



Emigrant Support Service

October 2018 – Issue 205

### CONTACT US:

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

**Tel:** 098 36036  
(from Ireland)

00 353 98 36036 (UK)

011 353 98 36036  
(USA/Canada)

0011 353 98 35036  
(Australia)

#### Website:

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

#### Email:

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



#### Safe Home office hours:

Monday–Thursday:

9am–5pm

Friday: 9am–4pm

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

**Get in touch**



ADVICE &  
INFORMATION



OUTREACH  
VISITS



HOUSING  
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### From the Chairman's Desk

When you read this newsletter everyone should know which of the six candidates has won the contest to be the next Uachtarán na hÉireann. At this time the opinion polls predict that our Patron, sitting President Michael D Higgins, will have a landslide victory and will be elected on the first count.

The unsuccessful candidates will then know also whether they have reached the required number of votes as regards getting some of their election expenses back. Most will lose everything they have spent (a small fortune) based on the present opinion polls. If there is a recount then it will of course take longer to find out who will be our next president.

That unlikely scenario could have happened maybe because people didn't exercise their right to vote and the 'Trump' factor comes in to play where a 'protest' vote elects an unlikely candidate.

There is a lot of speculation about the whole presidential election process at this time and the cost of an election which would not have been necessary if our sitting president had been automatically reinstated at the end of his term once he had decided to seek a second term. Yet that would be against the spirit of democracy and deny the public a most entertaining contest which is an integral part of the Irish bloodsport of politics. The financial cost of running for president means that only people with access to financial resources or those who have the backing of their political parties can afford to do it. Aside from this, we needed to have a referendum in any case on blasphemy so it was a most useful exercise after all.

As winter approaches and the days get colder it's time for all to consider getting the annual flu shot. No. It doesn't give you the flu and could well save your life especially if you are 65 years or more or have some chronic illness or are immunosuppressed. Even pregnant women should consider having the flu shot to give their baby the best chance of a safe birth. If it's ok for them then it's ok for you. Don't forget to keep warm and watch out for that older neighbour this winter too.

So long for now,

**Dr. Jerry Cowley**  
**Chairman**



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme

An tAon Gníomhaíocht Eagraíochta agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## **Did you know? – Applying for an Irish Insurance Number (PPSN) - useful information**

If you do not already have a PPSN it is not generally possible to apply for one in advance of a planned move to Ireland as 'face to face' appointments form part of the application process. **Note!** Once you have details of your proposed moving date, you can book a slot for an appointment by registering online at: [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie)

However, if your need for a PPSN can be deemed as 'exceptional circumstances', you **may** be able to apply in advance. There are no firm Departmental guidelines on what may qualify as 'exceptional circumstances', but if you think you may have an 'exceptional' case, you should contact;

**Client Identity Services, Shannon Lodge, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland**

**Tel:** + 353 1 704 3281      **Email:** cis@welfare.ie

## **Budget 2019 – A summary**

Budget 2019 took place in Ireland on 9<sup>th</sup> of October. It was not a good day for the tourism and hospitality sector, with the announcement of an increase in the VAT rate from 9% to 13.5%. This is set to come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. Two of the key areas focused on by Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe were funding measures to help ensure that Ireland is 'Brexit ready' and enhanced funding for social and affordable housing supports.

**In relation to funding for the possible consequences and preparations for Brexit,** more than €110m was announced across a number of government departments. These include;

- Educational spending of €300m for training and re-skilling of sectors and regions which are vulnerable to Brexit.
- An additional €80m to agriculture.
- €8m in business funding to help target new markets.
- An extra €5m for local enterprise offices to support small businesses through a new customs training programme.
- An additional €1m for the cross-border Inter-trade Ireland to support mainly border businesses.
- €10m was given for customs staff for East-West work, €4m for sanitary inspectors and €2.5m for food safety inspectors. No planning has been made for a border on the island of Ireland.
- Extra money was also provided to help offset the effects of Brexit on tourism businesses.

## **The funding towards social and affordable housing supports included;**

- A contribution of €1.25 billion towards the construction, acquisition and leasing of 10,000 new social homes in 2019
- The creation of a Serviced Sites Fund to help local authorities deliver 6,000 affordable homes
- An additional €121 million towards the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme to provide for an extra 16,760 new tenancies during 2019
- Tax incentives for residential landlords; 100% tax deduction on the interest expenses incurred on loans used to purchase, improve or repair their rental properties (from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019)

**Outlined below are some of the other measures announced by the Irish Finance Minister for the year ahead;**

**Cigarettes:** The excise duty on a packet of 20 cigarettes was increased by 50 cents. This brings the average cost of a pack of 20 cigarettes in Ireland up to €12.70.

**Welfare payments:** most working age related social welfare payments (including pensions) will increase by €5 per week – these changes are not due to come into effect until the end of March 2019. The Christmas Bonus was restored to 100%.

We will report further on the welfare changes over the coming months.

