home over the summer months and are working with others, who are still abroad and trying to navigate the long journey home. In an interview with RTE, in early September, we highlighted Noel's story, who returned home to Co. Laois. Having worked all his life, Noel found himself unemployed when COVID hit and contacted Safe Home in crisis. His journey home was distressing, as while in transit he got a phone message to say that his mother had died from COVID, and due to travel restrictions and self-isolation, he was unable to attend her funeral. With our support, Noel is now settled back home, rebuilding his life and is starting a new job next month.

On 15<sup>th</sup> September the Irish Government introduced Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19, which is a 5-level framework to guide us with our daily lives as much as possible. Dublin was placed at Level 3 on 20<sup>th</sup> September and the rest of Ireland is currently at Level 2. As we know, this plan could change at any time, depending on how COVID progresses. There are similar roadmaps in most countries as we all grapple with the virus so we must continue to adhere to public health advice and the restrictions that are in place.

We were delighted to welcome four new Directors to our Board this month, who all bring with them a diverse and impressive set of qualifications, skills and experience that will greatly enhance our work going forward. We were overwhelmed with the level of interest in Safe Home and we would like to thank all others who expressed interest in joining the Safe Home Board. Sadly, we could only accept four new Directors at this time.

It is hard to believe that we will be marking our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary next year! From our humble beginnings, as a voluntary pilot project in Mulranny, Co. Mayo, to our current national and global remit, we have supported thousands of people realise their dream of moving home. We are beginning to work on a calendar of events to mark this momentous achievement and will keep you posted over the coming months!

We all have a shared sense of anxiety and uneasiness about the future so it is vitally important we mind our mental health and stay connected at this time. We are all sailing through uncharted waters, so be kind and reach out to someone that you have not spoken to for a while! In Maya Angelou's words 'try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud'. You might be that persons only caller and brighten up their day!

*Take care from Karen and the Staff & Board of Safe Home Ireland*

### **Frequently Asked Questions:** Self-isolation facilities for returning emigrants

I lost my job abroad as a result of COVID 19. I have very little savings left and will shortly become homeless here, so I have made the decision to move back home to Ireland. I am nervous about staying with my elderly parents as they have under-lying health conditions. I do not have the funds to be able to rent for the first 14 days.

**Q.** Can you tell me if there is any Irish Government funded accommodation that I can access for 14 day isolation period?

**A.** There are no self-isolation facilities for people returning to Ireland in crisis situations. The only government facility for people who cannot safely self-isolate at home is based at City West in Dublin.

**However,** access to this is limited and referrals must come via a G.P, Hospital or the HSE contact tracing team. This facility is primarily reserved for;

- People have tested positive for coronavirus and have mild symptoms
- People who have tested positive for coronavirus, are recovering in hospital and about to be discharged
- People who are waiting on a test or test results and have mild symptoms
- People who don't have symptoms, but have been told to self-isolate by their doctor.
- You must be well enough to care for yourself and not need any other specialist care or help.

If you have other family/friends that you can stay with, the HSE provide a guide on how to self-isolate safely if living with other people that may prove useful, see [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

**Note!** For anyone who finds themselves having to return home in crisis, please do link in with us here at Safe Home and we will do our very best to assist you or refer you on to other relevant support services.

### **Accommodation for recently returned Irish emigrants**

I returned to Ireland six months ago, after many years of living abroad. I am currently staying with family but this situation cannot continue indefinitely. **Q.** Can I apply for housing via Safe Home Ireland?

**A** Safe Home outreach staff can assist with completing housing and other applications for recently returned emigrants. But our organisation **is not involved** in processing housing applications for anyone who is already living in Ireland, including those who may have recently returned from abroad. To do so would mean that we would be taking over or duplicating the role of the Local Authorities here.

Safe Home Ireland operates under a concession that allows qualifying older Irish emigrants, **still resident abroad**, to apply for limited social housing here in Ireland, via Housing Associations for older people. We do not manage or build any properties ourselves, our role is to assist our housing applicants to register with the relevant local authority to ensure that they can be considered when vacancies do arise in Housing Association schemes.

Anyone already living in Ireland, including recently returned Irish emigrants (of any age), who may need to apply for social housing supports (council or housing association properties, or help with rent costs in the private sector), must apply directly to the relevant Local Authority in order to have their social housing needs assessed. The assessment process can take up to 12 weeks to be completed. For more information, contact the housing section of the Council in your local area.

### **Housing opportunity – Co. Kerry**

A Housing Association in Rathmore, Co. Kerry has a one-bedroom property available. Priority will be given to applicants from Co. Kerry, however as Rathmore is quite close to the Cork borders, they will also consider applicants from surrounding townlands in Co. Cork. The maximum weekly rent is €58. Applicants who are not approved on the Kerry County Council housing list will have to pay the full rent from their own means. **For more information, please contact the Safe Home office**

**A Personal Public Service (PPS) number is** a unique reference number that helps you access social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland. It is essentially the Irish equivalent of your National Insurance /Social Security Number abroad.

