

February 2024 – Issue 258

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## Safe Home office hours:

### Monday to Thursday:

9.00am to 5.00pm

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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 From Our CEO

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter! The daffodils are blooming here in Ireland, and the days are getting longer! What is there not to look forward to!

We are delighted to announce that we will be launching our new 5-year Strategic Plan (2023-2028) at a Seminar '*Social Inclusion in Action for Returning Irish - Priorities and Challenges*' in Galway on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March**. We are partnering with the University of Galway, [Institute of Lifecourse & Society \(ILAS\)](#), and there will be number of key-note speakers and panellists to include [Darragh O'Brien](#), TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Professor Kieran Walsh of ILAS and panellists from our close partners here in Ireland. Please contact our office if you would like more information and you can register on Eventbrite. The event will be hybrid so anyone abroad who wishes to attend please register on [Eventbrite](#) and we will send the event link to you.

We will be launching our National Famine Way Walk (165km) in EPIC Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April** [Sean Fleming](#) TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for International Development and Diaspora, will launch the walk. This walk, along the Royal Canal, will take place in May (11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>) and we really welcome your support. Registration is now opened on [Eventbrite](#). If you would like to join us (if only for a few km's or to wave us on our journey!), or perhaps do the walk virtually, please do get in touch.

Our Returned Emigrants Network (REN), which we set up as a pilot project in 2023 met again in Laois in February. The group are now keen to meet monthly to share common experiences as well as provide information and guidance to those still abroad to overcome some of the hurdles they experienced on their return. One of the REN members, Alan Reilly, will be speaking at our Strategic Plan launch/Seminar in Galway.

We would like to thank singer/songwriters, [Ger O Donnell](#) and [Trevor Sexton](#) for organising a fundraising concert earlier this month in *The Forge at The Players Club*, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare and for donating the proceeds to Safe Home. [Seán Keane](#), (our Ambassador) was a special guest at the concert and we are so thankful to Ger and Trevor for thinking of Safe Home and our work supporting Irish abroad and those who seek to return home.

We are excited that the [Irish in Britain](#) will be bringing their unique Exhibition to mark its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to [EPIC Irish Emigration Museum](#), Dublin. The exhibition '*Look Back to Look Forward; 50 years of the Irish in Britain*' is a captivating snapshot using oral history to portray the Irish community's resilience, diversity and enduring contribution to modern Britain. We were pleased to visit this exhibition in Birmingham in November 2023. Ann Lawler, a member of 'Friends of Safe Home' and who returned home during Covid, is featured in this exhibition. We will provide more details in our March Newsletter.

## Navigating the emotional highs and lows of returning to Ireland

The return and resettlement process can bring with it a whole range of emotions. Preparing for, acknowledging and addressing these feelings is crucial for a smoother transition and resettlement experience. Below is an outline of some of the key aspects in this area that have been highlighted by recent returnees and members of our recently formed Returned Emigrants Network;

**Identity and Belonging:** While many have come back to their roots/'home', some returned emigrants can struggle with questions of identity and belonging. The familiar surroundings may have changed, and people may find themselves in a state of some turmoil as they try to reconcile their memories of the past with the current reality. Accepting that both they and their homeland have evolved and changed is an essential step in the adjustment process.

**Loss and Gain:** The 'journey' of a returned emigrant can be a unique blend of loss and gain. While many may gain a renewed sense of cultural identity and family connection, they may also mourn the aspects of their life abroad that they left behind. Acknowledging that this is normal is crucial for emotional well-being.

**Emotional Rollercoaster:** Coping with change can be described as an emotional rollercoaster. Feelings of excitement, anxiety, joy, and sadness may come and go, all in a very short space of time. Recognising that these emotions are very common and are a natural part of the adjustment process can be helpful in coping with them more effectively.

### The good .....

**Homecoming Joy:** The initial return often brings a sense of joy and nostalgia, rekindling fond memories and reconnecting with family and friends.

**Cultural Pride:** Rediscovering cultural roots can foster a deep sense of pride and belonging, contributing to a positive emotional experience.

### The not so good .....

**Loneliness:** Rebuilding social connections can be challenging, leading to feelings of loneliness, especially if the social scene has changed significantly and family/friends have moved on in their lives and locations.

**Uncertainty:** The uncertainty of adapting to a new job market, lifestyle, or society changes here in Ireland can trigger anxiety and stress. Difficulties in trying to integrate experiences from abroad with perceived expectations at home can prove challenging for some.

### Coping Strategies:

**Support Networks:** Establishing or rekindling networks by connecting with family and friends for support (before you return if possible), joining local groups or volunteering within the community can also foster a sense of belonging in the initial settling in period.

