



SAFE HOME IRELAND
DIASPORA SUPPORT SERVICE

Annual Review 2025



Supported by

Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Registered Charity Number : 20049119

Company No: 351678



Safe Home Ireland is an Irish charity with a global remit



Safe Home Ireland (Safe Home) was established in 2000 initially, to assist qualifying older Irish-born emigrants abroad in their desire to return to Ireland.

Since inception, Safe Home has assisted 2,363 Irish-born individuals to secure accommodation in Ireland, supported by collaborations with local authorities and housing providers across the 26 counties.

As well as providing housing assistance, Safe Home now offers a targeted range of services to Irish emigrants abroad, regardless of age or circumstances, who wish to return to Ireland. In addition, Safe Home supports people who have returned independently, often in crisis and challenging circumstances, by providing holistic, person-centred support.

For the majority, returning to Ireland was a lifelong dream that could not have been realised without the intervention and support of Safe Home.

Vision



That any Irish person living abroad who wishes to live in Ireland can do so with dignity and respect.

Mission



To support Irish people abroad, particularly those who are in crisis and challenging circumstances, to transition and settle in community life in Ireland.

A Message from our CEO Karen McHugh



2025 has been another busy but impactful year for Safe Home Ireland. Our small but committed team continued to support Irish people abroad who are considering returning, as well as those who have already made the journey home.

2025 also marked a significant milestone as we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Safe Home Ireland. It provided an important opportunity to reflect on our work to date, recognise the impact we have made, and look ahead to future opportunities for growth and collaboration. To coincide with this milestone, we were pleased to hold a Stakeholders Day and launch our new Safe Home Ireland website in September, sponsored by UTS Technologies, to whom we are most grateful. The launch, held at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum, brought together staff, board members, friends, supporters, and partner agencies from Ireland and overseas as well as our core funder, The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. We were especially honoured to receive a letter from former President Michael D. Higgins, our Patron for the past 14 years, until November 2025, to honour our 25th Anniversary.

Throughout the year, we continued to make progress across a number of strategic areas. We launched and co-chair a campaign advocating for Irish–U.S. driver’s licence exchange agreement. We also participated in our first European Erasmus+ project, working with partners across Ireland and Europe to share learning and develop best practice in supporting return migration. Our Returned Emigrants Network (REN) has also continued to grow, providing an important space for connection, support, and advocacy.

A special highlight of the year for me was my US Outreach trip to New York and Boston in October and November, funded through a separate grant under the Emigrant Support Programme (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade).

The trip was an invaluable opportunity for me to connect with the Irish diaspora, some of whom are thinking and planning to return or move to Ireland (some voluntarily and some involuntarily). It was great to visit so many Irish Centres and meet with the dedicated staff and volunteer teams who support our diaspora. The Centres are a lifeline for many of our diaspora and they truly provide a 'home away from home'. A special thank you to everyone I met and for the warm welcome extended to me.

Our outreach support to the UK also remained strong, with visits by our Outreach & Advocacy Officers to Irish Centres in London, Luton, and other areas primarily across the South East of England, where we co-hosted Moving/Returning to Ireland Information Clinics. These trips also provided an opportunity to meet with many of our housing applicants and others considering a move or return to Ireland. We look forward to expanding this work further across additional UK locations in 2026. We would also like to sincerely thank all of the Centres for their ongoing support and for the warm welcome extended to our team throughout the year.

During the year, our Board commissioned an independent Organisational Review of Safe Home Ireland to assess our structure, services, staffing, governance, and funding model, and to support future sustainability and growth. The review affirmed Safe Home Ireland as a trusted, high-impact organisation delivering high-quality, person-centred services with strong governance in place. The Board will continue to consider and progress the recommendations arising from the review to ensure the organisation remains fit for purpose, financially sustainable, and well positioned to deliver its mission into the future.

I would like to thank our *Board* for their ongoing support and commitment throughout the year, and for giving so generously of their time to ensure that Safe Home Ireland remains a highly regarded and compliant charity; the *Friends of Safe Home Ireland* for their continued support behind the scenes in promoting and advancing our work; our *Ambassador*, Seán Keane, for helping to raise awareness of our services and mission both at home and abroad; and our *Founder and Life President*, Dr. Jerry Cowley, for his unwavering support over the years. I would also like to thank *Claudine Leonard* for working with us on the design of this report, and for her work throughout the year on our social media and information materials, ensuring that we remain consistent and on brand. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated *staff team* for their continued commitment and support during the year.

I am fortunate to be the CEO of such an impactful charity and to lead a skilled, dedicated, and hardworking team whose compassion, kindness, and professionalism provide vital services and support to our diaspora and to those who return home once more.

A Message from our Chairperson Nova Fariss



I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues on the Board for their continued leadership, governance, and commitment throughout the year. Their oversight ensures strong direction, accountability, and stability across all areas of the organisation. During the year, the Board continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis, supported by its Fundraising and Audit & Risk Sub-Committees. This structure ensures strong governance and enables key areas of work to progress effectively between meetings.

