



Emigrant Support Service

## From the Chairman's Desk

During our recent client survey we were delighted to receive lots of valuable feedback, including a common query from a number of respondents as to how and why the Safe Home Programme was first established.

Those of you who have read "*Coming Home*," will remember the wonderful stories written by a number of our Safe Home returnees. In the introduction to that book I spoke of how Safe Home first came about to fulfil a need that existed to repatriate those of our older Irish long term emigrants who longed to return to the land of their birth, but were unable to do so.

I became aware of this forgotten group of older Irish people at the time I was involved in setting up voluntary social housing in Mulranny. I began to receive enquiries from abroad and from long term emigrants in the UK in particular. All of them had toiled overseas to keep the home fires burning, as officially documented through the Emigrant's Remittances. Now in their autumn years, in their efforts to return home, they had each received replies from the various Irish local authorities stating that as they were residing in another jurisdiction, the authorities here would take no responsibility to house them.

I remember one of the first to return to our St. Brendan's Village in Mulranny was an elderly gentleman who came from near to this area. He was terminally ill after forty years of hard labour in England. He had lost all hope of returning when his family approached me. It is no exaggeration to say that he had a smile on his face from the moment he arrived back in Mayo to the day he died a few short months later. He died happy. He had got his wish to return home.

Safe Home was set up officially in 2002 to help those fine people who didn't forget us when they had every reason to do so. These economic migrants were failed by our country, but Safe Home with the support of Government ensured that there would be some pay-back of an honourable debt owed to them, not in charity, but in justice. The rest is history as almost two thousand long term emigrants have been assisted to return since the millennium by Safe Home. Many returned to secure voluntary social housing in the bosom of a community near to where they originally came from, through the special amendment to the Capital Assistance Scheme that Safe Home negotiated with Government.

This is all possible thanks to the support we receive especially from the Emigrant Support Programme (Dept. of Foreign Affairs) and the Irish Voluntary Housing Associations and our many friends and supporters such as the ICSH at home and the Irish Welfare and Information Centres abroad.

With the support of our voluntary board of directors, our excellent staff under CEO Karen, Mary Ann, Brenda and Noreen all continue to give the very best and necessary advice to ensure coming home is the right thing to do in any particular circumstance, and if so, to also ensure as much as is possible that meticulous preparations guarantee a safe landing and a happy ending to every life story. And all of this is done from a small portakabin in rural Mayo!

So long for now,

**Dr Jerry Cowley - Chairman**

### CONTACT US:

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### Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:  
9am-5pm

Friday: 9am-4pm

## Are you a Carer, living in the UK and under State Pension age? This could be for you!

You could get Carer's Credit if you're caring for someone for at least 20 hours a week.

Carer's Credit is a National Insurance credit that helps with gaps in your National Insurance record. Your State Pension is based on your National Insurance record.

Your income, savings or investments won't affect your eligibility for Carer's Credit.

If you are eligible for Carer's Credit, you can get credits to help fill gaps in your National Insurance record.

This means you can take on caring responsibilities without affecting your ability to qualify for the State Pension.

### Eligibility

To get Carer's Credit you must be:

- aged 16 or over
- under State Pension age
- looking after one or more people for at least 20 hours a week

The person you're looking after must get one of the following:

- Disability Living Allowance care component at the middle or highest rate
- Attendance Allowance
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment - daily living component, at the standard or enhanced rate
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

If the person you are caring for doesn't get one of these benefits, you may still be able to get Carer's Credit. When you apply, fill in the 'Care Certificate' part of the application form and get a health or social care professional to sign it.

Carers who don't qualify for Carer's Allowance may qualify for Carer's Credit.

### You don't need to apply for Carer's Credit if you:

- Get Carer's Allowance - you'll automatically get credits
- Get Child Benefit for a child under the age of 12 - you'll automatically get credits
- Are a foster carer - you can apply for National Insurance credits instead

You can download the Carer's Credit claim form from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) (input Carer's Credit in the search box on the site)

You can also get the form by contacting the Carer's Allowance Unit (below).

The form includes a Care Certificate - you will need to ask a health or social care professional to sign it for you.