**Mindfulness and Self-care:** Engaging in mindfulness, taking things one step at a time and embracing little changes, day by day, will help in the early days of resettlement. Not being too hard on yourself and recognising that the emotions being experienced are common and natural will help in navigating the highs and lows of the return experience.

**Professional Guidance:** If required, seeking counselling or therapy, can offer valuable insight and tools to cope with the challenges that the return journey brings. Some resources that may be helpful in this area, : [Helplink](#) Counselling Service; HSE [National Counselling Service](#) or Request a Social Prescribing referral.

## Social Prescribing in Ireland

**What is Social Prescribing?** Social prescribing recognises that health is heavily determined by social factors such as poverty, isolation and loneliness. Social prescribing offers GPs and other health professionals a means of referring people to a range of non-clinical community supports which can have significant benefits for their overall health and wellbeing.

### Social Prescribing has a number of key components:

- A referral from any healthcare professional/other professional or self-referral into the service
- An intervention between the service user and a social prescribing link worker. The intervention can take up to eight sessions
- Supporting the service user to access local voluntary community and social enterprise organisations or services through discussion and joint decision
- Measuring the impact of the social prescribing on the person, the wider community and the health service

### Who is social prescribing aimed at?

Social prescribing is for adults over the aged of 18 years, including (but not exclusively) people:

- with one or more long-term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated
- who are frequent GP/ED attendees and may benefit from other social supports outside of clinical services
- who have complex social needs which affect their health and wellbeing.

**How can I access a social prescribing service?** To make a referral or to self-refer to a service contact your local social prescribing service directly. See [HERE](#) for a list of social prescribing services and their contact details across the country.

## Supports for Drivers & Passengers with Disabilities

For information on the Disabled Passengers/Drivers Tax Relief Scheme, please see below;

<https://www.ddai.ie/disabled-drivers-passengers-tax-relief-scheme>

If you have any follow up or specific queries on this scheme or if you wish to find out more about applying for a Disabled Person's Parking Permit, please contact;

Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland, Ballindine, Claremorris, Co. Mayo, Ireland

For general queries, email: [info@ddai.ie](mailto:info@ddai.ie)

For Parking Permit queries, email: [parkingcard@ddai.ie](mailto:parkingcard@ddai.ie)

**Tel: 00 353 94 936 4054 Tel: 00353 94 936 4266**

### Note!

For information on using your UK 'Blue Badge' Permit in Ireland/EU, please see [HERE](#)

## **Council Housing Applications – Assessment of current income and allowable income levels**

In order to qualify for social housing supports in Ireland, applicants must be registered and approved on the relevant Council housing waiting list. As part of the income means testing process, applicants in receipt of social welfare are required to provide proof of their entitlement/payments for the 12 months preceding the date of their application.

For Safe Home housing applicants, it is therefore important to hang on to relevant documentary evidence of entitlement that you receive from your pension/benefit providers.

In the UK, the DWP tend to issue their annual statements in March/April. If you receive a statement for 2024, it would be no harm to forward this to our office and we can include this on your housing file.

Alternative requirements are in place for people who are still in employment or self-employed.

Councils throughout the country have 'caps' on the level of allowable annual income that social housing applicants can have - please see [HERE](#) for details on a county by county basis. The figures are NET. If income is over the allowable threshold, applications cannot be processed.

Additional information on applying for social housing, from within Ireland, can be found [HERE](#).

## **What is Choice Based Letting (CBL)?**

Local authorities can allocate some of their social housing using a system called Choice Based Letting (CBL). This is **done exclusively via an online system** where local authorities advertise some of their social housing vacancies and approved social housing applicants can express their interest in being considered for them.

Not all local authorities use the CBL system. However, it is becoming more commonplace. Some Councils will not include housing for older or disabled people under the CBL scheme, .

For Councils who do operate CBL, they will send their approved housing applicants instructions on how to go about registering on the online CBL platform. Available properties including a range of additional information can be viewed on the local authority's website. Interested applicants can follow the instructions on the Council CBL site for guidance on how to express an interest/bid on a property. **You can also contact the relevant [local authority](#) for more information.**

**Note!** If you are a Safe Home housing applicant who has been approved by a Council here that operates the CBL scheme, you may have received instructions on how to register /login to the system. If you are unsure what you need to do, please get in touch with us, contact your nearest Irish Welfare/Advice Centre or speak to a friend or family member who can assist you with the registration process.

**For more on the CBL Scheme, and general information on social housing allocations in Ireland, please see [HERE](#)**

## **And, finally!**

Our Ambassador, Seán Keane is inviting songwriters to take part in a song contest! The winning song will be decided in the Autumn. The plan is that it will be produced, recorded and released by Seán in October. Entries cost €30/song and any proceeds will both raise funds and awareness of our work. For more information/registration contact Seán at <https://www.seankeane.com/contact>



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme

Seán Keane is an Ambassador of the Emigrant Support Programme