We continued to progress the implementation of our Strategic Plan, which guides the organisation's development and priorities. 2025 was another positive year for fundraising and supporter engagement at Safe Home Ireland, with a range of initiatives helping to raise both funds as well as raising awareness of our work.

We are deeply grateful to our partners and colleagues in Ireland and abroad, including Irish centres, welfare organisations, embassies, and consulates, who continue to support returning emigrants and those planning a return home. Our sincere thanks also go to our Ambassador, Seán Keane, the Friends of Safe Home Ireland group, our regular donors, sponsors and planned givers, some of whom wish to remain anonymous; also to the many new donors this year from both Ireland and abroad. This support is invaluable, and we are deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment.

Finally, we are particularly grateful to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Emigrant Support Programme, for their continued funding and partnership during 2025. This support remains fundamental to our ability to continue to deliver our core services. For now, thank you once again from the bottom of our hearts, as we look forward to another great year ahead.

Our Team



Nova Fariss
(Chairperson)



Ann Roddy
(Treasurer)



Dr Patricia Codyre
(Secretary)

Directors



Troy Gallagher
(Board Member)



Edel Shovlin
(Board Member)



Niall Foley
(Board Member)



Pauline Gallagher
(Board Member)

Staff Members



Karen McHugh
(Chief Executive Officer)



Mary Ann Fadian
(Co-ordinator)



Noreen Mulrine
(Outreach & Advocacy Officer)



Karen Bollen
(Outreach & Advocacy Officer)



Johnny B. Broderick
(Information & Communications Officer)

Ambassador Seán Keane

Seán Keane became our first Ambassador in May 2021 and comes from a family with a long and rich tradition of music, song, and dance in County Galway. He continues to play a vital role in advancing and strengthening the profile of Safe Home Ireland, both at home and abroad. He generously supports the organisation by leading our annual fundraising Concert, joining us on our annual Famine Way walk, and participating in a range of events on our behalf.



Life President Dr. Jerry Cowley

Dr. Jerry Cowley is the founder and former Chairperson of Safe Home Ireland. In 2000, together with a group of volunteers, he established Ireland's first national repatriation service to support eligible older Irish emigrants wishing to return home. What began as a small pilot project has grown into a globally recognised professional charity supporting people of all ages and circumstances, enabling them to return with dignity, care, and support. We are fortunate to continue to benefit from Jerry's ongoing support.



Friends of Safe Home Ireland

January marked the third anniversary of Friends of Safe Home Ireland, a group who have done so much to support and promote Safe Home Ireland and introduce us to many new partners, donors and supporters. We are grateful to all the members, who prefer to work quietly behind the scenes, but whose impact is felt far and wide. Their dedication and generosity enable us to continue our vital work, and we look forward to continued collaboration again in 2026.



Current members are Teresa Cowley, Stephen Graham, Ann Lawler, Diarmuid McAuliffe and Paul Reardon

A special Tribute to our former Patron, Michael D. Higgins - President of Ireland

Message from Our Patron Michael D. Higgins President of Ireland



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS 25th Anniversary of Safe Home Ireland

Mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, may I extend my warmest congratulations to all involved in Safe Home Ireland on the occasion of your 25th anniversary. *Traoslainn libh.*

This is a most fitting moment to acknowledge the immense contribution that Safe Home Ireland has made over the past quarter of a century in assisting thousands of our citizens, particularly older and more vulnerable members of our Irish family, in returning home to Ireland.

In doing so, you have not only offered practical support, but also the gift of belonging, reconnecting individuals with the communities, landscapes, and culture that shaped them. In helping people to return, you are also helping to weave back into our shared story those threads that might otherwise have been lost.

This work speaks to the very best of our national values, those of compassion, solidarity, and a steadfast commitment to the dignity of each person, efforts that represent, too, the spirit of active participation and engaged citizenship at its very best.

I am delighted to learn that your ambassador Seán Keane, whose musical gifts brought such joy to those gathered at Áras an Uachtaráin earlier this year, will be part of your anniversary celebration. His presence is a testament to the enduring role of music in connecting hearts and telling the story of Ireland, wherever our people may be.

May I once again extend my warmest congratulations to all involved in Safe Home Ireland as you celebrate a quarter of a century of dedicated service.

May I wish you continued success as you continue with your important work.

Traoslainn libh, is beir gach beannacht d'ón toidchái.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

In November, we said goodbye to our Patron of 14 years, former President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. It has been an enormous honour for Safe Home Ireland, and for all those we work with, to have had the President as our Patron. With his own deep family links to emigration, Michael D. has long demonstrated empathy, understanding and unwavering support for Irish emigrants worldwide.

One of the most enduring symbols of that support is the Tilley Lamp that shines from an upstairs window at Áras an Uachtaráin. First placed by President Mary Robinson and maintained by every President since, the lamp serves as a warm and constant beacon for Irish emigrants, reflecting Ireland's tradition of guiding strangers home. President Higgins continued this tradition with great sincerity and pride. We would like to extend our very best wishes to Michael D. and his wife, Sabina, for a long, happy and well-deserved retirement in Galway.

