

A Hand from Home



Our Story so far... 21 years of Safe Home Ireland



SAFE HOME IRELAND
EMIGRANT SUPPORT SERVICE



Introduction

Karen Mc Hugh - CEO Safe Home Ireland

With the support of The Community Foundation for Ireland and The Emigrant Support Programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Safe Home Ireland are delighted to present this report, which provides an insight to our model and impact over our 21-year history. We have also developed a series of short videos, which in tandem with this report tell the real human story of people supported and lives changed by the 'hand from home', that is Safe Home Ireland. The videos are available to view on our social media channels and website.



As an 1980's emigrant myself and having managed an Irish Centre in London, I am all too familiar with the desire that many emigrants, particularly older emigrants, have to return home. I know, for many, that this dream would never have become a reality without the presence and support of Safe Home Ireland. I am privileged to lead this charity together with our small but dedicated team of Staff, guided by our Board, and supported by Safe Home Ireland Friends and our Ambassador.

At the heart of this report are testimonies from people who have returned home to live and who have directly benefited from Safe Home Ireland services. We have included eight detailed personal testimonials, some who returned in recent times and others who returned some years ago. These interviews were sensitively carried out by Johnny B. Broderick, our Communication & Information Officer in summer 2022.

The report also features short commentaries from people still living abroad, some of whom are thinking about making the move home one day and others quite settled and happy in their adopted countries. We know that coming home is not for everyone and many people are happily settled and content in their adopted communities, having formed relationships and have children or grandchildren around them. However, we know that the desire to stay connected to Ireland is strong and we hope that we can play a small part to ensure that this connection is maintained and celebrated.

We have included feedback 'snippets' following a recent survey circulated as part of a monitoring and evaluation exercise. Hearing what our clients have to say about Safe Home Ireland is the best way that we can assess our impact.

We are pleased that, Colm Brophy TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, has written the Foreword to this report, and has also reiterated the Department of Foreign Affairs commitment to supporting our important work going forward, as it has done since our inception. We are looking forward to developing our new Strategic Plan in 2023, with the support of the Department and all of our other stakeholders. Our new Strategy will pave the way for another 21 Years of Safe Home Ireland!

We are asking readers of this report to please spread the word about Safe Home Ireland to ensure that anyone abroad who is considering moving or returning to Ireland knows about our service and can make an informed decision with our support.

Our Vision

To ensure that anyone considering returning or moving to Ireland is given every opportunity to make an informed decision

Our Mission

To act as the link for Irish emigrants both at home and abroad by providing advice, information, guidance and supports for those seeking permanent repatriation, as well as those who chose to stay in their adopted country.

Our Patron

The President of Ireland - Michael D. Higgins

We are honoured to have the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, as our Patron since 2012. A passionate political voice, academic and statesman, a human rights advocate, promoter of inclusive citizenship and champion of creativity within Irish society.



Migration and the Irish diaspora are a constant theme in the work of President Higgins and The President has said that our diaspora,

"is one of Ireland's greatest resources" and that "through the contribution our people make to the nations they migrate to; through the bonds they forge with the peoples of those countries, our migrants have allowed Ireland to have global connections far beyond our size."

The President recited this poem "Take Care" at our first Facebook Live Concert on 2nd May 2020. This poem resonated with so many people during the Covid pandemic and we are delighted that he has kindly given permission for it to be included in our report.



Take Care From 'The Season of Fire' 1993

In the journey to the light,
the dark moments
should not threaten.
Belief
requires
that you hold steady.
Bend, if you will,
with the wind.
The tree is your teacher,
roots at once
more firm
from experience
in the soil
made fragile.
Your gentle dew will come
and a stirring
of power
to go on
towards the space
of sharing.
In the misery of the I,
in rage,
it is easy to cry out
against all others
but to weaken
is to die
in the misery of knowing
the journey abandoned
towards the sharing
of all human hope
and cries
is the loss
of all we know
of the divine
reclaimed
for our shared
humanity.
Hold firm.
Take care.
Come home
together.

Colm Brophy - Minister of State with responsibility for Overseas Development Aid & Diaspora

It is a pleasure for me to mark the occasion of Safe Home Ireland's 21st anniversary by thanking the organisation and its staff for their valuable work providing advice, information and counselling to people – particularly older people - who are returning, or considering a return, to Ireland.



The world has changed so much in the twenty-one years since Safe Home Ireland was established by Dr Jerry Cowley. Travel has become cheaper and much more accessible and the internet has transformed the world and how we communicate with one another. The world is now a much smaller place and, for Irish people living overseas, staying in contact with home and abreast of developments is much less of a challenge than for earlier generations. From listening to or watching the daily news, to watching funerals online to regular trips back home, Ireland feels closer than ever before.

For many, this enriches the experience of living overseas. For others, however, it intensifies a desire to return home, to be more immediately part of the daily rhythm of life in Ireland.

Many people feeling that call may have been away for many years. Their decision to move home is not one that should be made lightly and experience shows that it is not one that always goes smoothly. It is important, then, that those considering returning to live in Ireland have all of the practical information and advice that they need to help them make the decision that is right for them.

This is where Safe Home Ireland has made such an important contribution, helping to guide people through the process. The Government places great value on the work that Safe Home Ireland does and has, through the Emigrant Support Programme administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, been able to support the work financially to the tune of almost €3.5 million since 2008. Safe Home Ireland will, I know, continue to be an important cog in Ireland's relationship with its diaspora.

Many of our citizens who are currently living overseas may choose this time of global uncertainty and disruption to once again make Ireland their home. The Government will play its part in guiding them on their journey back home, working with great partners like Safe Home Ireland. As Minister for Diaspora, I will ensure that the Department of Foreign Affairs and our network of diplomatic missions will continue to support Safe Home Ireland's important work. I am confident that Safe Home will adapt to maintain its ability to serve the Diaspora, and I support the organisation in its work to devise a new Strategy to set out its vision and chart a future course. My Department will support this process.

I would like to thank all who have worked with and been involved over the years with this fine organisation.

I want to pay special tribute to Dr Jerry Cowley founder, former chairperson and now Life President of Safe Home Ireland. Jerry was very much the driving-force behind Safe Home Ireland when it was founded at the turn of this century. Its success stands as testament to his vision and commitment to rural Ireland and to our diaspora. Through its housing service, Safe Home Ireland has directly supported more than 2,200 people returning home to Ireland. He should be very proud of what has been achieved.

**Colm Brophy TD,
Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora**

How it all Began

In the beginning... As a rural G.P and Chairman of a Voluntary Housing Association based in Mulranny County Mayo, Dr. Jerry Cowley, found that he was being approached on a regular basis by relatives of older Irish people living abroad asking that they be considered for housing in the scheme. Dr. Cowley set up the Safe Home Programme as a pilot in January 2000 to test the theory that if they could be given minimal support, a small but significant number of older emigrants would return to their homeland. Publicity surrounding the housing project at St. Brendan's Village in Mulranny increased the level of enquiries from abroad.



St. Brendan's Village, Mulranny, Co. Mayo - Headquarters of Safe Home Ireland

Following extensive lobbying, Safe Home Ireland secured the Amendment to the Capital Assistance Scheme in November 2001. For the first time, this Amendment gave qualifying older Irish emigrants abroad the opportunity to be considered for limited social housing in Ireland, via Housing Associations for older people.

Safe Home Ireland was given a coordinating role in processing and approving housing applications and the scheme was rolled out countrywide, to incorporate Housing Associations throughout the 26 counties.

As a progression from the success of the pilot project, Safe Home Programme CLG was registered as an organisation and registered charity in its own right in January 2002. Over the intervening years, with support from donors and funders, primarily the Department of Foreign Affairs (Emigrant Support Programme), Safe Home Ireland has been able to evolve and broaden the support and services we can offer.