**Note!** There was no increase in Child Benefit payments

The **Fuel Allowance** season will be extended by 1 week, from 27 to 28 weeks; the weekly rate of payment remained unchanged at €22.50

**Prescription Charges** for people over 70 years; From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019, this will be reduced from €2 per item prescribed to €1.50 per item.

**Drugs Payment Scheme:** From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019, the monthly threshold will be reduced, from €134 per month to €124 per month.

**National Minimum Wage Increase:** From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019, the minimum wage will increase from €9.55 per hour to €9.80 per hour

An **increase in the allowable income limits for the G.P visit scheme** will result in an estimated 100,000 more people qualifying for free G.P visits

### **G.P Visit Cards – Ireland**

If your income levels do not allow you to qualify for a full medical card, you may be eligible for a GP visit card. The allowable income levels for the G.P visit card are set at a higher level than for the Medical Card.

A GP visit card allows you to visit a participating family doctor (GP) for free. The GP visit card does not cover hospital charges. Any drugs prescribed are not covered by the GP card but may be covered by the Drugs Payment Scheme. The GP visit card does cover visits to GP out of hours services. Blood tests to diagnose or monitor a condition are also covered.

In order to qualify for a GP visit card, you must in most cases meet the income eligibility (exceptions to this outlined below) **AND** be 'ordinarily resident' in Ireland. That is, you must have been, or intend to be, living in Ireland for at least one year.

#### **The following groups will qualify for a G.P visit card, regardless of income:**

- All children under the age of 6 can get a GP visit card.
- If you get Carer's Benefit or Carer's Allowance, at full or half-rate, you are eligible for a GP visit card.
- The GP visit card is available to everyone aged over 70

**Note!** Applicants in the above categories must also meet 'ordinarily resident' status

## Late Registration of Births in Ireland

**Q.** I was born in a mother and baby home in Ireland and although I have a baptismal cert, my birth was never registered. How can I go about getting a birth cert now?

**A.** The General Registration Office advise that there is a process that can be gone through for 'late registrations'; You can make further enquiries on this via GRO headquarters:

The General Register Office can be contacted via: **Email:** [gro@groireland.ie](mailto:gro@groireland.ie)

**By Telephone:** +353 90 6632900 or +353 1 635 40 00

Or write to: GRO Dublin Offices; Joyce House, 8-11 Lombard Street East, Dublin 2, Ireland

## Safe Home Ireland – out and about in the UK

Safe Home Ireland outreach staff visit cities across the UK a number of times each year. During these trips, we will try to cover a number of different aspects of our work;

- **Carry out home visits with Safe Home housing applicants in the catchment area we are visiting**

By visiting applicants in their own homes, Safe Home staff can assess their current situation and provide more information on what is involved in 'moving to Ireland'. Where necessary and appropriate, we can make referrals to local welfare & advice agencies and support services that may be of assistance to our clients as they wait for an offer of housing in Ireland. These 'face to face' visits also give our applicants an opportunity to raise any questions they may have about the housing application process and any other aspects in relation to returning home permanently.

- **Meet with front-line advice staff in Irish/other agencies that may be relevant to our client group**

Maintaining close links and a good working relationship with our counterparts in the UK helps both sides to avoid duplication, become more aware of the services that each agency offers to clients and work together to get the best outcomes for those we work with.

- **In collaboration with Irish agencies, host information sessions on returning to Ireland.**

We are thankful for the support of our colleagues in Irish agencies across the UK in helping us to set up, host and publicise our general information sessions on returning to Ireland. These sessions are **open to anyone who may be considering returning or moving to Ireland**. The sessions tend to cover a broad range of topics, therefore we also invite people to leave their personal contact details if they wish to have a follow-up meeting or discuss their own individual circumstances in greater detail.

We also work with Irish based agency, **Crosscare Migrant Project** in delivering information and training sessions targeting staff in Irish and other welfare organisations in the UK. This training ensures staff are equipped to provide initial information and guidance to people considering moving or returning to Ireland.

**Listed below are details for information sessions planned for November in Coventry, Birmingham and Luton.** If you are someone who is considering moving/returning to Ireland yourself or you know someone who is thinking along those lines, please come along to see us or contact our office or the UK based host agency in advance as follows:

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November** (2-4pm) Flannellys Irish Club, Coventry 59/61 Holyhead Road, Coventry, CV1 3AA1; Tel: +44 24 7625 6629

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November** (3.30-5pm) St. Anne's Club, 45 Alcester Street, Birmingham B12 0PH; Tel +44 121 604 6111, email [rosie@birminghamirish.org.uk](mailto:rosie@birminghamirish.org.uk)

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November** (10am-12pm) Luton Irish Forum, Kathleen Connolly House, 102 Hitchin Road, Luton, LU2 0ES; Tel : +44 1582720447, email: [info@lutonirishforum.org](mailto:info@lutonirishforum.org)