



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



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August 2024– Issue 264

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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

## CEO Welcome

Welcome to our August Newsletter! We hope you had a great summer wherever you are located and managed to have some rest, relaxation and some fun too! The season of summer never really arrived here in Ireland, apart from a few occasional sunny days! We wait in anticipation for a nice September!

Thank you to everyone who responded to our **Surveys**, which we cover later in the Newsletter. Some key challenges were identified but we also received some very positive feedback about the support received on return as well as ideas as to how we can improve on what we are doing already.

The **Returned Emigrants Network** held its fifth meeting in Portlaoise. Co. Laois on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August and we were delighted to welcome some more new members – from Dublin and Carlow as well as all others from Laois and surrounding counties! The Network will continue to meet bi-monthly, and we will be inviting a guest speaker to each meeting on a mutually agreed topic/area of interest. Seán Fleming, Minister of State Department of Foreign Affairs (International Development and Diaspora) will be launching the Network in the autumn. We will provide more information on the launch in our September e-bulletin and on social media.

I am delighted to announce that **I will be travelling to the USA** in September, as part of our Ambassador, Seán Keane's, tour of Connecticut, New York, Boston and Philadelphia – see [HERE](#) for details of Seán's concerts.

I will be visiting Irish Centres in New York, Boston and Philadelphia and meeting with Safe Home housing applicants as well as co-facilitating Moving/Returning to Ireland Information Clinics where possible. I would like to thank all the Centres for their support so far in facilitating our outreach trip. We have some other meetings planned but will provide feedback in our September e-bulletin! Please contact our office if you would like any more information or if you would like to book an appointment to meet with me (Karen McHugh) while in the US.

We are also pleased to reveal that a recently returned Co. Sligo man will be running the [Dublin Marathon](#) on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October in aid of Safe Home Ireland, with the training support of Boyle Athletic Club. Seán Ballantyne and his family returned from Luton, England to Co. Sligo earlier this year and we are so thankful that he selected Safe Home Ireland as his chosen Charity. We will be doing a feature on Séan in our September issue and will provide more info on how you can support/run with Séan!

Finally ... our Ambassador, **Seán Keane**, will be doing his annual concert in aid of Safe Home Ireland on **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December in Dublin**, in [City Quay Church](#). Tickets will be on sale in early September so watch this space!

*Until next month, Slán agus beannacht, from all the team at Safe Home Ireland*



## Safe Home Ireland Returnee and Housing Applicant Surveys & Feedback

Over recent weeks we have been compiling the replies received from surveys sent to Safe Home clients who returned home recently and also to our housing applicants, still resident abroad, waiting to return.

Firstly, we want to thank everyone who took the time to complete and return the surveys and to those who contacted us directly to provide feedback. The information gleaned from the surveys will help us to develop and improve our service into the future. We will be sharing information/findings in our newsletter over the coming months.

In this issue, we will focus on feedback from the **Returnee Surveys**. The information shared by those who have already gone through the process and moved home will be helpful to those who will be embarking on their return in the future.

The 3 key areas that returnees listed as most challenging were;

- **Banking** – opening a bank account on arrival here in Ireland AND trying to access statements and arrange transfer of funds from their banks abroad;
- **Dealing with 'red tape'**/paperwork when applying for social housing support, medical cards and social welfare;
- **Resettlement and reintegration** in the initial period after the move. This was particularly challenging for those who returned after many years of living abroad and where there was no longer a close family network here in Ireland.



### 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. For more information on this, please see [HERE](#).



The bigger Irish banks have **dedicated teams for dealing with queries from people who may be thinking of returning/moving to Ireland**. They can also advise on setting up an online bank account which may be of interest to some people. Should you wish to make further enquiries, click on links below;

**AIB**

**Bank of Ireland**

**Permanent TSB**

**NOTE!** Re arranging for the transfer of funds from abroad. This is normally done now via electronic funds transfer (once an account has been set up here in Ireland). However, for anyone still resident abroad who may be embarking on their return journey shortly, it is advisable to call to your current bank and be guided by their advice on the best way to arrange this.


A visit to your local bank will also be a good opportunity to request your most up to date bank statements (at least 3 months), so that you can have this information 'to hand' when you return home.



## **Resettlement and Reintegration on return to Ireland**

This area can often pose the most unexpected and often, most challenging. People are often aware of the financial and bureaucratic implications that moving home will entail but don't always expect or acknowledge the emotional impact of what leaving all that was familiar (sometimes over many many years) and starting afresh can have.

For those who are lucky enough to have good family/friendship networks here in Ireland, the readjustment *can be* somewhat easier. The advice from those who have gone through the process already is;

- Give yourself time, working through things on a day to day and week to week basis, rather than expecting to settle straight away;
  - Keep channels of communication open and honest with your family network
  - Accept that you are not alone in feeling the way that you do – it is very common;
  - Reach out to social clubs and other support services in your local area – try to get involved in community events or volunteering, even if only small steps at a time;
  - If you are really struggling, speak to your G.P, seek counselling/support from professional services;
  - Join Safe Home Ireland Returned Emigrants Network – meetings are held in-person in Laois but there is the option to join online. Contact our office for more info if you are interested.
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## Getting back into 'the system' in Ireland and dealing with 'red tape'

As mentioned above, having easy access to your most recent bank statements from abroad as well as any other proof of income, and up to date pension & benefit information will be key to faster turn-around times when it comes to applying for benefits, entitlements & healthcare in Ireland.

For those who are still abroad and may need assistance in accessing their most up to date pension/benefit/social security statements, linking in with staff at the nearest Irish Welfare & Advice Centre may prove helpful. **Note!** Please [contact our office](#) if you are unsure of where your nearest Irish Centre is located.

For those who have recently returned to Ireland and are currently struggling with all of the applications/paperwork, please feel free to [contact us here at Safe Home](#) and we can try to arrange for an outreach officer to link in with you directly to assist with all of that.

Alternatively, Citizens Information Centres around the country can also be a useful source of advice and guidance. Details of CICs on a county by county basis can be found [HERE](#)



## For Safe Home Housing Applicants – Keeping your Council housing application 'live'

If you are a Safe Home client, who we have already assisted in getting approved on the Council housing waiting list in the area you wish to return to, **it is very important** that you engage/respond to the Council if they contact you seeking additional or updated information.

Sometimes applicants may ignore correspondence from the Council on the basis that they previously provided a range of information with their initial housing application. HOWEVER, Councils carry out annual reviews of their housing lists in order to ensure they are accurate and up to date and often request additional information as part of that process.

If you have recently had any contact from the Council and are unsure what you need to provide or having difficulties accessing or returning documentation, [please do get in touch with us](#) here at Safe Home [as soon as possible](#).

**Keeping your Council housing 'live' and active is necessary in order to qualify for any form of social housing support in Ireland in the future.**





## The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme provides financial payments and an enhanced medical card or health support payment to defined groups in acknowledgement of circumstances experienced while resident in Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. [Applications for the payment scheme are currently open.](#)

You can find more information via the range of Frequently Asked Questions & replies [HERE](#)

If you are abroad and require support and guidance around the application process, link in with your nearest Irish Centre.

**If you may know someone, particularly those living abroad who may qualify but may not be aware of this scheme, please spread the word**