Our work now...

Alongside our housing role, Safe Home Ireland now offers an extensive information, advocacy and outreach support service for people who are considering moving or returning to Ireland. This service is available to anyone, regardless of age, location or circumstances.

- We assist qualifying older Irish born emigrants to return home, we do not manage or build any properties of our own but we work in conjunction with Local Authorities and Housing Associations who provide housing for our qualifying applicants throughout Ireland
- We carry out home visit assessments to housing applicants (limited to the UK only)
- We provide an information and advisory service to anyone (regardless of age, circumstances or location) who may be contemplating returning or moving to Ireland
- We provide a home visiting and advocacy service to people who have returned home (regardless of age, circumstances or location) to assist with the paperwork involved in accessing rights and entitlements
- We host virtual and in-person Moving to Ireland information clinics in partnership with Irish Advice and Welfare Centres at home and abroad
- We offer a connection to home for those who remain in their adopted countries abroad through our social media channels, our blog and monthly e-bulletin.



Our impact...

We have directly supported 2,237 older Irish born people (as at 1st November 2022) to secure accommodation back home in Ireland. In addition to this, we have also supported countless others who have returned independently and sought our advice and outreach support on their return. Our queries come from all over the world. For the majority, their return was a positive lifelong dream and could not have been fulfilled without the intervention and support of our information, advocacy and outreach services.

Breakthrough in campaign to bring exiles home

A VITAL first step has been taken in the campaign by the Mulranny-based Safe Home organisation to allow free access by emigrants from this country to the local authority housing lists, writes Christy Loftus.

The chairman of Safe Home, Dr Jerry Cowley who is also a member of the Mayo county council Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) on housing has been campaigning for access to housing lists as a prelude to bring back hundreds of emigrants who have fallen on hard times in England.

He steered a motion through the SPC last week to allow access to emigrants wishing to return home and their recommendation will

now go before a full council meeting for approval.

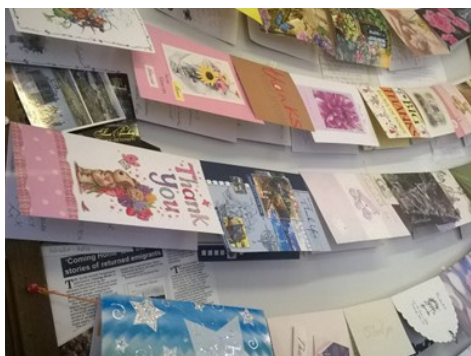
The Safe Home organisation will this week contact all members of the authority to enlist their support for the move.

Dr Cowley said yesterday that Mayo County Council had been to the forefront in dealing with applications for housing from emigrants and housing officials had taken a positive approach on the issue.

However the regulations requiring applicants to satisfy a residency clause was an obstacle in other local authority areas and it was vital that the issue be tackled so that emigrants would have equal access to the housing lists.

"These people emigrated so that they could support their families at home. The irony is that by emigrating and helping the Irish economy they now find themselves debarred from housing. It is a terrible travesty for people who have sent a huge sum of money home by way of remittances," said Dr Cowley.

He now expects that other counties will follow the example set by the Mayo SPC. "The members of the SPC were unanimously in favour of the move. There are administrative matters that must be sorted out but an important breakthrough has been made," he added



Over the years, we have been deeply touched by the sincerity of the gratitude expressed in the many letters, cards and messages that arrive, regularly, at our modest offices in Mulranny.

Dr. Jerry Cowley - Founder/Life President

I am very proud of all the wonderful people who continue to make the splendid work of the Safe Home Programme possible 21 years on from our humble beginnings.



I remember the first man who came home through Safe Home Ireland (Safe Home). It meant everything to him and his family. Although he was already terminally ill, he arrived with a smile on his face and he died with a smile on his face 6 months later. He had realised his dream of returning to his native county 60 years after he left for the UK. That really opened my eyes to the humanitarian value of helping this group of forgotten people who had done so much for us for generations. These economic migrants had every reason to forget us, but when we really needed help and had no other friend, they through their generous financial contributions, amounting to more than we ever received from the EU in structural funds, sustained entire communities, as documented in the "Emigrant's Remittances." Our first returnee was just one of Ireland's multitude of older Irish emigrants spread throughout the world. Many yearned to return to spend their final years in the land of their birth, but lacked the means to do so or perhaps were in poor health. Others were told they could not be considered for social housing in their native areas.

Thanks must be extended to the late and former Government Minister for Housing Mr Robert Molloy for 'opening the door' (via the Amendment to the Capital Assistance Scheme – 2001), that for the first time allowed the provision of social housing for qualifying older Irish emigrants.

Safe Home has successfully addressed the housing needs of older people abroad who fit our criteria through this unique access to social housing for older Irish emigrants living abroad. In addition, this charity was sensitive to and responded to changing needs by providing an information, outreach and advocacy service for anyone considering a move to Ireland, regardless of age or circumstance. With the support of the Irish Government and registered voluntary housing associations and local authorities' Safe Home has directly supported 2,237 people to secure housing throughout the 26 counties, repatriating them to as near as possible to their county of origin. More than that, Safe Home have assisted many others in the decision making process, some of those chose to stay on in their adopted countries, happy in the knowledge and realisation that coming home permanently is not for everyone.

Safe Home clients are uniquely supported at all stages of their journey, including on return which will involve home visits depending on their level of need, no matter where they finally return to. All of this is possible through the financial support we receive from the Irish Government, Emigrant Support Programme, via the Department of Foreign Affairs, and all of our other sponsors and donors, without which we would not function. Nor would we function without the support from social housing providers across the country and the Irish Welfare and Information Centres abroad.

The Safe Home Programme is a 'not-for-profit' company and charity overseen by a Board of Directors under Chairperson Nova Farris, and long-time board members such as Michael Joe Ginnelly and Teresa Cowley who have contributed so much, as have newer board members in recent years, including Joan O'Flynn, Ann Roddy, Patricia Codyre and Niall Foley, all of whom will greatly enhance our effort going forward. Former founding board members and volunteers, some of whom have passed to their eternal reward are remembered with great thanks and affection.

We are honoured and proud to have the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, as our Patron. The President's recognition, support and empathy for the Irish community worldwide means so much to Irish emigrants, particularly those who have a yearning for a connection to and with home. The legendary musician and singer, Seán Keane is Safe Home's very first Ambassador. Seán has hit the ground running on our behalf and has been everything we would have expected, and more, in supporting and promoting the organisation on a countrywide and world stage.

Safe Home is managed by an excellent staff team. 21 years is a long time ago and we needed a good foundation to bring Safe Home forward. In 2015, when our first CEO Máirín Higgins retired, we were worried because Máirín was solid gold in nurturing and developing the seeds of an idea from the beginning and bringing the vision of Safe Home to fruition. Luckily, we struck gold again when our current CEO Karen McHugh joined us and she continues to work tirelessly to drive the organisation and ensure that we offer a person-centred professional and friendly service. We are so fortunate to have our Coordinator, Mary Ann Fadian, with us since the very early days and she remains the first point of contact for all callers to our office and an invaluable asset to Safe Home.

When the dreaded Covid pandemic took over, Safe Home met the challenge of combating the increasing isolation of our emigrants by embracing modern technology including holding Facebook Live Concerts and regular Moving/Returning to Ireland Information Webinars with our partners in Ireland and abroad. We are blessed also with Outreach and Advocacy Officers Brenda Fleming and Noreen Mulrine and with our most welcome and energetic new addition Johnny B Broderick, Information and Communications Officer.

It is worth noting that those who return home are coming back to breathe new life into communities all over the country, including rural areas, bringing with them their generosity and new sources of income. For all they have done for us in times past, any help we can give them in their return is but the repayment of an honourable debt, never sought to be repaid by them, but owed to them by us, not in charity but in justice. I salute all those who make our emigrant's lives better and their repatriation possible when appropriate by continuing to support the good work of Safe Home Ireland.