**Note!** The PPS number was formerly known as the Revenue and Social Insurance (RSI) number. In the past married couples were issued with the same numbers so IF your number is the same as your spouse's number but your number has a W at the end, you may need a new PPS number. Before you can be allocated a PPS number, you must show that you need one for a transaction with a specified body. Here are some examples of where a PPS is required;

- All social welfare services/schemes
- Pupil ID
- Public health services, including the medical card and the Drugs Payment Scheme
- Child immunisation
- Taxation purposes
- Schemes run by the Revenue Commissioners, such as mortgage interest relief
- Social Housing applications and Housing grants
- Driver Theory Testing and driving licences

**A PPS number has already been issued to you if:**

You were born in Ireland in or after 1971

You started work in Ireland after 1979

You are getting a social welfare payment (this also applies to those living abroad who are in receipt of an Irish Contributory Pension)

You are taking part in the Drugs Payment Scheme

If you have forgotten or mislaid your PPSN or want further information on how to apply for one, including applications in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if needing to apply for a PPSN while still resident abroad), please contact; Client Identity Services, **Tel +353 71 967 2616**

**Email:** [ppsn@welfare.ie](mailto:ppsn@welfare.ie)

**Public Service Card/Free Travel Card appointments – service now back up and running**

As reported in last month's issue, due to COVID19, the registration process to apply for a Public Service Card (PSC) and Free Travel card was suspended. However, the Minister for Social Protection has now confirmed that the PSC / SAFE registration service has now resumed in most welfare/Intreo offices. It is expected that the service will be fully resumed nationwide over the coming weeks.

The online appointment booking system remains suspended. Therefore, anyone wishing to book an appointment should contact their local social welfare/Intreo office. The Department is also contacting people who are entitled to Free Travel and who have not yet received their Free Travel PSC, inviting them to contact their local Intreo Centre or Branch Office, to arrange their SAFE registration.

**What is a Public Service Card (PSC)?**

A PSC is usually issued in Ireland when you are allocated a PPS number (Irish Insurance Number). Anyone applying for or currently getting a social welfare payment (including Child Benefit) you will be asked to register for a PSC Card.

**What information does this card display?** The front of the card holds your name, photograph and signature, along with the card expiry date. The back of the card holds your PPS number and a card number. It also holds a magnetic stripe to enable social welfare payments such as pensions to be collected at post offices

For anyone entitled to free travel their card will also display this information in the top left-hand corner. If you don't yet have a Public Services Card, you can make an appointment to get one by calling into the local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office

**Note!** the online appointment booking system is currently suspended

## Returning to Ireland webinars – For Irish Agencies Abroad

Safe Home Ireland is delighted to be partnering with Irish in France, Crosscare Migrant Project and the Citizens Information Board in co-facilitating a returning to Ireland webinar for Irish people living in France. The event is being hosted by, The Irish in France and will take place online, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 19hr CET

**Anyone wishing to join us can register via;**

**[https://crosscaremigrantregistration.membersportal.co/?mc\\_cid=79ab5e36e6&mc\\_eid=66b65e03b3](https://crosscaremigrantregistration.membersportal.co/?mc_cid=79ab5e36e6&mc_eid=66b65e03b3)**

In pre-COVID times, as part of our outreach in the UK, Safe Home Ireland often partnered with our colleagues in UK based Irish welfare & advice centres to facilitate returning to Ireland information sessions. Now that we have all been catapulted into this changed and challenging world, we have all had to adapt and find ways where we can still reach out to people who may need help and advice.

With this in mind, if there are any Irish welfare agencies throughout the UK or indeed, worldwide, who would like us to host an online/virtual information session for your clients, please do get in touch.

Our office is open in the 'real world' for day to day telephone/email enquiries and we are also here, ready and waiting to zoom!

## Coming into Ireland during COVID-19 – Restricting your movements & self-isolating

The on-going Government/public health advice to passengers who arrive into Ireland, from non-Green List countries, is to restrict their movements for 14 days. This means that during the first 14 days, you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

You must also avoid:

- Using public transport
- Visiting others
- Meeting people face-to-face who are at higher risk from COVID-19
- Going to the shop, unless you have to

**Note!** If you are tested for COVID-19 during the first 14 days after arriving in Ireland, you must continue to restrict your movements **even if you get a negative test result.**

**If you feel ill while you are restricting your movements, you should self-isolate and call a doctor.** Do not go to a doctor's surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Your doctor will assess you over the phone. If they think you need to be tested for COVID-19, they will arrange a test.

If you test positive, you should self-isolate immediately and call your doctor. Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people, including people you live with.

You should only stop self-isolating if;

- You have had no fever for 5 days
- It has been 10 days since you first developed symptoms

If you live with others, they also need to restrict their movements.

For more information, please refer to the HSE website;

**<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html>**



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme  
An Buidéal Gníomhaíochta agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade