



Emigrant Support Service



ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings,

When I hear some people throwing their hands up in the air and lamenting that the people of the USA actually voted Donald Trump for their President, and the citizens of the UK voted for Brexit, I wonder if maybe in light of political corruption and other scandals, people simply wanted to change the status quo. There seems to be a general loss of confidence in politicians and long established institutions with no one believing politicians or the media any longer. No one seems to really know how things will work out. We can but wait and see!

In all of this it's still nice to note that some things never change. Like Christmas, man's ingenuity in discovering great things that could help his fellow man, still prevails. Two examples follow; I watched a programme recently about the non availability of the wonder drug Manika for the genetic disease Cystic Fibrosis which is so prevalent in Ireland. Manika seems to work for 10% of such cases and actually prolong life expectancy but it is not generally available because it costs 3,000 euro a week while the pharmaceutical company that supplies it makes billions from it.

Sadly, we have a most unequal world. I was thinking this too as I looked at another TV programme during the week. It followed a Dublin street cleaner who changed places with a street cleaner in Manila in the Philippines. What a contrast with the near horizon in the slums where so many poor people lived in the shadow of opulent buildings of the rich. The homes no doubt contained all of the trappings of luxury that they, like many of us in here in the western world, take for granted. The chasm is stark, where some have everything and others have nothing. Seeing people in the Manila slums washing the fast food scraps, discarded in the trash, in dirty water and then deep frying it would I'm sure make any health inspector squirm, but this was an ingenious way not dying from malnutrition or food poisoning. Frying the bugs to death and having the means to keep body and bone together couldn't be faulted.

Despite all of this, as far as I could tell and from the comments of the Dublin street cleaner in Manila, people there seemed very happy and content to be just alive. It's a timely reminder maybe that having worldly possessions are not what it should be about, and don't necessarily equate with happiness. It's easy to get caught up in the spend fest frenzy of Christmas. Let's take a lesson from Manila and think of those less well off this Christmas, and make contact with someone whom we have not been in touch with for a while and maybe would love to hear from us. Don't forget that elderly neighbour, those in poor health and those who are homeless or in housing need at this time of year. Happy Christmas from all of us at Safe Home Ireland and may the New Year bring every good health to you and yours. *Dr. Jerry Cowley - Chairman*

CONTACT US:

Safe Home Ireland
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(from Ireland)

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Website:

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Email:

info@safehomeireland.com



Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:
9am–5pm

Friday: 9am–4pm

**Thinking of returning
or moving to Ireland?**

Get in touch

Sharing the love – a little flavour of the feedback about our Newsletter

"Many thanks for your email about your new style, new format newsletter - I think it's great, but then I liked your old style newsletter too! It's got lots of information and news and your summary in the email grabs your attention straight away. I copy your newsletters every month and put them in an information folder which our Club Eireann members can browse through when they are in our Centre. Often, someone asks for a copy to take home and I know they have been known to be posted to America and Australia!

I often refer to back issues of your newsletter for information too, especially if someone is interested in returning to Ireland. An electronic copy is easier to store, readily available to print off as needed and takes up no room in the filing cabinet. Please keep up the good work and keep us up to date with what is going on - I certainly appreciate it".

Sandwell Irish Society

We were delighted to receive the first e-newsletter from the **Irish Australian Support and Resource Bureau (IASRB)** recently.

The Bureau is based at: 440a High Street, Northcote, Vic 3070

Contact: via email: iasrb@iinet.net.au or **phone:** (03) 9482 3865

IASRB also manages an emergency support line (available on a 24 hour, seven day a week basis) on **0407 317 539**

Some information from IASRB on the services that they provide:

"We are here to serve all Irish Australians - we are non-political, non- sectarian and non-judgemental. The Bureau has a busy schedule of events including groups for young mums and their partners, lunches for our seniors, card games and 'the craic'. For those in need, the Bureau provides visits to homes, hospitals, hostels and prisons. The staff can help with advice on a range of issues such as, employment, immigration, health care and funerals. You will be treated with compassion and respect and confidentiality is guaranteed".