Snapshot of our work and impact in 2025



Total Interventions
5,528

Total of
5,296
client interventions

Total of
232
organisation interventions

Information

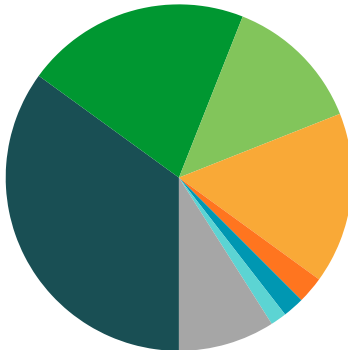


We support people while still abroad, to make informed choices about moving or returning to Ireland. This includes home visits to housing applicants (UK & US mostly); Information Clinics on Moving/Returning to Ireland as well as peer-support sessions with Irish and other welfare agencies abroad.

New contacts increased by 51% in 2025, rising from 424 in 2024 to 640 in 2025. Of these, 21% were from US-based clients, compared to 14% in 2024.

Location of New Contacts

- 35% - UK
- 21% - US
- 13% - Ireland
- 16% - not stated
- 2.5% - Canada
- 2% - Australia
- 1.5% - Spain
- 9% - Other



NEW Contacts/
Information Requests

640

Connect



We offer a connection to home for those who remain abroad, primarily through our monthly e-bulletin, social media channels and Returning to Ireland Information Clinics.



People in contact

940



E-Bulletin circulation

2,102



Social Media

7,657

www.safehomeireland.com
info@safehomeireland.com



Outreach



We assist returning citizens in feeling socially included during their transition back to Ireland by providing person-centred, holistic outreach support, helping them access essential services and their rights.

Outreach support visits Ireland



78

Outreach UK



64

Outreach US



26

Returning to Ireland Information Clinics



11

1-to-1 online appointments (worldwide)



20

Housing



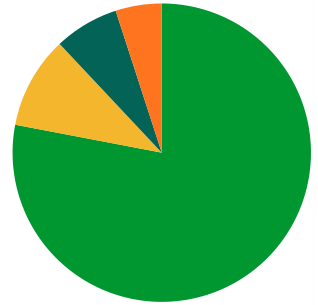
We explore housing options throughout Ireland, for qualifying Irish-born emigrants abroad. This is done primarily in partnership with Local Authorities and Housing Associations throughout Ireland.



Active Housing Applicants **300**

Host Countries

- 78% UK
- 10% US
- 7% Europe
- 5% Other



Accommodation Secured **35**



New Housing Applicants **55**

Accommodation Secured
Since inception, accommodation has now been secured for

2,363 people

Direct Support Service



**Noreen Mulrine &
Karen Bollen**

**Outreach & Advocacy
Officers**

The role of the Outreach and Advocacy Officers with Safe Home Ireland is to provide information, guidance, advocacy and outreach support to individuals before, during and after their return to Ireland.

Throughout 2025, Safe Home Ireland's Outreach and Advocacy service continued to play a central role in supporting returning Irish emigrants and those considering a return. The Officers provided tailored, practical support to people who returned to Ireland, both via Safe Home Ireland and independently, assisting with complex applications for healthcare, social welfare, and other essential services. Each person required an individualised approach, with intense advocacy often needed to navigate statutory systems and resolve challenges to reintegration.. This involves developing and maintaining strong working relationships with housing bodies, social welfare services, and health services. Officers also signpost clients to local services in their area of return to support longer-term integration into the community.

Our outreach officers also worked closely with Irish and other support organisations abroad, in order that people can make informed decisions in advance of the move on whether returning to Ireland is right for them. This included in-person meetings, telephone and online consultations, and holding online information sessions with the staff of Irish agencies so they in turn could provide up to date information and guidance for their clients

Outreach officers travelled regularly to the UK to meet with Irish community organisations, host information sessions on moving or returning to Ireland, and meet with our housing applicants. During the year information clinics were held in partnership with organisations including the London Irish Centre, Luton Irish Forum, Irish Community Services Bexleyheath, BIAS, Irish Elders Advice Network, Ashford Place, Survivors Service, and the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith. These events provided an opportunity for people to receive practical guidance on topics such as housing, pensions, documentation and access to services in Ireland.

In addition to direct client work, Outreach officers contributed to policy and sectoral engagement during the year. This included participation in diaspora consultation sessions contributing to Ireland’s new Diaspora Strategy, attendance at national stakeholder events, and ongoing engagement with Local Authority Housing Strategic Policy Committees to raise awareness of Safe Home Ireland’s work to help ensure better outcomes for our clients . Officers also played a role in the Returned Emigrants Network and European Return Migration Network (ERMiNe) projects during the year.

“ Altogether, the role is interesting and very rewarding, particularly in the cases where we can support people to fulfil their dream of returning home. It is also great to be able to provide guidance to enable people to come to the decision that is best for them”

On the morning of January 6th 2026, a call was received from one of our former clients, Padraig , who returned to the west of Ireland in 2024 from London.

“I’m sorry I forgot to call before Christmas — I don’t know why, because I owe you all so much. I just wanted to say Happy New Year and thank you for helping me get home. It was the best decision I ever made. I’m so happy now to have my own home and not have to share with strangers.”



