



Emigrant Support Service



ADVICE &
INFORMATION



OUTREACH
VISITS



HOUSING
ASSISTANCE



CONNECT

December 2018 – Issue 206

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Monday–Thursday:
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Friday: 9am–4pm

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

Get in touch

From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings,

As we come to the end of yet another year, Safe Home sends very special greetings to our emigrants abroad and to those who have returned home in 2018.

In carrying out our day to day work, Safe Home is fortunate to work with so many other great agencies at home and abroad and we look forward to maintaining and strengthening our links with these agencies in the year ahead.

On behalf of the Board of Management and our wonderful staff, I would like to thank all who support Irish communities worldwide and Irish emigrants seeking to return home permanently. A big thanks also to everyone who sent us lovely Christmas cards 'from across the miles'.

Christmas is a very special time and I hope you get to celebrate it with your family and friends. I also wish you all the very best that the New Year can bring wherever you are.

So long for now.

Dr. Jerry Cowley
Chairman



Nollaig Shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir

From

The Safe Home Ireland Board Members and Staff

Safe Home Christmas Holiday Arrangements

The Safe Home office will be closed from **4pm on Friday 21st of December**.

We will be back to work, totally refreshed 😊, on **Wednesday 2nd January 2018** at 9am

Housing Opportunities for Safe Home applicants

A Housing Association in **Banada, Co. Sligo** has 2 two bedroom properties available. Banada is approx. 8 KM from Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo and 9KM from Charlestown, Co. Mayo. It is a rural location with limited transport links, so this scheme is likely to be most suitable for people who can drive or those with family/friends living close-by.



While priority will be given to applicants originally from/with strong connections to Co. Sligo, the Association will also consider Safe Home applicants from other counties.

Maximum weekly rent is €73. People on low income, who are approved by Sligo County Council can apply for help with rent costs.

Those not approved on the Sligo County Council housing list will have to pay the maximum rent level from their own means. There is a "no pets" policy in operation in this scheme.

Vacancies in Youghal - For applicants from Co. Cork who are registered on the Council housing list



Respond! Housing Association have 2 one bedroom apartments available in their housing scheme in Youghal, Co. Cork. These units would be most suitable for single occupancy. Interested parties must be approved on the Cork County Council housing list.

The units are on the ground and first floor (chair lift access to first floor). This scheme is located within easy access to services and amenities in Youghal. There is a "no pets policy" in operation. Maximum weekly rent level is €56. Qualifying tenants on low income can apply for help with rent costs.

Vacancies in Lifford, Co. Donegal



Habinteg Housing Association in **Lifford, Co. Donegal** has a one-bedroom ground floor apartment available. Total weekly charge is €101 which includes the following elements; Rent €67.00, Service charge €10.00 (this covers heating, refuse collection and warden call service) and a four course lunch 6 days per week costing €24.00. There is a "no pets policy" in place at this scheme.

Priority will be given to applicants who are approved on the Donegal County Council housing list. However, there may be some flexibility in this but applicants who are not registered and approved by Donegal County Council will pay full rent from their own means.

Our near neighbours at **St. Brendan's Village in Mulranny, Co. Mayo** have two one-bedroom properties available. Maximum weekly rent is €79.



While preference will be given to Safe Home applicants originally from Co. Mayo or those with strong family links to the county, applicants from other counties may also apply. Qualifying applicants who are registered and approved by Mayo 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. Small pets are allowed.

Frequently Asked Question – Qualifying for Fuel Allowance in Ireland

I am a pensioner living alone in the UK. I receive a part Irish Pension from my time working in Ireland. Included in this, I also have entitlement to the Living Alone Allowance.

Q. Would I also be entitled to the Irish Fuel Allowance (based on the fact that I receive the Irish Pension)

A. No, part of the qualifying conditions for Fuel Allowance is a requirement to be permanently resident in Ireland

Note! Pensioners moving from the UK who have been in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment based on their UK State Pension entitlement can continue to receive this if they move to Ireland permanently. Being in receipt of the fuel payment from the UK does not exclude pensioners from qualifying for the Irish Winter Fuel Allowance when they return/move to Ireland; eligibility here is based on a number of criteria, including being in receipt of a 'qualifying payment' from Ireland and meeting income means testing.

Irish passport online service expanded and improved

A recently announced expansion to the successful Irish passport online system allows for the renewal of children's passports for the first time and also introduces a passport card for children. To renew a child's passport online, you will need a digital photograph of the child (not a selfie!), an email address and a credit/debit card. As part of the verification process, a Child Passport Identity and Consent Form for guardians will be generated for printing and witnessing at the end of the online process.

Charges have also been reduced for online renewals; a standard adult passport book online costs €75. A standard child passport book online costs €20. It is cheaper when you apply for a passport book and card at the same time. More information on Online Passport Application Service is available via: www.dfa.ie/passportonline

Keeping abreast of Brexit – Irish Government Website

The Irish Government's dedicated Brexit website; www.dfa.ie/brexit provides an online resource outlining the work that the Irish Government is undertaking to protect Irish interests in the Brexit negotiations, and the steps being taken to get Ireland 'Brexit Ready'.

On the site, you can;

- find out more about the Government's most recent engagements, outreach events, and ongoing consultation work on Brexit.
- find information about the resources and financial supports available from all Irish Government Departments and Agencies to help businesses to prepare for Brexit.
- learn about what Brexit means for you as the process continues; the things that will change and the many things that will stay the same.
- access comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions sections, and read key documents published by the Government outlining negotiations to date and preparations for the potential impacts of Brexit.

