



Emigrant Support Service

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#### Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:  
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**Thinking of returning or  
moving to Ireland?**

**Get in touch**



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### From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings, Its official! Ireland is experiencing a heatwave with temperatures in the high 20's and predicted to rise further to over 30 degrees centigrade in the next two days. It's truly Costa del West of Ireland as we bask in the glorious sunshine. Already people are enjoying outdoor barbecues and suffering from sunburn. Amidst all of this heat the Department of Agriculture has issued a "Condition Red Forest Fire Danger Rating Notice." This is the highest level and is rare in Ireland.

On the subject of heat and fire we recently celebrated the feast of St. John the Baptist (on 24th June), but as per usual practice we had our celebrations the night before St. John's Day, known locally as "Bonfire's Night." The hours before darkness are when frantic preparations are still happening in every village and townland across Ireland. As the evening draws to a close every possible contraption has been used to ferry material to be added to the fire which ends up piled high with car tyres, together with every conceivable piece of junk that is flammable. Once darkness descends neighbours gather around the blazing infernos to begin a night of celebrations. This frenetic activity by otherwise sane people is what really divides urban and rural Ireland. It's the one occasion when rural townlands vie with each other to have the biggest and best bonfire in their locality. Every high hill is taken over as the fires light up the evening sky with plumes of smoke billowing up to space. Our "Bonfire Night" goes back, we are told, to a pre Christian time when such bonfires were about getting rid of the 'pisheogs' or evil spirits that might sour the milk or spoil the crops. It's said that people took the ashes from the bonfire home with them to scatter on their land for the protection of their crops from harm. They also drove cattle through the same ashes to protect their valuable stock from disease.

We use bonfires as well at other times to mark important occasions such as when a local person is elected to the Dail or the local football team is returning victorious from some away game. Bonfires lit on the side of the road greet the cavalcade of cars with much loud cheering from the bystanders lining the way. Much beeping of horns from the cavalcade are an acknowledgment from them of the great effort made by the local community to greet their heroes.

Roll on a victorious Mayo Senior Football Championship and then the Mayo countryside will be ablaze with bonfires.

Here's hoping the sun is shining brightly wherever you are. If it is, please don't forget to use the factor 50 suntan lotion!

So long for now, **Dr Jerry Cowley - Chairman**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Pension Entitlement if employed in more than one EU Country

**Q.** What are the rules governing payment of pensions if I have worked in a number of EU Member States during my working life?

**A.** The following rules apply if you live and have worked in one or more EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

- In each country, your insurance record is preserved until you reach the pensionable age.
- Every country where you have been insured for at least one year will pay you an old-age pension, when you reach its national pensionable age.

**Q.** How is my pension calculated?

**A.** Your pension will be calculated according to your insurance record in each country: the sum you will receive from each of these countries will correspond to the length of your social security coverage there.

**Q.** Where should I apply?

**A.** Even if you have worked in several countries, you should apply for your pension in the country where you live, unless you never worked there. In the latter case, you should apply in the country where you last worked.

**Q.** What do I do if the pensionable age is different in the countries where I have worked?

**A.** You could be entitled to your old-age pension in one country at 60, yet have to wait until 67 in another.

Under such circumstances, it is important that you get information in advance, from all the countries where you have worked, on what your situation will be if you delay the payment of your pension.

### **Q. At what age can I qualify for State pension contributory in Ireland?**

**A.** From January 2014, pension age in Ireland became 66. This, means that if you were born between 1st January 1949 and 31st December 1954 inclusive, the minimum qualifying State Pension age will be 66.

If you were born between 1st January 1955 and 31st December 1960 inclusive, the minimum qualifying State pension age will be 67.

If you were born on or after 1st of January 1961 the minimum qualifying State pension age will be 68.

### **Q. Does Safe Home only deal with Housing Association schemes in Co. Mayo?**

**A. No,** our head office is located in Co. Mayo and this is where Housing Application forms are sent to and processed. **However, we link in with Housing Associations throughout the 26 counties.** While, we can also provide general information and links to housing providers in the North of Ireland, we do not have any role in securing housing for people there as housing policy is governed by a completely different system than in the Republic.

## Feedback on our service and matters raised

Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete and return our Client Satisfaction Surveys recently. 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 some of questions raised about the types of properties available to qualifying Safe Home housing applicants.**

The first point 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;**

When applicants have been registered and approved on the Safe Home Ireland housing list AND in most circumstances approved by the relevant Council, as suitable vacancies arise in their county of preference, we will circulate housing fact sheets with an outline of additional information on the scheme in question. The fact sheets include pictures of the scheme, an outline of supports available (if any) and details of proximity to transport links, shops and local services.

Based on that provisional information, 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 any housing 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 housing 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.

## Caranua – Alert for Application Deadline – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018

Caranua was established to provide funding for support services that are relevant to the needs of survivors, who as children, experienced abuse in residential institutions in Ireland.

The limited fund that was provided to support survivors is now decreasing, thus the work that Caranua was established to carry out is nearly complete.

Caranua have asked us to 'put the call out' to anyone who may have spent time in a residential institution in Ireland as a child and received an award through settlement, Court or the Redress Board, to alert them that they may still be eligible to apply for a range of supports. The help provided depends on the circumstances of each individual but the areas where assistance can be given include the following;

- Health and wellbeing
- Housing Support
- Education, Learning and Development

**Important!** Applications must be received by the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

If this information applies to you or anyone you may know, **please contact [Caranua](#) directly via the following;**

By phone: 1800 212 477 (within Ireland – Freephone); From UK, tel: 0808 234 1303 (Freephone)

From anywhere, Tel: +353 1 8742277 (not Freephone)

By post: Caranua, P.O Box 12477, Dublin 1      Email: [apply@caranua.ie](mailto:apply@caranua.ie)      Web: [www.caranua.ie](http://www.caranua.ie)

## **Free G.P schemes in Ireland**

There are two schemes operating in Ireland that cover the cost of G.P visits (details below). For children and older people in the relevant age categories, eligibility is based on being considered 'ordinarily resident' in the State and is **not** dependent on means testing. You are considered ordinarily resident if you are living in Ireland and have lived here, or intend to live here, for at least one year.

Free G.P care for children under 6 years; All children under 6 years of age living in Ireland can get a GP visit card, regardless of the household/family income. The under 6s GP visit card covers the following, free GP visits, assessments at age 2 and 5, GP home visits, out-of-hours urgent GP care, care for children with asthma

Free G.P care for people aged 70 years and over; If you are over 70 and have a GP visit card, you don't have to pay to see your doctor. However, you will still have to pay for medicines and other services. If you have a medical card, you don't need a GP visit card as well because the cost of the GP visit will automatically be covered under a Medical Card.

**Note!** If your GP of choice is not taking part in these schemes, or can't take any more patients, you will need to pick another GP.



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme  
An tAonús Gairbhíochtaí Eanáir agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade