



Emigrant Support Service



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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<b>Our Vision</b>	To ensure that anyone considering of returning or moving to Ireland is given every opportunity to make an informed decision
<b>Our Mission</b>	To act as the link for Irish emigrants both at home and abroad by providing advice, information, guidance and supports for those seeking permanent repatriation as well as those who chose to stay in their adopted country.



## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – DR. JERRY COWLEY

Another busy year has passed and Safe Home Board and Staff have worked extremely hard to ensure that our Irish emigrants abroad remain connected with Ireland and are supported in their journey back home where possible.

During the year we carried out an extensive review of our strategic and operational policies, procedures and systems to ensure compliance with legal requirements.

We developed a new **Constitution** with the pro-bono support of the Bar Council and in line with requirements of the Companies Act, 2014, we changed our **name** from Safe Home Programme Ltd. to Safe Home Programme Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG).

We set up a **trading company** in the name of Safe Home Ireland, primarily for marketing and PR purposes as most people know us as Safe Home Ireland instead of Safe Home Programme Ltd/CLG.

We carried out a **Governance Review** during the year devised a new **Governance Manual**, which was adopted at our September Board meeting. Following months of development work, we adopted the **Governance Code** at our October Board meeting and are now fully compliant with the Code.

We also registered as a lobbyist under the provisions of the new **Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015** and submitted our annual return in November.

We carried out a mid-review of our **Strategic Plan** and are pleased to say we are on target to achieving our goals by the end of 2018.

I want to take the opportunity to thank my fellow Directors who have worked very hard during the year and together we achieved so much. I also want to acknowledge Safe Home staff, who work tirelessly to support and realise the dreams for many Irish to return home to live.



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

### **Board of Directors**

Safe Home Ireland is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity with its registered office in Mulranny, Co. Mayo. The Company is governed by the following voluntary board of Directors:

#### **Chairperson**

Dr. Jerry Cowley

#### **Company Secretary**

Michael Joe Ginnelly

#### **Directors**

Teresa Hanley; Teresa Cowley; Mary Wood; Teresa Gallagher

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## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO?

Safe Home Ireland was set up in 2000 to assist older qualifying Irish born emigrants to explore the option of returning to live in their native areas. Our work is spread across the 26 counties and we provide supports to our applicants at every stage of their journey from the initial enquiry abroad to actual return home. Over the years, Safe Home has evolved from simply providing a housing option for older Irish born emigrants. Alongside this role, we now provide a range of additional services, summarised as follows;

### ADVICE & INFORMATION

We provide an information and advice service to anyone (**regardless of age or circumstances**) who may be contemplating returning or moving to Ireland. This is particularly important for younger single people and families who are unsure where to start or what to do to begin with.

### HOUSING ASSISTANCE

We assist **qualifying Irish born emigrants** to return home, primarily to social housing schemes back in their native areas. We do not manage or build any properties of our own but we work in conjunction with Housing Associations who provide housing for our qualifying applicants throughout Ireland. To apply for **housing** through Safe Home, applicants must be: (a) Irish born emigrants living abroad (b) aged 57 years or older (c) capable of independent living (d) living in rented accommodation abroad and unable to provide accommodation for themselves out of their own resources on their return to Ireland.

### OUTREACH

As part of our outreach work, where it is feasible we carry out **home visits with Safe Home housing applicants** throughout the UK. In the UK we can meet with applicants in their own homes, go through the application process in detail, answer any questioning they may have and assess their situation. Where relevant, we can also refer applicants to local support services in the area to improve their situations (financial/housing/support), as they wait to return home to Ireland.

We also provide an outreach and advocacy service to people who have returned home (regardless of age or circumstances), who need assistance with general resettlement and integration in Ireland. This could include assistance with paperwork involved in applying for services, rights and entitlements as well as signposting on to other relevant support agencies that may be of assistance.

### CONNECT

Finally, Safe Home Ireland acts as a link with home for emigrants who decide to remain on in their adopted countries. We do this primarily through our monthly Newsletter, which is disseminated globally as well as through social media platforms. We realise that 'Coming Home' is not for everyone but staying connected with Ireland is particularly important for most emigrants.



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

## CEO – KAREN MC HUGH



I am delighted to report on another busy and impactful year!

One of our core objectives in 2016 was to raise our profile to ensure that the Irish diaspora around the globe know about Safe Home and our work. With this in mind we devised a new logo, launched our new Website, advanced our Social Media presence, developed a range of new publicity materials and generally marketed our work globally. We also redesigned our Newsletter and created an on-line bulletin so that both intending returnees as well as Agencies can continue to keep in touch.

