



ADVICE & INFORMATION



OUTREACH VISITS



HOUSING ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

December 2021 – Issue 237

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**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



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme

As Naomh Chaitéil: Kaitéilíochas
Department of Heritage Affairs

Message from our CEO

Welcome to our final Newsletter of 2021. While 2021 has been challenging in so many ways, as we continue to live with Covid, it has also been an exciting and eventful year for us too. Our service remained open throughout, and we continued to respond to queries from all parts of the world. We welcomed people home, some in planned situations, while some others in challenging situations. We kept in touch with people abroad who were unable to come home but needed emotional support and our contact was a lifeline to many.

2021 marked our 21st anniversary and in March we were delighted to welcome our **first Ambassador** the legendary singer and musician, [Seán Keane](#). When it became apparent that all in-person events would be curtailed, we continued to connect with our global community virtually and held **four Facebook live concerts** (all still available from our [Facebook](#) page): on St. Patrick's Day, Mayo Day, on the Summer Solstice and on GivingTuesday, all led by our Ambassador. We were pleased to be able to hold one in-person fundraising concert in November in Mulranny, Co. Mayo. Seán has worked with us throughout year to both advance our profile on a national and global level, but also has assisted in raising much needed funds for our work. We are most grateful for his support and that of all the other performers who featured at our virtual events throughout the year.

Following our AGM in April, our board elected a **new Chairperson**, Nova Fariss, who has risen to the challenge and guides us with great vision, compassion, and support. Our former chairperson and founder, Dr. Jerry Cowley, whom many of you will know, was appointed our **Life President**. We are extremely grateful to both Nova and Jerry and our entire board for their ongoing commitment and dedication to Safe Home to ensure good governance and compliance in all areas of our work.

During the year we held a number of **Moving/Returning to Ireland Information Clinics** in partnership Luton Irish Forum, Camden Irish Centre, Irish Community Care Manchester, Irish Community Care Liverpool, Leeds Irish Health and Homes. These centres, and all others, have been the lifeline for so many Irish communities abroad over the past two years and deserve our special mention and recognition here.

We started our first **blog** in March, entitled, **Home Thoughts from Abroad**, and so far this year, we have featured Sarah Whelan, of Irish Women Abroad, Australia; Nessa Monaghan, Chair of London LGBT; Austin Comerton of Irish Radio Canada and Lorraine Maher of IamIrish. The blogs are available on our [website](#) and I really encourage you to take time to read about the inspiring lives of the contributors and the impact they have made and continue to make abroad.

In June, we launched a Planned Giving Campaign, **No Place Like Home**, and would like to say a big thank you to all those who have supported this so far. We would also like to thank **Inspire Fitness Galway** and all those who took part and donated to Safe Home Ireland as part of its October Fitness Challenge. Furthermore, I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who supported our work and donated to Safe Home Ireland in 2021. We are indebted for your support, which enables us to continue to reach out to those abroad who need our support and assist people who have made the journey back home, particularly those who return in crisis situations.

Finally, in November, we launched our first [Poetry Book](#), entitled **Reflections**, which is available to purchase from our website. We continue to work on our **Every Picture Tells a Story** and will start sharing some stories online during the month of December.

I would like to take this opportunity thank you all for your support during the year and wish you all a safe, healthy and peaceful holiday season; look out for each other and check in on those who are alone or vulnerable at this time.

"Ní neart go cur le chéile - There's no strength without unity"

Take care and keep in touch from Karen, the Staff & Board of Safe Home Ireland

Returning to Ireland - Is it for me? Part Two

In our October issue we posed a number of questions to people who were thinking of returning to live in Ireland after a period abroad, we acknowledged that in some cases on an emotional level this can be a very difficult decision to reach. There are so many considerations such as family, friends, lifestyle, work and ties to one's homeland versus their adopted home. In each situation there are losses and gains.

This month we would like to focus on just a few practical questions to think about. Then, if the decision to return to Ireland is reached, we highlight some important documents which you should bring with you in order for the move to be as seamless as possible.

