

Welcome From Our CEO

January 2023 – Issue 247

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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

Welcome to the January edition of our Newsletter. It's hard to believe that a month has already passed since Christmas. We would like to thank everyone who sent in Christmas cards and New Year wishes to us over the festive season and we wish all of our readers a healthy and happy 2023.

We also wish to extend our appreciation to everyone who supported our **Friday Friendship 2023 Diary/Poetry book** – to our sponsors and to everyone who purchased the publication. Each Friday, on our social media channels, we feature the weekly sponsor, with an original poem, so be sure to check this out and share with your contacts where possible. We have received some lovely feedback to date, with many poems recited on national and local radio stations too. We are currently planning some private readings in theatres across the county so watch this space! We only have a few copies left, so if you would like your own 'signed copy', get in touch or you can purchase from our website [HERE](#).

This year we welcome a new bank holiday in Ireland to mark **St. Brigid's Day/La Fhéile Bhríde** (on Monday 6th February). The bank holiday will fall on the first Monday in February each year. The only exception will be when St. Brigid's Day falls on a Friday - in which case the Friday will be the bank holiday! **This will be the first bank holiday in Irish history to be named after a woman.** The Department of Foreign Affairs is launching its fifth international St. Brigid's Day programme, celebrating women's contributions and many events will be held online, live-streamed or recorded see [HERE](#) for more information or to tune in live or to view at your convenience. **To Be Irish** also returns on St Brigid's Day, with a programme of over 75 online and in person events around the globe and across Ireland celebrating leadership, creativity, and the talent of women from Tuesday 1st of February – the full list will be available to view [HERE](#)

We are delighted to partner with [The London Irish Centre](#) to host our first in-person *Returning to Ireland Information Clinic* of 2023 on **Monday 13th March**. The clinic is open to anyone who might be thinking about moving/returning to Ireland and would like more information to make an informed decision. The information clinic will be held from 11am to 1pm and we will be offering follow-up appointments in the afternoon. Contact the London Irish Centre directly to make appointment (**Tel:** + 207 916 2222; **Email:** info@londonirishcentre.org). We will be holding other clinics this year, both in-person and virtually. Please do get in touch if you would like more information or to partner with us to run an information session.

Finally, we are incredibly proud of the **14 Irish Oscar nominations** announced last week – what an extraordinary achievement for the Irish screen industry! Nominees include ... *An Cailín Ciúin/The Quiet Girl* - the first Irish language feature film to ever be nominated for an Oscar; *An Irish Goodbye* nominated in the best short film category; Richard Baneham for best visual effects in *Avatar: The Way of Water*; Jonathan Redmond for best film editing in *Elvis*; Paul Mescal for best actor in *Aftersun* and finally *The Banshees of Inisherin*, has a total of nine Oscar nominations. Congratulations and good luck to all nominees - we look forward to the live ceremony on Sunday, March 12th!

Le gach dea-ghuí, Karen and all the Staff, Board and Friends of Safe Home Ireland

Safe Home Ireland Survey - Have Your Say!

We are currently in the process of developing a new **Strategic Plan** that will inform the direction of our service over the next 3 years. To assist us in this, we have recently circulated a short survey to *Irish agencies abroad*. The survey is an opportunity to provide feedback on our services and to share views on the needs of the Irish emigrant community abroad and the challenges facing those who are considering returning to Ireland. If you have not received a survey already and would like to give your feedback, please do get in touch. We will also be developing a number of other targeted surveys in the coming weeks for agencies in Ireland so will be in touch soon!

NOTE! We want to thank all those who completed our Impact Report survey, (postal and online), in November 2022 - your feedback will be incorporated in the development of our Strategic Plan.

Making Voluntary Contributions for your UK State Pension - Important Deadlines

You may get gaps in your UK National Insurance record if you do not pay National Insurance or do not get National Insurance credits. This could be because you were:

- employed but had low earnings
- unemployed and were not claiming benefit
- self-employed but did not pay contributions because of small profits
- living or working outside the UK.

Gaps can mean you will not have enough years of National Insurance contributions to either:

- get the full [State Pension](#) (sometimes called 'qualifying years')
- qualify for some benefits

Up to now, there were means in place where eligible people could make voluntary contributions to make up the gap in their National Insurance records.

Changes after 5 April 2023 will mean that people will only be able to pay for voluntary contributions for the past 6 years. This may not be enough to qualify for a new State Pension if you have fewer than [4 qualifying years on your National Insurance record](#) - usually at least 10 qualifying years are required.

For more information on these new changes, including guidance for people resident outside of the UK, please see [HERE](#)

Hardship Grants & Support for Irish People in London

The London Irish Centre facilitate applications for small grants for Irish people in their catchment area who may be struggling financially. For more information or to apply for support, please see [HERE](#)

Note! Irish Centres in other parts of the world may also have similar schemes or they can assist by signposting people to relevant local agencies who could offer assistance.

Remember! Irish Centres offer a range of services, from practical information on benefits/entitlements and housing as well as emotional support and activities to promote inclusion and well-being.

The Department of Foreign Affairs published a [Global Irish Diaspora Directory](#) that includes information/contact details on Centres and supports for the Irish community worldwide.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) – Ireland

If you have recently returned to Ireland or are contemplating doing so and need help with the cost of private rented accommodation, the HAP scheme may be of interest to you.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support provided by local authorities in Ireland.

Under the HAP scheme, local authorities make a monthly rental payment on behalf of the tenant directly to their landlord. This is subject to terms and conditions, **primarily that the tenant must first be approved on the local authority housing** list and HAP payments will also be made in line with monthly rent limits, set on a county-by-county basis.

The HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority. If the actual rent being paid is greater than the rent limits set for the county, the tenant must generally make up the shortfall themselves and pay this directly to the landlord each month.

Unfortunately, monthly HAP limits in all counties do not reflect the realities of actual rents being charged in the private rental market – see www.daft.ie. This together with the shortage of properties available in the long-term rental market are things that should be given careful consideration by anyone considering this option in the future.

You can read full information on the HAP scheme, including rent limits on a county by county basis, [HERE](#)

Get In Touch!

If you would like more information about the services provided by Safe Home Ireland, please do contact us.

We can provide tailored information and advice that is specific to every situation. Everybody's circumstances are different, and we will be happy to discuss your individual needs, concerns and options about moving to Ireland.

If you wish to provide a contact phone number or email, we would be happy to contact you directly.

Safe Home Office mobile for calls, text/WhatsApp messaging; **Tel:** +353 86 059 4538; **Web Contact form**, please see [HERE](#)

