



ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

March 2021 – Issue 230

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Monday to Thursday:
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**Thinking of returning or
moving to Ireland?
Get in touch!**



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme
An Rannóg Cúlaí de Thacaíocht agus Taidilín
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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

Welcome to our March Newsletter! Sadly, it's yet another month with restrictions still in place here. It continues to be very challenging and isolating for many people. We are pleased to be able to do some small bit to ease that, by keeping in touch with so many of you around the world and bringing up-dates on the latest news from Ireland!

In early March, we were delighted to announce and welcome **Seán Keane as our first Ambassador!** Seán will be a household name to many of our readers worldwide, coming from a family with a long and rich tradition of music, song and dance in Co. Galway. His distinctive voice and sean-nós style of singing captures the hearts and minds of diverse audiences right around the world. We are very excited and honoured to have Seán on board and he has already opened up many new doors for us and you will be hearing more about this and Seán in the months to come!

On St. Patrick's Day, Seán led a special **Facebook Live Concert** with a star-studded cast of singers, musicians, dancers and spoken word artists all performing specifically for Safe Home. All performances were outstanding and connected us all with loved ones around the world, albeit virtually. Many performed from iconic locations, boasting some breath-taking scenery around Ireland. We also featured some personal stories from people who accessed our support services and we are extremely grateful for their honesty and bravery in sharing their experiences. For those who were unable to tune in on the day, the concert is still online [HERE](#). We will also be uploading it on our YouTube channel, along with our previous Concerts.

During March, we started our **first blog**, which will be monthly from hereon in. We featured Dublin born and Sydney based Sarah Whelan of [Irish Women Abroad Network](#). Sarah's blog can be viewed via our website [HERE](#). Sarah has set the bar high, and we wish to welcome her new baby boy, Conall, who was born only days after Sarah wrote her blog! Keep an eye out for our next blog in April.

While the Irish Government is advising against all incoming travel to Ireland, perhaps now is the time, for those who are considering returning/moving to Ireland to start researching and planning the move, once it is safe and possible to do so. With this in mind we have reconvened our Online Information Sessions the **first** of which was held in partnership with [Luton Irish Forum](#) on Thursday 25th March. It was great to have participants from around the world, including England, Peru, South Africa, Argentina, Canada and Ecuador – one of the benefits of going virtual! If any individual or organisation would like us to hold another session in the future, please do get in touch and we can tailor one to meet your specific requirements. **NOTE:** for those not online we have a phone-in system in place during the sessions, to ensure no one is left behind.

While we continue to be affected by restrictions globally and our lives have been disrupted in so many ways, we are all forging innovative ways to keep in touch with loved ones. As in previous editions, we reiterate the importance of **reaching out, especially to those who might not be connected online or living alone**. With Easter around the corner, this is the perfect time to reach out with a surprise card, a phone call, a message or even a hand-written letter!

"Sometimes it only takes one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life"

Take care and Happy Easter from Karen, the staff and board of Safe Home Ireland

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: APPLYING FOR AN IRISH PENSION

Q. What is the procedure for applying for an Irish Pension while living abroad?

A. If a person is residing outside the Republic of Ireland, in an **EEA Country**, they should apply for an EU Pension to the pension institution in **their country of residence**, in accordance with the procedures of that institution.

If a person does **not live in an EEA country**, they must apply for an EU Pension to the pension institution in the EEA country in which they were last in insurable employment.

Q. I will be moving to Ireland in March 2021; Will I continue to get my UK State Pension?

A. Yes. You will continue to get your UK State Pension if you move to Ireland and you are a UK or Irish national. You will be able to claim and continue to receive UK benefits in Ireland if you are a UK or Irish national, as long as you continue to meet the eligibility requirements. You will however need to tell the Government Office that deals with your benefits or your UK State Pension if you are moving or retiring abroad.

Q. How do I apply if I live in the US?

A. There are bilateral social security agreements between participating countries that allow people to move between countries and protect their pension entitlements and the USA is included on that list.

You must contact the Pensions Section of the Department of Social Protection in Sligo 6 months before your 66th birthday.

Notes/Further Information:

For general/follow-up queries, contact The Pensions Services Office, College Road, Sligo.

Tel: + 353 71-915 7100; **Email:** state.con@welfare.ie; **Website:** Contributory Pension [HERE](#); Non-Contributory Pension [HERE](#)

Regardless of where in the world you are currently living, if you are considering leaving the country permanently and are in receipt of a pension, social security payment, other benefits of any kind, it is always a good idea to contact the Department issuing your payment to get confirmation on how a move will affect your on-going entitlement.

Ireland also has bilateral social security agreements with Australia, Canada New Zealand, Quebec, Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Japan.

CHANGE TO THE TREATMENT BENEFIT SCHEME – IRELAND

The Treatment Benefit Scheme is run by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and provides dental, optical and aural services to **qualified people**. The Scheme is available to insured workers, the self-employed and retired people who have the required number of PRSI contributions.

As announced in Budget 2021, **from 27th March**, a grant of up to €500 to buy hearing aids and up to €100 towards repairs will be provided under the Treatment Benefit Scheme without requiring a matching payment by the claimant.

For more information or to make enquires about your eligibility, contact The Treatment Benefit Section; **Tel:** +353 74 916 4480; **Website:** [HERE](#)

Note! It is important to contact your treatment provider to check whether they are registered under this scheme and your eligibility before proceeding with any treatment.