Our Work in Action



Sarah, Home from London

Sarah first came in contact with Safe Home Ireland in 2021. Sarah had initially gone to the UK in the 1980s for employment.

Sarah was attending Ashford Place in London and had expressed to them that she wished to return home to Ireland as she was retiring that year. Sarah had many good friends while she lived in the UK, many of whom had already returned to Ireland themselves. Sarah wished to return to her native county where she has close family members to spend her retirement. Ashford Place then reached out to Safe Home to work together in supporting Sarah in making her dream a reality.

Sarah was provided with the required paperwork and support to apply to the social housing scheme as facilitated through Safe Home, and she was approved on the council housing list in 2022. A Safe Home Outreach Officer carried out a home visit with Sarah in London and thereafter maintained contact with her and her support worker at Ashford Place to provide updates and information on the progress of her housing application.

Sarah was offered housing in Ireland in 2025. Safe Home and Ashford place supported her as she set about organising her return home; providing assistance around ending her tenancy in the UK, arranging for UK benefits to be terminated or transferred where applicable. Once back in Ireland, our Outreach Officer met with Sarah and provided help with applying for an Irish pension top-up, medical card and other benefits she was entitled to.

Sarah was very grateful for the collaboration and support from Ashford Place and Safe Home Ireland. She is very happy to be back in her home county to spend her retirement with her family.

Our Work in Action



James - 'Home for Good' this time!

James first contacted Safe Home Ireland in January 2025 when he was considering a move back to Ireland for the second time.

In the 1980s, James and some friends moved from the west of Ireland to the UK to work in construction when it was difficult to find work in Ireland. He moved to London then later to Manchester. He maintained good contact with his family and friends at home and in the early 2000s decided to return home. Most of his friends had already done so.

At the time of his return there was a lot of work in Ireland, so he easily found a job and bought a house, he was very happy to be settled back at home. Unfortunately, around 2007/2008 Ireland began to go into recession and James was made redundant, he was able to secure another job but his new wages did not cover his mortgage repayments so sadly within a few years the bank repossessed his home. Once more James had the dilemma of whether to remain in Ireland to work in a job where he could barely afford to rent a flat or to return to England, in the end he decided to go back to the UK, this time he moved to Birmingham and worked until his late 60s.

When he contacted Safe Home he explained that in recent years he suffered a number of serious health conditions and had felt very isolated in the UK after his retirement. His family in Ireland helped him secure a private rented tenancy so he returned in spring.

Safe Home's outreach staff helped him apply to the council to be assessed as having a housing need, then apply for HAP to help with his rent. They also assisted him to open a bank account here and transfer his Irish and UK pensions, they assisted him to register with a doctor, get a medical card and apply for other related benefits such as fuel allowance and household benefits.

Our Work in Action



John's Return

In June 2025, Safe Home Ireland supported John to return home to Ireland following a period of significant personal and health related issues abroad.

His return was the outcome of months of coordinated planning between a number of agencies. As a result, while John returned in very challenging circumstances, the necessary supports had been put in place to ensure that the transition was as smooth and stress-free as possible for him.

Prior to his return, John had been living abroad and was being supported by a transitional housing project for people experiencing homelessness. He had accessed the service when after becoming unwell he was no longer able to work and required day-to-day support. While hostel staff provided essential assistance, John's status abroad and the short-term nature of the service meant they were unable to offer a long-term solution. Recognising this, they contacted services in Ireland to explore the option of a supported repatriation to Dublin for John.

Early engagement between the HSE Social Inclusion Team, Safe Home Ireland, Dublin City Council, the Simon Community, and Safety Net ensured that all relevant documentation and referrals were in place before John arrived home. This advance planning meant that key medical and housing assessments could be fast-tracked for him on his return.

John's immediate priority on arrival back in Ireland was his health. With the involvement of the HSE Social Inclusion Team, initial medical assessments were facilitated through Safety Net, followed by further interventions when John was admitted to the Dublin Simon Community's step-up/step-down service. This provided him with much needed stability and access to appropriate care at a critical time.

Alongside this, a Safe Home Ireland Outreach Officer worked in partnership with the HSE Social Inclusion Team to support John with applications for social welfare and a medical card. Engagement also continued with Dublin City Council to explore longer-term housing options, ensuring that John’s needs were considered beyond the immediate/emergency housing response.

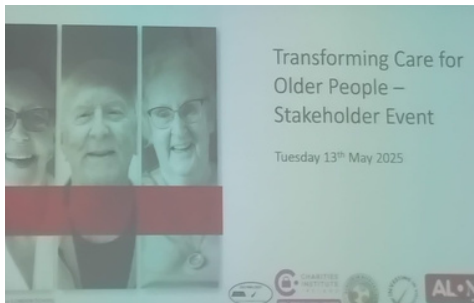
By the end of 2025, John had been offered his ‘forever’ home, a secure social housing tenancy in Dublin. He is now settled and continues to engage positively with relevant support services.

John’s experience highlights what can be achieved when agencies work collaboratively before, during, and after a person’s return home. Even when someone has to return to Ireland in crisis, coordinated planning and partnership working can lead to positive and sustainable outcomes.