Dr. Jerry Cowley
Founder/Life President

Nova Fariss - Chairperson

The history of emigration globally has one common theme: every emigrant has their own story. Whilst there may have been broader societal reasons behind the large movements of people across the world at different times, and to and from a wide variety of locations, to every emigrant the journey and experience is uniquely theirs.



Part of that story is the varying degrees with which each emigrant identifies with their country of origin culturally and personally and feels drawn to return. Many have the resources and capability to plan and action their return without too much difficulty. Others may have the resources but lack the knowledge or information about where to start and how to reconnect. But there are also many for whom the longing to return remains strong but the resources and reconnection pathways are either not available to them or are too complicated to navigate.

Safe Home Ireland was established in 2000 initially in response to the needs of Irish people forced by economic circumstances to emigrate in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, many who were ill-prepared for what lay ahead. In the 21 years that have followed, Safe Home Ireland has assisted 2,237 people in their journey to return to Ireland. Each one of them has had their own story, their own needs and their own vision of where they want to live and how they can they reconnect. Consequently, the key features of our work are the personal contact with each individual throughout the whole process, through outreach and ongoing support, information and guidance on access to services, connection to important statutory processes and local services, and access to housing.

Under the guidance of our CEO, Karen McHugh, a small and dedicated team of staff carry out all functions of the service. Additionally, none of the successful outcomes could be achieved without positive connections with Irish welfare and other support organisations in Ireland and abroad, the Consular services, statutory services, local government and the alternative housing providers.

This report provides the opportunity for our clients to be heard in a confidential way so that their individual experience becomes part of our story, assisting the organisation to plan ahead, utilising strategies that are most effective and being ready to adapt to meet the needs of returning emigrants in the future.

Finally, I want to acknowledge all funders and donors, who have supported our work since our inception. We look forward, as part of our next Strategic Plan, inviting new supporters of our work going forward.

Nova Fariss
Chairperson

Should I stay or should I go?

Safe Home Ireland is here to facilitate the desire that some older Irish emigrants have to return to their homeland. While we advertise our services to ensure that people wishing to access our housing service know what we do and how to get in touch, the decision on whether to apply to us for housing and around returning home is something that each individual must reach for themselves.



We are fully aware that far away hills can often look greener so we advise our applicants to consider all aspects carefully, weighing up the pros and cons of all that is involved in packing up homes and memories from years living abroad and starting afresh back home. Our housing applicants in the UK have reported that our home visits to them have proved a great help in bringing clarity and helping them to make the decision that is right for them. Home visits are restricted to Ireland and the UK only.

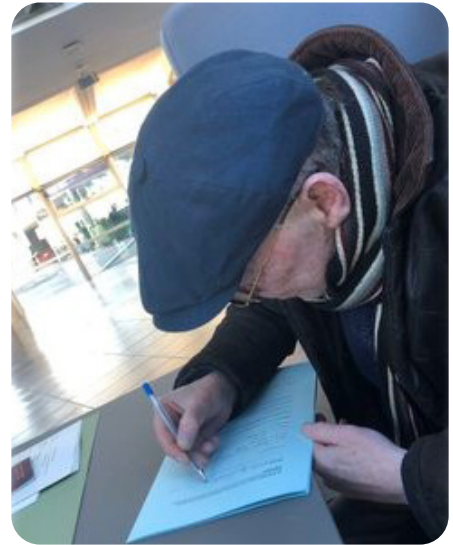
I want to go home now, as my health is not good, and my kids have all grown up now, basically I am going to be here on my own. I'm missing my grandchildren growing up, and I'm missing the family, sisters and brother.

I AM GETTING OLDER AND WANT TO RETURN HOME. I HAVE CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN AND OTHER FAMILY. CORK IS HOME FOR ME.

NORTHANTS
UK
DEAR SIR
I AM INQUIRING
ABOUT RETURNING TO IRELAND
I AM 74 YEARS IN OCTOBER AND
ALL THE FAMILY ARE GROWN AND
LEFT HOME SO I AM ON MY OWN
AND IT IS GETTING VERY LONGLY
SO I WOULD LOVE TO RETURN TO
CORK FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS
OF MY LIFE SO I AM ASKING FOR
HELP PLEASE
MUCH OBLIGED



Getting the key to the door... Safe Home client, James (RIP), signs up to his new tenancy in Dublin



Eyes on the prize! Tom overseeing construction of a house he was offered in Mayo

Johnny B. Broderick - Communications & Information Officer



I joined Safe Home Ireland as Information & Communications Officer in September 2021. As part of my role, I undertook the task of documenting the impact that Safe Home Ireland had on the lives of people who returned home with the assistance of the project.

I took this on as a person, coming 'very new' to the work of Safe Home Ireland and with no preconceptions in place about the organisation or their client group. In taking this journey with returnees, in housing schemes across the country, it opened my eyes to the courage and resilience of those who took that 'leap of faith' to return home once more.

The conversations with those I met along the way only reinforced my own belief that Safe Home Ireland is a very special, very needed, very diligent organisation. With almost 22 years' experience in assisting and supporting returning and returned Irish emigrants, they are well placed to carry out this work

For some it was the light house pulsating beam dipping into the sea as they looked back from the ferry leaving Dun Laoghaire. For others it was the sight of clouds covering the forty shades of green as the Aer Lingus plane from Shannon soared into the skies. For many more it was that last memory of their homestead and loved ones before they set out on life's journey, going away, to come home again. The squeak of the haggard gate, the family dog following the village car up the road, each with their own abiding memory.

For most of the people in this report, returning home was something that remained a constant craving within their psyche. Through contact with and support from Safe Home Ireland, those who have kindly shared their journey with us, were able to realise the dream of closing the circle of emigration and returning home once again.

It is often said, "Life is what you make it" and for those who returned, with the help of Safe Home Ireland, have made a great adjustment in their return. A few never really left, a few more saw it as a means to an end. For each of them though they have one thing in common, their contact with Safe Home Ireland has changed their life, and all believe that has been for the better.

Johnny B. Broderick Communications & Information Officer

"They speak loudly. They speak powerfully. They say things that are painful. They say things that are deeply personal. They tell of injustice. They recount suffering. They allude to abusive and cruel acts. They express feelings of loneliness, isolation, fear, vulnerability, sadness and yearning. They also allude to things that are, perhaps, best left unsaid. However, and perhaps most tellingly, they express an enormous sense of hope and a deep sense of gratitude".

GERALDINE - The road less travelled

Geraldine was on the phone to me directing me towards her home in Dublin City. On arrival, I could see inside her picture window on the first floor of a beautiful apartment complex, which was very well maintained outside and in. There was a genuine warmth in her welcome and it was easy to feel at home in her cosy and inviting flat.

Geraldine spoke freely about her life, warts and all. Geraldine had a very difficult start to life, born into a mother and baby home in the 1950's, never knowing her mother or her family, and she suffered all the abuses of institutional life. Geraldine could be excused if she took the road of alcohol and drug abuse. All the triggers were there but she told me that she was made of stronger stuff and had an internal desire to create her own present with each passing day.

Geraldine worked all her life in London. Some jobs had accommodation with them, others not.

On talking about her past Geraldine held no bad feelings about her family, the religious order or her mother. There was an inner forgiveness that was very impressive to witness.

I was moved by her story and her fortitude and really felt so proud of Safe Home Ireland for helping bring this woman home in the midst of the Covid crisis.

I felt very privileged to hear her talk about her desire to give back, to accept that her mother was an innocent victim to the time she lived in. Every week Geraldine goes into the city centre to volunteer at a woman's homeless centre. That is understanding and empathy at a very high level and great sense of character.