HOME SUPPORT SERVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE ('HOME HELP')

If you have a relative living in Ireland who requires additional support or have recently returned yourself and need assistance with certain day to day tasks, this information may be of interest to you. **Note!** Applications cannot be made in advance of a move here as people must be 'ordinarily resident' in Ireland to be assessed.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) Home Support Service (formerly called the Home Help Service or Home Care Package Scheme) aims to support older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and to support informal carers.

The Home Support Service provides support to assist with everyday tasks including:

- getting in and out of bed
- dressing and undressing
- personal care such as showering and shaving

The level and type of support allocated depends on each applicant's individual needs. These supports will be provided by the HSE or by an external private home-care provide, approved by the HSE.

Costs: The Home Support Service is free. You do not need a medical card to apply and your income will not be assessed. However, if you arrange additional home supports, over and above the level approved by the HSE, you will have to pay for these.

Who can apply? The Home Support Service is available to people aged 65 or over who may need support to continue living in their own home, people returning home following a hospital stay, or in some cases people wishing to move back to their own homes, from a nursing home setting. Sometimes exceptions are made for people younger than 65 who may need support. For example, people with early onset dementia or a disability.

To apply; contact the regional home support office in your area of residence or you/an appointed family member can also contact your local G.P or Public Health Nurse for further guidance on the process. See HSE website [HERE](#) for more information.

Note! The Home Support Service in Ireland is often under-pressure, funding and staffing constraints, on an area by area basis, can lead to delays and insufficient support hours being allocated.

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

We have been living in New York for over thirty years and plan to retire back to Ireland in the next few years.

Q. Can we take out private health insurance ahead of our scheduled move, we want to avoid waiting periods?

A. No, in order to have valid private health insurance cover in Ireland, you would have to prove residency here for at least 6 months of the year. While this would be the case when you do actually move permanently, it obviously would not apply to allow you to take out a policy in advance.

As new entrants to the market you will have to serve waiting periods before you are fully covered. You will be treated immediately for accidents, but you will have to wait 6 months before you are covered for new conditions and 5 years for pre-existing conditions. A pre-existing condition is one which shows signs or symptoms in the 6 months prior to taking out insurance.

Important Note! In line with Lifetime Community Rating in Ireland, anyone aged 35 or older, who does not purchase private health insurance **within 9 months of moving to Ireland**, will be subject to a 'loading' (additional charge) of 2% of the gross premium for every year they are over the age of 34

Notes/Further Information:

For more information from an independent source, including details of health insurance companies operating in the Irish market, and policy comparisons, contact the Health Insurance Authority

Tel: +353 (0)1 406 0080; **Email:** info@hia.ie; or **Website:** [HERE](#)

COVID-19 UPDATE

Ireland remains at [Level 5 Covid restrictions](#) until at least 5th April 2021. It is hoped that there **might be** a slight easing of restrictions then, but nothing has been confirmed as yet.

Some examples of day to day living in Ireland under Level 5 restrictions:

- People must stay at home, except, for work, education or other essential reasons
- People are allowed to exercise within 5km of their home
- People must work from home, unless their work is an essential service that cannot be done from home.
- No visits to other households are allowed, except for essential purposes.
- People can meet with one other household outdoors when taking exercise.
- Schools are open except for first to fourth year post-primary students. It is planned those students will return on 12 April 2021.
- Childcare is closed except for services for vulnerable children, children of essential workers and children on the ECCE scheme. It is planned for all other childcare services to return on 29 March 2021.
- Only essential retail are open. Bars, cafes and restaurants are closed except for take-away food and delivery.
- Construction work is closed, with some exceptions.

Travel and Mandatory Hotel Quarantine Arrangements

The Irish Government continues to strongly advise against all non-essential travel to and from Ireland. In the event of urgent travel to Ireland, passengers are advised to contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate before commencing the journey or contact The Department of Foreign Affairs Emergency Travel Advice Line – **Tel:** + 353 1 613 1700 or check **Website:** [HERE](#) for more information

With effect from Friday 26th March, all passengers arriving into Ireland from an airport or port considered “high risk”, or who have been in a “high-risk” country in the 14 days prior to travel, will have to **quarantine for two weeks at a designated hotel**. The average cost of a 12-night stay for a single person is just under €1,900 and this must be pre-booked before arrival in Ireland. The list of “high-risk” countries includes all South American nations, many African states along with Austria and the United Arab Emirates.

For passengers who are arriving in Ireland from “non-designated” high risk countries and who do not have a “negative/not detected result” pre-departure PCR test (taken within 72 hours prior to arrival) they will also have to pay for mandatory hotel quarantine at a rate of €150/day for a single person.

Notes/Further Information:

See [Quarantine Hotels Ireland](#) for more information/booking details.

For the latest information on the Covid-19 restrictions see the Irish Government portal – www.gov.ie

It is important to note that the list of designated states will be subject to change at short notice and passengers are required to check the list before travelling to Ireland, to be sure of their obligations.

TAKE CARE, STAY SAFE AND STAY CONNECTED FROM THE STAFF AND BOARD OF SAFE HOME IRELAND

Ireland’s next review date for Covid restrictions will fall on Easter Monday (5th April), so this year we will once again be celebrating Easter in a much quieter fashion, with very limited family members. For most of us that will mean an Easter with members of our household or allowable ‘bubble’, while connecting those who cannot be with us via phone or social media or even with an old-fashioned post-card or Easter card. On a positive note, the weather is improving, the days are getting longer, and things are looking brighter, with the number of people getting vaccinated on the rise, giving us all hope for the future.

Wishing all of our readers a Happy Easter and looking forward to when we can all celebrate Easter together like we used to, back when we couldn’t see the bottom halves of people’s faces ... because they were covered in chocolate, rather than face masks!