Teamwork works!

Outreach & Advocacy Learning

In May, Karen & Noreen attended an event in Dublin hosted by ALONE Ireland entitled *Transforming Care for Older People*



Advocacy & Project Work



Returned Emigrants Network (REN)

In November 2023, we established the Returned Emigrants Network (REN) to serve as a social hub to promote wellbeing, and to offer returned emigrants a chance to meet up and support each other, especially during the early days of resettlement. The Network acts as a valuable platform for identifying challenges experienced by returned emigrants, helping Safe Home to inform policy discussions and advocate for improved supports. The Network continued to grow during 2025, with meetings held regularly in Laois and Sligo, as well as online. We hope to expand REN meetings to additional locations in 2026.

Thank you to everyone who attended our first Sligo Returned Emigrants Network meeting in October. We had valuable discussions around the positive aspects of returning home, as well as some of the key challenges and barriers experienced by those returning from both the US and Australia.

Returned Emigrants Network Meeting - Sligo
Option to attend in person or on-line

Saturday 25th October 2025
12pm to 2pm
Southern Hotel (Connaught Room)
Strandhill Rd, Rathedmond, Sligo, F91 EW24

Recently returned home to Ireland?
Would you like to meet others who have lived abroad?
If so, come along to our next meeting!

Register on Eventbrite or contact our office as follows:
Contact Karen at Safe Home Ireland
Tel: 098 36036/087 977 5080
Email: karen@safehomeireland.com

Supported by Department of Ireland, Diaspora Support Programme

Safe Home Ireland is a charity that works with the Irish diaspora. With your support, we can continue to provide information and guidance to Irish abroad thinking of returning home and maintain our vital support services for those who have recently returned.

www.safehomeireland.com Charity Number: 20048293



Advocacy & Project Work



Irish-US Driver's Licence Exchange Campaign

One of the most significant advocacy initiatives during 2025 was the launch of a campaign calling for the reciprocal exchange of driver's licences between Ireland and the United States. Safe Home is one of the founding members and co-chair of this Network. The campaign was formally launched in February 2025 in collaboration with individuals across Ireland and the United States, including Irish welfare organisations and diaspora advocacy groups.

The issue of driver's licence exchange has long been identified as a major barrier for returning Irish emigrants from the United States, many of whom must restart the licensing process from the beginning after decades of driving abroad. The significance of this issue has been recognised by its inclusion in Ireland's 2025 Programme for Government. During the year, Ireland's Minister for Transport, Darragh O'Brien TD, has formally written to the Governor of New York to request consideration of a reciprocal driving license agreement with Ireland. Given its large Irish population, New York was selected as the first 'pilot' State. The Road Safety Authority (RSA) is now examining the feasibility of entering into such agreements but before moving forward, it must ensure that New York's licensing and testing systems are comparable with those in Ireland.

Further information on the campaign, including how to subscribe for updates and follow progress, is available at: www.irishlicenseexchange.com

As Co-Chair of this Committee, we will continue our work on this campaign in 2026 and will keep you informed of progress through our e-bulletins and social media platforms



Advocacy & Project Work



ERMiNe - European Return Migration Network

In 2025, Safe Home Ireland joined its first Erasmus+ project, the European Return Migration Network (ERMiNe), a pan-European partnership of non-profit organisations dedicated to advancing intra-European mobility and strengthening the rights of EU migrants by promoting social inclusion and improving access to services across Germany, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Poland, and Ireland. Funded under the Erasmus+ Small-Scale Partnerships in Adult Education, the project runs from December 2024 to February 2026.

The project was launched in Dublin in February at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum, followed by in-person partner meetings in Brussels in June, Berlin in November as well as monthly online meetings and learning exchanges. These gatherings have enabled partners to exchange knowledge, strengthen collaboration, and align approaches to supporting returnees across Europe. Engagement with European institutions and stakeholders, particularly in Brussels, has also helped position the network within the wider EU policy context.

ERMiNe aims to strengthen support for return migration by sharing best practice between partner organisations. This includes identifying barriers faced by people moving or returning within Europe, developing practical resources and training to enhance support services, and building stronger cross-border cooperation among diaspora support organisations.

Participation in ERMiNe has strengthened Safe Home Ireland's connections with organisations across Europe working in migration, diaspora engagement, and mobility, helping to inform and enhance our support for returning Irish citizens. We will continue to work with members to further develop this collaboration, advance shared priorities, and explore opportunities to expand this work in 2026.



ERMiNe - Dublin, Brussels and Berlin

Lunch Event at
EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum



Berlin



Brussels



Advocacy & Project Work

Housing Strategic Policy Committees (SPC)



Galway

Safe Home has continued to advocate for improved access to housing for returning emigrants. In June, we warmly welcomed Galway County Council’s important policy change to include ‘Returning Emigrants’ in its 2025 Housing Allocation Scheme.