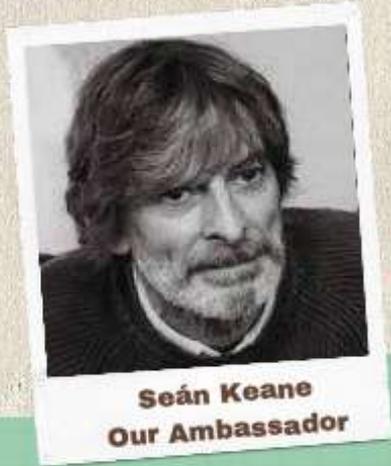
- If your plan is to work when you return, check if there are opportunities in the area you will move to?
- If the plan is to start your own business, will this be possible, is there a need for your business in the county you return to, do you know which agencies to approach for support?
- If you have qualifications from study in another country will they be recognised in Ireland?
- If you are returning with a young family, have you checked out the local schools and colleges? Will they suit your family's needs/do they have capacity? Have you factored in the availability and cost of childcare?
- Are you planning to buy or rent a home, have you checked out rents/property prices? Is there an availability of suitable housing to meet your needs?
- Are you planning on bringing furniture with you, what are the removal costs?
- If you need social housing support, do you know how to access this and how the procedure works?
- What are the supports and services like in the area you plan to return to? Are they adequate for your requirements? For example, what level of public transport is available if you do not own your own transport?
- If you own a vehicle, are you planning to bring it with you? Will there be costs involved in importing it into Ireland?
- If you have a driving licence from another country will it be recognised in Ireland?
- Do you or anyone moving with you have specific healthcare needs? Can relevant treatments be easily accessed in the part of Ireland you are returning to?
- If you are planning to retire in Ireland, does your current pension transfer with you?

We hope that these initial questions will help you decide on a practical level about returning to Ireland. If you have any queries or if you would like to talk through any aspect of returning home permanently, **please do contact us.**

Please find below a list of some important documents to bring with you, depending on your circumstances. Having a good paper trail of back-up documentation* will help to ease your transition into 'the system' here. *This is particularly important for those who may be applying for welfare or social housing supports when they move here.

- Personal documentation – birth cert, marriage cert, divorce papers;
- Back up documentation regarding any medical conditions and take home 3-6 month's supply of medication if possible;
- Name and Address of last employer and social security number, latest P6/equivalent, and recent payslips
- If in receipt of a benefit or pension from abroad, the latest annual statement outlining your entitlement;
- Proof property abroad sold or tenancy ended;
- Car insurance documents (that show 'no claims history');
- If taking car – drivers licence, documents to show ownership;
- 6 months bank statements and, if possible, closing statements.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021



Handing over the reins
Dr. Jerry Cowley, former
Chairperson, now Safe
Home Ireland Life
President with our current
Chairperson, Nova Fariss



Singer, Seán Keane,
appointed our
Ambassador in March
2021



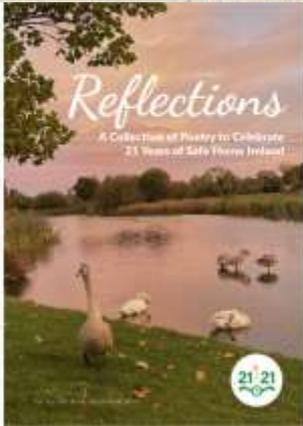
100 years & still smiling!
Safe Home Ireland Ambassador, Seán
Keane, Dr. Jerry Cowley, Safe Home
Ireland Life President, Karen McHugh –
CEO, Safe Home Ireland

**Centre stage: Mary Caffrey, returnee to St.
Brendan's Village, Mulranny celebrating
her 100th Birthday**





Safe Home Ireland Concerts 2021



Safe Home Ireland First Poetry book, Reflections - November 2021





Redress Scheme for survivors of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions

On 16th November last, the Irish Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman T.D announced details of the financial redress scheme for the survivors of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. Minister O'Gorman also confirmed that the archive of the Commission of Investigation has been opened to ensure that survivors of mother-and-baby Institutions can access their records.

Mothers who were resident in one of the institutions for any length of time will be eligible to receive a financial payment. People who were resident as a child for a period of six months or more will also be eligible for a payment. In addition, people who spent more than six months in one of the institutions will be eligible to receive an enhanced medical card.

Applicants will qualify solely based on proof of residency, without a need to bring forward any evidence of abuse nor any medical evidence. In certain limited circumstances, sworn affidavits may be required.

Survivors and former residents now living overseas will qualify for a payment on the same terms as individuals living in Ireland, and will have the choice to receive an enhanced medical card or a once-off payment in lieu of the card as a contribution towards their individual health needs.

NOTE: Urgent Legislation is required to establish the scheme but it is hoped that it will be open for applications as soon as possible in 2022.

Contacting the Department

There is a dedicated telephone information line available for people at home or abroad seeking further information about the publication of the Report, counselling information etc.

