

Welcome from our CEO

December 2023 – Issue 255

Welcome to our December Newsletter! As we approach the end of 2023, in this short section, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the year that was and to share just a few of our highlights and achievements during the year.

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Monday to Thursday:

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Friday:

9.00am to 4.00pm

**Thinking of returning or
moving to Ireland?**

Get in touch!

We started off the year with the launch of our **Friday Friendship Diary & Poetry book**. Each Friday throughout 2023, on our social media channels, we shared inspirational thoughts and poetry from the Diary, to connect with our diaspora and with those who dream to return home one day. Thank you to the weekly sponsors and all of you who purchased the Diary too.

January marked the first anniversary of **Friends of Safe Home Ireland**, a group who have done so much to support and promote Safe Home Ireland and introduce us to many new partners, donors and supporters. We are indebted to the members, who prefer to work quietly in the background, and we look forward to working with you all again in 2024.

During the year we held a number of in-person and virtual **Information Clinics** in partnership with Irish Welfare & Cultural Centres covering England, Australia and USA. These centres, who like Safe Home, are supported by the Irish Government, via the [Emigrant Support Programme](#), are a lifeline for our diaspora in both good and more challenging times.

We continue to meet quarterly with our partners here in Ireland, [Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project](#), [Citizens Information](#) and [Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas \(ICPO\)](#) to ensure we work together to offer a co-ordinated and seamless service to the Irish diaspora and those who are considering or have returned home to Ireland. This year we also worked in partnership with Irish [Embassies and Consular Services](#) to support, guide and directly assist those who required our support to return home.

In May, we walked The [National Famine Way](#) (165km) from [EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum](#), Dublin to [Strokestown Park and National Famine Museum](#), Co. Roscommon. We will be doing this walk again in 2024 (11th to 19th May) and registration is already opened on [Eventbrite](#) if you would like to join us or purchase as a gift for someone else. You can join in person or if abroad you can join us virtually. More to follow in January 2024!

We attended the [Irish in Britain](#) 50th Anniversary heritage project in Birmingham in November. We are delighted that the exhibition features our very own Ann Lawler, who returned to Ireland in 2020, having lived in England for over 30 years. Ann is also a member of 'Friends of Safe Home Ireland' and tells her story of "the miracle of moving home to Ireland". We look forward to this exhibition coming to Ireland in 2024.

In November we had a wonderful **Evening of Music & Song** with our Ambassador, [Seán Keane](#) in the [Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#), Dublin. Thank you to Fr. Alan Hilliard of the Archdiocese of Dublin for hosting and warmly welcoming us and thank you also to all who attended. We launched our first [Safe Home Ireland Calendar](#) at the Concert, which is available to purchase from our website (see pg 4. for more info).

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who supported our work and donated to Safe Home Ireland in 2023. We are also most thankful the [Irish Abroad Unit at The Department of Foreign Affairs](#) for selecting Safe Home Ireland to receive multi-annual funding this year. Your collective support enables us to continue to reach out to those abroad who need our support and to assist people who have made the journey back home. We wish you all a safe, healthy and peaceful holiday season; we know Christmas can be a challenging time for many people so look out for each other and check in on those who are alone or lonely at this time of the year.

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

Becoming an Irish Citizen via the Foreign Births Register (FBR)

If you were born in Ireland and you qualify to be an Irish citizen by birth, your child is automatically an Irish citizen by birth, even if the child was born in another country. You do not have to register their birth with the Foreign Births Register. You can proceed to apply for an Irish passport for your child.

If you were born outside Ireland, and you are not an Irish citizen by birth, you can become an Irish citizen if:

One of your grandparents was born in Ireland **OR**

One of your parents was an Irish citizen at the time of your birth but was not born in Ireland. Your parent may have claimed citizenship through the Foreign Births Register themselves, or become a citizen by naturalisation.

In both these cases, you become an Irish citizen by registering your birth with the Foreign Births Register. Once a person is entered onto the Foreign Births Register they are an Irish citizen and entitled to apply for an Irish passport.

FBR- cost, processing times and more information;

Application Costs; Adults €278 - Children €153 (includes postage fees)

Processing times; approx. 9 months

Find out more: FBR, Consular Section Tel (Dublin); Tel: + 353 1 568 3331

Web: <https://www.dfa.ie/citizenship/born-abroad/registering-a-foreign-birth/>

Safe Home Ireland Documentary

We are delighted to announce that Safe Home Ireland will feature in a documentary which will be aired on the Tommy Marren show on [Midwest Radio](#) from 9am on Sunday 31st December. **"It's Where the Heart Is"**. The documentary will feature stories from people happily settled back at home, it will also feature members of Friends of Safe Home Ireland, our Ambassador, Seán Keane and a recital by our Patron, the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins. The documentary was produced and will be presented by Peter Grogan, a Friend of Safe Home Ireland, and was edited by Gabor Zajzon. We are most thankful for those who contributed as well as the producer and editor! We hope you will tune in on 31st December too!