When talking about Safe Home Ireland Geraldine described her dealings with Mary Ann, Safe Home Coordinator, as very positive, being so thorough throughout the application and moving process, so helpful, kind and reassuring during the transition and resettlement process.

BERNARD - Doing my own thing

Bernard had a difficult childhood, born into a traditional family setting in the 1950's but things went horribly wrong for him when his father left home when he was only 3 years old. Bernard and his sisters ended up in two separate care homes. He believes he was not abused but emotionally damaged by separation. In his teens, his mother who had moved to London for work, tried to reconcile the family. Bernard did go to London to meet his mother and sisters but he soon found work and as he says "he did his own thing". Bernard worked hard in the building sites across London and settled in a flat in Brighton which formed his love for Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club.

Bernard said it took great tenacity on his behalf to avoid the route some of his single male friends took in London at that time. He said he didn't take to the drink and while he socialised a lot in London he didn't become addicted. He felt that living in Brighton helped him to be a little removed from the Irish gathering spots. Romance was not a major factor in his life and as Bernard said many times he did his own thing

As he became older and work started to dry up, Bernard's thoughts turned to home. A relative back in Ireland sent him a clipping from the newspaper about Safe Home and so his return journey began and thanks to Safe Home Ireland, it ended back in a quiet gated-community in Co. Kildare.

Bernard lives in beautiful location on the outskirts of a town, far enough away from the bustle of night life and yet close enough to walk. Bernard has a lovely routine, he cycles into town, buys the paper and the few household items, picks a few horses, reads about his favourite Brighton & Hove Albion FC, chats with neighbours, goes back to town to do his few cent lucky 15 and watches the races in the comfort of his sitting room. A retired man, enjoying the contentment that he now finds himself. He feels safe which is a great thing when you consider his journey. Bernard never spoke an ill word against his parents or the Institution to me. He had one regret, that they did not teach him carpentry. He felt his life would be less labour intensive if he had a trade in London, but he was not bitter about it.

When speaking about Safe Home Ireland he said they are a great organisation and can do nothing wrong. He said Noreen, one of their Outreach Officers was a constant source of support to him, assisting with minefield of paperwork in the early days of his return and always available to answer a query or just to have a chat.

Bernard wants for nothing now in the retirement village and hopes that he gets good health to enjoy it for a long time. I felt I could visit Bernard anytime as it would not intrude in his settled and contented place.

BRIDGET - Never left

Bridget finally returned to the parish of her birth more than forty five years after leaving as a young girl. She had no real plans to leave Ireland but an elder sibling returned home for a holiday from the UK and said she had secured a job in a hospital with live-in accommodation provided.

It was a difficult decision to make, but an opportunity also. It was a sad time, leaving parents and siblings meant it was going to a lonely time without them, but the decision was made to go to London. Growing up attached to her father but also listening to the counsel of her mother meant she was never idle and never depended on the state. Work was important and she worked hard and long hours including bank holidays to earn that bit extra when she could. An independent lady with her eyes focused on the ultimate prize, Home!

Bridget saved to purchase her home in London and a site in Mayo, her goal to return on retirement, to be close to family and friends. Coming from a large family thread, in her head she never really left, her heart was always in Ireland.

Bridget had served her local community as a "Special Constable " for over 14 years until injury caused her to retire. It was during her recovery while she volunteered at the Luton Irish Forum that Bridget became aware of the services of Safe Home Ireland. Due to the restrictions of Covid and Brexit, Bridget found selling her house a stressful and complicated time with offices closed and restricted movement. When the house sold it brought with it a dawning that the time had arrived, another time of loss, moving away from family and friends again, but this time to return home.

Dealing with the Irish agencies was also very complicated during Covid and it was then that Bridget received the necessary supports from Safe Home Ireland staff. Their advice and reassurance along with Bridget's own tenacity and organisational skill, the transition became a reality. Bridget says " I will never forget the support of Safe Home Ireland and the fantastic service they provided me"

LIAM - Leader of the band

Liam was raised, along with his two siblings in a family unit with a Gaelic influence from his parents. He spoke Gaelic within the home and learned to play the Uilleann Pipes at a very young age. Little did he know that 70 years later they would still be opening doors, still forming connections, still a major conversation piece in his life.

While he received a good education, it was his life learning that moulded him to develop and strive for better things. As a young man, he worked locally until he got an opportunity to work in Dublin. Always a member of Comhaltas he made new connections through his pipes, he also started teaching English classes, and found his niche. One day fed up with the dampness of the Irish weather he applied for a job teaching English in Spain. To his surprise he got a phone call to see if he could start immediately. He answered the call and started a new wonderful chapter in his life, teaching English and his much loved pipes. He learned about other piping traditions and other types of pipes.

Liam was very content and had no thoughts of retirement until two things outside of his control happened. Firstly, Brexit impacted on people's movement reducing his class sizes therefore reducing his income. While that was having some impact on finances, along comes Covid and totally wipes out his income. Liam's struggled along with support from friends in the short-term but as his savings dwindled to nothing, he found himself homeless.

Someone aware of his circumstances made the call to Safe Home Ireland and in a short period of time, Liam returned home to Dublin. Liam thought he would end his days in the south of Spain but acknowledged fate had its own plans for him.

He is grateful for the positive impact the involvement of Safe Home Ireland has had on his change of fortune. Liam is learning to adapt once more to his environment, he is currently making plans to make musical instruments and maybe teach the pipes again.

BREDA & TREVOR - Serendipity

What an amazing surprise to meet Breda and Trevor! It was like meeting a couple that had just won the lotto. They could not believe it themselves. A few weeks before I met them their life was in disarray, nothing but bad news in relation to housing shortages, inflation, rent increases and the stress of uncertainty was putting a strain on their relationship.

Breda spent most of her life in Ireland and became a widow in her 50's, Trevor an English man spent most of his adult life at sea in the merchant navy. They met in England and were there for a while before they decided to move back to Ireland. Trevor had never lived in Ireland and was finding the whole situation a little like it wasn't meant to be. Their contact with Safe Home Ireland changed everything. Karen the CEO put the wheels in motion and they were offered a beautiful two-bedroom apartment with views of the country and within walking distance of the town. With main meals provided within a gated community, Breda and Trevor have made friends quickly in the shared outdoor spaces and dining areas of the housing complex where they live.

It was a beautiful summers day when I visited the development and many of the people sitting around the outdoor seating area were strangers a few months previously. The genuine gratefulness expressed by Breda and Trevor was heart-warming to hear, this move has changed their lives so much for the better and rapidly too. They said they knew what they needed and Safe Home Ireland delivered way above their expectations and therefore it was easy for them to accept the offer. Trevor said there was so much he had not thought about in relation to coming to Ireland and staff at Safe Home Ireland were so helpful in helping navigate them through all of the red-tape and paperwork.

Their transition from England to Ireland was smoother than they had thought possible only a few months earlier. I felt I had gate-crashed a surprise party because they were so happy. Their fellow residents and staff at the housing scheme have made them so welcome, they told me it feels like they have been there for years.

JOY –The full circle

Joy's story is different to most in the sense that she had by her own admission a very comfortable life. When she emigrated it was by choice because of job opportunities presented to her husband. His work with multinationals took them to the Middle East, USA, Canada and greater employment and living conditions than they could achieve here in Ireland at that time.

On the outside looking in they had it all, successful careers, luxury homes everywhere they went and three beautiful, well-educated children. But the smooth road can develop potholes and that is what happened to Joy. The couple made a decision in her mid 50's to sell up everything and retire to Portugal, a luxurious fruit for their hard work. Maybe early retirement didn't suit and soon her spouse became dependent on alcohol and changed their relationship for the worse. Eventually, Joy found herself in emergency accommodation in a foreign country, estranged from her home and family, something she could have never seen coming.

