



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

May 2024 – Issue 261

## CONTACT US:



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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 from our CEO

This month we completed the [National Famine Way](#) fundraising walk *The Long Road Home – Ag Siúl le Chéile (165km)* from [EPIC Irish Emigration Museum](#), Dublin to [Strokestown Park and National Famine Museum](#), Co. Roscommon. We were blessed with the weather again this year with blue skies and sunshine for all but one day! We would like to thank **everyone** who walked with us and supported us along the way; to [UTS Technologies](#), who sponsored our merchandise this year and to Sean Brogan who joined us the walk too; to our Ambassador, [Seán Keane](#), who also walked with us and entertained us on our arrival 'home' in Strokestown on the final day. We are indebted to our friends and partners at EPIC, Strokestown Park and The National Famine Way who supported and encouraged us in every way and also joined us on the walk. **Our GoFund Me platform is still open if you would like to support our work - see [HERE](#).**

We were delighted to cross paths with **Defence Force Veterans, Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann ONE Veterans Charity** on their Famine Way Walk, in Mullingar and would like to thank you to Peter Malone for joining us on our first day! The group are raising funds to help support other veterans who have become homeless or need professional services.

We also joined **The National Famine Way Commemorative Walk**, led by [Eamonn McKee, Ambassador of Ireland to Canada](#) and [Caroilín Callery, of the National Famine Way](#) on its final day from Maynooth to EPIC in Dublin where **The Global Irish Famine Way** was launched. Next month we will have a special feature on the development and plans for The Global Irish Famine Way.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May we attended the **Inter-departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad** chaired by [Sean Fleming TD](#), Minister of State for the Department of Foreign Affairs (with special responsibility for International Development and Diaspora). This is an important forum for us to highlight issues affecting those abroad who seek to return home and is a good opportunity for us to meet up with other networks and agencies.

We look forward to our upcoming **Returned Emigrants Network** meetings; on 13<sup>th</sup> June in Galway in The Maldron Hotel (Sandy Lane) and in Portlaoise, Co. Laois on 15<sup>th</sup> June in Portlaoise Library. Contact our office for further information.

Finally, we were delighted to partner with US based [Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres \(CIIC\)](#) on 28<sup>th</sup> May to explore the topic of **'Retiring to Ireland'**, as part of their seminar series for those contemplating **'Moving to Ireland'**. We are looking forward to partnering again on 25<sup>th</sup> June on **'Splitting Time between the US and Ireland'**.

## **'Abhaile' - Returning to Ireland virtual conference – 4<sup>th</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup> June**

Our colleagues at Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project have announced their first-ever [returning to Ireland virtual](#) conference which will run from 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of June.

Named for the Irish word for 'home,' Abhaile, aims to foster discussion, inform and support Irish emigrants considering/planning a return to Ireland, as well as facilitate learning and connections between [Irish organisations at home and abroad assisting returning Irish emigrants](#).

The Conference programme will include panel discussions with returnees and industry experts including the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs – Consular Services Unit, [Back for Business](#), the [Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas \(ICPO\)](#), and many more. Safe Home Ireland will be represented by CEO, Karen McHugh. The conference will also feature digital resources and virtual clinics with the Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support team in which they will answer individual questions about returning to Ireland.

**The conference is free and open to all, but advance registration is required.** Please see [HERE](#) for more information, including registering for various events.

## **Befriending Service – London Irish Centre**

If you are in the London area and think that you may benefit from some extra company or to meet for a chat, the London Irish Centre Befriending service may be of interest to you.

The Befriending Service offers a blended approach of contact. People are matched with volunteers, who provide weekly telephone calls and / or in-person community / home visits, depending on the person's individual circumstances.

For more information/ to get details of the eligibility criteria, and where relevant, the agency referral form, please see [HERE](#)

Or

Contact the Befriending Coordinator, Caroline Hanks

**Tel:** 02038153499                      **Mobile:** 07947108396

**Email;** [carolinehanks@londonirishcentre.org](mailto:carolinehanks@londonirishcentre.org)

**Note!** This service may also be of interest to someone who wishes to volunteer to become a befriender.

If you want to check if the Irish Centre where you live runs a similar service, please see contact information for Irish Support Services worldwide in the Global Irish Diaspora Directory, links available [HERE](#)



## FAQ; Working while in receipt of Social Welfare – Ireland

**Q.** I have returned to Ireland and am in receipt of a means tested Disability Allowance payment. I am capable of some level of part-work. Is this allowed and how would it affect my payment?

**A.** If you are getting [Disability Allowance](#) you can keep your full payment while earning up to €165 per week from employment or self-employment.

If you earn over €165 a week from work, half of your earnings between €165 and €375 are not included in the Disability Allowance means test.

Any earnings from work over €375 per week are assessed as income on a euro (€1) for euro (€1) basis, that is your Disability Allowance will be reduced by a €1 for every €1 earned from employment above €375 per week.

### **Retaining entitlement to Free Travel**

- If you are working and still receiving a Disability Allowance payment, you keep your entitlement to the Free Travel (Pass) Scheme.
- If you move off Disability Allowance, to a job, you keep your entitlement to the Free Travel (Pass) Scheme for five years.

**You can read more about conditions relating to employment while on social welfare payments [HERE](#)**

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### **Returning to Work after a period of illness/unemployment – Retaining your Medical Card**

If you are returning to work, you may be able to keep your card for **3 years**. This can be from when you start employment to when your benefits end. You must have been receiving a full social protection payment or government employment scheme payment for 12 consecutive months.

**You will need to submit a new medical card application stating you are applying on this basis.**

For detailed information on Medical Cards, please see [HERE](#)

**For information on Medical Cards, depending on various circumstances;** including discretionary and emergency medical cards, medical cards for 16 to 25 year olds, cards for over 70s and children with cancer, please see [HERE](#)



## **Making voluntary contributions to your UK State Pension**

If you live in Ireland but have spent time working in the UK, you might be missing out on some valuable National Insurance Contributions which could increase your UK State Pension entitlement in retirement.

### **Who can avail of this opportunity?**

In order to qualify for a full UK state pension, you must have paid National Insurance Contributions for 35 years. However, if you have less than 35 but more than 10 years National Insurance Contributions, you could be entitled to a partial UK state pension if one or more of the following apply to you;

- You were working and paid National Insurance contributions
- You were getting National Insurance credits
- You were paying voluntary National Insurance contributions

If you have gaps in your National Insurance Record (NIR) between April 2006 and April 2016 and do not meet the ten-year qualifying requirement you can 'buy back' these years to be eligible for a partial UK State Pension. 'Buy back' refers to making voluntary contributions for any years you were not working in the UK.

If you have already met the ten-year qualifying requirement and have gaps in your National Insurance Record (NIR) between April 2006 and April 2016, you can 'buy back' these years to enhance your UK State Pension entitlement.

**It's important to note this is a once-off opportunity which will expire after the 5th April 2025.** After this date you will only be able to buy back voluntary contributions from April 2016 onwards.

### **How to apply to buy back years?**

In order to avail of the option to buy back years, you will need to complete the Application to pay National Insurance contributions abroad form ([CF83 - Application to pay National Insurance contributions abroad \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)) and return this to HMRC in the UK directly. All details are available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and the return address is outlined on the application form.

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