Removing barriers to employment for people with disabilities in Ireland

On 30th November 2018, The Minister for Health, Simon Harris T.D announced a significant improvement to the Medical Card income assessment process which will enable people in receipt of Disability Allowance to have a greater earning capacity and still retain/qualify for a Medical Card.

Effective from 1st December 2018, the earnings 'disregard' level for people in receipt of a Disability Allowance payment will be significantly increased, from €120 to €427 per week (a 250% increase). The new measures should reduce the fear and anxiety that people in receipt of Disability Allowance have about entering into the workforce or taking on additional hours in existing employment.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has advised people in receipt of Disability Allowance who did not previously have eligibility to a Medical Card under the old guidelines to apply/re-apply. Applications can be made online via: www.mymedicalcard.ie or by completing an application form (MC1) available in most G.P surgeries or Citizens Information Centres countrywide.

Reduction in driving lessons for returning emigrants from non-EU countries/countries where there is no licence exchange agreement in place

From 21st January 2019, new regulations will come into place that will make it a little easier for returning emigrants/people moving to Ireland, who have to under-go the full learner driver application process in order to obtain an Irish driver's licence.

Currently, people taking up residence in Ireland, including returning emigrants, who have a driving licence from another EU country, or from a country with which Ireland has a bilateral agreement on the exchange of driving licences, can exchange their licence for an Irish equivalent.

Here to fore, people who did not fall under the above categories had to go through the full Irish learner driver process, including passing a theory test to obtain their learner driver permit/licence, undertaking a mandatory course of 12 Essential Driver Training (EDT) lessons and passing the driving practical test.

Last month, following extensive and prolonged lobbying from emigrants/emigrant support groups in Ireland and abroad, and subsequent discussions with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and Minister for the Diaspora Ciarán Cannon T.D, Minister for Transport Shane Ross T.D signed regulations into law to shorten the number of lessons needed for people with non-EU country licences. **People with a full but non-exchangeable licence from abroad will now be able to take the driving test after a reduced programme of 6, rather than 12 EDT lessons. This takes effect on 21st January 2019**

More on the Driving Licence Application Process - Frequently Asked Question:

I recently returned from the USA, where I held a full driving licence for 22 years. Despite this, I have to go through the learner driver application process to apply for an Irish licence. I have passed the theory test and now have my Irish learner's permit.

Q. Once I have completed the mandatory amount of EDT lessons, how long do I have to wait before I can sit the driving test?

A. In most cases, first-time learner permit holders (in categories for cars, motorcycles and works vehicles (eg, tractors, JCBs) must wait six months after the start date of the particular licence category before they can sit their driving test. **However**, a holder of a current valid full driving licence from another country (jurisdiction) for more than six months is exempt from the six month waiting period before they can sit their test, provided they forward a current valid original driving licence and a letter of entitlement (**see below for more on this) from the relevant licensing authority in that country to:

The Road Safety Authority (Customer Service Manager – Driver Testing Section)

Moy Valley Business Park, Ballina, Co. Mayo, Ireland

Email: drivingtest@rsa.ie Tel: 1890 40 60 40 (within Ireland only)

Important! Applicants are advised to forward their original licence by registered post. – it will be returned to you by registered post within 3-5 working days.

**** What is a letter of entitlement?** A letter of entitlement refers to a copy of a driver record issued by the driving authority in the relevant country and should include the following details: Licence holders name, address, date of birth, driver number, date of expiry of licence and class of licence to include details of what that class refers to. The letter of entitlement is also required to verify that the licence has not being withdrawn or disqualified. For more information, please email: lqueries@rsa.ie

Safe Home Ireland – an outline of our outreach service

Safe Home Ireland has two Outreach and Advocacy Officers, Noreen Mulrine and Brenda Fleming. In their day to day work, they offer support to our clients before, during and after the returning to Ireland process. Noreen is based in Co. Galway and Brenda is based in Co. Kerry. They are a small team but between them, they can offer support to returned emigrants regardless of age or circumstances across the entire country.

Here in Ireland, our outreach team explores housing options available to Safe Home housing applicants throughout the twenty-six counties; meeting with housing providers in order to highlight the needs of our clients and to secure housing for them.

As part of the outreach work, Noreen and Brenda carry out home visits to UK based housing applicants to ensure they are familiar with the process of returning home and all that this involves; i.e. the transfer of benefits and eligibility for benefits and healthcare in Ireland. The visit also gives people the chance to have a chat 'face to face', to discuss their concerns or other queries that they may have about returning to Ireland. It is at this stage that some applicants may decide that moving home is not the right choice for them. In those cases, the outreach officers will try to organise on-going support by linking them in with welfare and support organisations in the local area.

When our housing applicants have firm plans in place to return to Ireland, Noreen and/or Brenda will maintain contact throughout the process, advising them of the necessary documents to bring home and addressing other concerns they may have.

On their return, one of our outreach officers will meet the returnee at their new home to ensure that they are supported in transferring/applying for, rights and entitlements getting signed up with a doctor, local services etc. They will liaise and advocate on behalf of returnees with government and welfare department staff or any other agency as appropriate to the needs of the returnee.

In supporting returnees, we are conscious not to duplicate the excellent existing advice services that are available here (e.g Crosscare Migrant Project, Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO), and Citizens Information Centres countrywide) so where it is more appropriate, outreach staff will refer returnees to existing welfare/information and support services in their local areas.

Finally, it is very important to mention that our outreach and advocacy service is not only available to Safe Home housing applicants. **It is a broader service that is available to people of all ages and circumstances who are considering moving home. Our outreach team can also link in with people who have already returned to Ireland and will assist and support people in the overall transition and integration process.**



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Buidéal Góidhál Eacshrachta agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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