After many years of isolation in Portugal, during the Covid pandemic, Joy made contact with Safe Home Ireland. Instead of waiting, what could be years for a vacancy to come up in her native, Dublin, with the help of Safe Home Ireland Joy identified a suitable housing project in the Midlands and within a few weeks Joy found herself in a beautiful apartment in a supported housing complex. Again safety is a priority for Joy and she seems to have found that in her new living conditions.

When Joy was talking about Safe Home Ireland her gratitude was evident in the sincerity of words and tone. Joy was so thankful for Mary Ann's and Karen's intervention and how swiftly the transition happened. She was amazed that an organisation like Safe Home Ireland exists and how so few people know about it but mused that maybe it's only when you or a family member are in need that you see the things that have been there in front of you all along.

MARY – Dreams come true

I met Mary in her lovely semi-detached one bedroom apartment. Mary's story is slightly different in the sense that she was the most connected with her home after she left for London. Mary was a worker, a genuine hard worker and was never idle even though she changed her jobs often. When her marriage didn't work out Mary came home with her son for a while but returned again when the job she had in Ireland came to an end during the recession of the 80s.

For Mary, Ireland was always home and once the retirement bells rang she only had one dream and that was to retire to Ireland for good. Her son settled in Mayo and it was while visiting him she heard that the Safe Home Ireland office headquarters was in Mulranny and decided to call in when passing. In a short space of time Mary was offered her lovely living space in Mayo not far from her son and his family, giving her the opportunity to be a hands-on granny.

Mary continues to be a bonus to the community that she settled in, during Covid she organised a 'going strong club' for her neighbours to fight the isolation; having outdoor lunches, and get together when it was safe to do so.

Mary was born to give and born to serve, and while her health allows her, she will continue to do that. She is so grateful to Safe Home Ireland for making her dream come true, she said they covered everything and took nothing for granted. She can now live independently in a safe environment and continue to support others.

MICHAEL - Patience and perseverance

Michael's journey is testament to several stakeholders working together. Michael was living in a less than ideal situation in Sri Lanka. Covid complicated that further with many restrictions imposed in the area he was living in. On top of that the whole country was in financial disarray with people uprising and curfews enforced. The fact that Michael is in his 90th year, has a vision impairment and other health issues, made the planning for his move home even more difficult and expensive than originally thought.

Michael was born in the Ireland of the 1930's, 6 years before the Second World War, that in itself takes a while to get your head around, particularly as sitting in front of me was a man with perfect recall of so many milestones in his life, an excellent and entertaining story teller.

His journey through those years brought him to England, the Middle East, retiring to Spain and then finally retiring to Sri Lanka, constantly searching for the sun. His command of the English language opened doors and opportunity for him and financed his long and exciting life. As we talked, I could hear in his diction that every word mattered, every story matters, stories of hurt, loss, discrimination.

In our conversation he named all of the people he needs to thank to ensure his homecoming was successful. One of the highlighted supports were the regular phone calls from Safe Home Ireland Outreach Officer, Brenda, during the 13 months of planning to get Michael home. He told me of what a comfort it was for him to know that an organisation like Safe Home Ireland were working away in the background trying to sort the logistics of his move, as well as keeping him reassured along the way.

Michael is now living in a nursing home in the west of Ireland. He is receiving excellent care and hopes to reach his 90th birthday hale and hearty and up for a party in November 2022!

Our People... Our greatest asset Our Ambassador – Seán Keane

Seán Keane became our first Ambassador in March 2021. Seán is a household name to many, coming from a family with a long and rich tradition of music, song and dance in Co. Galway. His distinctive voice and sean-nós style of singing captures the hearts and minds of diverse audiences right around the world. We are very excited and honoured to have Seán as our very first Ambassador and he has already opened up many new doors for us and promotes our work in Ireland and abroad.



"I was delighted to be asked to be an Ambassador for Safe Home Ireland. The work of Safe Home Ireland highlights a cause that is very dear to my heart, having been an emigrant myself, I got a first-hand insight into the myriad of mixed emotions of the Irish emigrant experience. From the good times of dance halls and friendships, to the loneliness and isolation faced by some who were forced to leave their home and loved ones behind. It is a great pleasure for me to be able to work with Safe Home Ireland in recognising all Irish emigrants who left Ireland in the hope of finding a better life for themselves and their families. Most importantly, I am committed to helping, where I can, those who now wish to return home again".



Facebook Live Concert
- 2 Oct 2022 Carragh
Cottage. Seán with Ann
Lawler & Karen McHugh



Seán with Karen
McHugh at National
Concert Hall



Seán with Karen
McHugh & Dr. Cowley
Mulranny November
2021

Friends of Safe Home Ireland

In January 2022 we set up Friends of Safe Home Ireland which works to enhance, and advance, the profile of Safe Home Ireland through different networks and events at home and abroad, thus ensuring that those who may need our help know who we are, what we do and how to contact us. The Friends also identify and help organise charity fundraising events and activities, ensuring that Safe Home Ireland can continue to offer relevant services to people returning or moving to Ireland, particularly those who are most in need, now and in the future.



Friends of Safe Home Ireland – (left to right – Loretta Gordon, Johnny B. Broderick, Ann Lawler, Pauline Gallagher, Diarmuid McAuliffe, Karen Mc Hugh, Stephen Graham)



Seán with Stephen Graham & Loretta Gordon



Concert Hall – with Friends of Safe Home Ireland



Nora O Shea & Kathleen Flynn
Concert Hall September 2022

Staff

Over a period of 22 years, a total of as few as 10 staff have dedicated a total of 66 combined loyal years to the organisation with unstinting dedication and compassion.



Safe Home Staff (left to right) – Mary Ann Fadian, Noreen Mulrine, Karen Mc Hugh, Brenda Fleming
Inset Johnny B Broderick

Board

Our board give so generously of their time and expertise to ensure we are a compliant and high performing charity,



Strategic Review Day October - photo includes Nova Fariss (Chairperson), Teresa Cowley, Ann Roddy (Company Secretary), Michael Joe Ginnelly (Treasurer), Joan O'Flynn, Niall Foley and Patricia Codyre



Board 2017 (Back row – Micheal Joe Ginnelly, Maureen Wood, Teresa Gallagher, Teresa Cowley, Teresa Hanley, Dr, Jerry Cowley)



Afternoon Tea in Áras an Uachtaráin. Staff and Board – 2017

Zayneb Amine

Zayneb was born in Dublin and lived there until she moved to England with her family, when she was 15 years old. Zayneb returned to Ireland in summer 2020 and now lives in Tipperary with her three children. Zayneb is a creative writer and poet and hopes that her work will inspire and motivate readers and take them on a journey through her thoughts. Zayneb dedicated this poem to Safe Home Ireland, who supported her on her return home.



SAFE HOME

Close your eyes. Home is on your minds horizon. Its where the heart rests and where it belongs. Where your body took its first breath and your soul heard the first songs.

Where rain felt like a tonic that washed away pain and the sun was the heat that beat down on the chains, that held us back from our dreams and all of its gains. but then the sun shone different.

It did not recognize me nor welcomed my tears. enhanced my anxieties and deepened my fears. You're not the sun I know or is it that you do not know me? did not belong and my soul knew it to be.

I was taken away, too young and too far, I got up and walked but still carried the scar. It was on the green fields where my dreams kept rolling, taking back all the time from my life that was stolen.

I reached up to the sky. I screamed to be heard. My pain carried on the wings of a flightless bird, the tears poured from my eyes and drowned every word.

I read and I read. My mind a landscape of ice. I read and then stumbled on life saving advice. Open your eyes. Stop thinking you can't. A brighter dawn glows with every gift that you grant.

For good follows good and it's good to be kind. so open your heart and your hand, then you'll find. a hope you can't see if your heart is still blind.