### Where to send your form

Carer's Allowance Unit  
Mail Handling Site A  
Wolverhampton  
WV98 2AB

**Carer's Allowance Unit**  
Telephone: 0345 608 4321

Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 5pm  
Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete and return our Client Satisfaction Surveys. It was great to have the feedback from our clients who have already moved back to Ireland as well as those still living abroad, waiting to make that move. Your input will be helpful to us in improving and developing our services into the future. We will be reporting on some of the main findings from the surveys over the coming months as well as answering some of the queries raised.

### **This month, we will address questions raised about the types of properties available to qualifying Safe Home housing applicants.**

The first thing to note is that Safe Home does not manage or build any properties of our own. We operate by trying to match our applicants up with Housing Association schemes back in their native areas.

**Note!** Not all housing bodies will consider applications from returning emigrants. Some schemes are tied into conditions depending on the funding that was applied for to build the properties. This can mean that they may only consider applicants already living in the area that have been processed and approved on to the relevant Council housing list.

**Types and size of accommodation:** The properties that we generally have access to are primarily, housing schemes developed for older people. We do not have access to 'family type' accommodation. The size of the properties available are one and two bedroom units. Generally, preference will be given to couples for the two bedroom properties. In towns and cities, the properties will normally be flats/apartments, whereas in other locations, the property types could be quite mixed; some little bungalows, some flats and some houses.

Although sometimes described as 'Sheltered Housing', the Housing Association schemes that we deal with generally do not offer a high level of day to day support. Some will have limited on-site supports such as access to meals on wheels or part-time wardens, while others simply offer a housing option specifically for older people who can live independently with little/no support.

### **How the Safe Home housing application process works:**

As suitable vacancies arise, we will circulate housing fact sheets to qualifying applicants. These fact sheets will contain pictures of the scheme, an outline of supports available (if any) and details of proximity to transport links, shops and local services.

If an applicant expresses an interest in being considered for the particular vacancy, we then submit their details to the relevant Housing Association for review. It is the Housing Association (in consultation with the relevant Council) who will make the final decision on who to short-list, invite to interview and ultimately allocate the property to.

Safe Home has no role in this decision making process or in the day to day administration or management of the schemes.

Generally, housing bodies tend to give preference to tenants originally from the area where the scheme is located or to those with strong family connections in the area.

However, from time to time, we are notified of more 'flexible options' and we advertise these here in the Newsletter. If you think this may be of interest to you, keep an eye out for those.

**Larry** (Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan) got in touch with us to enquire if Fuel Allowance in Ireland is means tested: **Yes - Fuel Allowance is a means-tested payment.**

If you are in receipt of a non-contributory payment (E.G State Pension Non-Contributory/ Disability Allowance), you are accepted as satisfying the means test. The Fuel Allowance means test is linked to the maximum rate of the State Pension (Contributory). You can have a combined weekly income of €100 above the maximum State Pension (Contributory) €233.30, for your situation and still be eligible for a Fuel Allowance. This means that you can have capital/savings, providing they are less than €58,000, and be eligible for a Fuel Allowance.

Fuel Allowance is paid for 26 weeks of the year, from October – April annually at a rate of €22.50 per week. **Note!** Only one Fuel Allowance payment will be paid per household

## Getting a pension or benefit from another country

If you are getting a pension/benefit or equivalent payment from a country covered by EU Regulations or a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement (provided there is an equivalent Irish payment), you may qualify for a Fuel Allowance provided you satisfy the qualifying conditions mentioned above and you are:

- Resident in Ireland **And** aged 66 or over
- OR**
- Under 66 **and** getting an Invalidity Pension (for over 12 months), a Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension or an equivalent payment from another country.

Thanks to **Yvonne (West London)** for contacting us recently with some feedback on her trip to Dublin during some of the 1916 commemorative celebrations

"I have just returned from a visit to my home city of Dublin. There are of course many projects & exhibitions connected to the 2016 celebrations going on. One of the most informative and interesting is the '*1916 Rising Tour*', a 2 hour coach trip to all the relevant sights connected with the rebellion. The commentary was outstanding. We were also shown photos of Dublin at the time.

For anyone visiting Ireland with an interest in its history, this is a wonderful way to follow in the footsteps of those who gave their lives for the Republic of Ireland".

Safe Home is supported by the Emigrant Support Programme via:



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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND