

# SAFE HOME FOR RETURNED AND RETURNING IRISH EMIGRANTS

Safe Home Ireland has directly assisted 2,280 Irish-born people to secure accommodation on their return home since the charity was first set up in 2000. This has been achieved with the support of local authorities and housing associations across the country, according to CEO Karen McHugh, who outlines what sets it apart from other service providers.

**S**afe Home Ireland (Safe Home) is a not-for-profit Irish charity<sup>1</sup> with a global remit. The organisation was set up in 2000 to facilitate the desire for qualifying older Irish-born emigrants abroad to return to their homeland.

After much advocacy and publicity at that time, Safe Home succeeded in highlighting their circumstances and this recognition was reflected in the granting of the Amendment to the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) in November 2001.

The Amendment gave qualifying Irish-born emigrants a realistic chance of realising their dream of returning home to Ireland by allowing them to be considered for housing association properties in their native areas. This recognition continues to this day, primarily facilitated by local authorities throughout the country.

Over the years, Safe Home has evolved from simply facilitating a housing option for older Irish-born emigrants. It now provides a targeted range of services to Irish emigrants abroad, regardless of age or circumstances, who desire to return home, as well as supporting those who have recently made the journey back home. Our head office is located in Co. Mayo with our outreach offices located in Co. Kerry, Co. Laois and Co. Galway.

In addition to directly assisting 2,280<sup>2</sup> Irish-born people to secure accommodation back home, we have also supported countless others who have returned independently, by providing holistic and person-centred support upon their return. For the majority, their return was a positive lifelong dream and could not have been fulfilled without Safe Home intervention and support.



Safe Home Ireland's CEO Karen McHugh and Secretary/Director Ann Roddy pictured outside the National Famine Museum in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon.



In recent times, several local authorities have committed to offering one 'age-friendly' property per year to a qualifying returning Irish emigrant.

## FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2023 the Safe Home Board undertook a review and planning process to capture trends, analysis, lessons, and insights to inform the strategic decision-making that underpins its new five-year plan to 2028<sup>3</sup>. The following are the key work areas during this period:

- **Explore housing options throughout Ireland**, for qualifying older Irish-born emigrants abroad in vulnerable/challenging circumstances. This is done primarily in partnership with local authorities and housing associations throughout Ireland.
- **To support Irish people while still abroad**, to make informed choices about returning to Ireland. This includes home visits to Safe Home housing applicants (UK only); information clinics on moving to Ireland for Irish people abroad, as well as peer support sessions with Irish and other welfare agencies abroad.
- **To support the integration and inclusion of returning Irish** to feel socially included on their transition back in Ireland by providing person-centred and holistic outreach support on accessing services and rights.

<sup>1</sup> Registered Charity No: 20049119

<sup>2</sup> Qualifying Criteria: Older Irish born emigrants, aged 57 years or older; Living in rented accommodation abroad; Unable to provide accommodation from their own income/means on their return to Ireland; Capable of independent living.

<sup>3</sup> As at 1st July 2023 – this figure also includes who secured/returned to their own housing on return.

- To offer a connection to home for those who remain abroad. This is done primarily via a monthly newsletter/e-bulletin and social media channels.
- To ensure the development and sustainability of the organisation.

### RANGE OF SERVICES ON OFFER

We offer a real housing option for qualifying older Irish emigrants throughout the 26 counties.

- We are the only service that can offer **outreach and home-visits** for returning and returned Irish emigrants to help with the transition back home and improves the likelihood of integration in their communities.
- We are the only holistic **frontline support service** for people, **before** (via UK home visits), **during** (phone/email support) and **after** (outreach visits in Ireland) the moving process.
- Safe Home Ireland is generally the **'first port of call'** for vulnerable older people considering this move and for agencies that work with vulnerable members of the Irish community abroad.

## The Long Road Home... Ag Siúl le Chéile

Our Fundraising Walk will begin at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin's Docklands and finish at The National Famine Museum in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon.

Saturday 11th May to Sunday 19th May 2024



If you are interested in the Official Famine Way Pack & Passport to stamp along the Trail and to receive your Official Certificate, log onto [www.nationalfamineway.ie](http://www.nationalfamineway.ie) and click on the Official Pack & Passport link.

**SAFE HOME IRELAND**  
DIASPORA SUPPORT SERVICE

The National Famine Way is a 165km trail that traces the footsteps of the 1,490 famine emigrants who left Strokestown in 1847. It commemorates the heart-breaking walk of forced emigration from Ireland.

### FUNDRAISING WALK ON 'THE LONG ROAD HOME'

Safe Home Ireland's fundraising walk along the National Famine Way\* returns in May 2024, and follows its inaugural 165km trail last May.

Starting at EPIC (the Irish Emigration Museum) in Dublin's Docklands on Saturday 11 May the walk will finish at Strokestown Park and National Famine

Museum, Co. Roscommon on Sunday 19 May. Registration is now open on Eventbrite at [bit.ly/48bNFzS](https://bit.ly/48bNFzS) and participants can walk (or cycle) for a day, part of a day or do the full nine-day challenge. For information on the 'National Famine Way' visit <https://nationalfamineway.ie/>



Dr Jerry Cowley, founder of Safe Home Ireland (left) pictured with the group who took part in the fundraiser in May 2023, after they reached Strokestown Park National Famine Museum.

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All of this is possible through the financial support received from the Irish Government, the Emigrant Support Programme, via the Department of Foreign Affairs, and other donors and supporters without which we would not function.

Safe Home Ireland wishes to acknowledge all local authorities throughout the 26 counties who have assisted us in turning the homecoming dream into reality for our clients. In recent times, several local authorities have committed to offering one 'age-friendly' property per year to a qualifying returning Irish emigrant. Our New Year Wish would be that this precedent would be rolled out across all local authority areas countrywide.