



ADVICE & INFORMATION



OUTREACH VISITS



HOUSING ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

February 2021 – Issue 229

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### Safe Home office hours:

Monday to Thursday:  
9.00am to 5.00pm  
Friday:  
9.00am to 4.00pm

### Thinking of returning or moving to Ireland?

Get in touch



Safe Home Programme CLG  
trading as Safe Home Ireland  
Charity No: 20049119  
Company Reg No: 351678

### Welcome from our CEO

On 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 the first confirmed case of Covid-19 was identified in Ireland and within three weeks cases were confirmed in all counties. The first death occurred on 11<sup>th</sup> March and on 12<sup>th</sup> March the Government announced the closure of all schools and colleges and all public gatherings were cancelled, including St. Patrick's Day festivals. It has been a roller coaster of a year and we now find ourselves in a third wave of the virus with strict restrictions in place throughout the Island until at least 5<sup>th</sup> April. Never before, in our generation, has our individual and collective resilience and resolve been tested. However, there is hope with the roll-out of the vaccine over the coming months - we know there are better times ahead and we look forward to when we will be able to meet again in-person.

In early January, when it became apparent that St. Patrick's Day festivities would be cancelled, we decided to organise a [Facebook live Lunchtime Concert](#) to connect with our global family, on the day we all want to be together! We have a very exciting line-up of entertainment organised, including Sean Nós dancing, Irish dancing, spoken word and performances from internationally acclaimed singers and trad musicians, with some performing from iconic landmark locations around the country.

This event is also our first this year to mark our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations and will also serve to launch our **fundraising target to raise €21,000 in 2021!** This is a daunting challenge but we are hopeful we can meet our target over the coming 10 months! Wherever you are in the world, grab your breakfast roll, lunchtime sandwich or evening take out and bigí linn for what promises be a great event filled with Ceol, Caint agus Craic!

We are planning a number of virtual **Moving to Ireland Information Sessions** over the coming months and I am delighted to announce our first session will take place on **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March (2pm)** in partnership with the **Luton Irish Forum**, in England. While international travel is restricted at present, this is a good time to start research and putting a plan in place for moving, so that when restrictions are lifted it will be possible to take that step. If any Irish organisation around the world would like to partner with us to run an information session, please do get in touch with our office. We will be delighted to design a tailor-made session – this can be for staff or for the general public.

As in previous editions of our Newsletters, I reiterate the importance of staying connected and minding our mental health at this time. Covid-19 has impacted all of our lives and we are all challenged in one way or other, so it is vitally important to reach out to others where possible. If you are unsure where or who to turn to and really need to talk pick up the phone to our office and we will be very happy to be that friendly voice at the end of the phone. The important message is **'you are not alone'**.

**Take care, stay safe and stay connected from Karen and the staff and board of Safe Home Ireland.**

# Safe Home Ireland Facebook Live Lunchtime Concert



Safe Home Ireland  
Emigrant Support Service

Connecting with Irish Abroad during the COVID-19 lockdown

Featuring:

## Seán Keane

Singer/Songwriter/Musician  
Carragh Cottage, Co. Galway

## Kelli McGrory

Singer/Musician  
Fanad Lighthouse in Co. Donegal

## George Murphy

Singer/Songwriter  
Co. Dublin

## Elle Marie O'Dwyer

Singer  
Co. Cork

## Broken Pokers

Traditional Irish & Folk Band  
Perth, Australia

## Emma O'Sullivan

Sean Nós Dancer/Teacher  
Connemara, Co. Galway

## Paula Carroll

Spoken Word  
Ashford Castle, Co. Mayo

## Savannah Phoenix Munroe

Singer  
Co. Dublin

## Padraig Jack

Bilingual Singer/Songwriter  
Aran Islands, Co. Galway

## Lisa Canny

Singer/Songwriter/Harp & Banjo Player  
London, England

## Megan O'Neill

Singer/Songwriter  
Co. Kildare

## Surprise Performance

from Kilonan Castle Hotel,  
Ballyfarnon, Co. Roscommon

**St. Patrick's Day 17th March 2021, 13:00 - 14:30pm (UTC)**



LIVE

facebook.com/safehomeprogramme



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme



## England, Wales and Northern Ireland Census – March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

The national census for England and Wales and Northern Ireland will take place on 21 March 2021. The census is conducted every ten years and collects valuable and detailed information about every household. The data is used to shape policy, allocate resources, plan public services and monitor equality. Census 2021 will also provide fresh information to improve and help with understanding the Covid-19 pandemic, making sure that the services meet the needs of today's changing society, to include hospitals, schools, universities, job centres and much more. The census in Scotland will take place on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

### Here, we answer some questions on how this Digital first census will work:

**Why should you take part in the census?** The census is an immensely important event as it provides data on where people live, their occupations and education, and their identity. **You must complete the census by law.** If you do not, or if you supply false information, you could be fined up to £1,000. Some questions are clearly labelled as voluntary and it is not an offence if you do not answer these. The census helps understand what society needs now and what it is likely to need in the future. The information it collects helps plan and fund services such as transport, education and healthcare. A total of 94% of people took part in the last census, helping each area receive its share of public funding. Without the census, it would be much more difficult to provide the community-based services.

**How to participate digitally?** Census 2021 is a digital-first census, which means that people will be able to respond online using any device such as a mobile phone or tablet. If you need help, online assistance is available as well as support by phone, webchat, email, social media or text message. An access code can be obtained from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Simply go online and enter the code into the website to get started. ONS will be in contact nearer the time to let you know what you need to do. Paper forms will also be available. See the [ONS](#) for more information on the Census.

**What to do if you don't have access to digital devices?** After Census Day, at the end of March and into April, census field officers will be visiting households from which they have not received a completed census form. They will encourage people to complete the census however will never need to enter your house. Field officers will be working in the same way as a postal or food delivery visit, they will be wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and working in line with government guidance.

**The Irish in Britain** (IIB) has published a [census information page](#), including different ways to fill in the form, how to record Irishness, new questions and how the ONS is responding to the pandemic. Contact IIB on **+44 203 903 0994** or email [info@irishinbritain.org](mailto:info@irishinbritain.org)

### **Next of Kin explained**

'Next of Kin' can be a confusing term but simply means someone 'who you would like to be contacted in the event of an emergency'. Being a 'Next of Kin' provides no **legal standing** whatsoever despite widespread belief to the contrary. To safeguard yourself in a healthcare situation, it is advisable to state clearly (a) who you would like contacted in case of emergency, serious illness or death and (b) who you would like information about your medical condition to be shared with. Being clear on these **two matters** and insisting that your wishes be recorded can help minimise confusion and family tensions.

In this regard, it's advisable that things are done correctly, as this can save a lot of heartache and upset later on. Some people prefer to make clear and firm plans with family members, others opt to visit a solicitor for advice, contact their nearest Age Action/Age Concern agency or link in with specific advocacy agencies, such as Sage Advocacy (Irish based support group working on behalf of vulnerable people) For more Information on Sage Advocacy see [HERE](#) or contact Sage via **Email:** info@sageadvocacy.ie OR **Tel: + 353 1 536 7330**

### **Irish Passport Services up-date**

As of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the [Passport Service](#) has temporarily paused the processing of routine applications while Ireland remains at Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions. The Department of Foreign Affairs has said that Passport Service staff "do not have access to private, personal data when working outside of our secure offices and so cannot process passport applications remotely." However, a same-day service is continuing for emergencies including bereavement, illness or medical treatment overseas. In addition, a weekly urgent service is still also being provided for Irish citizens resident overseas who require a passport for local immigration purposes. These applicants are advised contact their [local Irish Embassy or The Consulate General](#). Just to note that in most instances (apart from emergencies), phone lines are currently closed, however [web-chat](#) is available.

