

Greetings,

We had the great moment of national euphoria when Robbie Brady scored that magnificent goal beating Italy, and afterwards a courageous showing against France by the Irish Republic soccer team.

But around then we had the terrible news about Brexit. I don't think anyone could believe the shocking news that the UK is set to leave the EU in two years time. We went to bed last week confident it wouldn't happen, yet the very next day brought the ominous news that our largest trading partner was to leave the premium EU free market. This referendum was all about limiting the free movement of people. Despite reassurances to the contrary it is impossible to believe that the free movement of goods, services and capital across the EU will not be affected as well. It is true that we have a common travel area between us and the UK since 1922 which means we have no passport controls, but can this situation of no borders be sustained in the light of the UK exit?

Government reassure us that there is time to work an arrangement which will lessen the effects of the Brexit when it does happen, but only time will tell how our country will fare. Negotiation to ensure we keep as much of the status quo such as the common travel area with the minimum of borders and tariffs will be crucial. The fall of Irish shares and the fall of sterling by 5% against the Euro in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit decision is the reality of what we are up against. If our goods are costing more, then, everything being equal, it follows we will sell less of them than we sold before. Over 40% of our overseas visitors come from Britain and it will be a battle to keep them coming in the same numbers if it costs visitors even more to come here. Perhaps we will need to be more competitive by giving greater value to our visitors, and to be more imaginative by providing novel schemes to entice them here rather than have them go elsewhere. I can suggest one such scheme which would certainly boost tourism in this regard.

I have long fought for free travel for our older emigrants when they return to their native land on their holidays. I did this both as a former Independent T.D. and as a member of the British Irish Parliamentary Body. While it is true to say I made some progress, arguing the case on their behalf as the payment of an honourable debt owed to our long term emigrants in justice, and the fact that a common travel area already existed between our two countries, the official reply I always got from the Irish and UK authorities was against granting a blanket free travel concession to our older emigrants. Their argument was simple. It would discriminate against those older citizens who were resident in other EU countries. Thanks to Brexit that argument will no longer apply if indeed the UK does leave the EU.

Barring another referendum on Brexit giving the opposite result, I would urge we at least give free travel to our own long term emigrants, and in the interest of tourism, work to extend it further to include all older people resident in the UK who are not Irish citizens, but would like to visit our country on their holidays. This would be great for Anglo-Irish tourism.

So long for now,

Dr Jerry Cowley



Emigrant Support Service

CONTACT US:

Safe Home Ireland
St Brendan's Village
Mulranny, Westport
Co. Mayo, Ireland.

Tel: 098 36036

(from Ireland)

00 353 98 36036 (UK)

0113 53 98 36036 (USA)

Fax: 098 36037

Website:

www.safehomeireland.com

Email:

info@safehomeireland.com



Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:
9am–5pm

Friday: 9am–4pm

Examples of Housing Association schemes throughout the country

Last month in response to some queries raised in our recent Client Surveys, we gave some general information on the types of properties that Safe Home clients may have access to, together with an outline of the housing application process.

This month, we feature some examples of various housing schemes throughout the country which we hope will be a useful guide in demonstrating the differing styles and designs of properties that exist.

It is worth noting that in schemes designated for older people that are currently fully occupied, the management usually cannot give a time-frame of when a vacancy may arise.



Ballymacarbry Voluntary Housing

Waterford

Gowran
Voluntary
Housing
Co. Kilkenny



Respond! Housing Association, Tallaght, Dublin

Cluid Housing
Association
Clifden
Co. Galway



Ballyhooly Sheltered Housing, Co. Cork



Mulranny Day Centre Housing, Co. Mayo

Housing Opportunity: Muff, Co. Donegal

Muff Voluntary Housing has a number of properties available in their scheme. While preference will be given to people originally from Donegal or those with strong family connections in the area, they will also consider applicants from other counties.

Muff is a small village situated on the Inishowen peninsula. It is around six miles from Derry and twenty four miles from Letterkenny

For more information on the scheme and the application process, please contact the Safe Home Office.



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: I suffer from Coeliac Disease. Can you tell me if gluten-free products are covered by the Medical Card in Ireland? If not, is there any other assistance or subsidy to assist with the additional costs involved?

A: Gluten-free products ceased to be covered by the Medical Card system in 2012. A Diet Supplement, formerly available via the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme, was also discontinued for new applicants in 2014.

However, for those who are employed as PAYE workers, they may qualify for tax relief in relation to the purchase of gluten-free foods.

For more information, please see:

www.revenue.ie

www.coeliac-ireland.com

Back-up paperwork, forms, forms and more forms!

Something that many Safe Home housing applicants have raised with us is their frustration at the level of paperwork involved in the social housing application process in Ireland.

Certainly, there is an awful lot of 'red tape' involved. From Council application forms to Police Checks to Land Registry searches and affidavits, the list can seem never ending. However, we would urge applicants not to be put off by all of this. It is important to ensure that all of the required paperwork is in place because, when it comes to the allocation of properties, applicants who have supplied all the required back up documentation will be considered ahead of those who have not.

We understand that paperwork can be stressful and daunting for many people. For that reason, where possible, we try to complete the various additional forms in so far as we can, from information already provided by applicants. We then send the part-completed forms to applicants with 'sticky notes' to indicate where more information or signatures may be required. It is not as helpful as being able to assist someone in person but at least it's a start.

If you need help with paperwork, ask a friend or family member for support, drop into your nearest Irish welfare or advice Centre or ring us here at Safe Home, we can help with queries over the phone. The important thing to remember is, there is no rush, take it all a step at a time and don't 'throw in the towel'..... it will all be worth it in the end!

Cat Maloan!

Joan, who returned to live in Co. Mayo recently, contacted us to enquire if her cats could travel with her on Irish Rail. She wanted to visit family in Dublin but didn't want to leave her beloved cats home alone, "especially Harry, he's very possessive". The answer is yes, **if** they are in closed cat box with litter tray. The other good news is that cats have Free Travel and they don't even have to be pensioners to qualify! For more detailed information, contact Irish Rail Customer Service line: (00 353) 1 836 6222

Introduction of Universal Credit in the UK

Universal Credit is being introduced to support people who are on low income or out of work. The aim of this payment is to ensure that people will be better off in work than on benefits.

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages. It is available to single people throughout the UK. For couples and families, it is only available in some areas for now.

Once fully 'up and running', Universal Credit will replace the following:

- Income –based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income- related Employment & Support Allowance
- Income support
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Payments: Universal Credit will be paid monthly directly into the bank account nominated by the applicant/s. If part of a couple, living in the same household and both claiming Universal Credit, you will receive one monthly payment.

How to claim: Universal Credit is usually claimed online. To begin the process, please see:

www.gov.uk/universalcredit

Support is available to help with the online application process. Your local Job Centre can provide access to the internet or provide information on places where you can use the internet for free. If you cannot access the internet, face to face and telephone support will be available. Contact your Job Centre. Alternatively contact the nearest Irish welfare/advice centre for assistance.

Safe Home is supported by the Emigrant Support Programme via:



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