

Welcome Pack for Immigrants in Clare

Where I live



Compiled by Clare Immigrant Support Centre



How do I find a place to live?

Having a comfortable secure place to live is very important

Temporary housing

If you arrive in Ireland and have nowhere to live you may be able to find temporary accommodation in a hostel (www.hostels.com, www.hostelworld.com). 'Bed and Breakfasts' ('B&Bs') sometimes offer good rates. www.goldenpages.ie is a web-based phone directory where you can search under a number of categories like 'Hostels – Tourist' or 'Bed & Breakfast'.

Some people have had difficulty getting a PPS (Personal Public Service – see Employment and Welfare booklet) number because they live in temporary accommodation. You must show proof of address to get a PPS number and not all hostels will provide you with this.

Accommodation to rent

There are a number of choices when looking for a place to live in county Clare. First, you can rent from a private property owner or an estate agency. The

types of rental housing include:

- **bedsit** – usually one room suitable for one person;
- **flat, apartment or house** – for one or more people;
- **house sharing**; and
- **lodgings** – living with a family in their house.

It can be difficult to find accommodation in the right place and at the right price. Certain times of the year can be very difficult to find a place to live, especially where colleges and universities are reopening after the summer holidays.

Newspapers

A good place to start looking for a flat, apartment or house is the accommodation section of local newspapers such as the:

- **Clare Champion**
- **Clare People**
- **Clare County Express**
- **Clare Courier.**

Look in the classified ads section – usual headings are “accommodation” or “house share”. You should make an appointment to see the flat or house and turn up early.

Always look at accommodation before agreeing to rent it. If living in Ennis check in with the Clare Immigrant Support Centre on Thursday morning about the accommodation on offer in the local newspapers.

Accommodation websites

- www.daft.ie/clare/
- www.let.ie
- www.myhome2let.ie
- www.Ireland.com/HouseHome
- www.property.ie/property-to-let/clare/
- www.gumtree.ie

Paying for your accommodation

Make sure you understand the lease before signing it

Contract with property owner

The money you pay to use a property is called rent. The amount you pay the property owner is agreed before you move in and you pay the money to them or their agent in the way that you have agreed. This may be in cash or through your bank.

You may be asked to sign a lease or contract. It will state:

- how much the rent is and when you have to pay it;
- other conditions attached to renting the accommodation;
- your obligations as a tenant; and
- the property owner's obligation to you.

You should make sure to study the lease and that you are happy with the conditions of the lease before you sign it. A lease is for a particular time period (for example six months).

You may have to pay the remainder of the lease if you stop living in the property before the lease time is up.

If you sign a lease with others, you

'Landlords and landladies'

The owner or manager of the property you rent may be a man or a woman. They are often called a landlord or landlady. Sometimes they appoint a 'property manager' to manage renting out their property.

become responsible for each other's rent. If you don't understand the terms of the lease, contact the independent agency, Threshold, for free advice before signing.

The nearest Threshold office is Galway; phone (091) 563 080.

References

Some property owners may ask for references from your former landlords or landladies to show you have been a good tenant in the past. If you are new in Ireland, a reference from your employer or doctor may satisfy the property owner or manager.



RENT ALLOWANCE

Paying your rent

The monthly rent quoted to you is for a full calendar month. A month varies from 28 days to 31 days. You must pay the full month's rent 12 times a year, no matter how many days there are in any month.

If you pay it weekly, it is good practice to pay it on the same day each week for all 52 weeks of the year.

Deposit

Most property owners or managers ask for a deposit (usually one month's rent) as well as one month's rent in advance.

Before paying the deposit, if you are receiving any Social Welfare payment, contact the Community Welfare Officer who may help with paying part or all of a deposit. It is important to do this before you pay any money because you will not get a refund if you have already paid the deposit.

You must also have had your housing needs assessed by the Local Housing Authority and have been put on a list for Council housing. Make sure you get a receipt for any deposit you pay.

