



**SAFE HOME IRELAND**  
EMIGRANT SUPPORT SERVICE



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

## Welcome from our CEO

February 2022 – Issue 239

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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 to our February Newsletter and to Spring - the season of growth and new beginnings! With that in mind we are pleased to announce that we recently launched 'Friends of Safe Home Ireland' on 31<sup>st</sup> January, an exciting new venture for us and one of its founding members has penned an article on the back page so keep reading to find out more!

We launched our [2021 Annual Review](#) last week and while there was a decrease in numbers who returned to Ireland in 2021, due to lockdowns and strict global travel restrictions for most of 2021, we welcomed home and directly supported 52 people, some who returned in crisis or challenging situations. We supported countless others via our telephone information service and advocacy supports both here in Ireland and abroad. We encourage you to read our Review on our [website](#) or alternatively, please contact us if you would like a copy posted out to you.

After almost two years of lockdowns and restrictions it is great to report that life has resumed to *almost* normal again here in Ireland with the further easing of restrictions over the past month. An end might finally be in sight - is Covid likely to become 'endemic' - eventually fading in severity. We are hopeful and optimistic but must remain cautious at the same time.

From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022, [new rules for travel to Ireland](#) came into effect. Passengers to Ireland with an accepted proof of vaccination or proof of recovery from Covid-19 in the past six months do not have to show an additional pre-departure Covid-19 test result. It is important to note that all arrivals to Ireland must complete a [Passenger Locator Form](#). As in all previous editions we urge you to check current travel requirements in place at time of travel. Almost all of Ireland's Covid restrictions will be lifted on 28<sup>th</sup> February. Face coverings will no longer be mandatory and protective measures in schools and early learning settings will be lifted. Face coverings will still be required to be worn in health settings and will be advised to be worn on public transport, but this will not be a legal requirement.

Now with society almost fully opened, we are excited to announce that our Ambassador, [Seán Keane](#) will be hosting some concerts with and for us in May and some other dates to be confirmed later in the year. The first Concert will be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May in [Mulranny Park Hotel](#), as part of the [Home to Mayo Day 2022](#) festival. This event will also include a guided walk on the Greenway, a lecture with [Utan Cowley](#), author of [The Men Who Built Britain](#), with Seán's concert as the finale that evening. Seán's second Concert will take place in the [Ardhowen Theatre](#), Enniskillen. Co. Fermanagh on 12<sup>th</sup> May. We will keep you posted about both events on our social media channels and in upcoming editions of our Newsletters.

Finally, it is great that St. Patrick's Day celebrations will resume in most parts of the world. The central message of this year's St Patrick's Day is that Ireland is reopening. The international programme will focus on the theme of 'Rebuilding Connections & Supporting Communities' across the globe and in particular acknowledging the Irish overseas and emphasise the importance of our Diaspora, whose connections to Ireland have been so severely impacted by the pandemic.

**Until next month, take care, stay safe and keep in touch from Karen and all the staff and board of Safe Home Ireland**



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme



An tAire Ceirdeál Eanáir  
Department of Foreign Affairs

## Banking in Ireland .... Some questions answered

### Dormant Accounts

#### When is a bank account considered dormant?

A dormant account is an account on which there has been no transaction by the account holder for **15 years** or more (the year begins on 30<sup>th</sup> September). The accounts in question can be a variety of types (e.g. savings/deposit/bank/post office)

#### 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<sup>th</sup> September a transaction has not been passed by the account holder in the previous 15 years) - the account holder has until the 31<sup>st</sup> March of the following year to reactivate the account by contacting their institution and carrying out a transaction on the account. After the 31<sup>st</sup> March, the funds are transferred to the Dormant Accounts Fund.

### Opening an Irish Bank Account

#### Can I open a bank account in Ireland before I move home?

You cannot open a **resident account** until you are actually living here and can prove this. This is down to Criminal Justice Legislation (to prevent money laundering). Irish banks are required to seek proof of address/residency in Ireland before a customer can open an account here.

#### What do I have to produce to prove I am resident in Ireland?

The generally accepted proof of address is at least one utility bill addressed to you at your Irish address. Some banks may accept a letter from a Government office addressed to you at your Irish address. Up to date/valid photo I.D is also required (passport/drivers licence).

There can be an element of discretion involved in what is acceptable proof of address, from bank to bank. So it may be worth 'shopping around', to find the best option for you.

Some Irish banks allow customers to open an online **non-resident** account from abroad – this can make things easier later on, to change it to a resident account, once you are living here.

The bigger Irish banks have dedicated teams that deal with customers who may be moving /recently returned to Ireland, so if you fall into this category, it may be worthwhile making enquiries.

**Note!** Be aware that it can take a number of weeks to get a utility bill in your own name and it may also take some time to get an appointment with the bank

### Housing opportunities – Cork and Kerry

Clúid Housing Association currently has some one bedroom properties available for older people in their housing schemes in **Carrigtwohill and Newmarket in Co. Cork** and in **Kenmare and Killarney in Co. Kerry**.

**Important!** Interested parties **must be approved** on the relevant County Council housing list to be considered for these vacancies. For more information, please contact, the Safe Home Ireland office.

## Frequently Asked Question – Free Travel

I recently returned home to Ireland and have now qualified for a [Free Travel Pass](#).

### **Q. Can you tell me if I can use this pass in the North of Ireland?**

**A.** If you are 66 or over and have Free Travel you can travel free of charge on all bus and rail services within Northern Ireland. **However**, you will first have to apply for a [Senior Smartpass](#).

