



Welcome from our CEO

Welcome to our February newsletter! While the weather here in Ireland may not yet feel like spring, we are looking forward to brighter days and better weather in the weeks to come!

Thank you to all who attended our first online [Returned Emigrants Network \(REN\)](#), on Saturday 14th February. We were pleased to have such a good turn out and delighted to welcome many new members too, some of who are still abroad, and will be joining the network on their return. REN provides returnees with a space to connect, share some of the positive aspects of returning to Ireland as well as highlighting some of the challenges and barriers. Our next meetings will take place on **Saturday, 18th April**. Further details will be shared on our social media channels, or you can contact our office directly for more information.

In our Newsletter this month we would like to pose a few thought-provoking questions that you could ask yourself to help you to make a decision about returning to Ireland. In our next newsletter we will focus on practical questions as well as outline a few ways in which to prepare for the move, if you do decide to return to Ireland.

We continue to advance our advocacy to press for progress on the [US | Irish Driver's Licence Exchange](#). We meet every month and members are made up of individuals and organisations in Ireland and across the US. See [HERE](#) for details of members. If you, or someone you know, has recently returned or moved to Ireland from the US, we encourage you to join this campaign [HERE](#) and help strengthen our call for policy change.

St. Patrick's Day, or *Lá Fhéile Pádraig* is one of the most widely celebrated cultural holidays in the world. The Irish Government 2026 Programme will see the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, and 40 State representatives travel to over 50 countries to promote Ireland and engage with political, business, cultural, and diaspora leaders. The largest and oldest St Patrick's Day parade in the world takes place in New York City, with this year marking its 265th year. Other major celebrations in the United States include the Chicago River, which is dyed green with an eco-friendly powder, an event dating back to 1962, as well as festivities in Boston, Philadelphia, and Savannah, where St Patrick's Day is a legal holiday. See [HERE](#) for more information on St. Patrick's Day parades and events taking place around the world and [HERE](#) for everything you need to know about St. Patrick's Day!

As we mark the Chinese Year of the Horse, and as the seasons of Lent and Ramadan begin, we also extend our warmest wishes to all those who are celebrating and observing these important occasions. May this time bring renewal, reflection, and hope.

We also wish you all a very happy St Patrick's Day/Lá Fhéile Pádraig, from Karen, the Staff, Board, Friends and Ambassador of Safe Home Ireland.

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Thinking
of returning or moving to
Ireland?

Get in touch with us!

Safe Home Programme CLG
trading as Safe Home Ireland
Charity No: 20049119
Company Reg No: 351678

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To request your Irish PRSI Contribution Record

The Department of Social Protection in Ireland does not provide forecasts of future pension entitlements or comment on individual pension planning enquiries.

However, to help you estimate the rate of State Pension (contributory) (SPC) you may receive, you can request a copy of your Contribution Statement. Your Contribution Statement is a summary of your pay-related social insurance (PRSI) contributions in Ireland. When calculating your rate of SPC, the department uses your Contribution Statement to identify:

- your working history,
- any time you spent on payments from the Department of Social Protection,
- any time you spent caring.

To calculate your SPC, the department will consider any reckonable contributions that are on your record up to your chosen pension drawdown date.

The quickest and easiest way to request a copy of your Contribution Statement is online at <http://www.MyWelfare.ie>

Or you can also request your Contribution Statement in writing via:

Client Eligibility Services, Department of Social Protection, McCarter's Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal, F93 CH79 Ireland

Tel: 00353 1 471 5898 Email: ContributionStatement@welfare.ie

Having access to your contributions history can make pension and social security claims much smoother down the line. You can read more about social insurance contributions in the Irish system [HERE](#)

Global Irish Civic Forum

The **4th Global Irish Civic Forum** will take place on **30 April and 1 May 2026** at Croke Park, Dublin. The Forum is an initiative of the Irish Government to engage with the diaspora from around the world. to share experiences, discuss the opportunities and challenges facing Irish communities abroad, and strengthen global connections.

The Forum will also mark the launch of **Ireland's new Diaspora Strategy**, setting out the Government's priorities for supporting, engaging and building relationships with Irish communities abroad in the years ahead.

To coincide with this Forum Our colleagues at [Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project](#) are hosting a **Coffee Morning on Wednesday, 29 April**, at their offices in **Dublin 7 (10am to 12pm)**.

This is a wonderful opportunity to visit their offices; meet their team and connect face-to-face with representatives of Irish organisations from Ireland and across the globe, including some members of Safe Home team! Advance registration is required, so please register your attendance [HERE](#).

Thinking of moving or returning to Ireland - Is it for me? PART 1.

In recent years there have been many changes throughout the world, too many to discuss in this article. These changes may have caused many Irish people who may have left Ireland for various reasons such as work, better opportunities, adventure etc and ask 'should they remain in their adopted countries where they may have begun to put down roots, where there may be better opportunities, amenities and not to mention, better weather' ...or do they respond to the 'pull' to come home in order to be closer to family and friends, or perhaps to raise their children away from large cities? In any case transporting your life from one country to another (even if that country was the one of your birth) can be a complicated process both you and Ireland have changed in the time you have been away. There are so many practical and emotional considerations and even more so if non-Irish born spouses or children are part of the decision.