Rent Supplement

Your Local Health Offices pays a Rent Supplement to people living in private rented housing who cannot afford to pay for their own accommodation. In general, if your only income is a social welfare or Health Service Executive (HSE) payment, you will qualify for a rent supplement from your Local Health Office.

Co Clare Health Centres

Carrigaholt	(065) 905 8205
Clarecastle	(065) 682 9488
Ennis	(065) 682 8525
Ennistymon	(065) 707 1143
Kildysart	(065) 683 2012
Kilkee	(065) 905 6381
Kilmihil	(065) 905 0155
Kilrush	(065) 905 4200
Lisdoonvarna	(065) 707 4194
Scariff	(061) 921 286
Shannon	(061) 718 400
Sixmilebridge	(061) 369 427
Tulla	(065) 683 5264
Kilmaley	GP (065) 683 9748

Rental Accommodation Scheme

If you are getting Rent Supplement for more than 18 months and you need long-term housing, you may be eligible for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). The scheme is run by local authorities that have contracts with property owners to provide housing for people with a long-term housing need.

The local authority pays the rent directly to the property owner. You contribute to your rent, but you pay this contribution to your local authority, not to the property owner.

Under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS):

- local authorities will pay most of the rent to the property owner for you;

FUEL ALLOWANCE

- the property must meet minimum standards for private rental accommodation; and
- you do not need a deposit because the local authority has entered into a contract with the property owner.

The RAS does not apply to:

- asylum seekers; or
- non-Irish nationals who do not have permission to remain in the State permanently.

For more information about the Rental Accommodation Scheme please contact your local authority.

You can also contact the Clare Immigrant Support Centre (CISC), Unit 13, Carmody Street Business Park, Ennis, Co Clare. Phone (065) 682 2026; your local Citizens Information Centre, Citizens Information Centre at Bindon Lane, Ennis. Phone (065) 684 1221

Tax relief for rent

To apply for tax relief for tenants paying rent in private accommodation, complete a 'Rent 1' form available from your local tax office.

Fuel Allowance

If you depend on long-term social welfare or HSE (Health Service Executive) payments you may qualify for the Fuel Allowance to help with the cost of heating your home from September to May.

More information is available: on the www.citizensinformation.ie website – you can go directly to the relevant page by using this website address <http://tinyurl.com/cbcehj>; or from the Clare Immigrant Support Centre (CISC).

Household bills

Check with your property owner if you need to set up your bills in your own name and open an account with companies such as:

- the ESB and Airtricity – which provide electricity; and
- Bord Gais – which provides gas and electricity.

To set up these accounts you will need photo ID and a bank account.

You may be asked to pay a deposit to the company before they set you up. You will get this back when you leave the rented accommodation.

Services you must pay for

Other services that you may need and you have to pay for include:

- refuse collection – you will need to set up an account with a private company such as Mr Binman or Polar Bear Bins;
- TV cable – private operators include Sky or Chorus;
- TV Licence (see 'General' leaflet);
- phone line – if there is a phone line in your accommodation you can have that connected to any phone service provider; and
- phone line installation – if there is no phone line in your house you must contact eircom (www.eircom.net) to have one installed – once installed you can use any phone service provider.

You can pay your bills by direct debit from your bank account or in the local post office. Some companies may insist you pay your bill by direct debit from your bank account. Check with the company first.

Who must maintain rented housing?

Both the property owner and tenant must take care of the rented property

If you are renting, the property owner is responsible for:

- repairing and maintaining the interior of the property; and
- making sure the house is safe, in good repair and essentially sound.

If these repairs are carried out by the tenant the property owner must repay the tenant.

The cleanliness of the house is the tenant's responsibility. You must remove rubbish and put it into the bin for regular collection.

A company must be engaged to remove your refuse.

If you wish to make changes to the interior or garden area of the accommodation, you must ask the property owner for permission. Again the property owner must repay you if they give you permission.