Information on [An Post's](#) international postal services regarding passport deliveries is available via **Tel: + 353 1 705 7600**. Where there is no An Post International service available, the Department of Foreign Affairs are working to deliver Passport Online through their network of Embassies and Consulates. If you have pre-paid for delivery (€15) there will be no further charge. Due to COVID-19 the An Post passport service has put in place different working arrangements for their teams to ensure their health and safety. Therefore, paper applications will take approximately 6-8 weeks to process. If in Ireland, you can call into your nearest post office and apply for your passport for a charge of €9.50 plus passport fee.

### **Medical Card News**

Since the onset of Covid-19, the quickest way of applying for a Medical card when you return to Ireland is online via the [Health Service Executive \(HSE\)](#). Postal applications can still be made but will take longer. Applications forms can be downloaded from the above link and you will need to complete and submit by post. For anyone who is not online, you can contact the HSE directly, via **Tel: + 353 1 2408787**, contact a local [Citizens Information Centre](#) to request a copy of the form to be posted out OR contact us here at Safe Home and we will be happy to do so too.

#### **Extension of the Medical Card for those with a terminal illness**

The Minister for Health recently announced changes to the existing Emergency Medical Card scheme that covers those with a terminal illness. Previously this applied to people that had a terminal illness with a prognosis of less than 12 months. The changes mean that the 12 month period has now been extended to 2 years. Anyone, ordinarily resident in Ireland who falls within this category is **AUTOMATICALLY** entitled to a Medical Card. This card will not be based on means testing and recipients will never have to go through a review process. For more information, see; [HERE](#), **Tel: + 353 1 2408787** or contact your local GP to be guided through the application process.

## **Frequently Asked Question: Applying for an Irish Contributory Pension from abroad**

I am an Irish citizen currently living in New York. I have just turned 65 and as I previously lived and worked in Ireland, I think I should be entitled to a part-Irish Contributory Pension. I cannot remember my Irish Insurance number and don't know how I would go about checking it out.

### **Q. Can you tell me if it is possible to apply for the pension without an Irish Insurance Number?**

**A.** The pension application will be more straight-forward if the applicant does have a valid Irish insurance number (known now as a PPSN) or even an older Irish Insurance number, from pre 1979 (known as a RSI number).

To check out if you have existing PPSN or a former RSI number in the system here, contact; [Client Identity Section in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection \(DEASP\)](#) via **Tel: +353 71 967 2616** or **email: [cis@welfare.ie](mailto:cis@welfare.ie)**

**However**, the Pension Services Office in Sligo have confirmed that it is possible to submit a pension application without an Insurance Number (PPSN) as they can allocate a PPSN number as part of the application process. It is very important that the applicant can provide sufficient information on the form regarding dates and locations, showing when and where they worked in Ireland.

### **Notes!**

- It is advisable that anyone living abroad should start applying for their Contributory Pension six months ahead of their 66<sup>th</sup> birthday (66 is the current pension age in Ireland).
- For queries on the Irish State Pension (Contributory) application process /to request an application form, please contact the Pension Service [Website](#); **Tel: +353 71 915 7100** or **Email: [state.con@welfare.ie](mailto:state.con@welfare.ie)**

## **And ..... finally!**

**International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>)** is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognised for their achievements-national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike.

Women from around the world will celebrate women's progress and, more importantly, hope to inspire and motivate women in many nations to join together to discover and help implement solutions to the world's most critical problems. It is a day when women lift up their voices to develop an even greater worldwide will for peace. Women everywhere, motivated by their great desires for a better world are making significant improvements in homes, communities.

On this special day, we here at Safe Home Ireland will be launching our first ever blog and speaking with **Sarah Whelan** who through her own journey was inspired to create [Irish Women Abroad \(IWA\)](#), an online global support network. With more than 3,000 network members, the majority of whom are Irish-Australian, IWA provide everything from a shoulder to lean on, to suggestions regarding every challenging aspect of emigration, from leaving relatives, to transporting pets.

Be sure to check out our chat with Sarah, one of our own female leaders, making her mark and flying the flag for Irish women abroad. Check all of this out via our [Website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#)!

*Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig oraibh go léir*