This month we would like to pose a few thought-provoking questions that you could ask yourself to help you to make a decision. In our next newsletter we will focus on practical questions as well as outline a few ways in which to prepare for the move, if you do decide to return to Ireland.

- **Family connections:** Consider your family links at home and in your adopted country. Would a return to Ireland mean that you are physically closer to parents, siblings, nieces and nephews; also, will you be leaving behind children or grandchildren or other family members?
- **Friendships and support networks:** Similarly, with friendships ... look at your circle of friends in both countries and your support network. Moving can be an uncertain and lonely time for some people so it is important to consider where your strongest support networks are.
- **Who is (would be)moving with you:** Are you returning alone or with a partner and children and how does each individual think/feel about the move? Are you bringing family members who have never lived in Ireland before? If so, take time to consider what additional challenges this may bring for them and for you.
- **Work and life plans:** What are your plans when you move? Are you hoping to find work, set up a business or are you hoping to retire? If you are still working, what will it be like to leave your current workplace and professional network?
- **Time spent away:** Another consideration is the length of time you have been away. As already mentioned, both you and Ireland have changed... if you have not been home for many years but still dream of returning, consider going to Ireland for a break? A visit would give the opportunity to experience the changes and imagine how it would be to live there permanently
- **Hobbies and interests:** What are your hobbies and interests? if you move to Ireland would you be able to continue with these or are there others there you would like to take up?
- **Lifestyle and location:** Are you someone who enjoys a busy social life? Will you be moving from a busy urban centre to a more rural area in Ireland? Take time to consider how this may feel and work out in reality.

We hope that these questions will help people to weigh up some of the pros and cons of returning home or 'staying put'. If you have any queries or if you would like to talk through any aspect of returning home permanently, please do contact us [HERE](#)

NEW Passport requirements for travel between Ireland and the UK

From 25 February 2026, [Aer Lingus](#) passengers travelling between the Republic of Ireland and the UK will be required to present a valid passport or an Irish passport card to check in and board. Previously, Irish and British citizens could fly between the two countries using alternative forms of photo ID, such as a driving licence or age card, under the long-standing Common Travel Area arrangements. However, from that date, other forms of identification will no longer be accepted.

The new requirement applies to both Irish and British nationals, passengers who do not present the required documentation will not be permitted to travel. This was already the case for [Ryanair](#) flights since November 2025, which also require Passport or National ID cards to be used.

Photo ID requirements on domestic UK routes operated by Emerald Airlines (e.g., Belfast to other UK destinations) remain unchanged.

For travellers who are neither Irish nor British citizens, existing immigration requirements continue to apply. Many will also need an [Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#) or visa to enter the UK, depending on nationality.

Passengers planning travel between Ireland and the UK with Aer Lingus are advised to check their documents well in advance, particularly if they previously relied on non-passport forms of ID. Get the latest travel alerts and updates from the Irish Government on the **TravelWise** App.

Insurance Contributions, If you have worked in the UK and live abroad or have returned to Ireland

The UK 2025 Autumn Budget confirmed that voluntary Class 2 National Insurance (NI) contributions for those living abroad will end from 6 April 2026, marking a major change for those living abroad who used this lower-cost payments to maintain their State Pension record. If you previously paid UK National Insurance contributions, and live abroad, you may still be able to make voluntary contributions to increase your eligibility for the UK State Pension. **Important: Rules are changing from 6 April 2026:**

- **Class 2 contributions from abroad will end:** the lower-cost option will no longer be available
- **Class 3 contributions will be restricted:** only available if you, either lived in the UK for **10 consecutive years** or paid **10 years of UK National Insurance contributions**

If you paid **at least 3 years of UK National Insurance contributions**, you can currently buy back missing years to fill gaps in your record and help qualify for the **UK State Pension** .

If you have gaps in your record and want to qualify for, or increase, your UK State Pension, it is important to review your record and consider making voluntary contributions before **6 April 2026**. For more information on how to pay voluntary contributions, see: [How to pay voluntary National Insurance contributions](#).

THE MAGDALEN LAUNDRIES RESTORATIVE JUSTICE EX-GRATIA PAYMENT SCHEME

This scheme remains open for applications from women who were admitted to one of 12 Laundries. In addition, the scheme is open to applications from people who worked in one of the 12 laundries and lived in one of the 14 adjoining institutions. Payment can be between €11,500 and €100,000.

There are separate applications depending on whether an applicant was admitted to one of the 12 laundries or worked in one of the laundries and lived in an adjoining institution. The application form can be found [here](#).

Applicants will need to submit identification and evidence of residence in an institution.

If you need help or support to make an application you can call the Freephone National Response Line is 0800 519 5519 (**from WITHIN Ireland**).

Lines open from 10am – 4pm every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

OR Tel: 00447432138682 (**UK based**) Monday to Friday.