In 2016 we embraced Salesforce, a new on-line client management system, which ensures accurate and confidential data recording and reporting. In 2016 we dealt with 676 contacts; these included enquiries from Safe home housing clients as well as new enquiries from Irish emigrants abroad seeking advice, information and supports about moving home, from all over the world. These queries came via email, phone, post and some in person.

We received and processed 58 new housing applications, bringing the number of people now seeking housing through Safe Home to 244, with these applications coming from all corners of the world. Accommodation was secured for 21 applicants via Safe Home and 33 applicants returned independently but were all supported by our Outreach & Advocacy staff. Since our inception in 2000, we have secured accommodation for 1,908 clients.

We continued to work closely with Agencies abroad as well as Agencies here in Ireland who support returning or returned emigrants. We strengthened our partnership with both Crosscare and Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO), who also work specifically with intending or returned Irish emigrants and now meet regularly as a team to save duplication of work as well as maximise our resources.

I would like to express my appreciation to our funders and in particular, The Emigrant Support Programme of Department of Foreign Affairs, as without their support our work would not be possible. I would also like to thank our board members, who, in 2016 worked very hard to ensure we met all requirements of new Companies and Charity regulations which was no easy deed! I want to thank the agencies both at home and abroad who both supported Safe Home and Irish emigrants abroad during 2016. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of Safe Home for their hard work, commitment during the year and to acknowledge the difference they have made to the lives returning emigrants. Together we look forward to 2017 and to advancing our vision 'to ensure that anyone considering of returning or moving to Ireland is given every opportunity to make an informed decision'

## COORDINATOR– MARY ANN FADIAN



Based at the Safe Home Ireland office headquarters in Mulranny, Co. Mayo, my role is mainly focused on the day to day behind the scenes 'nuts and bolts' that I helps the organisation run along smoothly.

I greatly enjoy and value the interaction that I have with other welfare and advice agencies in Ireland and throughout the world. Working together makes it easier to offer a more coordinated service to our Irish emigrant community, it avoids duplication and helps in highlighting the issues and needs of those we were set up to assist.

2016 was a busy year on the administration side of things, that included;

- Getting to grips with policies and procedures that will ensure good governance is at the heart of the organisation. Good governance is also key to receiving on-going funding and securing new funding streams in the future. Being transparent and accountable to our clients is very important to us.
- Collaborative work in developing and finalising our new database. This will assist us in collating statistical information and outcomes that will be of interest to our funders/stakeholders and in planning the future direction of the organisation. All four Safe Home Ireland staff work from different offices so being able to record client casework in this one central online database has proved invaluable to us in offering a more profession streamlined service to our clients.
- Collaborative work in the up-dating and design of our new website; check it out on [www.safehomeireland.com](http://www.safehomeireland.com)
- Working on the redesign of our newsletter and the introduction of the online bulletin.

My main 9-5 work, which includes answering queries, signposting people to other relevant organisations and supporting our clients in their decision making process and just being here to offer a listening ear when needed, is what makes my work so interesting and rewarding.

*.... I've been back in Kerry since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Thank you so much for all your guidance during the year. I would never have understood or waded through all the paperwork without your help. It was all worthwhile and 2016 has been a wonderful year for me. I absolutely love being home and it was the right decision for me ..'*



## OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY OFFICER – BRENDA FLEMING



2016 has been another successful year. I have thoroughly enjoyed welcoming home returning emigrants to their new homes. It gives me such a sense of job satisfaction to have visited a client in their home in the UK, talking to them about their reasons for wanting to return home and then seeing their dream come true by securing accommodation here in Ireland.

I have visited many organisations both in the UK and here in Ireland promoting the work of Safe Home Ireland and finding out how they may be able to assist our returnees.

I have enjoyed many other aspects of my role and in particular working in partnership with housing providers here in Ireland, to advocate on behalf of our clients. We have established excellent working relationships with Voluntary Housing Associations and Councils throughout the country. Without their support, we would not be able to achieve the happy result of securing housing for those who wish to return to their homeland.

Supporting clients when they come home is perhaps the most rewarding part of my job; assisting them through the mountain of paperwork, helping them to apply for benefits and sharing the burden of stress that moving home to a new country brings.

I look forward to meeting our clients, old and new, in the coming year and securing more properties for those who want to return to their native shores.