Frequently Asked Question: Irish Passports

Q. What is the difference between the Passport Book and the Passport Card?

A. The passport book comes in 2 sizes, a standard book (34 pages) and a large book (66 pages).

The large passport is recommended for frequent travellers to countries that require visas. The cost of a passport book is €75 and it is valid for 10 years.

The passport card is valid for 5 years travel **within the EU, EEA and Switzerland.** The card costs €35

For more information on the passport card/to apply, please see:
<https://www.dfa.ie/passportcard/>

Application type	Current average turnaround time	
Simple Adult Renewal	10 Working Days	
Complex Adult Renewal	15 Working Days	
Child Renewal	15 Working Days	
First Time Online Application (Adult and Child)	20 Working Days	
Passport Card Application	3-5 Working Days	
Post Passport (paper) Application	8 weeks	
Notes!		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">All turnaround times are the same regardless of the country of residence of the applicant.Turnaround times do not include postage delivery times.Turnaround times for applications which require supporting documents begin from the date the Passport Service receives the supporting documents.If you have submitted your documents and the Passport Service needs to request further supporting documents turnaround time can take longer.		

Coming Home or planning to Holiday in Ireland over Christmas?

Some, 'just in case', health related information

Access to public health care in Ireland: If you live in Ireland and you are **ordinarily resident** you can access in-patient and out-patient services in public hospitals.

You are considered ordinarily resident in Ireland if you satisfy the Health Service Executive (HSE) that you have been living in Ireland for at least a year or you intend to live here for at least one year.

To verify this, the HSE may require you to produce supporting documentary evidence.

Certain visitors to Ireland from countries covered under EU Regulations can also qualify for access to free healthcare, see [HERE](#) for more information.

UK residents holidaying in Ireland can also have access to emergency health care in Ireland, please see [HERE](#) for more information.

If you do not belong to any of the groups that can get free health services, you will have to pay the full cost of the bed, whether it is a public bed or a private bed. You also have to pay the consultant. If you are **coming to holiday in Ireland from outside of the EU**, it is important that you **check your travel insurance** to ensure that you have adequate cover should you fall ill while here for the holidays. Note! The Health Service Executive (HSE) has the discretion to reduce or waive the charges in cases of hardship.

For the relevant categories, as outlined above, there are **no hospital charges** for public inpatient care or day service care in Ireland. The removal of these charges was announced as part of Budget 2023 and came into effect on 17 April 2023.

However, you may be liable for charges if you attend an emergency department (A+E) of a public hospital. Medical card holders and certain other groups do not have to pay hospital charges.

Outpatient and Emergency Department (A+E) Charges

If you attend the out-patient department or emergency department (A+E) of a public hospital **without being referred by your GP or family doctor**, you may be charged a standard fee.

The fee is €100. This charge is not applicable if you are in one of the following groups:

- Medical card holders
- People admitted to hospital after attending the emergency department
- People receiving treatment for prescribed infectious diseases - including coronavirus
- Children, in respect of the following diseases and disabilities: "mental handicap, mental illness, phenylketonuria, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, hydrocephalus, haemophilia and cerebral palsy"
- People who are entitled to hospital services because of EU Regulations



Are you an Irish emigrant entrepreneur thinking of returning to Ireland to set up a business? Or have you recently returned?

The Back for Business programme may help you to start and grow your business! Back for Business is an initiative to foster and support entrepreneurial activity among returned Irish emigrants or those planning to return to live in Ireland in the near future. If you have lived abroad for at least a year and have returned to Ireland in the last three years, or for emigrants currently living abroad who are planning to return to Ireland in the near future see: <http://backforbusiness.com> for more information/application details. **Deadline for applications: 15th January 2024**

Supports and Information re Electricity Costs – Ireland

From earlier this month, the Irish Government began to roll out the first of the three Electricity Credits totalling €450 (inc VAT) announced in the 2024 budget. This Government Electricity Credit of €150 x 3 will be paid intermittently from December 2023 to March 2024. The credit is automatically available to all domestic electricity accounts and no action will be required from the customer.

As the chilly days and nights are well and truly upon us, did you know that energy providers in Ireland (possibly other countries too!) have measures in place to help protect vulnerable customers. These can include tailored payment plans for the winter months. Contact your own provider directly, see also; <https://www.cru.ie/consumer-information/your-rights/vulnerable-customers/>

Safe Home Ireland 2024 Calendar – An ideal gift for the New Year!

This year one of our fundraising projects was to produce a Safe Home Ireland Calendar. Why not treat yourself or a loved.

Calendars can be purchased online via our website [HERE](#)

Prices vary due to differing postal costs to various locations. If anyone wishes to order multiple copies, please contact our office directly and we will be happy to negotiate terms.



Safe Home Office Christmas Holiday Arrangements

The Safe Home office will be closed from 5pm on Wednesday 20th December and will re-open on Tuesday 2nd of January 2024, at 9am

*Nollaig Shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir
From the Staff, Board & Friends of Safe Home Ireland*