The agreed policy change formally recognises and supports the housing needs of older Irish-born emigrants approved via Safe Home Ireland as a distinct group within the Council housing allocations policy. This amendment ensures that those who once left Ireland, many under difficult circumstances, are treated fairly and equitably within housing policy and welcomed back to Ireland with dignity and support. It is important to note that the inclusion of these amendments does not afford preferential treatment but rather allows for equitable consideration in line with other vulnerable groups. We are deeply grateful to Galway County Council and to Cllr Dr Evelyn Parsons, whose lived experience abroad and leadership helped make this change possible.

Sligo and Monaghan

Our CEO, Karen McHugh, was delighted to present to Monaghan County Council Housing SPC meeting in September and Sligo County Council Housing SPC meeting in December. A native of Sligo and a returned emigrant herself, it was a meaningful “full-circle” moment for Karen.

The purpose of attending SPC meetings is to seek Council support for Safe Home eligible housing applicants, approved by the relevant County Council, for nomination to ‘age-friendly’ accommodation.



Karen McHugh, CEO
pictured in Sligo with
Cllr Dara Mulvey and
Cllr Edel McSharry

We look forward to working with all other councils in 2026 to develop tailored responses, which may differ, but will ensure that the needs of qualifying older Irish-born emigrants are fully considered.

Stakeholders Day

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

Monday 22nd September 2025

We held a Stakeholders Day to bring together partners in Ireland and abroad to mark our 25th Anniversary and launch our new website. The day included a workshop with diaspora specialist *Dr Martin Russell*, presentations from our core funders, The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Irish Abroad Unit), Consulate Services, EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum, the Irish Australian Support & Resource Bureau, Ashford Place London and the Irish Pastoral Centre Boston. We were also honoured to receive a warm message from *President Michael D. Higgins*, our Patron (until November 2025).



Date for Your Diary!
Stakeholders Day
and
Launch of
New Website
Monday, 22nd September

CALENDAR

SAFE HOME IRELAND
DIASPORA SUPPORT SERVICE

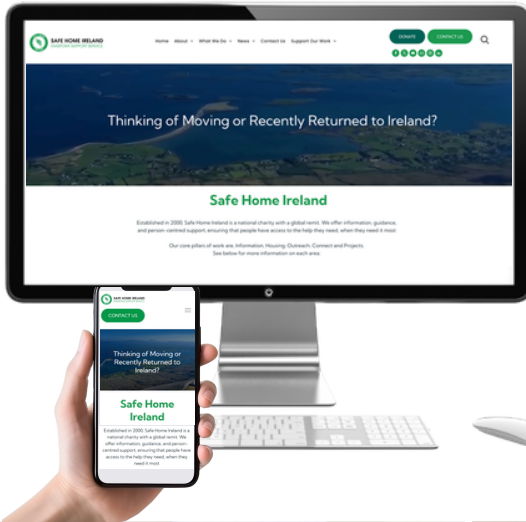
Details to come...

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

New Website Launch

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

Monday 22nd September 2025



We were pleased to unveil our new website designed by Growth Digital Marketing. This was made possible through sponsorship by *Seán Brogan* of UTS Technologies to whom we are indebted.

Our website www.safehomeireland.com is intended to improve access to information for returning emigrants and partner organisations.



Fundraising Walk



The Long Road Home / Ag Siúl le Chéile

The National Famine Way Walk | May 24th & 25th 2025

In May, we walked the **National Famine Way** (in reverse) for the third year, travelling from **EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum**, Dublin to **The National Famine Museum**, Strokestown Park, Co. Roscommon. This year we completed the 167 km route over nine stages in just two days. We look forward to taking part again in May 2026. We welcome you to join us, for details, see [HERE](#). We want to sincerely thank our partners at The National Famine Way, EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum and Strokestown Park for their continued support and commitment to our mission.



Christmas Concert



Performances from our Ambassador *Seán Keane*, the *Timahoe Male Choir* and special guest *Kate Dineen*

Our Ambassador *Seán Keane* continued to play a vital role in raising awareness of Safe Home Ireland through concerts and public events. In December, we once again hosted an *Evening of Music and Song* in St. Andrew's Church, Dublin. It was wonderful to see a packed church with a rapt audience enjoying performances from our ambassador, the *Timahoe Male Choir* and special guest, *Kate Dineen*. We are grateful to parishioners of Dublin's South Inner City Parishes and to their Administrator, Fr. Alan Hilliard, for ongoing support of Safe Home Ireland mission.



Annual Calendar



Each year, we create a Safe Home Ireland Calendar to help raise funds for our work supporting returning Irish emigrants. The calendar features very generous sponsors, and we are deeply grateful to each of them for their support. All images featured in our Calendar were donated by the contributors named and accompanying each image are original reflections by our own Johnny B Broderick.



Friday Friendship Calendar Social Media Posts

We thank these sponsors on our Friday Friendship social media posts every week, which feature poems by Johnny B Broderick.

Diversity

We can share this space together
No need for hatred to spread
We are no different from each other
When our wounds are bleeding red

JBB ©

Thinking of coming home to roost?