Tel: + 353 16473200 from Monday to Friday 9.30am to 6pm or

email: motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie

More information:

A web page has also been set up, please click [HERE](#)

This site brings together information which may be helpful and of interest to survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, their families and supporters. This includes information on accessing personal information, details of the forthcoming Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme, the Government Action Plan and related legislative developments. The information will be updated on a regular basis.

People living abroad who may require counselling or additional support at this time can link in with their nearest Irish welfare and advice service. For contact information on those services/centres, please get in touch with us here at the Safe Home office



Returning to Ireland - Frequently Asked Questions

Social Welfare

I will be moving back to Ireland shortly.

Q. Will I qualify for any unemployment benefits while I am looking for work?

A. There is no automatic entitlement to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

However, you may well qualify for assistance if you meet the required means testing and Habitual Residence criteria. To summarise the Habitual Residency side of things, anyone who has returned/moved to Ireland and is applying for means tested social welfare (e.g JSA) must be able to show that they have (a) cut their ties abroad and (b) show they have sufficient ties to/in Ireland that demonstrate their intention to remain here.

Note! If applying for Job Seekers Allowance on return to Ireland, providing a completed Habitual Residence form (HRC1) together with the JSA application and the supporting documentation as outlined in (a) + (b) above will speed up the assessment process.

Housing

We have been reading about the Irish Government's *Help To Buy Scheme*, (HTB) which gives a tax refund initiative up to €30,000 to first-time buyers in Ireland.

Q. We own our own home in the UK, can we still qualify as a first time home buyers when we move home? We have never bought a house in Ireland before.

A. You would not be considered first time buyers here - the qualifying criteria for the HTB Scheme applies to properties purchased worldwide, not just in Ireland.

.....
I don't have a huge amount of savings, but I can afford to rent privately for a while when I move back to Ireland.

Q. Can I apply for help with my rent straight-away.

A. No, in order to qualify for help with your rent, you will have to be approved on the relevant Council housing list, with a view then of applying for support via the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). It is therefore important to apply to the Council as soon as you can – it can take up to 12 weeks for the Council to assess an application.

Driving

My UK Driver's licence is due for renewal, but I don't know if I will bother renewing it? I hope to move back home at some stage and plan to exchange it for an Irish one then.

Q. What would happen if my UK licence is expired when I move?

A. If you live in Ireland and have a UK driving licence, your licence is no longer recognised in Ireland. You should exchange your licence for an Irish licence as soon as possible. **You cannot exchange a UK licence if it has been expired for more than one year.** You can continue to be licensed during the exchange process as the National Driver Licence Service will issue a receipt to confirm you are exchanging a licence.

Q. I held an Irish Driver's licence in the past. I would like to revert to this licence when I move home but cannot remember how long ago it expired. Is there anywhere I can go to check this out?

A. If you contact the Road Safety Authority (RSA) giving your full name, date of birth and PPSN, they will be able to check their system and give you that information. Road Safety Authority **Tel:** +353 96 25000 **Email:** lqueries@rsa.ie

Note! if your Irish Driver's licence has expired more than 10 years, then you cannot renew it. You would have to begin the driver testing process from the start again (including a theory test, driving lessons and sitting a driving test)

Some snippets from Budget 2022

The Irish Budget for 2022 took place on the 12th of October 2021. Below is an outline of some of the measures that were announced:

- Income tax relief for remote working in 2022 will be available at 30% of vouched expenses for electricity, heating and internet services for days spent working from home.
- From 13th of October, the price for a packet of 20 cigarettes increased by €0.50, bringing the average cost of a pack of 20 cigarettes in Ireland to €15.
- From January 2022, all weekly social welfare payments will increase by €5, with proportional increases for qualified adults and those on reduced welfare payments (however, people aged 25 and under on reduced Job Seeker's Allowance will get the full €5 increase).
- People on long-term social welfare payments will receive an additional 100% weekly payment in early December (Christmas Bonus payment).
- Fuel Allowance (paid Oct-April) increased on October 13th, from €28 to €33 per week
- From January 2022, Living Alone Allowance will increase by €3, bringing it to €22 per week
- The allowable income and savings threshold for Carer's Allowance payments will both increase from June 2022

*The amount someone must pay toward the monthly cost of prescribed drugs under the Drugs Payment Scheme will be reduced to €100 (currently €114 monthly)

*The free G.P scheme for children will be extended to cover 6 and 7-year-olds (the scheme currently only covers children under 6). **NOTE: No specific date in 2022 has yet been set for the implementation of these changes**

Funding to the Department of Foreign Affairs will almost double, helping to enhance services in the following key areas;

- Improve passport services
- Develop consular services to Irish embassies and consulates
- Fund emigrant support programmes and diaspora engagement

See [HERE](#) for more detailed information on Budget 2022

Coming into Ireland – Latest Covid-19 Regulations

Everyone arriving in Ireland must complete an online Covid-19 Passenger Locator Form before boarding a flight or taking a boat to Ireland. One form should be completed for each passenger aged 18 or older. You will get an email receipt, which you will have to show when boarding.