**To get a Senior SmartPass** you must fill in an application form (FTNI1). You can get this form from your local Citizens Information Centre, Intreo/social welfare office. **It is not possible to get this form online.**

The application form must be filled in with black ink only and **returned in person (not posted)** to your Intreo/Social Welfare office.

You must bring the following information along with you;

- Your Irish Free Travel pass/Public Services Card and
- Proof of your address, (for example, a gas, electricity, phone bill or bank statement) and
- Proof of your identity, (for example, your driving licence, passport or another form of photo identification) and
- A recent passport standard colour photograph.

It may take up to 6 weeks to process your application.

**Note!** A spouse, civil partner, cohabitant or companion cannot travel with you for free on public transport within Northern Ireland. However, your Irish Free Travel allows your spouse, civil partner, cohabitant, or companion to travel for free on certain cross-border services between Ireland and Northern Ireland. For example, a cross-border train journey that starts in Ireland and ends in Northern Ireland or vice versa

## Driving in Ireland

### **Information for Drivers aged 70 years+**

From Monday 21<sup>st</sup> of February, the age of applicants who must supply a medical report to secure a driving licence increased, from 70 to 75 years. However, those over 70, who have an identified illness, will still be required to provide the medical report.

The requirement for people aged 70 years+ to produce a medical report had been temporarily suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to ease pressure on medical services.

The new rule change is supported by international research indicating that older drivers are generally recognised as being "exceptionally responsible".

Driving licences will remain free to anyone over 70, and people in this age group can apply by post to renew a licence or learner permit.

**Exchanging/Renewing a licence:** [The National Drivers Licence Service \(NDLS\)](#) are advising customers that exchange of foreign licences to an Irish licence will take longer to process as the licence entitlements have to be verified by the country that issued it. In exceptional circumstances, this can take up to 3 months.

**Important note!** When you make an application for renewal or exchange you will be issued with a receipt which you should carry with you to confirm you are in the process of renewal or exchange. You will continue to be fully licensed to drive for the period of the application process for renewals and on exchange provided the original licence submitted for exchange is current and valid.

**NOTE:** You must book an appointment to attend your local NDLS office – there are no 'walk-ins'.

For more information: **Tel:** 0818 700 800 **Web:** [www.ndls.ie](http://www.ndls.ie) **Email:** [info@ndls.ie](mailto:info@ndls.ie)

## Becoming a 'Friend' .... My Story!

*“Whilst I’m not musical myself, I’m in awe of those that are. To me, having the gift of music is like having a lifelong global passport. Not only can it take the musician anywhere, it can transport the listener to far off places too ... or remind them of home. It seems to me that wherever in the world you’d find someone with an Irish background, there’d be Irish music within earshot”*

### “Music introduced me to Safe Home Ireland ..... and re-introduced me to Mulranny”

This time last year I knew nothing about Safe Home Ireland. Truth is, I hadn’t needed to. Seán Keane, Safe Home Ireland Ambassador, changed all that. Watching his morning musical offering on Facebook – in the face of Covid - had become part of my daily routine. At some point, initially subliminally, the phrase Safe Home Ireland cropped up. I am not particularly curious by nature, but I had the time, and inclination, to try to find out more ... so Google it I did ... and I was intrigued.

I’m from Holywood and I live in Belfast. I’ve worked in London and in Canada. There was a time when I’d have holidayed in the West of Ireland, before, frankly, it became better value for money to fly off in search of sunshine or to visit friends abroad. To me, Mulranny seemed a strange place to ‘headquarter’ a registered charity with a global reach and remit. I guess I’m like most people. I have some preferred charities that I try to support and I make occasional, random and modest donations to others.

I’d been looking for an opportunity to go see Seán Keane ‘live’. He was set to play a fundraising concert – in my understanding - somewhere near Westport/Achill, in November 2021. Hmm, a 200+ miles 5 hour drive ... to a charity event? Not many live concerts to be had at that time. A change of scene. Sure, why not? My journey wasn’t without its complications, even with SatNav, but that’s another story!

At some point it struck me, quite simply, that Safe Home Ireland ... helps people navigate their way ‘home’. When I met Karen and the team before the concert [in Mulranny, in November 2021], they’d already gone out of their way to help me. They were warm and welcoming. They are passionate about what they do. They do it professionally, sensitively and discreetly ... and with a smile. They didn’t ask, but before even a note had been played, I’d made up my mind to at least offer to help, without quite knowing how .....

We all got chatting and one thing led to another and it turned out that as Seán has sung many times “Never Alone”, some other people were of like mind. We first met as a small group on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and with the approval of the Board – **“Friends of Safe Home Ireland” was born!**

Our common purpose is to enhance the profile of Safe Home Ireland through different networks and events at home and abroad to ensure that those who need Safe Home Ireland’s services and support know the organisation exists ... and to identify and organise charity fundraising events, schemes and activities to provide ‘additional’ financial support to the organisation’s ongoing work as well as enabling it to develop relevant new services and projects which will assist those - who are most in need - to return home.

Friends of Safe Home Ireland prefers to work quietly in the background and believes that this method of operation will allow the truly dedicated staff to concentrate their efforts on helping those most in need of the range of frontline services provided by the organisation.

We are each telling our own friends about Safe Home Ireland and encouraging them to tell their friends. We are also asking them to consider making a donation if they can and/or to support our fundraising efforts, by attending future events. It would be wonderful if you were inclined to do the same.

**Stephen - Friend of Safe Home Ireland**