Rights and responsibilities

The property owner

Rent

- The property owner sets the rent (it cannot be more than the current market rate).
- The property owner reviews the rent once a year – if they decide to increase the rent they must give you 28 days notice.

- There are 52 weeks in the year

PRTB

- The property owner must provide details of their tenancies to the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB).

The tenant

Rent

- You must pay the rent on the day it is due.
- You are entitled to a rent book.

Other tenants

- You must tell the property owner or manager who is living in the accommodation.
- You are entitled to have friends over for a short period of time unless otherwise stated in your tenancy agreement.

Length of stay

- Your property owner cannot ask you to leave during the period of your lease, unless you have broken the terms of the agreement.
- Your property owner must give you four weeks' notice in writing if they want you to leave the property.

Peace and quiet

- You are entitled to a private and quiet enjoyment of your home

Standards

If you think your accommodation is below standard and your property owner disagrees with you, you can ask the local authority to make the property owner comply with the legal standards for rented accommodation.

Maintaining the property

Tenants must keep the property in good order. If you are a tenant, you must not cause damage or trouble for your neighbours or the property owner.

Disputes

The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) resolves disputes between property owners and tenants. You can contact them at: Private Residential Tenancies Board, O'Connell Bridge House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2. Phone: (01) 635 0600; email, prtbt@environ.irlgov.ie; website, www.prtb.ie

If you become homeless

If you are homeless and need information on free food, shelter and healthcare, go to the Citizens Information Centre (see back page). They will also provide information on voluntary organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, the Simon Community and the Salvation Army.

In the short term, emergency accommodation is provided for single people in hostels. If there are families or individuals who are not suited to a hostel, generally bed and breakfast accommodation will be provided as an alternative.

There are various housing schemes available for homeless people, such as:

- local authority housing;
- private rented accommodation;
- long-term supported housing; and
- other housing schemes.

Ask to speak to your Housing Welfare Officer at your local authority and they will advise you which scheme would benefit you.

Owning your own property

If you are thinking of buying property you can look at the options of getting financial support. You can:

- apply for a mortgage (a loan to pay for property) from a financial institution; or
- apply to the local council for a loan under their shared ownership scheme.

Your success in getting these loans depends on your income and financial circumstances.

Local authority housing

If you are homeless, you can apply to the local authority to live in a local authority house or flat. If you are eligible, it will put you on a waiting list until suitable housing becomes available. Priority is given to homeless people.

Young homeless people

Unaccompanied foreign nationals who are homeless and without their families are referred to the Health Service Executives (www.hse.ie). The HSE is responsible for looking after people in these circumstances.

If you have a dispute you can phone the Private Residential Tenancies Board (01) 635 0600

Useful contacts

Citizens Information Centres

Location	Address	Phone
Ennis	Bindon Lane, Ennis, Co Clare	(065) 684 1221
Shannon	Shannon Business Centre, Co Clare	(061) 364 704
Kilrush	Francis Street, Kilrush, Co Clare	(065) 908 0056
Scariff	East Clare Community, Co-Op, Main Street, Scarriff, Co. Clare	(061) 921 286

Clare Immigrant Support Centre

Ennis	Unit 13 Carmody Street Business Park, Ennis, Co Clare	(065) 682 2026
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Local Health Office

Community Welfare Officer	HSE, Sandfield Centre, Highfield Park, Ennis.	(065) 686 8090.
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See Page 8 of 'Health' leaflet for list of Health Offices in Co Clare

Threshold

The National Housing Organisation in Ireland	Threshold, 21 Stoneybatter, Dublin 7. Threshold also provides services in Clonmel, Cork, Dundalk, Galway and Tralee.	(01) 678 6096
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Social Welfare Offices

Location	Address	Phone
Ennistymon	Parliament Street, Ennistymon, Co. Clare	(065) 707 2528
Tulla	Main Street, Tulla, Co. Clare	(065) 683 1908
Kilrush	45 Moore Street, Kilrush, Co Clare	(065) 908 0030
Ennis	Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co Clare	(065) 686 7800