

What you need to know about returning to Ireland

Getting started

It doesn't matter how long you've lived abroad, you'll need a plan of action. Start by doing your research while you are still abroad. These links will help:

- **Crosscare Migrant Project** - www.migrantproject.ie/returning-to-ireland/
- **The Citizens Information** – www.citizensinformation.ie
- **The Irish Times Abroad** - www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/returning-to-ireland
- **Irish Expats Returning to Ireland** - www.facebook.com/groups/irishexpatsreturninghome/
- **Safe Home Ireland** - www.safehomeireland.com/need-answers/
- **Ireland Move Club** - <http://irelandmoveclub.com/>
- **Global Irish** - www.dfa.ie/global-irish/returning-to-ireland/

Employment

Begin your job search before you return. Use online resources (e.g. www.jobsireland.ie, www.indeed.ie, www.irishjobs.ie, www.cpl.ie/onetribе) and talk to people in the sector you are interested in.

Check if your **foreign qualifications** are recognised in Ireland at Quality and Qualifications Ireland - www.qqi.ie. Your skills may also be transferable to other areas so try to cast your net wide.

You may be eligible for **social welfare support** as a jobseeker in Ireland, however this will depend on your circumstances (*see the Social Welfare Payments section below*).

Housing

Arrange somewhere to stay on arrival in Ireland, even if it's with family/friends. Rents are higher than ever, especially in urban areas, so take a look at www.daft.ie for an idea of what to expect. If you're thinking about buying, or want to know about local authority housing, see www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/.

Healthcare

Once you are *ordinarily resident in Ireland* (living in Ireland permanently) you can access health services in the same way as any resident of Ireland.

If you have a low income on return, you may be entitled to an HSE issued **Medical Card** or a **GP Visit Card**. Medical Cards allow you to access a variety of health services free of charge including visits to the GP and prescribed medicines for a small contribution. GP Visit Cards allow you to see a doctor for free, and are automatically available to children under 6 and people age 70 or over. See www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical_cards_and_gp_visit_cards/.

If you are considering Private Health Insurance, the website of the Health Insurance Authority of Ireland will help you to compare plans at www.hia.ie.

Social Welfare Payments

You can apply for a social welfare payment in Ireland on your return if you are seeking employment, have a disability, are a single parent, are retired, or have a low income. To qualify you will need to satisfy a means test and something called the **Habitual Residence Condition** – it's important to prepare for this by reading www.migrantproject.ie/returning-to-ireland/social-welfare-habitual-residence/.

You'll also find information on all the **different types of social welfare payments** at www.welfare.ie

Returning with children

- **PPS number:** This is a unique reference number that you need to access public services in Ireland. If you or your children have never had PPS numbers you will need to apply on your return. See www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/irish_social_welfare_system/personal_public_service_number.html.
- **School:** If you are returning with children, start the application process for a school place well in advance of your return. Find a school at www.education.ie/en/find-a-school.
- **Health:** Children under 6 are now entitled to free GP visits in Ireland. See the 'Healthcare' section above.
- **Childcare:** Costs vary from county to county and can be expensive. The new Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is available for children of pre-school age (age 3 to 5 and a half). See www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre_school_education_and_childcare/.
- **Child Benefit:** If you are coming back to Ireland with children under age 16, you can apply for this universal payment as soon as you each have PPS numbers and an Irish address. The monthly rate is €140 per child, and you will need to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition (*see above*) to qualify. Children between the ages of 16 to 18 may also be eligible in some cases. See www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/273_Child-Benefit.aspx

Information for Older people

- **Foreign Pensions:** If you receive a pension from another country, check if it can be paid to you in Ireland by contacting the office that pays you. Occupational pensions can generally be paid anywhere in the world, but do contact your pension administrator to check this
- **Irish Pensions:** If you are age 66 or over and you have worked in Ireland previously and have a record of social insurance contributions here, you may be eligible for a **State Pension (Contributory)**. You can apply for this BEFORE you return to Ireland. If you do not have sufficient social insurance contributions to qualify for this you could apply for a **State Pension (Non Contributory)** once you are living in Ireland. You will need to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition and a means test to qualify (*see the Social Welfare Payments section above*)
- **Housing:** If you are age 57 or over, born in Ireland and you do not own your own home, find out about help with sourcing accommodation before you return at www.safehomeireland.com.
- **Health:** Depending on your income, you may be entitled to a Medical Card or a GP Visit Card from the Health Service Executive (HSE). People age 70 or over are also now entitled to free GP visits in Ireland. See the 'Healthcare' section above.
- **Other support:** If you are over the age of 66 you may be entitled to other supports, such as Free Travel and financial help with your heating costs. For everything you need to know on this see www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/older_and_retired_people/income_supports_for_older_people.html.

Supports if you have a disability or are caring for someone with a disability

The HSE website (www.hse.ie) contains useful information on supports available in Ireland if you have a disability or you are caring for someone with a disability. The Citizens Information website (www.citizensinformation.ie) also details social welfare payments and other supports available to you.

Non-EEA spouses/civil partners, and de-facto partners

Depending on where your non EEA spouse, civil partner or de-facto partner is from, they may need a visa before they can travel to Ireland [*NOTE: Citizens of some countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA do not need a visa to enter Ireland*].

On arrival in Ireland, your non-EEA spouse/civil partner or de-facto partner will then need apply for **permission live and work in Ireland on the basis of marriage, civil partnership or a de-facto relationship** (cohabiting for 2 years or more) with an Irish citizen. This can only be applied for within Ireland, so it is important to prepare by reading: www.migrantproject.ie/returning-to-ireland/bringing-non-irish-family-members/.

Driving in Ireland

Depending on where your **driving licence** was issued you may be able to exchange it for an Irish one on your return. Currently this included any **EU country or EEA member state, Australia, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle Of Man, Japan, Jersey, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, New Zealand, Taiwan, or the Canadian Provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, Newfoundland & Labrador**. Find out more from the National Driving Licence Service at www.ndls.ie.

Car insurance can be expensive for returned emigrants so do your research and shop around. Thanks to a new protocol between the Department of Finance and Insurance Ireland insurance companies will now take overseas driving experience into consideration as long as you can provide proof of claims-free driving experience from abroad. Full details are available on the Insurance Ireland website at www.insuranceireland.eu/consumer-information/general-non-life-insurance/motor.

You can also find information on **car and vehicle registration tax** at the website of Irish Tax and Customs - www.revenue.ie.

Wellbeing on return

Returning to Ireland is like emigrating, and you might even experience a culture shock on return. Make sure you have realistic expectations by doing your research in advance. Also talk to others who have made the move back and reach out to your family for support. Try to embrace the change and give yourself at least a year to adjust.

Contact us

If you have further queries or you are returning to Ireland in difficult circumstances and would like to discuss your situation, **contact us** by email at migrantproject@crosscare.ie or call +353 1 873 2844. You can also connect with us on **Facebook** (www.facebook.com/CrosscareMigrantProject/) or **Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/irishmigrants>).

Crosscare Migrant Project is an Irish Emigrant Support Programme funded NGO providing information, advocacy and referral services to intending and returning Irish emigrants. **Disclaimer:** Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this guide is accurate; however, policies and legislation can change at any time. All information should be clarified with the relevant government department or authority before any decision is made.