I took at these words written by 16 year old me. Heart thumping so hard for now I could see.
I knew not at the time of the fate that was mine. As though an alternate me spoke in an alternate time.

When shadows are cast and the cold overtakes, when cruelty is real and compassion forsakes. Open your eyes to build your path home and look for the friends who don't leave you alone.

For loneliness is a spear that strikes the soul. Sending the strongest of men down an endless hole. An avoidable fall from an avoidable fight. A void in the past. no more stars in your night.

So say I, Go back to the sun, remind her of the fighter, the writer you are. The songs you had written for this beautiful star. Give me a flame, to melt the ice that has spread. Freeing the numbness that's plagued my head.

A portal was opened and all the me's that had died. Came out of the darkness with a courage and pride. I took to the wind and looked back to the bird, wings may not work but I have my words. And words are my vessel holding life's worth, the land that I yearn for, the place of my birth.

I'm home. I'm cracked but not broken, my scars are a token and I'm Safe Home.

I may be shaky and learning, but the sun's flame is still burning, and history has known... No fight like the Irish, or cry for our freedom, no man left standing alone.

What our clients say...

We carried out a recent survey seeking feedback on our service and feature just a small selection of replies and correspondence received from clients and agencies using our service.

Firstly, we highlight responses from people who contacted our service for information, advocacy or to access housing. Next, we highlight some responses from our partners in Ireland and abroad, with whom we share a strong bond and working relationship. These organisations, from all continents, are often the first point of contact for those who are thinking of returning to Ireland and often support our emigrants in challenging situations.

"What can I say if it wasn't for Safe Home Ireland I would not have been able to return to Ireland to live. As soon as I got the call from Safe Home there's a place available they were so good they made my experience of coming home trouble free. Without them I would have been overwhelmed with the move but because I had them at the end of the phone for support, it made it ok. The people at Safe Home Ireland are kind caring and make you feel you have a friend helping you along the way"

"Safe Home Ireland is a contact and information source for me with my plans to return to Ireland and I found out about it whilst doing some research on that. My emails have been responded to promptly and with all the information and paperwork supplied to help get things started. As I don't have secure contacts in Ireland, being in contact with your agency has been wonderful and I look forward to the continued association however that may look"

"Safe Home is a small charity with a big heart. The team is flexible and extremely hardworking. Their work touches people in practical and emotional ways, providing information, support and help at a difficult time of transition. I have tremendous respect for the work carried out."

"I'm 73. Was born in Waterford. Left age 18 to train as a nurse in England. Options were limited. Came from a family of 13. Always hoped to return to Ireland to live. Would like to see branches of Safe Home in the UK as for our age group, face to face contact is important as technology can be off putting. And returning having been an immigrant after many years is daunting and takes courage and confidence which tends to dwindle as we age.
RGN (retired now)".

"The Safe Home Newsletter has been a welcome visitor in my mailbox over the years. Lots of definite, clear information, all useful to those able to return home. Unfortunately, I'm not one of them. I receive a prompt, courteous reply to any queries, staff are always ready to be helpful"

"Safe Home have been a touch stone with the possibility of my repatriation to my homeland. It's a wonderful concept. I'm particularly interested in the culture around death and elderly Irish, especially those living alone. Over the years I've returned for funerals where the whole town turns out to say goodbye, in contrast, in my many years of work in the NHS dying alone and being buried alone is a sad and common occurrence. Thank you for all that you try to do at Safe Home. I'm sure many have benefited"

"It has been a good experience , they have given me a link to Ireland I wouldn't have without them"

"I contacted the Safe Home Ireland rep about five years ago to get information on what had to be done to return to Ireland to retire there since my family lie there...parents deceased. It was an invaluable tool in my research and the rep was fantastic...even met her on a trip back home to Ireland. Then the Covid 19 pandemic arrived and my plans and research were indefinitely put on hold. I continued to receive via email the newsletter and other and other information...I felt I was always being kept informed and that was good. Now that the pandemic is over, I do plan to reignite my research and plan to visit with the rep the next time I am in Ireland in 2023".

I LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR VERY WELCOME NEWSLETTERS. THEY KEEP ME ABRÉAST OF THE LATEST HAPPENINGS IN RELATING TO PEOPLE WISHING TO RETURN HOME TO IRELAND. PLEASE CONTINUE TO INFORM US OF THE LATEST NEWS. IT IS APPRECIATED VERY MUCH. THANK YOU.

SAFE HOME HELPED ME FEEL MUCH MORE CONFIDENT IN PLANNING MY MOVE TO IRELAND. I AM A SURVIVOR OF BOARDING SCHOOLS (1960'S/70'S) IN IRELAND. I FEEL MORE WELCOME TO RETURN.

I THINK my experience with Safe Home Ireland has been excellent. They are always happy to help and go above and beyond. They are quick to reply with any questions and answers.

Having Retired and wanting to move back to Ireland to be near my daughter safe home Ireland has been a godsend, I would not have known how to go about this without their help. The Newsletter I received monthly with all the information regarding Pensions, Bank Accounts, finding a doctor plus all the information you need to know about moving has been so very helpful. I am most grateful for the service you provide and I cannot think of a single thing that would make it better.

What some of our partners say...

Partnership working is at the heart of our work and our partners, agencies working for and with the Irish community, span the globe. Working together, with these agencies in Ireland and abroad, enables us to achieve positive outcomes for Irish still abroad and those who desire to return home, one day.

"I have only had positive experiences with Safe Home Ireland, the staff are always friendly and professional and extremely helpful to potential clients and to 3rd party organisations. Staff are very knowledgeable but also very aware of limitations and the changing nature of things affected by Brexit. The staff have provided both in person and online workshops for people interested in returning to Ireland and again these work very well."

"Your organization is a critical resource for us that is trusted and extremely reliable. We are very grateful for your input when we are advising clients on moving to or returning to Ireland. In the future we would be delighted to welcome you in person for a workshop on returning home, health care, housing and pensions. Would love to discuss further thank you for all you do"

"As a Consular assistance Case Officer, I managed a consular case involving an Irish citizen in a very precarious situation abroad. It was a great comfort to this citizen to connect with Safe Home and gain access to emergency housing accommodation upon return to Ireland"

"It's difficult to suggest how Safe Home can improve on work with older returnees as to date it has a very clear aim, approach and ethos to this work. If there is a clear decision to widen out client-focus to include other emigrants, then it might be good to identify core areas of support and expertise that could be focused on. We share a similar ethos of supporting the individual and their choice. I would like this relationship to continue and envisage it looking relatively the same, although perhaps we might work more closely on research or policy projects. Our respective client focus seems well defined and there is no duplication of work"

"The experience I have of Safe Home Ireland is a positive one. Staff I have come into contact with have given me a clear understanding of the support and also the pros and cons for those wishing to return to Ireland. This relationship has meant that I have the correct information and case studies for those who come to me to discuss the possibility of returning home to Ireland. I envisage Safe Home Ireland continuing running the same services going into the future".



Meeting with Crosscare Migrant Project, Dublin



Meeting with Crosscare Migrant Project, & Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas



Attendance at the Global Diaspora Forum

Concluding Reflection

Sometime in the 17th Century, Thomas Fuller, a clergyman and historian popularised the phrase...

"charity begins at home, but should not end there"

Safe Home Ireland hasn't been around quite that long, but the phrase resonates.

"Safe Home Ireland is a gift that all of Ireland should be proud of. A charity that deserves to continue to be supported financially. An organisation deserving of a higher profile, but one that goes about its work quietly and without fuss, effectively on behalf of the Nation" (respondent to recent survey)

In 2000, consciously, or otherwise, Dr. Jerry Cowley reinterpreted the mantra of Thomas Fuller - and actually almost turned that on its head - when he, and a group of committed volunteers, established Safe Home Ireland. What has evolved since then is nothing short of remarkable. The history of Safe Home Ireland is a living example of humanity and compassion in action ... which is just as it should be. Dreams being fulfilled and heartfelt thankfulness being offered for the gift that is Safe Home Ireland. A gift that is courtesy of Dr. Jerry Cowley and all those he has inspired over the years.