Contact Safe Home Ireland
Web: safehomeireland.com Email: info@safehomeireland.com

Friday Friendship Calendar

25 SAFE HOME IRELAND

A Friend of Safe Home Ireland
Bringing People Home Together

Times Hall Theatre
www.timeshalltheatre.com

Vacant Chairs

Another Christmas almost here
people gathering with gifts to share
There will be no celebration in many homes
Instead IBS with a vacant chair

Avoidable torturous grief
Avoidable vice like pain
If we really learned from our mistakes
It would not happen again

Light a reverent candle
And say a heartfelt prayer
For the people left behind
To grieve the vacant chair

JBB ©

December 19th 2025

Friday Friendship Calendar

25 SAFE HOME IRELAND

A Friend of Safe Home Ireland
Bringing People Home Together

RELAXO CUP PLUS
www.relaxocupplus.com

Smiling

I grasped a fleeting memory
As it was floating near
It brought a little smile
and a lot of inner cheer.

I let it fly again
So someone else might know
The feeling that I felt
Smiling as I go!

JBB ©

December 5th 2025

Friday Friendship Calendar

25 SAFE HOME IRELAND

A Friend of Safe Home Ireland
Bringing People Home Together

THE WILLY LAMP, AKA AN EXHIBITION

THE DOORSTOPPERS
www.doorstoppers.ie

Community Garden Party Áras an Uachtaráin



We were delighted to be invited by former *President Michael D. Higgins* and *Sabina Higgins* to one of the final Community Garden Parties of his Presidency. At the event, our own *Johnny B Broderick* had the honour of sitting with the President. In June, *Christy Moore* released a tribute to *Michael D.* with beautiful words by *Johnny B* called **'Music to our ears'**, set to music by *Gavin Murphy*.



Included in the pictures with the President and Sabina Higgins are: *Ann Lawler* and *Paul Reardon* of 'Friends of Safe Home Ireland'; *Johnny B. Broderick* (our Information & Communications Officer); *Ann Roddy* (Board Director, Treasurer); and *Vivienne Woodley* of our Returned Emigrant Network.

Networking & Representation (Europe)

In May, our CEO participated remotely at the first *Asturias Forum on Return and Talent Attraction* held at the Congress Palace of Gijón, Spain. The Forum brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss activities related to diaspora return policies and talent attraction models. We shared the Safe Home model and Ireland's approach to diaspora engagement and support. It was a privilege to be one of only two international panellists, alongside a representative from New Zealand.



*Karen McHugh and Karen Bollen are pictured with James O'Brien, Consular Officer, and David Aşgin Walsh, Deputy Head of Mission at the **Embassy of Ireland, Belgium.***

It was a good opportunity to talk about Safe Home Ireland's work and to hear about the great work carried out by the Consular Service in Belgium.

Networking & Representation (Europe)



During our trip for the second ERMiNe project meeting in **Brussels** we were pleased to meet with *Denis Buckley* and *Mary Jo Mullarkey* (UK/Irish Diaspora) | **Irish in Europe Association (International) AISBL.**

Their main function is to help the worldwide Irish Diaspora living and working in Europe and promote Irish culture.

Our CEO attended the ‘2025 Meeting of German-Irish Societies and Organisations’ at the **Embassy of Ireland, Berlin** in November. It was good to hear about the great work done on the ground across Germany, covering business, sports, culture, language, music, town twinning (and so much more). It was also great to meet with Ambassador, Maeve Collins.



Networking & Representation (Ireland)

We attended meetings of the **Interdepartmental Committee on Diaspora Affairs**, chaired by *Neale Richmond TD, Minister with Responsibility on International Development and Diaspora*, in February and June. This Committee provides a unique opportunity to highlight areas of our work and to raise key issues, challenges and opportunities relevant to returning Irish citizens.



We attended **The Global Irish Summit** in Dublin Castle in May and met so many friends & colleagues from Ireland and around the world, including our friends at Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project and the Irish Pastoral Centre, Boston. The Summit featured many interesting panels, keynote addresses and interactive discussions. We look forward to ongoing discussions and playing our role in continuing to support Irish abroad and those thinking of returning home once more.



Networking & Representation (Ireland)

In October, we had the opportunity to present at a cross-party briefing on **“Issues Affecting Returning Irish Citizens”** in Leinster House (Dáil Éireann), in association with *Ciaran Staunton* (Recipient, Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad, 2022)

We highlighted key issues affecting returning Irish citizens and members expressed strong support for establishing a Cross-Party Oireachtas Committee on Returning Irish Citizens.



Networking & Representation (Ireland)

In October, we attended a **Diaspora Consultation forum**, hosted by *Neale Richmond TD*, Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora.

This forum, along with other consultations held in Ireland and abroad, took place to feed into the development of Ireland's new **Diaspora Strategy**, which will be launched in April 2026.



Once more we highlighted some of the key issues affecting Irish abroad and those considering moving or returning to Ireland, particularly people doing so in challenging or crisis situations.

We were pleased to meet with *Neale Richmond TD*, Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs with special responsibility for International Development and Diaspora, and with *Karl Gardner*, Head of Irish Abroad Unit in July to discuss our work and highlight challenges for those seeking to return to Ireland.

Pictured with *Nova Fariss (Chairperson)* and *Karen McHugh (CEO)* of *Safe Home Ireland*.



