



ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

August 2023 – Issue 252

WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to our August Newsletter. We hope you all had a lovely summer and are feeling refreshed for the remainder of the year!

Summer is generally a busy time for staff here in Safe Home. We tend to receive many requests for one-to-one meetings from people who are home on holidays and thinking about moving/returning home. Such meetings afford people the opportunity to discuss in detail all that is involved in navigating the returning/moving to Ireland process and helps them to make informed decisions.

We were pleased to welcome the London based, [Irish Chaplaincy](#) and the Bishop of Achonry, Bishop Paul Dempsey, to our office in Mulranny on 18th July and to join with them for their *Emigrants Walk* on the Mayo Greenway. The sun shone (in-between some showers!) and there was a great turnout by locals as well as one of our friends who was home on holidays from Germany. It was lovely to recall stories of those who left our shores, some of whom are supported by our colleagues at The Irish Chaplaincy in London.

In July, we also met with our partners here in Ireland for the quarterly *Returning to Ireland Forum*, comprising of [Crosscare Irish Diaspora Project](#), [Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas](#) and [Citizens Information](#). The forum, hosted by Crosscare Irish Diaspora Project in Dublin, discusses collaborative projects, emerging trends and key issues for returning emigrants and how collectively we can assist those considering moving/returning to Ireland, particularly those who may be returning in challenging situations.

In August, we e-met with the [Irish Diaspora Centre in Philadelphia](#) and look forward to partnering with them, the [Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres](#) and others, in their upcoming *Peer to Peer Seminar Series* this Autumn. The series will cover range of topics in relation to moving and living in Ireland.

Finally, we are looking forward to travelling to London again in September! We will be facilitating a *Moving to Ireland Information Clinic* in partnership with [Luton Irish Forum](#) on 25th September; we will attend [BIAS](#) (Brent Irish Advisory Service) 45th Anniversary on 27th September in the [Embassy of Ireland, Great Britain](#) and other meetings with colleagues in other Centres, to be confirmed yet. We will also be carrying out in-person meetings and home visits to some of our housing applicants across London.

Until next month, take care from the Board, Staff & Friends of Safe Home Ireland

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Office hours:

Monday to Thursday:

9.00am to 5.00pm

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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





Are you on a Local Authority (Council) Housing Waiting list in Ireland?

If you have been approved for social housing support and are on a Council housing waiting list in Ireland, please be aware that Councils around the country are currently carrying out their annual social housing assessments. This is to ensure that social housing lists in Ireland remain accurate and up to date.

If you receive any correspondence from the Council in relation to this, it is very important that you return any paperwork to them within the allotted timescale. This will ensure that your housing application remains 'live'.

The paperwork in question is normally a short form to complete, confirming that you wish to remain on the housing list, it includes sections to confirm/update your contact information and current circumstances. There is usually a requirement to provide up to date proof of income/benefits and a recent rent statement. This exercise also gives social housing applicants the opportunity to amend the 3 areas of choice where they may wish to be considered for housing in the future.

For Safe Home housing applicants; If you have received any paperwork recently from the Council and are unsure what to do, please do contact us here at the Safe Home office or visit your [local Irish Centre](#) for assistance.




Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant – Ireland

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant is a payment you can get if you are turning a vacant house or building into your permanent home or a rental property. A grant of up to €50,000 is available. To qualify, applicants must;

- have proof of ownership or evidence of active negotiations to buy the property (that is, confirmation of engagement from the estate agent or owner of the property) where you are seeking approval in principle for a grant
- live in the property as your principal private residence or make it available for rent
- have proof that the property has been vacant for at least 2 years and that it was built up to and including 2007

If the refurbishment costs exceed the standard grant of up to €50,000, a top-up grant amount of up to €20,000 is available (Derelict Property 'top up' Grant). To get this top-up grant, you must confirm that the property is derelict. This means that the property is structurally unsound and dangerous. The total grant available for a derelict property is therefore €70,000. Applicants must submit an independent report prepared by a qualified professional, along with the application confirming that the property is derelict.