The Irish Diaspora

Some two centuries on from Fuller's ruminations, the consequences of An Gorta Mór – The Great Famine had led to many Irish citizens leaving home, a phenomenon that is now generally recognised as the beginnings of the Irish Diaspora. Today, about 70 million people claim Irish heritage, or ancestry, worldwide.

An Gorta Mór was but one reason why people left this island and emigration continues to be a distinctive feature of Irish life. There will have been many other, honourable, reasons for their departure ... whilst, for others, the reasons will be as a consequence of discrimination, prejudice, intolerance or injustice.

Thankfully, Ireland is a more tolerant, progressive, society these days. The emerging trends from the 2022 Census (conducted a year later than planned because of Covid 19), reveal that its population stands at 5,123,536, the highest figure since that which was recorded in the 1841 Census, just 4 years before An Gorta Mór. This represents a 7.6% increase on the 2016 census.

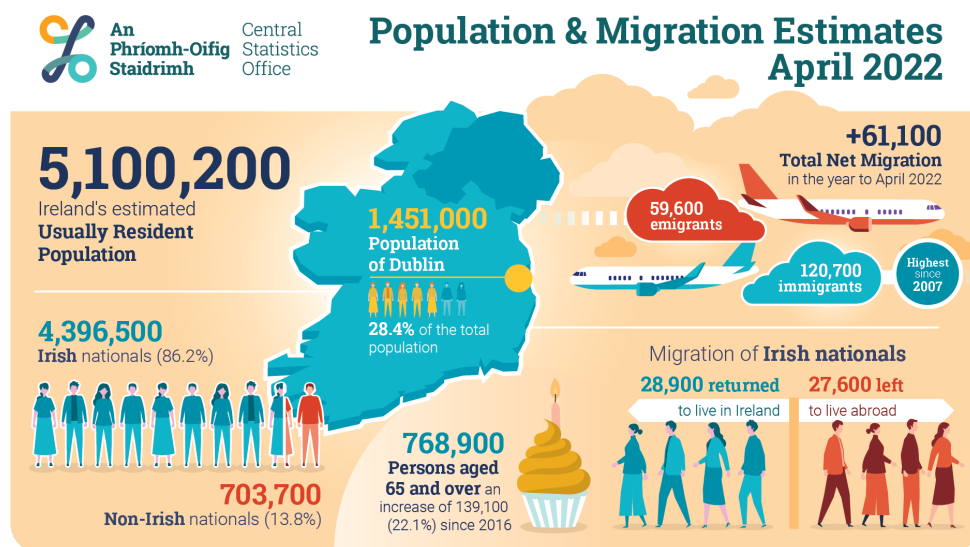
Census 2022 reveals a 15 year high in net inward migration with more than 120,000 people relocating to Ireland. Of this number, 28,900 were returning Irish nationals, 24,300 were other EU nationals, and 4,500 were UK nationals. The remaining 63,000 were other nationals including almost 28,000 Ukrainians in the 12-month period.

We also know more people emigrated than in recent years with 59,600 persons departing the State compared with 54,000 in 2021. This includes 27,660 Irish people which represents an increase of 4,800 for the same period to April 2021.

More Irish people returned to Ireland than departed and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated that 28,900 Irish people returned to Ireland to April 2022 as opposed to 30,200 to April 2021.

Wars, political turmoil, economic uncertainty, Brexit, climate change and a global pandemic will likely be amongst those reasons for migratory patterns. But maybe it is also the case that Ireland has - at a time of crisis - rediscovered the true meaning of Céad Míle Fáilte and there is a renewed willingness to look out for, and help, others, and which makes Ireland an attractive place in which to live once again?

Analysis of this data is particularly important to Safe Home Ireland and can demonstrate the ongoing need for the organisation to adapt to ensure it is able to respond to the needs of those seeking to return home.



What next?

Safe Home Ireland fully intends to carry on ... insofar as it can ... not least because the need for its services remains immediately apparent. However, the limited resources continue to be stretched and that will be one of the main challenges for the charity going forward.

The organisation prides itself, and rightly so, in being wholly compliant with relevant statutory requirements and the highest standards of governance. The Board is currently developing a new Strategic Plan and are pleased the Department has reaffirmed its commitment to support the organisation in this process.

Maintaining consistently high levels of service in any organisation is challenging enough and, with the added complexities of Covid, it has proved beyond many. The fact remains that, since its inception, and particularly during the pandemic, Safe Home Ireland has excelled in continuing to deliver its services and it has done so by adapting quickly, and working creatively, in the face of all sorts of adversity. Therefore, it is with some comfort and satisfaction that the positive impact of Safe Home Ireland has now been verified and recorded in this report by both individuals' testimonials as well as responses to its recent survey.

That's a legacy. That's an impact. Long may it endure.

Acknowledgements

We want to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to this report and who supported us since our inception in 2000. We particularly want to thank all participants, who so generously and honestly, shared their stories of living abroad and returning home to Ireland, with our support. Thanks also to those who took the time to respond to our survey, both online and via post – your comments and feedback were so heart-warming and help us shape and adapt our services to ensure we are providing the best possible service.

We would like to thank The Community Foundation for Ireland for supporting our work over the years and particularly for funding this work and publication. We wish to acknowledge our core funders, The Dept of Foreign Affairs for funding and supporting our work since 2001 – we would not be able to do this work without your support. We wish to acknowledge all other funders and donors who have supported our work over the years and continue to do so and thank our current planned givers and regular donors. We look forward to expanding this relationship in the coming years.

We would like to thank Minister Colm Brophy, The Minister with responsibility for Overseas Development Aid & Diaspora; our Founder and Life President, Dr. Jerry Cowley and our Chairperson Nova Fariss for their thought provoking, positive and meaningful contributions in this report. . We are also pleased to include The President of Ireland's poem, Take Care, which resonates with so many people.

We are grateful to our extensive network of partners, collaborators and supporters who provide the platform which enables us to continue our humanitarian efforts to offer hope, comfort and reassurance and which allows us to deliver positive outcomes for those people throughout the world who continue to access our services. We are particularly thankful to Irish Welfare & Cultural Centres abroad who are often the first port of contact and a haven of support for many Irish abroad and particularly those most vulnerable. Furthermore, we are fortunate to work closely with our partners here in Ireland, in particular, Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project, Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas and Citizens Information. By working together we can offer a dedicated and coordinated response to support those Irish abroad seeking to return to live in Ireland.

In March 2021 we welcomed our first Ambassador, singer Seán Keane, who has embraced his role with such enthusiasm and dedication and has used every opportunity to support and promote our work. We are indebted to Seán for his support.

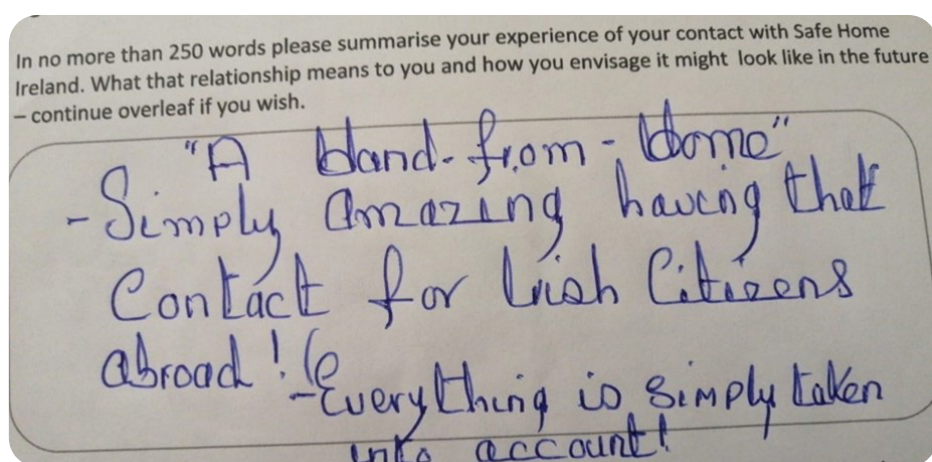
In January 2022, we set up Friends of Safe Home Ireland which works to enhance and advance the profile of Safe Home Ireland through different networks and events at home and abroad and helps to organise charity fundraising events and activities. We are most grateful for all their support to date.