*'... my dream has come true, thank you to Safe Home Ireland and Brenda in particular. I couldn't have done it without you and Mary at the London Irish Centre. I am so happy to be at home and look forward to many happy years here. I am eternally grateful to Safe Home Ireland.'*

## OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY OFFICER – NOREEN MULRINE



This has once more been a busy and interesting year for our small team in Safe Home.

In 2016 we continued to work closely with Irish Welfare organisations abroad and with any organisation who may have Irish clients. While conducting home visits in the UK I met with several agencies that have Irish clients. These agencies included organisations who work with elderly Irish people, homeless people, survivors of abuse, travellers, as well as welfare advice centre's and social clubs. It is important that we can all work together to assist anyone who is considering a return to Ireland. Whenever possible we attend the *Advice and Support Workers* forum in Birmingham which is organised by the Irish in Britain. This is a great opportunity for us to learn more about the welfare changes in the UK and to connect with UK based advice workers.

My work also involves working closely with social housing organisations, various agencies, community welfare officers and departments in Ireland on behalf of our clients. When these bodies are familiar with our work and the services we offer, they in turn refer to us people who have returned to Ireland independently of Safe Home who may be encountering difficulties. Many may have returned to Ireland but do not know how to transfer their pensions or avail of medical treatment here. We can then work together in order to achieve a positive outcome for our mutual clients.

An important aspect of the services we, the Outreach and Advocacy Officers provide, is that we travel to meet with our newly returned clients in their home throughout the 26 counties, from there we can assist them in making applications for entitlements, help with form filling and accompany them to vital appointments if necessary.

A more recent aspect of our work has been working with people who have been home for many years and are now at an age where they are eligible for pensions from the countries where they have lived in the past. I have helped people retrieve their insurance numbers and have helped them apply for their pensions.

Safe Home has a unique role in working with people who wish to explore the possibility of returning home, I feel that it is a privilege for me to assist these people. My hope for the coming year is that we continue to raise our profile so we can reach the people who most need to avail of the services that Safe Home offer.

*" I cannot thank you enough for all the help you have given me since I came home in x 2016. Only for Safe home I would still be in London. If I ever win the Lotto, I will be sending money for Safe home to continue the great work in helping the Irish people in London come back home. Mary Ann and Noreen you have made me very happy and I can be myself again and enjoy life for the first time in many years..."*



## OUR WORK IN 2016

- We provide support and assistance to older Irish emigrants before, during and after the moving process.
- We act as a link with home for emigrants who choose to stay in their adopted countries.
- We provide clear up to date information on returning to Ireland to all of those who seek it
- We explore and establish links with housing providers throughout the country, and maintain a database of possible housing options for returning emigrants
- We meet with and lobby statutory bodies to highlight the needs of our client group and assist in the formulation of policy changes as necessary.
- We work together with other relevant agencies in the voluntary sector in Ireland to promote the work of our Association and highlight the needs of our client group.
- We liaise and work together with relevant welfare & advice agencies abroad to highlight the needs of our client group and identify support solutions for them where they currently reside.
- We assess, process and approve Housing Applications for qualifying applicants seeking to return permanently to Ireland and where appropriate and feasible, seek out suitable housing options for them.
- Where possible and feasible, we carry out home visits with qualifying applicants seeking to return home permanently and use such visits to ensure they are fully aware of all aspects involved in a permanent move.
- We 'sign post' individuals who may need additional supports in their current location and if appropriate, make referrals to relevant agencies.
- We ensure that qualifying clients are kept informed and up-dated on any issues relevant to their planned return to Ireland.
- We provide on-going support as is appropriate and feasible, to those who have returned home by assisting with relevant paperwork and as necessary, linking them in with other local services.
- We act as a vital link with Ireland that many emigrants, of all ages, crave and value



## WORKING TOGETHER

Partnership and joint working is critical to achieving positive outcomes for our clients and we met with a broad range of service providers both in UK and Ireland as follows:

### England

- HARP newspaper, Birmingham
- ICAP Birmingham
- Monica's Place, Birmingham
- St Eugene's Court, Birmingham.
- Birmingham City Council Homeless Unit
- Birmingham Irish Centre
- Fireside Homeless Centre, Birmingham
- Father Taaffe House, Birmingham
- The Passage, St Vincent's Centre, London
- Age UK Islington, London
- Mind Yourself, London
- Irish Women Survivors Support Network, London
- Luton Irish Forum. This also included a clinic with clients who are interested in returning to Ireland.