You must also have one of the following when you arrive in Ireland:

- An [EU Digital COVID Certificate](#) that shows you are fully vaccinated with an approved vaccine, or have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 180 days
- Other acceptable proof that you have been fully vaccinated with an approved vaccine, or you have recovered from COVID-19
- Proof of a negative RT-PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before your arrival

From Friday 3 December 2021, all arrivals aged 12 and over who are fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 must provide either of the following:

- A negative or not detected antigen test (taken within 48 hours before arrival)
- A negative or not detected RT-PCR test (taken within 72 hours before arrival)
- The test result must be certified and not self-administered. If you are not fully vaccinated or recovered, you must show a negative or not detected RT-PCR test taken within 72 hours before your arrival.

Notes! (i) Citizens with a genuine humanitarian emergency requiring urgent travel, should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate immediately for advice before commencing their journey. **(ii)** Regulations can be subject to change with quite short notice during this time, so ensure that you monitor your travel booking with your airline or ferry company

For more information on public health advice and current measures in place in Ireland see [HERE](#)



Postcard from Abroad



"They say things happen for a reason and some days I find it difficult to put that logic to my lifestory"

For most of my life I did not know my life was any different to anyone else, I was raised in a loving family about fifty miles north of Toronto, Canada. My parents were normal hardworking people with just myself as their only daughter. All told I had a very comfortable life style and as a child Toronto offered us so much in day trips, shopping, meals out and of course when I got older entertainment. The buzz from the nightlife scene in the big city drew me in on a regular basis and it was there I met an Irish man with his Connemara brogue and charm. He swept me of my feet and I fell in love in a heartbeat. When I told my mother about him, something changed, I thought she was just been over protective as she was known to be but this was different. She wanted it to end before it began, what was wrong with a nice Canadian boy, someone from your own town. I couldn't understand it. We never fought growing up and I couldn't understand where this animosity was coming from, my father the quiet reserved type became involved asking me not to upset my mother.

We met in secret, made plans, he wanted me to see Ireland, I had no passport, never needed one, so I applied to get one and that is when the truth emerged, I was adopted and my adopted parents made the decision not to tell me. They went away for a year and came back with me telling the neighbours it was their own. Worse was to follow, my mother had given birth to me in a Mother and Baby home and it seems she only saw me once before I was taken from her. After years of dead ends in the search for my true identity, I finally made progress a few years ago. I have found my roots, my homestead, my family and I have found my true home. After the anger had subsided I began to understand why my adopted parents did what they did, and after hearing the many bad stories about the many other children born out of wedlock in Ireland, I began to accept how lucky I was to be adopted by two loving people who could not have children of their own, I forgave them and went in search of my history.

I know now where I want to be, as the song says *"my heart is in Ireland and it is there I want to be"* and a whole new chapter awaits me, it broke my heart when my wonderful man could not cope with me not coping with who I really was. Every trip to Ireland was about me and unfortunately not about us. For thirty years I have gone back and forth with more questions than answers and when I got answers they usually were not good reading. From idelic childhood to distracted adulthood and what life could have been. At 55, what lays ahead is daunting but not as tough or as sad as that fateful day my mother gave birth to me in a Cork Magdalen home, and the trail of misfortune that was left in its wake. A loving joyful occasion of new life shrouded in hatred and dread. I want to go to Ireland to right some of those wrongs, to forgive and get healing and to get to know my siblings and cousins in a different era. I have contacted Safe Home Ireland to put the pieces together

With love from Toronto xx

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain Faoi Mhaise Daoibh!

In this year like no other, whether you are at home or abroad, you are in our thoughts this Christmas.

Take care, stay safe and stay connected.

From everyone at Safe Home Ireland.

Our office will be closed from Thursday 23rd December 2021 to Monday 3rd January 2022 inclusive.

21:21

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Department of Social Support Services