We would like to thank all our former Staff and Directors. Special recognition must be extended to Máirin Higgins, who was our first CEO (2001-2014) and worked tirelessly at the outset to establish firm foundations and to put Safe Home Ireland on the map. Other staff include, Frances Browner (2007-2009) who produced Coming Home, our first publication; Mary Philbin (2005), Niamh O Sullivan (2021), and Bernadette Connaghan (2021).

We wish to express our deepest appreciation to the former Directors and our founding members, some of whom have departed from this life – they include: Ruth Heard (RIP); Annie Nixon (RIP); Phoebe Masterson (RIP); Bridget McLoughlin (RIP); Teresa Gallagher (2002-2018); Teresa Hanley (2002-2018); Collette Wood (2015-2019); Padraic Grennan (2017); Orlagh Mc Hugh (2017); Loretta Kenny (2018); Denis Joyce (2020-2021); Patricia Liddy (2020-2022)

We would also like to thank some people behind the scenes and include Seán Mallen at Get Funky Design for his design of this publication and his remarkable patience in the final editing of this publication and Michael Hanley for cover photos.

Finally, we would like to thank all our friends, followers and supporters here in Ireland and around the world for supporting our work since our inception in the year 2000. We look forward to the next 21 years!



How to support Safe Home Ireland

Safe Home Ireland is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and invites your support to ensure that we can continue to help the Irish abroad and those who dream of returning home one day. Your support can be in the form of monetary support but also you can help us by getting the word out there on our behalf. Tell people about us, who we are and what we do. You can also like our page on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter

If you wish to support the work of Safe Home Ireland, please contact our office or donate online via; <https://safehomeireland.com/support-our-work/>

Our latest full year figures – 2021 Annual Review

2021

SAFE HOME IRELAND OUR YEAR IN REVIEW



Safe Home Ireland has a proven track history of supporting and advocating for Irish emigrant communities globally. Our 2021 review provides a snapshot of our work and some of our key achievements.

4,473

client
interventions



INFORMATION



OUTREACH



HOUSING



CONNECT



INFORMATION

484

information
requests

We provide a free, confidential and professional information and advocacy service to anyone (regardless of age or circumstances) who may be contemplating returning or moving to Ireland.

75% of queries are from Irish-born people.

9% 2nd generation

16% Other

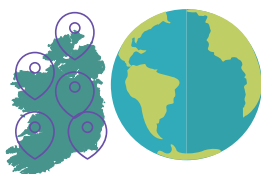
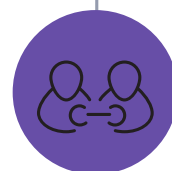


80 Outreach Appointments



5 Returning to Ireland Information Clinics

OUTREACH



We provide an outreach and advocacy service to people who have recently returned home to Ireland and to our housing applicants in the UK. Due to Covid imposed travel restrictions, our outreach to the UK is suspended at present.



HOUSING

We assist qualifying older Irish born emigrants to explore secure housing options and to assist in their return home, primarily to social housing schemes, back in their native areas. Our housing applicants return to all parts of Ireland and from all parts of the world.



52

Accommodated



51

New Applications

2,196

people
accommodated
since 2000



301

Housing
Applicants

5%

86%

Other: 9%



people in
contact

785

4987



Newsletter **570**

E-Bulletin **1,457**



CONNECT

We act as a link with home for emigrants, particularly important since the onset of Covid. We do this via our monthly newsletter, blog, social media platforms, virtual Returning to Information Clinics and our Facebook live concerts, which was a new venture for us in 2020 but continued this year.

Facebook Live Events **4**

Fundraising Concert **1**



Safe Home Ireland
St. Brendan's Village,
Mulranny, Westport, Co.
Mayo, IRELAND
F28 A386



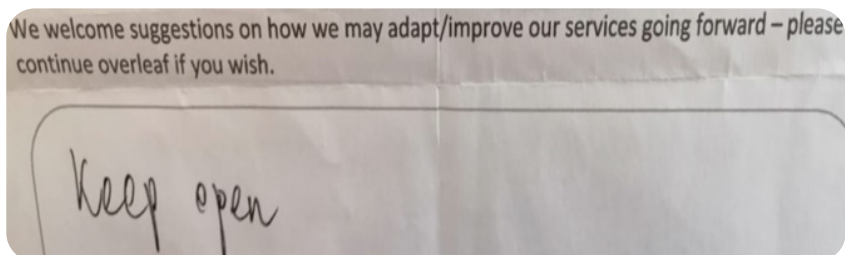
info@safehomeireland.com
(+353) 098 36036



(+353) 86 059 4538
www.safehomeireland.com

Our Timeline

2000	Dr. Cowley and other volunteers come together to establish Safe Home Ireland as a pilot project, initially in Co. Mayo
2001	First Staff Members appointed, Máirin Higgins (CEO) and Mary Ann Fadian (Coordinator)
2001	Secured Amendment to the Capital Assistance Scheme. Significantly, this Amendment means that the needs of Irish emigrants wishing to return to secure accommodation in their homeland was recognised.
2002	Safe Home Programme CLG is registered as a national organisation and formally incorporated as a registered charity in its own right
2002	First Outreach Officer appointed - Brenda Fleming
2005	Second Outreach Officer appointed - Noreen Mulrine
2007	Frances Browner appointed to carry out a research project to document stories of older Irish emigrants who returned home
2008	Launch of 'Coming Home' – a Safe Home Ireland publication with stories of older emigrants who have returned to their homeland
2012	The President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins becomes Patron of Safe Home Ireland
2015	Karen McHugh take up post as CEO
2016	Safe Home rebranding takes place with a new Logo (the Fern) and other publicity materials. The Fern represents the unfolding of a new life, a transformation, renewal and hope for the future.
2020	Dr. Jerry Cowley, Founder of Safe Home Ireland becomes Life President
2020	Nova Fariss becomes Chairperson of Safe Home Ireland
2021	Seán Keane, singer and musician becomes Safe Home Ireland first Ambassador
2020-2021	Safe Home Ireland holds a number of Facebook Live Concerts to connect with Irish abroad during Covid
2021	'Reflections' a first Poetry Book to mark our 21st Anniversary launched
2022	Friends of Safe Home Ireland is established and launched
2022	Launched a Diary/Journal (for 2023) and an Impact Report on 21 years of Safe Home Ireland is launched



Go raibh míle maith agaibh, from;

Board: Nova Fariss (Chairperson), Michael Joe Ginnelly, Ann Roddy, Teresa Cowley, Patricia Codyre, Joan O'Flynn, Niall Foley

Staff: Karen Mc Hugh (CEO), Mary Ann Fadian (Coordinator), Brenda Fleming & Noreen Mulrine (Outreach & Advocacy Officers), Johnny B. Broderick (Communications & Information Officer).

Life President: Dr. Jerry Cowley

Ambassador: Seán Keane

Patron: The President of Ireland – Michael D. Higgins

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/safehomeprogramme>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Safehomeireland> **Instagram:** [@safehomeireland](https://www.instagram.com/safehomeireland)

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Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme

An Boinn Góthaí Fachtartha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