The IASRB will be closed for the Christmas holidays from end of business on Friday 16th of December and we will reopen on Monday 9th of January 2017.

However, an emergency line will continue to be managed during the holiday period on 0417 299 242.

Life after Brexit.....Frequently Asked Question

I am a pensioner living in Ireland. I am in receipt of a part UK State Pension which is 'topped up' with a payment via Irish State Pension Non Contributory. The recent drop in the value of sterling has resulted in a drop in my weekly income.

Q. Can the Irish Pension office alter their currency conversion rates so that my claim can be re-assessed?

A. It would not be 'workable' for the Pension services to alter/amend their currency rates based on the day to day fluctuations. Instead, the Department of Social Protection uses the conversion mechanism provided for under Article 107 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 574/72 on Social Security for Migrant Workers.

Under this mechanism, the conversion rate used for means testing purposes is derived from the average of the daily exchange rates in the first month of a quarter. This rate is then used in all conversions during the course of the succeeding quarter. Alternatively, the conversion rate applicable to the next succeeding quarter is used if it is more beneficial to the customer.

However, Pensioners who had their Irish Non Contributory 'top up' set when sterling rates were much higher and are now experiencing a drop in their income can contact the Department of Social Protection for a review of their current situation.

Contact: Department of Social Protection: Social Welfare Services, College Road, Sligo, Ireland
Tel: **(071) 915 7100** Locall: **1890 500 000**

Or you can send a secure email via the Department website enquiry form on: **www.welfare.ie**

Please note! A review is only likely to be carried if your current **total** pension (UK + Irish Non Contributory) comes in **at less** than the relevant rates for your age and circumstances, see examples of current maximum weekly rates below;

Personal rate age 66 - 80 yrs =	€222 per week
Personal rate for over those aged 80yrs+ =	€232 per week
Additional rate for Qualified Adult (e.g spouse/partner) =	€146.70 per week

Whoops a daisy!

In our October Newsletter, we reported that the improvements in the **Treatment Benefit Scheme (optical and dental treatment)** announced in the Budget were due to come into effect from October 2016. This information was incorrect as the changes are not actually due to come into place until **October 2017**. Sincere apologies to anyone who rushed out to the dentist to avail of their free annual scale and polish!

We appreciate a Department of Social Protection email bringing this error to our attention. Mind you, it was interesting to note an extra little bit of information in their email to alert us that "the other details about rates may be modified slightly between now and then". I suppose we shall have to watch this space (of course, we will be watching with our old reading glasses, until after October 2017, at least!)

Housing Opportunities

Tooreen Voluntary Housing (close to Ballyhaunis and Knock) in **Co. Mayo** has a 2 bedroom property available. This is a rural location so it is likely to be most suitable for people who can drive.



St. Dominick's Housing Association in Newport, Co. Mayo has a one bedroom newly refurbished and part-furnished bungalow available.



In both cases, vacancies **are only open** to applicants who have been registered and approved by Mayo County Council.

Habinteg Housing Association in **Lifford, Co. Donegal** has the following vacancies; a one bedroom apartment and a two bedroom bungalow. Preference will be given to people originally from Donegal, but they will also consider applicants from other counties. **Note!** Applicants who are not registered and approved by Donegal county Council will pay full rent from their own means.

Please contact the Safe Home office for additional information on these schemes.

Returning to Ireland Survey – Have you returned to Ireland in the last 2 years?

By sharing your experience in the Crosscare Migrant Project Survey, you can help others who may be thinking of embarking on the same journey. The survey is available online via: **www.surveymonkey.com/r/returnedirish**

For anyone who does not have access to the internet, Crosscare will be happy to post out a hard copy of the survey for completion. Contact Crosscare with your address:

Tel: **00353 1 8732844** or write to: Crosscare Migrant Project, 1 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1

Alternatively, get in touch with us here at Safe Home and we can post you out the survey to you.