### Ireland

- Cluid Housing, Cork
- Respond Housing, Limerick.
- Villiers Voluntary Housing, Limerick
- St. Vincent de Paul Housing, Killorglin, Kerry.
- Faranree Voluntary Housing, Cork.
- SHARE Housing , Cork
- ALONE Housing, Dublin

In addition to the above, we developed closer working relationships with **Crosscare and The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)**, with a view to developing a system of smoother cross-referrals, joint consultations and general information sharing. This will ensure improved responses and outcomes for our clients. We have met twice in 2016.

We attended and made presentations at all of the **Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH)** regional meetings (8 in total) throughout Ireland. This offered us a unique opportunity to promote our work around the country, to develop closer links with housing bodies and advocate for increased housing options for our clients. We also met with Kildare Housing Strategic Policy Committee and presented to the Inter-departmental Committee for Diaspora Affairs, outlining some of the challenges and barriers facing returning emigrants.

## KEY OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

- We dealt with **676 new queries**
- We processed **58 new Housing Applications** bringing the total number of active applications registered on our housing waiting list to **244 applications** (covering 275 individuals)
- We facilitated **24 new referrals to Local Authority** housing waiting lists in Ireland
- We carried out **33 home visits** to Safe Home applicants throughout the **UK**
- We carried out **64 outreach visits** to Safe Home returnees throughout **Ireland**
- A Total of **2,428 interventions** carried out on behalf of Safe Home clients (returnees, housing applications, general enquiries)
- We visited **4 new Housing Association schemes**, and compiled Information factsheets on the developments bringing the number of schemes on our comprehensive countrywide social housing register up to **267**.
- **Accommodation was secured by 54 people**, bringing the total number of people assisted in their return home, to **1,908**, since the inception of Safe Home in 2000.

## WHAT SOME OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY ...

*I love being home, I love that my sister lives across the road so we do lots of things together. I am happy that I have a beautiful garden. I also love the art classes I now attend with my sister and I have a lovely doctor here. Carol, Co. Tipperary*

*Without Safe Home and Mary Ann we would not know where to start and would definitely not have been here today. Tommy, Co. Monaghan*

*It was lovely to spend my first Christmas back here at home with my family and friends and to be able to go dancing with them. Petra, Co. Donegal*

*While it was lovely to go back to England for my holidays last week it was even nicer to get back to my own little house. Kathy, Co. Meath*

*I feel really safe living here compared to where I had been living in the UK, there I was scared to open my door at any time of the day, then my neighbours were drinking and fighting all night. It is great to be home. Brendan, Co. Mayo*

*Coming home to Ireland has meant the world to me and being near my family and relations and being able to go to various celebrations and meet people that I hadn't met for years. I had been trying to return for a couple of years but did not get any help from other organisations I contacted until I discovered Safe Home. Safe Home made it all possible for me to return home. They were always there to answer any questions that I had. All their help, assistance and dedication they gave me both before and after my return were beyond my wildest dreams. May, Co. Cork*

*Thanks to the Safe Home team for all the help you have given us to start a new life back home in Ireland surrounded by all the new friends we have here at Oriel Lodge and more importantly to be surrounded by our whole family at Christmas for the first time in more than twenty years. Michael & Pauline, Co. Cavan*

*'Safe Home' is just amazing and provides a wonderful service for people returning home after a long period of time! They were invaluable to us when we returned after 43 years in Africa! Mo, Co. Sligo*

*I moved from Derbyshire two and half years ago. The help that I got from Safe Home was invaluable, delivered to me in a very caring it's no problem way. I agree with them that you really need to be extra sure you are doing the right thing for yourself and not for your family. That said I am very happy with my decision and wish Safe Home also all staff a long and successful life. Teresa, Co. Tipperary*

*I think the Safe Home is a terrific help to the Irish Diaspora. They inform and guide and give us a great laugh from time to time and the staff are always willing to go that bit further to help when needed. It is a universal link for all of us with what we are mutually feeling and what we left behind. The newsletter is great. More power to their collective elbow. Collette in Cyprus*



# Safe Home Ireland

## Emigrant Support Service

*Providing advice, information and support to Irish emigrants seeking to return or move to Ireland*



**ADVICE &  
INFORMATION**



**OUTREACH  
VISITS**



**HOUSING  
ASSISTANCE**



**CONNECT**

*Acting as a link for those who choose to stay in their adopted countries*

### **Safe Home Ireland**

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

**Tel:** 098 36036

**Tel:** 00 353 98 36036 (from UK)

**Tel:** 011 353 98 36036 (from USA)

**Email:** [info@safehomeireland.com](mailto:info@safehomeireland.com)

**Web:** [www.safehomeireland.com](http://www.safehomeireland.com)

