



Emigrant Support Service

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ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

Greetings

There's only one thing certain in life besides death and that's change. Some change is good but the tragedies still occur. Like the unfortunate accident with the search and rescue helicopter just down the road from us, off Blacksod, Co. Mayo where the operation to recover the still missing crew is ongoing. God comfort their families. The fact that's its people who were themselves engaged on our behalf in saving lives makes it all the more tragic. Also that it's on our doorstep and the search and rescue community is a small one, makes it all the more personal.

The death of a policeman by stabbing in London, also in the course of his duty, brings it home to us the inherent danger of those occupations. Sometimes maybe we forget the bravery required and the price that can be paid by such people which can go above and beyond the call of duty. We are most grateful to all of those who serve us so well on a daily basis and we applaud their dedication in so doing. God keep them safe for us. Our thoughts are also with the families and friends of those who died or were injured in that terrible attack.

The annual visit to the White House by our Taoiseach affords our small country a splendid opportunity to highlight our existence, and the problems we face in the Emerald Isle. And we have two problems in particular. Never was there a more important time to get the ear of the most powerful man in the Western world. It's a matter of some speculation how successful our Taoiseach was in putting our case forward on behalf of our undocumented citizens in the USA. The reports from White House press secretary, Sean Spicer (of Irish descent himself), was not reassuring. In fairness this is a big ask which affects every single country whose citizens siphon home American dollars which helps sustain their respective economies, but takes dollars out of the American one. Keeping as many American jobs in Ireland is crucial for our economy too.

There is no more experienced politician than our Taoiseach Enda Kenny. It was a great coup to get in just before Germany's Chancellor Merkel. The body language between President Trump and our Taoiseach was much better than between Chancellor Merkel and President Trump. Time will tell of course.

So long for now, **Dr. Jerry Cowley**

Chairman – Safe Home



Returnees have their say

Thanks to Bridget and Steve who recently returned from Kent (UK) to Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny for contacting us with some "been there, done that" advice on returning home. They advise other potential returnees, where possible to save up prior to a move as it can take a number of months to sort out the transfer of pensions/apply for any benefits here. They also caution anyone who may be returning home with an older vehicle to expect insurance and road tax costs to be much higher than what they may have been previously paying in England. Bridget and Steve gave their own situation as an example; their car insurance was £450 in England compared to €1250 in Ireland; Motor tax was £250 in England and it is now costing them €1200 in Ireland! The couple also warn others that registering a vehicle in Ireland and claiming the Vehicle Registration Tax exemption (if applicable) is a complicated process..... be prepared for a headache!

Moving /returning to Ireland? – don't go it alone

The realities and stress of moving to another country or returning home after many years abroad can be very daunting indeed. There is a lot of paperwork and 'red tape' to be sorted out.

For anyone who may be contemplating a move to Ireland in the near future, please do get in touch with us here at Safe Home. We will be happy to advise on the paper trail of documentation that you should bring home with you in order to make the transition 'into the system' here as smooth as possible. We may also be able to offer our outreach/home visit service or point you in the direction of other relevant services in the area that you move to.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA)

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a means tested weekly allowance paid to people who do not have enough income to meet their needs and those of their families. There are a variety of instances where SWA may be payable.

Examples; if you have applied for a social welfare benefit or pension but it has not yet been paid or if you are awaiting the transfer of a pension from abroad and you have no other income, you may qualify for basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance while you are waiting.

In certain circumstances, you may have to repay SWA. For example: if basic SWA is paid while you are waiting for a social welfare benefit, assistance or pension, the amount paid will be deducted from the arrears of your social welfare payment.

The individual weekly rate of SWA for people aged 26yrs+ is €191. An additional amount of €128.10 is paid if the claim includes a qualified adult (spouse/partner).

Motor Tax in Ireland

For private vehicles registered before 1st July 2008, Motor tax is calculated based on the **engine size**. If you have a car that was registered before this date, then the bigger the engine capacity of your car, the more expensive the motor tax will be.

Note! For vehicles registered after the 1st July 2008, the motor tax is based on the CO2 emissions, regardless of the engine size.