Applications can be accepted from people living abroad. However, as well as meeting the requirements for the property in question, applicants must also be able to prove they are tax compliant in their country of residence. For more information, contact the Vacant Homes Officer in the Council area that is relevant to where your property is located.





Frequently Asked Question – Free Travel in Ireland

I am an Irish citizen, currently resident abroad. I receive an Irish Contributory Pension.
Q. Does this mean that I can qualify for Free Travel when I am holidaying in Ireland in the future?

A. No. In order to qualify for Free Travel, applicants must be **permanently resident in Ireland.**

Anyone aged 66yrs+ who is permanently resident in the State will qualify for the Free Travel scheme. Younger people in receipt of certain Disability payments and Carers may also qualify.

Full details on the Free Travel Scheme and application process can be found [HERE](#)

Did you know?

If you are 66yrs+ and have Free Travel, you can travel for free on all bus and rail services within Northern Ireland by applying for a Senior SmartPass Card (SSPC).

The application form for the SSPC is (FTNI1). You can get this form from your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office. It is not possible to get this form online. You should not use a photocopy of the form as each form is barcoded. The application form must be filled in with black ink only and returned in person (not posted) to your Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office. You must bring each of the following items with your application form to your Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office:

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


It may take up to 6 weeks to process your application. A Senior SmartPass Card lasts for 5 years, after which time, you must apply to renew it.



Extension of the GP visit card scheme- Children aged 6 and 7

This measure, announced in last year's Budget, came into effect in Ireland on the 11th of August this year. The rollout means that children aged 6 and 7 can now qualify for the [GP visit card](#), giving them access to free GP care.

The card was previously only available for children under 6. You can [register online for a GP visit card](#) or contact the HSE if you wish to do so by post. If your child turned 6 after 1 July 2023 and they already had a card, this will be extended automatically by the HSE.





Opening an Irish Bank Account

Opening a bank account in Ireland is still one of the major barriers that returning emigrants face. The Consumer Protection Commission have published [THIS](#) guide on opening a bank account in Ireland.

Due to anti-money laundering legislation, to open a resident bank account in Ireland, applicants must be able to provide at least one proof of address/residency in Ireland (usually a utility bill addressed to them at their Irish address). They must also provide up to date photo I.D (valid passport or driver's licence)

Note! some banks MIGHT accept a letter issued to the person, at their Irish address, from a Government Department, in lieu of the utility bill. 'Shop around' is the advice in relation to this!

Non-Resident Basic Irish Bank Account – for EU Residents Only

If you are over 18, you can open a basic bank account with one of the main Irish banks IF you are legally resident in the EU AND you do not already have another payment or current account in Ireland. This is normally done via an online process and having a basic Irish bank account already may make it a bit easier then to change to a resident account on return.

The bigger banks have dedicated teams for dealing with queries from people who may be thinking of returning/moving to Ireland. Should you wish to make further enquiries, click on links below;

[AIB](#)

[Bank of Ireland](#)

[Permanent TSB](#)



Unpaid leave to provide Medical Care

Unpaid leave for medical care was introduced in Ireland on 3rd of July 2023 and comes under the [Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023](#). Under the Act, employees who need to take time off work to deal with serious medical care for a child or other relevant person like a family member, the right to do so. The statutory entitlement is 5 days in any 12 consecutive months and can be taken as single or multiple days.

You can apply for the leave to care or support your:

Child (including an adopted child), Spouse or civil partner, Cohabitant, Parent or grandparent, Brother or sister, Housemate (any other person to those listed above who lives in the same house as you).

Note! If you are in employment outside of Ireland and you need to provide medical care to a relative here in Ireland, it may be worth checking out if similar rights exist that would facilitate you leaving work urgently in these circumstances.