Healthcare: making enquiries to the Health Service Executive (HSE) Information line

The HSE in Ireland operate an information line that can be accessed on a low-call number within Ireland: **1850 24 1850**
However, this number is only charged at low-call rates if the call is being made from a landline telephone.
The 1850 number can end up being quite expensive if calling from a mobile.
This is particularly true as there can often be waiting periods before a call is answered

Customers using mobile phones are advised to use the following contact numbers instead of the 1850 number:

For general HSE related enquiries: 041 6850 300*

For Medical Card enquiries: 051 595129*

*Both of these numbers can be accessed from abroad by using the relevant international dialling codes

Alternatively, queries can be emailed to: infoline1@hse.ie
See **www.hse.ie** for more information

Who do you think you are?

From September 2016 finding out all about your roots has been made a little easier.

In September, a further 29,738 Church records of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials were added to the website **www.irishgenealogy.ie**

These records include 17,667 Roman Catholic Church records from Bandon (Cork and Ross RC), 11,411 Roman Catholic Church Records from Iveleary (Cork and Ross RC) and 660 Church of Ireland Records from St. Michaels (Dublin COI).

Access to the records is free and all of them come with an accompanying image.

The Irish Elderly Advice Network in London provides a free confidential advice service and also offers a service where they can accompany clients to appeal tribunals.

They operate drop-in Outreach offices in **Kilburn** each Wednesday (10am -1pm) and every Thursday in **East London** Earlham Grove E7 (10.30am -1pm). A home visiting service can be made available for anyone who may be unable to come to their offices in person.

For more information on all of the above, contact the Elderly Advice Network office in London on: 0207 428 0471.

The office will close for Christmas at 5pm on 23rd December and will re-open at 10am on 5th January 2017.

Reaching out

Christmas is often depicted as a season of great joy and happiness, of spending time and sharing presents with family and friends and generally fun and positive times. However, for many this is not the case and Christmas can be a sad and lonely time. It can be particularly difficult for those who may have lost a loved one during the year or in households where there are worries about a family member or an illness.

For many Irish abroad it can be an exciting time and Christmas has taken on a whole new meaning. For others and particularly for those who are undocumented and are unable to travel home, for those who are in prison, are homeless, are estranged from family and those who are alone, Christmas can be a difficult season.

There is an opportunity to highlight the true meaning of Christmas, of compassion, of kindness, of giving and to reach out to others. Remember your family, neighbours and friends during the holiday season and if you need to seek some support for yourself or a loved one, reach out and ask.

Mind Yourself – London



Mind Yourself is a charity that supports Irish people in London who want to improve or maintain their physical or mental health. They do this by providing health related **one-to-one support** (information, advice and advocacy), **accompaniment to health related appointments**, and **group activities**. You can refer yourself or you can refer a friend, family member or a client if you are professional. If you referring someone else, make sure that you have their consent to do so.

Home Visits: If you live in the boroughs of Islington, Hackney, Camden, Brent, Haringey, Westminster or Kensington and Chelsea, Mind Yourself can arrange a home visit to help you to decide what you can do to improve your health. If you live outside these boroughs, you can call in person to their offices or contact them by phone or email (details below).

Mind yourself, The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, London N7 6QT

Tel: 020 7697 4753 or **email: info@mind-yourself.org.uk**

Christmas Holiday Arrangements: Closed from 4pm on 22nd December and re-opens at 10am on the 3rd of January.

Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) - Ireland

This service is for people with mild to moderate psychological difficulties. It is a short-term counselling service that provides up to 8 counselling sessions with a professionally qualified and accredited Counsellor/Therapist. The CIPC service is for medical card holders, who are 18 years of age or over, and who want help with psychological problems that are appropriate for time limited counselling in primary care. The service is suitable for people who are experiencing certain difficulties such as:

- Depression, anxiety, panic reactions, relationship problems, loss issues, stress

For more information on this service, contact your local GP practice/ primary care team

Cabhrú is a free online counselling service for Irish emigrants living in Australia

Cabhrú (meaning help or support in Irish) is operated by **Helplink.ie**, a national non-profit organisation which has been providing phone and online counselling to clients in **Ireland** for the past five years. The service for Australia was launched in September 2016 with the assistance of the Emigrant Support Programme. Clients are to avail of up to six free appointments over a free-to-use video platform called VSEE (like Skype); their appointment will be with a qualified, insured, Garda vetted Irish counsellor.

Cabhrú can assist you if you are dealing with any of the following: Feeling unhappy, feeling low, being constantly worried, not sleeping, feeling stressed out and/or anxious, behaviour problems, anger issues, feeling sad, difficulty dealing with a death, being bullied/cyber bullied, feeling confused, drinking too much, addiction problems, problems with eating, not feeling good about yourself or lacking in confidence.

How to apply? If you hold an Irish passport and are living in Australia you are eligible for an appointment. To get an appointment please use the contact form online: <http://www.helplink.ie/cabhru/contact/> or email helplinksupport@helplink.ie with the word **Cabhrú** in the subject line.

Administration staff will then ask you a couple of questions in return about where you are located and which day/time suits you best. You will then receive an email providing you with all the details you need to know about how to start your first appointment.

Helplink.ie aims to expand the Cabhrú service to other countries with significant Irish populations, such as Canada, the US and United Arab Emirates in the future.

Level of service over the Christmas holidays: The service is closed from Christmas Eve (24th/Dec/2016) until the 4th of January 2017. **However, appointments are available for the 28th and 29th of December 2016.**

Irish advice and support services worldwide:

If you are an Irish citizen away from home or have friends and family abroad who run into difficulties or could do with some advice, information and/or support, there is help out there.

There are many welfare services funded through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Emigrant Support Programme. Details of funded organisations throughout the world can be found via: www.dfa.ie/global-irish/

Or contact the Dept. of Foreign Affairs: Tel: 01 4082000 /00353 14082000

Safe Home Ireland is supported by the Emigrant Support Programme via:



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA NA HÉIREANN
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND



Nollaig Shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir

From Safe Home Ireland Board members and staff



Safe Home Board Members

Back L-R: Michael Joe Ginnelly, Mary Wood, Teresa Gallagher, Teresa Cowley. **Front seated:** Teresa Hanley & Dr. Jerry Cowley



Safe Home Staff Members

L-R: Mary Ann Fadian, Noreen Mulrine, Karen McHugh & Brenda Fleming

Our work during 2016

2016 has been another busy and successful year for us all at Safe Home Ireland and as the year draws to a close we would like to share just a few of our highlights and outcomes.

We created our new **logo**, launched our new look **website**, redesigned our **Newsletter** and devised a wide range of new **leaflets** and publicity materials

We responded to **639 new enquiries** from all around the globe

We facilitated **26 new referrals to Local Authority** housing waiting lists in Ireland

We carried out **33 home visits** to Safe Home applicants throughout the **UK** and carried out **64 outreach visits** to Safe Home returnees throughout **Ireland**

Accommodation was secured by 53 people, bringing the total number of people assisted in their return home, to **1907**, since our inception in 2000.

We look forward with anticipation to another successful year in 2017, working in cooperation with Irish welfare agencies at home and abroad to highlight the issues and needs of all Irish emigrants. We will continue to do our very best in assisting our **242 Safe Home housing applicants** to realise their dream of returning home permanently.

Safe Home Christmas Holiday Arrangements

The Safe Home office will be closed from 5pm on Thursday 22nd December. We will be back to work, totally refreshed, on Tuesday 3rd January 2017 at 9am sharp!

Dr. Cowley, Karen, Mary Ann, Brenda & Noreen