Housing Opportunity



The St. Vincent de Paul Society in **Ballaghadereen, Co. Roscommon** have a one bedroom property available. Maximum weekly rent is €55 per week. Preference will be given to Safe Home applicants originally from Roscommon/Mayo or those with strong family links in the counties. However, applicants from other counties may also apply.

People who are registered and approved by the Council can apply for assistance with their rent. Those who are not on the relevant Council housing list will have to meet the full rent costs from their own income.

Please contact the Safe Home office for more information

More on Brexit

For the UK to leave the EU, it has to invoke an agreement called Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which gives the two sides two years to agree the terms of the split. Article 50 was created as part of the Treaty of Lisbon - an agreement signed up to by all EU states which became law in 2009. Before that treaty, there was no formal mechanism for a country to leave the EU.

Britain intends to trigger the exit process on 29 March, meaning the UK will be expected to have left by the summer of 2019, however this will depend on the precise timetable agreed during the negotiations. It is expected the EU leaders will meet by the end of April/early May to agree and adopt guidelines that will define the framework for the final exit negotiations.

It is difficult for anyone to really know how the Brexit process will work in practice - Article 50 has never been activated since it became law in 2009. Unpicking 43 years of treaties and agreements covering thousands of different subjects was never going to be a straightforward task. The post-Brexit trade deal is likely to be the most complex part of the negotiation because it needs the unanimous approval of more than 30 national and regional parliaments across Europe, some of whom may want to hold referendums.

We will keep you posted as the process unfolds. In many respects, it will be a case of 'watch this space'!

A question on Brexit

Q. I was born in Northern Ireland. Will the UK exit mean that I am no longer entitled to Irish citizenship or an Irish passport?

A. A UK exit from the EU does not change anything regarding entitlement to Irish citizenship.

The essential legal position remains as follows: If you were born on the island of Ireland before 1 January 2005, you are entitled to be an Irish citizen. If you were born on the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005, your right to Irish citizenship depends on your parents' citizenship at the time of your birth and the residency history of at least one of your parents before your birth.

Voting rights for Irish emigrants

Voting in Presidential Elections: The Government has decided to hold a referendum to amend the Constitution to allow Irish citizens resident outside the State, including in Northern Ireland, to be allowed to vote in The Irish Presidential elections. In making the announcement at the Irish Famine Memorial in Philadelphia during his tour of the USA for St. Patrick's Day, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny said: "Today's announcement is a profound recognition of the importance that Ireland attaches to all of our citizens, wherever they may be. It is an opportunity for us to make our country stronger by allowing all of our citizens resident outside the State, including our emigrants, to vote in future presidential elections".

While this decision marks a turning point in government policy towards the diaspora and a victory for those who have long campaigned for expatriate voting rights, in reality it is likely to take some time to make any real progress on this. It is a complex issue that will require research around the legalities of how it will work in practice.

Voting in Seanad Elections: Graduates of the National University of Ireland who have received a degree (other than an honorary degree) who are Irish citizens are eligible to vote in Seanad Éireann elections, once they are included in the University electoral register. **This includes Irish emigrants living abroad.**

The deadline for registration to be included in the 2017 register (to be published on 1 June 2017), is closed since 26th February, **however, the registration process is continuous** and graduates may apply for inclusion at any time. The registration application form can be downloaded from: <http://www.nui.ie/elections/seanad-register.asp>.

The form must be completed in full and returned to the National University of Ireland, 49 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Tax Matters

For Irish residents, if you have any income or assets held outside of Ireland, for example a UK pension or rental income from a holiday home/property overseas, please be aware that the Irish Revenue Commissioners are undertaking a campaign to target offshore income that has been thus far undeclared or under-declared. Taxpayers are being given a final opportunity to come forward and make voluntary disclosures **before 30th April 2017**. After this date, new exchange of information rules mean that Revenue will be able to receive bank and other financial account information from over 100 countries globally. You can find out more via: www.revenue.ie or www.irishtaxinstitute.ie

Please don't be too alarmed as many pensioners may not fall within the taxable income levels at all. For single people over 65 years, the annual tax exemption level in Ireland is €18,000; for couples, the exemption is €36,000.

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



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