



Emigrant Support Service



ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

From the Chairman's Desk

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Greetings,

The power of nature on our lives is never more obvious than when storms arrive on our shores which can overnight close our transport systems, schools and public services. The biggest wave ever off our coast was recorded recently, the size of a six storey building, a legacy to Storm Ophelia which visited us closing the country down and leaving three people dead in its wake. All died in accidents relating to fallen trees. Yet how much worse would the death toll and destruction have been without the power of the media and quick action by the government in closing public services by declaring a national emergency?

Storm Brian quickly followed with an orange weather warning resulting in flooding in our cities with some of our population still without ESB power after Ophelia.

Certainly the media is powerful and with social media spreading the word people battened down the hatches to ride out the storm secure in their own homes.

It makes one realize the power of communication and the power of words. We all have that power which social media can amplify to turn a simple Tweet in to a national headline.

A simple few words of praise to someone else can have the power to make their day and more. On the other end of the spectrum a careless comment could put a vulnerable person over the edge of despair. Words are so easily uttered but harder to take back. When the storm is over we can try and pick up the pieces. When the wrong words are said which can turn out to be more devastating than any hurricane it is impossible to take them back. Better to have not said them at all.

So long for now,

Dr Jerry Cowley

Chairman



Access to invalidity/illness payments on return to Ireland, based on continuing to make voluntary contributions from abroad.

I am currently 57 years old and living in the USA. I left Ireland 5 years ago but have continued to make voluntary contributions to maintain my social insurance record in Ireland. Unfortunately, due to illness, I am no longer able to work in the USA.

Q. If I return to Ireland, will the fact that I've been making voluntary contributions allow me to qualify for any of the illness/invalidity schemes in Ireland?

A. The voluntary contributions section at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection have confirmed that in general these voluntary contributions do not apply to illness benefit/invalidity benefit schemes, they mainly relate to pensions.

However, anyone wishing to check out the specifics of their own situation or make more detailed enquiries in relation to this can contact the voluntary contributions section directly via

email: volcons@welfare.ie

Tel: (00353) 51 356 000

Write to: Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Cork Road, Waterford, Ireland

Police Checks/Garda Clearance requirement by social housing providers in Ireland

For Safe Home housing applicants: We are once again highlighting the fact that most Local Authorities and social housing providers in Ireland will require prospective tenants to have Police/Garda clearance (or the equivalent, depending on the country you are currently living in).

These checks can often take some time to be carried out. For example; In the UK, the relevant clearance is known as a Subject Access Request (S.A.R), it costs £10 and can take up to 40 days for the results to come through. When you submit a S.A.R application you will need to include copies (not originals) of at least two different documents which confirm your identity, current address and signature.

These could be:

- A passport or driving licence which shows your date of birth and signature
- A utility bill, bank, mortgage or credit card statement which is dated within the last six months and which shows your current address

Applications can be made online or by post. More information on UK Subject Access Requests, including the application form can be obtained via: **www.acro.police.uk**

To request an application form; **Tel:** 02380 47 9920

Email: **customer.services@acro.pnn.police.uk**

Some people, those who may have worked /volunteered in roles where they were involved with children or vulnerable adults may already have the required clearance.

Important Note! In our experience of dealing with Housing Associations and Councils throughout the country, particularly in most recent times, only applicants who have provided **ALL** of the required paperwork will be considered for vacancies that arise.

We understand that some applicants may have difficulty in applying for the required checks so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries whatsoever. If you live close to an Irish Welfare & Advice Centre abroad, they too will be happy to offer assistance.

Housing Opportunities



Gowran Community Housing, approx. 8 miles from **Kilkenny** have a one-bedroom property available. The scheme is for people aged 65 years+ who can live independently. The maximum weekly rent is €45. Additional services, such as meals and social activities are available via the on-site day centre.



The St. Vincent de Paul Society have a small one-bedroom bungalow available in **Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon**. The scheme is situated close to shops and services. Ballaghaderreen is a small market town. It is situated on the Mayo/Roscommon borders as anyone who follows gaelic football may know!



St. Brendan's Village in Mulranny, Co. Mayo have two one-bedroom properties available. Maximum weekly rent is €79. St. Brendan's Village is a sheltered housing scheme designed for older/disabled people who can live independently. The village offers secure affordable tenancies in a community setting, with additional support services on-site.

St. Dominick's Housing Association, Newport, Co. Mayo have two one-bedroom properties available. Maximum weekly rent is €86. The scheme is located close to services and amenities in the small market town of Newport.

There are a range of on-site services and activities to residents, e.g day care facilities and meals on wheels.



While preference for the above vacancies will be given to Safe Home applicants originally from the counties where the schemes are located or those with strong family links to the county, applicants from other counties may also apply. Qualifying applicants who are registered and approved by the relevant County Council can apply for assistance with their rent. Those who are not on the Council list will have to meet the full rent costs from their own income.

For more information on any of these developments, please contact the Safe Home office

Back for Business – A new initiative to foster and support entrepreneurial activity among emigrants returning or recently returned to live in Ireland.

Back for Business is a pilot scheme that addresses the challenges that all early stage entrepreneurs face with a particular focus on the additional barriers and challenges faced by those who have been out of the country for some time. This can often result in their local knowledge, contact base and professional and personal networks being less developed than those of typical entrepreneurs.

To apply, initial registrations should be made online via www.backforbusiness.com

An application form will then be sent out by email. Completed forms can be returned via email or posted to: Fitzsimons Consulting, 6 James's Terrace, Malahide, Co Dublin.

Important! The closing date for receipt of applications is 3rd of November 2017



We were pleased to host a Webinar in Galway earlier this month in partnership with the US based Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform (ILIR).

The event was held in direct response to the Government announcement of the appointment of independent consultants to undertake a detailed economic report on the topic of 'barriers' facing recently returned/returning Irish emigrants and to 'identify solutions' to the 'disproportionate or unnecessary administrative burdens' that negatively affect people wishing to return to live.

The Webinar heard from a broad range of speakers including returned Irish citizens sharing their stories as well as a selection of other invited speakers, including the Minister with responsibility for the Diaspora, Ciaran Cannon TD, Senator Billy Lawless, Senator for the Diaspora and Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh, Sinn Féin Spokesperson on the Diaspora (pictured above with Ciaran Staunton (ILIR) and our CEO, Karen McHugh).

A number of barriers were highlighted and some solutions discussed. Topics raised on the day included the lack of recognition of qualifications/experience gained abroad; difficulties around transfer of driving licences; third level education fees; car insurance quotes; opening bank account; accessing credit/mortgages; social protection issues and meeting habitual residency conditions. Most speakers said they have found the whole process of 'coming home' difficult, with some saying they were considering leaving again.

The deadline for submissions to the consultation process has passed but a report from the Webinar was submitted for consideration as well as a separate Safe Home submission. We are looking forward to the publication of the report by year end and to positive action to ensure that those who wish to return home do not face unnecessary barriers and that those who have 'come home' do not leave again. We will keep you all posted with progress in this regard.

For those on facebook, the Webinar can be accessed via:
<https://www.facebook.com/903878989710116/videos/1406761529421857/>

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