Networking & Outreach (UK)

Our team travelled regularly to the UK to meet with Irish community organisations, host information sessions on moving or returning to Ireland, and meet with our housing applicants.



Returning/Moving to Ireland Information Clinic in the **London Irish Centre**



Irish Services Team at **Ashford Place - Cricklewood, London**



Karen & Noreen with Suzanne, Susan, & Martyna at **BIAS BRENT (Brent Irish Advisory Service), London.**



Karen & Noreen met with Shauna & Frances at **Irish Community Services, Bexleyheath, London.**



Karen and Noreen met with Kieran at **Irish Elderly Advice Network, London.**

Networking & Outreach (UK)



Noreen at **London Irish Centre, Health & Wellbeing Day**

Karen with Noelette Hanley, CEO **Luton Irish Forum**



Our CEO attended the **London Irish Vintage Club 2025 Vintage Charity Day** to advance our profile and to meet with colleagues based in the UK



With Shauna from the **Irish Community Services Bexleyheath** and Brian Dalton from **Irish in Britain**



With William and Rose at the **Irish Cultural Centre Hammersmith**, Returning to Ireland Information Clinic



Attended the 'Survivors Integrated Service Health Wellbeing Day' at the **London Irish Centre**

Networking & Outreach (US)

In October and November, our CEO undertook a US outreach trip, to New York and Boston to strengthen relationships with partners there and meet with people considering moving/returning to Ireland

Karen's first stop was to meet the team at the **Irish Pastoral Centre (IPC) Boston**. Later IPC service-users attended our Moving/Returning to Ireland Information Clinic and Karen also met with others for one-to-one follow up appointments.



Our CEO met with Sighle Fitzgerald from the **Consulate General of Ireland, Boston** to talk about the work of Safe Home Ireland, particularly work assisting Irish emigrants in the Massachusetts area and those thinking about returning or moving home to Ireland.

Our CEO met with staff at **Emerald Isle Immigration Center in New York** to hear more about the great work carried out by the team there and to meet with EIIC clients thinking of moving /returning to Ireland.



Networking & Outreach (US)

During her US trip, Karen received a warm welcome from Sandra and team at **Aisling Irish Community Center, New York**. She had the opportunity to meet and chat with members of the Seniors Program who benefit from the strong community connection and range of activities that the Centre provides



Our CEO, met with Gerald Angley, **Consul General of New York** to talk about our work assisting Irish who are thinking of moving/returning to Ireland. We greatly appreciated the support and the opportunity to strengthen our links with the Consulate in New York.



Considering a Move Home to Ireland?
Book a free, confidential chat with Karen McHugh, CEO of Safe Home Ireland.



Wednesday, November 5
Appointment Only
(718) 482-0909
info@newyorkirishcenter.org

SAFE HOME IRELAND
INFORMATION SERVICE



The final stop on the 2025 US Outreach trip was to the **New York Irish Center**. Thank you to Niamh, George, Stephen and all the volunteers for their hospitality. It was great to attend the Seniors Program and to meet with individuals thinking of moving or returning to Ireland as part of our information clinic.

Networking (US, Canada & Australia)

In May, we held a virtual Information Session with the Social Services committee of **Coalition of Immigration Centers (CIIC) in the US**. This session provided an overview of the work of Safe Home, referral criteria, as well as general guidance on moving or returning to Ireland. We also held several virtual meetings with both staff and service users of Irish Centres across the US about making a planned return to Ireland.



We took part in a Podcast on Moving to Ireland with Tadhg O'Connor from Alberta, **Canada**, on his **'Tadhg Talks'** Podcast series. We had a wide-ranging conversation about the many aspects involved in making the move home. See [HERE](#) to listen back.



During the year, we also held virtual meetings with staff in the Claddagh Association in Perth, **Australia**, to support mutual clients. The Association also presented at our Stakeholders' Day/Website launch in September.

Financial Overview: A Snapshot of 2025

Safe Home Programme CLG

Income	
Government Grants: Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (Emigrant Support Programme)	230,206
Donations, including Planned Giving	36,766
Fundraising	33,942
Interest Earned	228
Total Income	301,142
Expenditure	
Salary Costs	193,091
Fundraising Costs	5,998
Administration Costs	49,606
Travel and associated costs	25,830
Total Expenditure	274,525
2025 - Surplus	26,617

Safe Home Ireland's financial position reflects the careful and effective management of limited resources. This enables us to continue supporting Irish emigrants worldwide while maintaining sustainable operations for the future.

Our core funding is provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, to whom we are most thankful. In addition to this vital support, Safe Home Ireland depends on income from donations and fundraising to sustain our services.

In 2025, donations increased by 39%, resulting in an additional €6,180 compared to the previous year. While modest, this increase has a meaningful impact on our ability to deliver services.

Safe Home Ireland is a carefully managed charity and company, but there is little margin for error and every euro truly counts. We are extremely grateful to everyone who supported our work in 2025.

Our 2025 Annual Accounts will be available shortly on our website, offering a transparent overview of our income and expenditure throughout the year.



SAFE HOME IRELAND
DIASPORA SUPPORT SERVICE

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Company No: 351678

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